

PARADIGM SHIFT:

Preventing Livestreamed Abuse of Children

FINDINGS FROM THE UNITED KINGDOM



A 2026 Report in Partnership with
International Justice Mission, Childlight
and University of New South Wales (Sydney)



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Justice Mission



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SYDNEY

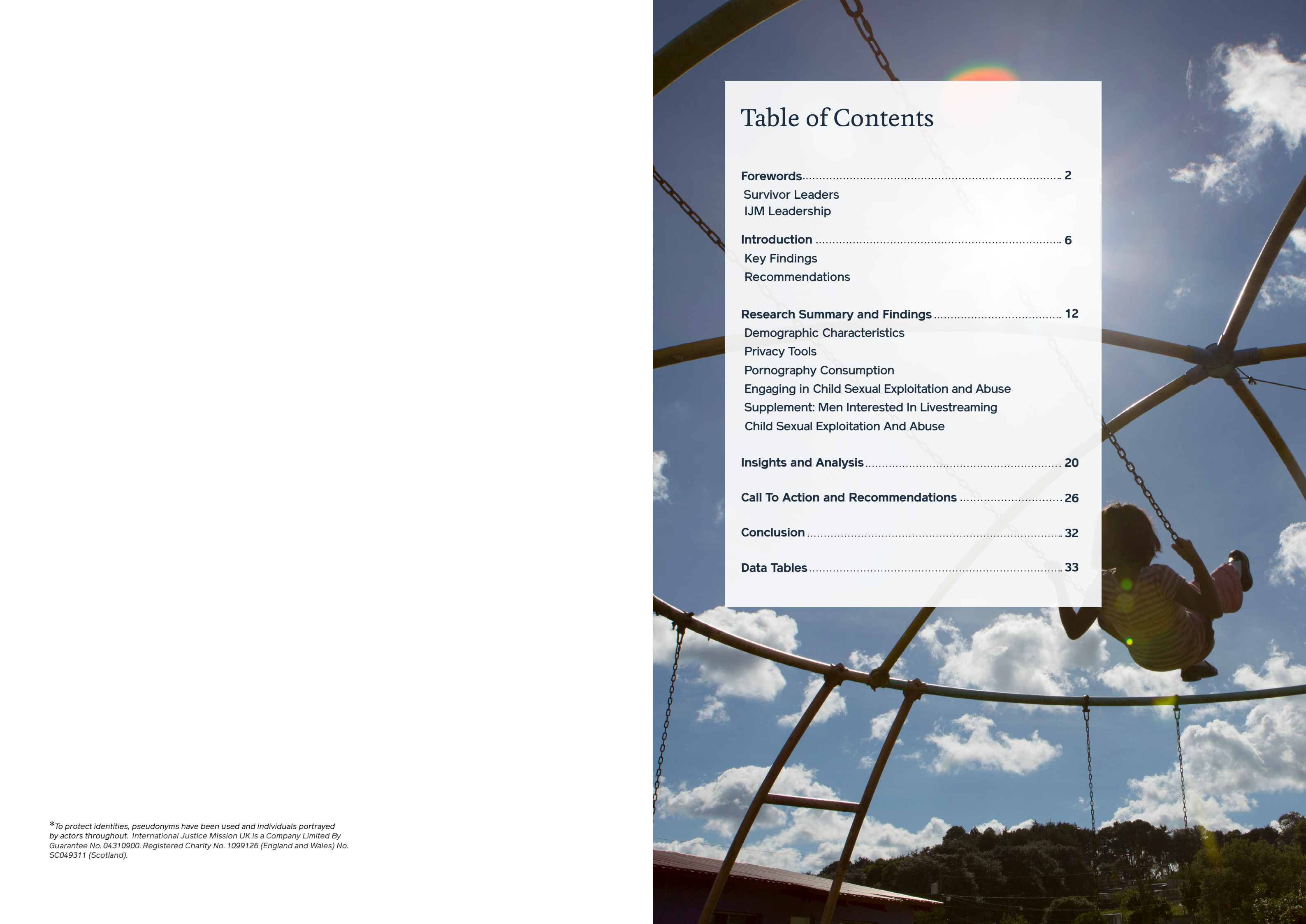
A low-angle photograph of a child swinging on a swing set. The child is seen from behind, wearing a pink and white striped shirt. The swing set's metal frame and chains are visible against a bright blue sky filled with white clouds. A faint rainbow is visible in the upper center of the sky. The overall mood is bright and hopeful.

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Survivor Foreword

As survivors of online sexual exploitation, we share these words to speak for every child who was silenced and every young person who deserves safety. Years ago, our lives were reduced to transactions—abuse streamed across borders for the price of a few dollars.

Today, we stand free, but countless children remain at risk because this crime thrives in the shadows of technology and finance.

This report is not just data; it reflects lived realities.

Behind every statistic is a child whose innocence was stolen through a camera, often watched by those who treated suffering as entertainment. These crimes cross oceans because those with power delay action.

Online sexual abuse is fuelled by money. Every livestreamed act is funded by payment.¹ According to the Philippine Anti-Money Laundering Council, the UK ranks second globally in sending payments to the Philippines for child sexual exploitation.² Offenders can pay as little as £15 to direct and watch abuse in real time. Research shows 1.4% of surveyed UK men admitted involvement, and another 5.2% said they would if given the chance—one in 15 men willing to exploit a child online.

These numbers represent real children and real offenders. We cannot ignore the fact that another child is suffering right now, hoping for someone to bring them to safety. Even when freedom comes, healing is lifelong.

We already have tools to stop this—AI can detect abuse instantly, and financial institutions can block suspicious transactions. These solutions exist today. What we need is courage: from governments, tech companies, banks, and communities.

Stop endless discussions. Start real action. Lives depend on it.

To fellow survivors: your voices matter. Healing is possible, and our stories can drive change.

To leaders and advocates: listen, believe, and act. Together, we can create a world where children are safe and survivors live free from fear.

Thank you for standing with us. Let us use every tool—technology, finance, and courage—to end this crime for good.

***Ruby & Mark, Survivor Leaders**

Philippine Survivor Network

1 While not all livestreamed child sexual abuse involves financial transactions, the survivor leaders of the Philippine Survivor Network primarily experienced abuse that did involve payments.

2 AMLC. (April 2023). *Online Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children in the Philippines: An Evaluation using STR Data*. The Philippines Anti-Money Laundering Council. Available from: <http://www.amlc.gov.ph/images/PDFs/Main/Online%20Sexual%20Abuse%20and%20Exploitation%20of%20Children%20in%20the%20Philippines.pdf>

IJM Foreword

For more than a decade, International Justice Mission (IJM) has been on the frontlines of combatting the technology-facilitated onslaught of child sexual abuse known as “livestreaming.” IJM has supported Philippine authorities in safeguarding more than 1,500 victims and at-risk individuals, leading to more than 460 arrests, 295 convictions, and 570 survivors supported to reach a place of sustainable recovery.

During that time, I have had the privilege to lead local and global teams to protect children from this shocking crime. It has taken me across the Philippines, to parliaments in the UK, Canada, and Germany, the main stage of the Singapore Fintech Festival, and congressional hearing rooms, testifying before the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives. Along the way, I have met the most courageous survivor leaders calling on policymakers to use their power to stop the creation and consumption of child sexual abuse online.

Today, I am more hopeful and confident than ever in one thing: this global crisis of online sexual abuse is preventable.

Together, governments, law enforcement, tech and financial sector companies, non-profit organisations, survivor leaders, community members, and more can significantly reduce the prevalence of livestreamed child sexual abuse—can take it from rampant to rare.

International Justice Mission, our partners, and survivor leaders have sounded the alarm on these egregious violations of child rights and victim-survivor privacy that take place online through popular live video platforms, including video-chat and messaging applications. This report spotlights how adult men using the internet and smart devices in the UK are a major source of this form of online sexual abuse, with **one in 15 of survey respondents saying they have engaged in sexually explicit livestreams with children or would if offered.**

Pause to digest that number. It represents real offenders harming real victims, sometimes in the most cruel and inhumane ways, as revealed in IJM’s casework. This report focuses on livestreaming data because it is a relatively common way for offenders to sexually abuse children online. Child sexual abuse transmitted via live video is harder for law enforcement to investigate and prosecute than the distribution of images and recorded videos, which leave a clear digital trace. While law enforcement needs to determine whether images and videos involve new abuse, children depicted in livestreamed abuse are being harmed in real time and thus require a different and more immediate response. Moreover, as survivors have repeatedly told me, oftentimes they can see the offender on the other side of the screen. This ugly reality of livestreaming compounds the suffering of the abuse.

For that reason, when it comes to child exploitation cases, UK law enforcement should investigate and prosecute as many livestreaming offenders in the country as possible. These are high-harm individuals who pose threats to British children in person and online - and because the internet knows no borders, they also harm children in especially vulnerable jurisdictions, such as the Philippines. While UK law enforcement maintains robust capabilities to combat this crime through the National Crime Agency (NCA), Regional Organised Crime Units, local police forces and other

agencies, the government can assign greater priority and resources to increase publicly reported prosecutions of these offenders. Doing so intercepts ongoing abuse and prevents future offences by deterring criminals. The scale of livestream offending, however, is more than law enforcement can be expected to tackle alone³

But there is hope. In fact, the UK Government has an opportunity to lead the way with the boldest, smartest, technology-driven preventative approach to combat child sexual abuse images and videos (known as child sexual abuse material or CSAM) by requiring tech companies to shut down livestreamed child sexual abuse, replacing excuses with courage and prioritising the best interests and protection of children above all else.

Through a layered prevention approach, technology sector companies should embed child protection measures at multiple opportunities, including increasingly sophisticated artificial intelligence (AI) tools, effective signal sharing, and every possible digital intervention to deal decisive blows to child abuse livestreaming. We are talking about offenders who sexually abuse dozens of children or more, all while using everyday apps on devices like HP laptops featuring Microsoft Windows, iPhones and iPads running on Apple's iOS, or smart devices using Google's Android operating system. That status quo must change.

Australia's eSafety Commissioner reports that the most powerful and wealthy tech platforms in the world are not taking steps to proactively detect live video child sexual abuse in video-chat apps, despite the availability of technology to do so.⁴ While tech companies may be unable to stop every instance of abuse, they can disrupt and frustrate offenders, making it increasingly more difficult to transmit and view child sexual abuse, and making their smart devices and platforms more resilient to live child abuse.

Every company across the technology stack has numerous opportunities to detect, disrupt, and potentially report these live crime scenes, yet remarkably, today, none of them do so in video-chat apps and platforms. They can deploy proactive AI tools in their operating systems, via servers, or in their apps, specifically trained to recognise child sexual abuse videos and images. Such CSAM AI classifier tools are privacy-preserving and protective of lawful free speech. The sole purpose of these tools is to determine whether the image or video being produced or streamed is of a child being sexually abused.

National and international laws recognise the rights of children to safety and protection from sexual violence, online and offline. The status quo, however, is complicit in the violation of those rights, as technology services and platforms are misused by offenders to commission sexual abuse live. While some civil liberties groups, erroneously under the banner of "user privacy" and "free speech", prevent reasonable and citizen-supported attempts to keep children safe online, if we care about privacy and free speech, we must demand an end to child sexual abuse images and videos. Tell me a more egregious privacy violation than the abuse of a child shown and watched in real-time on

3 The National Crime Agency states that, "the response to the continual CSA threat cannot be one for policing alone - a wholesystem approach is the only way to protect children effectively. We all owe it to our children not to be a bystander - now is the time to really make a difference. . . The NCA and policing partners are arresting an average of 1,000 potential offenders each month and safeguarded approximately 1,200 children. . . But this is not enough. The NCA and Policing leads are urging strengthened use of the powers in the Online Safety Act (OSA) by Ofcom to hold companies to account if they are not compliant. . . And the development of prevention initiatives to deter adults and young people who are at risk of sexually abusing a child should be prioritised, alongside funding for offender management to help deter offending before it happens. . . [T]he use of technology is increasing the opportunities for child sex offenders, and the risk to children and young people. We have seen some improvements by tech companies, but it's nowhere near what's actually needed to protect children in this day and age. . ." See NCA. (17 February 2026). Child sexual abuse is increasing in severity, complexity and accessibility, say policing leads, National Crime Agency. Available from: <https://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/news/child-sexual-abuse-is-increasing-in-severity-complexity-and-accessibility-say-policing-leads>.

4 eSafety Commissioner. (February 2026). Periodic reporting series on child sexual exploitation and abuse, grooming and sexual extortion, Report 2: 1 January 2025 – 30 June 2025. Basic Online Safety Expectations. Available from: <https://www.esafety.gov.au/industry/basic-online-safety-expectations/child-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse-material-and-activity#interactive-transparency-summary-and-snapshots>; See also: eSafety Commissioner. (August 2025). Baseline for online safety transparency: Snapshot of the first regular report on child sexual exploitation and abuse, and sexual extortion. Basic Online Safety Expectations periodic reporting series. Available from: <https://www.esafety.gov.au/sites/default/files/2025-08/BOSE-Snapshot-first-regular-report-on-CSEA-sexual-extortion-periodic-notice-August2025.pdf?v=1754435223208>

WhatsApp, FaceTime, Skype, Messenger, and the like. The truth is that preventing images and videos of child abuse from being created, transmitted, and viewed protects the privacy rights of victim-survivors whose abuse is horrific enough, without strangers watching it in real time and sharing it online.

And if we care about free speech, we should acknowledge that the continued creation and spread of child sexual abuse images and videos unfairly impedes survivors in the exercise of their free speech rights because of fear of being identified or harassed by offenders who have watched their abuse images and/or videos.

We must change that. We can change that. And survivor leaders demand that we do, thus protecting generations of children at home and abroad:

We specifically ask that digital services be held accountable for livestreaming child sexual abuse – that such criminal activity be proactively detected and disrupted on their platforms.

– Philippine Survivor Network, a chapter of the Global Survivor Network⁵

John Tanagho

Executive Director, Center to End Online Sexual Exploitation of Children
International Justice Mission

5 The Philippine Survivor Network. (28 February 2023). *The Philippines brings together two group of survivors to launch a National Survivor Network*. Available from: <https://globalsurvivornetwork.org/stories/the-philippines-brings-together-two-group-of-survivors-to-launch-a-national-survivor-network-the-philippine-survivor-network>

Introduction

This report exposes the involvement of British men in the live online sexual abuse of children, commonly referred to as “livestreaming.” It shows that a worrying number of men are using everyday technologies, such as video-chat and streaming platforms, to direct and watch the sexual abuse of children in real time.

Released by the Childlight East Asia and Pacific Hub at the University of New South Wales, in partnership with International Justice Mission (IJM), the report features data collected and analysed by Childlight with insights and recommendations provided by IJM. 1,506 men in the UK, aged 18 or older, participated in the survey. Of these men, **1.4% admitted to engaging in sexually explicit webcam interactions with children and another 5.2% said they would if offered.**⁶

This is the equivalent of one in 15 respondents having either webcammed sexually with a child or having a desire to do so.

According to the National Crime Agency, the UK is in the top three global consumers of financially motivated livestreamed child sexual abuse.⁷ Offenders may pay as little as £10 or £15 to direct and consume the sexual abuse of children over live video calls without even leaving their homes.⁸ Given that UK offenders are driving the abuse of countless children, there is a moral imperative for the UK Government to take action to prevent this crime. Cassie*, trafficked at age 12 and abused via livestream for five years, puts it simply:

*The internet has no borders – and neither does this crime. I'm determined that it will stop and that children like me will be protected. The UK Government, Ofcom, and UK authorities all have a key role in making this happen.*⁹

The findings have serious implications for policymakers. Men who reported livestreaming sexually with children were more likely to have already sexually abused a child in person. Those who had not yet were more likely to say they would, often targeting children under 14, if they thought they could avoid being caught. This pattern echoes research by the Australian Institute of Criminology, suggesting that individuals who view livestreamed child sexual abuse have already crossed the “psychological threshold” to commit contact sexual offences, because they have directed and watched the live sexual abuse of a child online, on par with abusing children themselves.¹⁰

Moreover, the Childlight study reveals that respondents who livestream child sexual abuse are generally more tech-savvy, well-educated, employed, with relatively higher incomes, and – concerningly – have direct access to children at home or at work.

Real cases involving offenders or victims in the UK reveal just how serious livestreaming offences are:

- *At the direction of a UK-based offender, a U.S. offender in South Carolina, David James Allison (33), admitted to sexually assaulting a 22-month-old five times and “livestreaming these assaults over Skype.”*¹¹
- *Kent man, Patrick H. (58), was sentenced to 30 years in prison for paying almost £56,000 to facilitators in the Philippines to sexually abuse 19 children as young as eight, making 796 separate transactions over seven years.*¹²
- *South London man, Robert C. (49), admitted to using the persona of a teenage boy online to watch livestreams involving children as young as six years old around the world, directing them to carry out sexual acts.*¹³
- *Ilford man, Cesar C. (39), was sentenced to 15 years in prison for paying facilitators in the Philippines to livestream and direct sexual abuse of children as young as two years old.*¹⁴
- *Somerset man, Darren A. (52), was arrested for livestreaming real-time acts of child sexual abuse from the Philippines and sharing indecent images of children as young as 11 years old.*¹⁵
- *Kent man, Matthew B. (52), pleaded guilty to orchestrating the sexual abuse of young children, including those under two, in multiple countries, including via live video streams. He committed these offences over a nine-year period and was only identified after a victim reported the abuse.*¹⁶

Despite these shocking cases, tech companies have failed to act. The eSafety Commissioner’s Basic Online Safety Expectations (“BOSE”) 2022 report found that major platforms were doing little, if anything, to detect child sexual

6 For the purposes of this research, a child is defined under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which states a child means every human being below the age of 18 years. Available from: <https://www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention/convention-text>. Although the legal age of consent in the UK is 16 years old, “Parliament recognised the need to protect children up to the age of 18 from those who seek to exploit them for the purposes of prostitution or pornography.” Available from: <https://www.cps.gov.uk/legal-guidance/rape-and-sexual-offences-chapter-7-key-legislation-and-offences>. Thus, the report uses the term “livestream child sexual exploitation and abuse (CSEA)” for any instance of livestreaming by an adult with a person under 18 years old.

7 UK National Crime Agency. (20 May 2019). *IICSA Inquiry – Internet Hearing* (pg 31). The National Archives. Available from: <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20221214230326/https://www.iicsa.org.uk/key-documents/11537/view/open-session-transcript-20-may-2019.pdf>

8 Independent Inquiry Child Sexual Abuse. (October 2022). *The Internet Investigation Report – Part E: Live streaming*. IICSA. Available from: <https://www.iicsa.org.uk/reports-recommendations/publications/investigation/internet/part-e-live-streaming/e1-introduction>

9 Survivor leader, *Cassie, shared at the Parliamentary event. IJM. (2024). *MPs, campaigners, survivors and UK NCA urge action to tackle growth in livestreamed child abuse*. International Justice Mission. <https://www.ijmuk.org/stories/mps-campaigners-survivors-and-uk-nca-urge-action-to-tackle-growth-in-livestreamed-child-abuse>

10 Australian Institute of Criminology. (2023). *The overlap between child sexual abuse live streaming, contact abuse and other forms of child exploitation*. Trends & Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice No. 671. Available from: https://www.aic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-05/ti671_overlap_between_csa_live_streaming_contact_abuse_and_other_child_exploitation.pdf

11 United States Attorney’s Office District of South Carolina. (8 April 2022). *Beaufort County Man Sentenced to 30 years for Production of Child Pornography*. Available from: <https://www.justice.gov/usao-sc/pr/beaufort-county-man-sentenced-30-years-production-child-pornography>

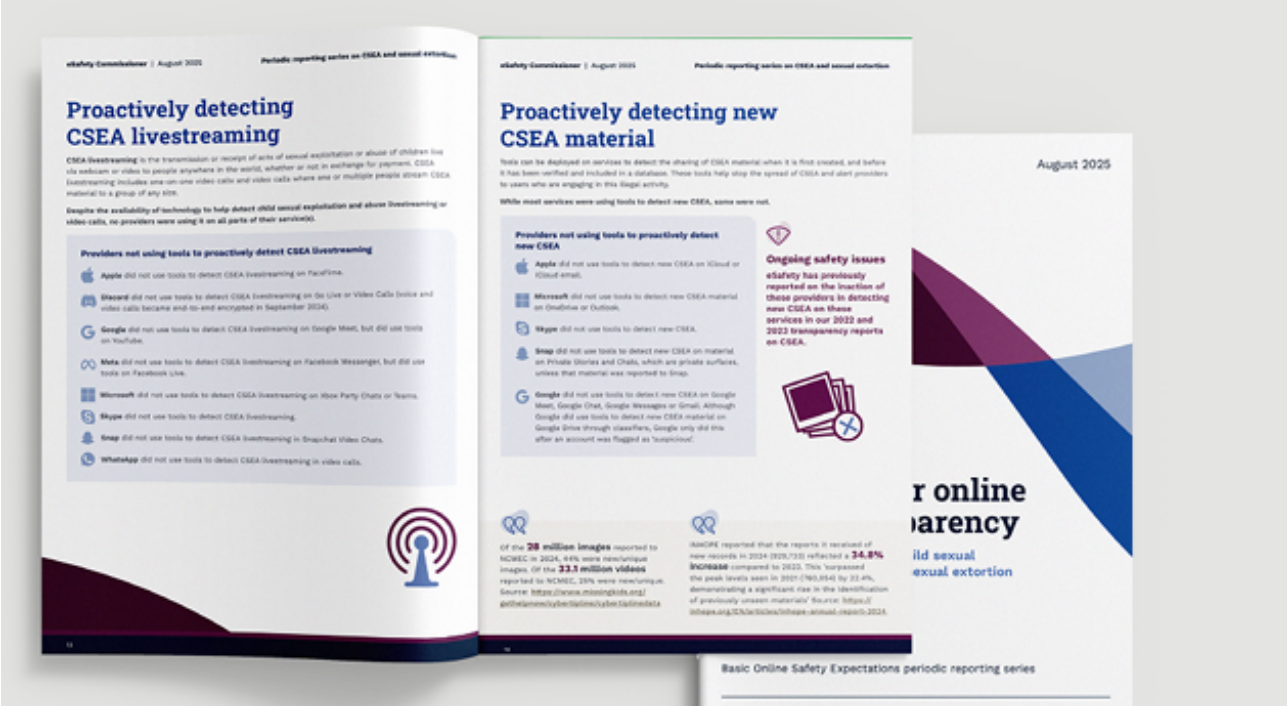
12 Bennett, E. (18 July 2025). *Man who sent £56,000 to Philippines for livestreamed sexual abuse of children jailed for 30 years*. LBC. Available from: https://www.lbc.co.uk/article/man-philippines-livestreamed-sexual-abuse-5Hjd7Wj_2/

13 NCA. (6 October 2025). *Paedophile posed as teenage boy to sexually abuse children online*. National Crime Agency. Available from: <https://www.wired-gov.net/wg/news.nsf/articles/paedophile+posed+as+teenage+boy+to+sexually+abuse+children+online+06102025111500?open>

14 Holden, J. (17 October 2024). *Ilford paedophile paid mums £1,300 to livestream sexual abuse of children as young as 2*. MyLondon. Available from: <https://www.mylondon.news/news/east-london-news/ilford-paedophile-paid-mums-1300-30171453>

15 Skirkowski, J. (12 May 2025). *Man who live-streamed child abuse sentenced*. BBC. Available from: <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cly-v3ynylydo>

16 Davis, B. (26 January 2024). *Brit jailed after paying for sexual abuse of children from all over the world*. Independent. Available from: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/matthew-bower-fbi-nca-paedophile-kent-b2485430.html>



eSafety Commissioner's August 2025 Report - A Baseline for Online Safety Transparency: The First Regular Report on Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, and Sexual Extortion. *Note: In the February 2026 transparency report, Skype indicated that it implemented an internal proprietary programme for video calls in certain regions to detect child sexual exploitation and abuse (CSEA) from February 2025 until Skype stopped operating in May 2025.

abuse in livestreams or video calls.¹⁷ As of June 2025, not much had changed. The eSafety Commissioner's BOSE February 2026 report found that while technology is available to detect live child sexual abuse, tech companies are still only selectively using it on public portions of their platforms, to the clear detriment of children globally.¹⁸

In fact, the surveyed tech companies admitted that they only use technology to detect livestreamed child sexual abuse on publicly broadcast services, such as YouTube, Facebook Live, and Instagram Live; thus, in practice, allowing children to be sexually abused in private live video apps and platforms with zero protection while offenders watch online undetected, undisrupted, and unreported. In short, offenders are operating with near impunity, enabled by a tech industry that looks the other way.

Livestreamed child sexual abuse has been allowed to proliferate online, with experts repeatedly warning of the scale and growing nature of this form of child exploitation and child sexual abuse material:

17 "Providers are neither taking action to detect [child sexual exploitation and abuse] CSEA in livestreams (insofar as any of these could be regarded as livestreaming services) or taking action to detect CSEA in video calls or conferences". eSafety Commissioner. (December 2022). *Basic Online Safety Expectations: Summary of industry responses to the First mandatory transparency notices* (pg.15). Available from: <https://www.esafety.gov.au/sites/default/files/2022-12/BOSE%20transparency%20report%20Dec%202022.pdf>.

18 eSafety Commissioner. (August 2025). A baseline for online safety transparency: The first regular report on child sexual exploitation and abuse, and sexual extortion. Basic Online Safety Expectations periodic reporting series. Available from: <https://www.esafety.gov.au/sites/default/files/2025-08/BOSE-full-report-CSEA-sexual-extortion-periodic-notices-August2025.pdf?v=1760035534156>; See also eSafety Commissioner. (February 2026). *Periodic reporting series on child sexual exploitation and abuse, grooming and sexual extortion, Report 2: 1 January 2025 – 30 June 2025*. Basic Online Safety Expectations. Available from: <https://www.esafety.gov.au/industry/basic-on-line-safety-expectations/child-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse-material-and-activity#interactive-transparency-summary-and-snapshots>

WeProtect Global Alliance: "... the scale and nature of livestreamed sexual abuse of children – occurring across mainstream social media as well as dedicated livestreaming platforms – remains important and under-documented. Surveys of offenders looking for CSAM on the dark web suggest that over one-third consume livestreamed material, with prevalence varying across regions."¹⁹

Europol: "Live-streamed child sexual abuse is a growing industry, involving child traffickers in the Philippines and elsewhere who curate a vetted customer base of buyers who pay to watch the live-streamed abuse of children. Criminal buyers direct child traffickers to perform acts of sexual abuse on minor children in real-time during private webcam interactions."²⁰

INTERPOL: "This appalling case shows that live streaming child sexual exploitation is not confined to any region, it is global, and as in this case, usually involving very young children."²¹

But this can change. Livestreamed child sexual abuse is preventable. Children in the UK and around the world do not need to remain defenceless while offenders exploit live video technologies. Governments, law enforcement, tech and financial sector companies, and civil society can work together to stop it by making detection and disruption of live abuse a top priority. The UK could take a lead globally with an innovative and preventative response to online child sexual abuse, utilising smarter AI to make devices and platforms resilient to offenders.



19 WeProtect Global Alliance. (2025). *Global Threat Assessment 2025 – Preventing technology-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse: From insights to action*, p. 28. Available from: https://www.weprotect.org/wp-content/uploads/GTA-2025_EN.pdf

20 Europol. (2025). *Operational sprint generates 197 new leads on buyers of 'live distant child abuse'*. Available from: <https://www.europol.europa.eu/media-press/newsroom/news/operational-sprint-generates-197-new-leads-buyers-of-live-distant-child-abuse>

21 Interpol Secretary General Jürgen Stock. (27 February 2023). *Colombia: Two arrested for live streaming child sexual abuse*. Available from: <https://www.interpol.int/en/News-and-Events/News/2023/Colombia-Two-arrested-for-live-streaming-child-sexual-abuse>

KEY FINDINGS

- 1. In a sample of 1,506 UK men matched to 2021 census data, 1.4% (n=21) indicated that they had engaged in sexually explicit webcam interactions with children, and another 5.2% (n=78) said they would if offered. In other words, **1 in 15 of respondents have or would livestream child sexual abuse.**
- 2. Compared to respondents who do not livestream child sexual abuse, those who livestream indicated a **higher likelihood that they would have sexual contact with a child under 14 years old if they were not caught.** This is alarming, as **63% of livestreamers indicated that they had a child at home, and 46% worked in fields involving contact with children.**
- 3. The majority of respondents who livestreamed child sexual abuse **(70%) reported engaging in online enticement of children (e.g., grooming) and were around 20 times as likely to have purchased child sexual abuse images and videos as non-livestreamers.**
- 4. Respondents who livestream child sexual abuse **were nine times as likely as non-livestreamers to report concerns or worries about their sexual feelings toward children and around seven times as likely to have had sexual contact with a child.**
- 5. Pornography consumption was also higher among respondents who livestreamed child sexual abuse. Respondents who livestream child sexual abuse were around **four times more likely than non-livestreamers to watch adult pornography daily, 11 times more likely to intentionally view bestiality, almost three times as likely to intentionally watch rough or violent pornography, six times more likely to purchase sexually explicit livestream services, and around 14 times more likely to purchase private nudes or videos.**
- 6. Respondents who livestreamed child sexual abuse appeared to **adopt a broader suite of privacy and encryption tools more often** than non-livestreamers, consistent with efforts to obscure or conceal online activity. They used cryptocurrency (53% vs. 19%), Virtual Private Networks (VPNs) (55% vs. 21%), and encrypted messaging apps such as Telegram (49% vs. 10%), WhatsApp (45% vs. 37%), and Signal (24% vs. 4%).
- 7. A higher proportion of respondents who indicated they had livestreamed child sexual abuse are in **higher income brackets, live in a city, are employed, are married or living with a partner, and have a bachelor's degree or higher.**
- 8. **Social networks seem to influence offending behaviour,** with respondents who livestream child sexual abuse indicating they have friends who view online child sexual abuse images and videos, engage in online enticement of children (e.g., grooming), and livestream child sexual abuse.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. **Technology Sector:** Legislate to require device manufacturers and operating systems to incorporate safeguards that detect and disrupt livestreamed child sexual abuse in real-time at the device level, extending protections beyond platforms to prevent abuse before it starts.
- 2. **Financial Sector:** Establish a comprehensive framework enabling real-time blocking of payments for child sexual exploitation, including dedicated reporting channels, improved feedback loops, and appointed Child Safeguarding Agents within financial institutions to oversee implementation.
- 3. **Law Enforcement:** Strengthen operational capacity through specialised training for livestream offence detection, enhanced international coordination with agencies like the Internet Watch Foundation and the U.S.-based National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC).
- 4. **Primary Prevention and Public Health:** Implement early intervention programmes targeting individuals with excessive pornography consumption patterns that may lead to child sexual abuse offending, expanding accessible confidential services and prevention campaigns that address peer network influences and escalation pathways.





Research Summary and Findings

Child sexual exploitation and abuse (“CSEA”) livestreaming is “*the transmission or receipt of acts of sexual exploitation or abuse of children live via webcam or video to people anywhere in the world, whether or not in exchange for payment. CSEA livestreaming includes one-on-one video calls and video calls where one or multiple people stream CSEA material to a group of any size.*”²² Europol describes CSEA livestreaming as:

*[...] a persistent threat, where offenders watch child sexual abuse on demand with the support of one or more facilitators who perpetrate the abuse on the victim(s) in exchange for payment. It stands out as the main form of commercial sexual exploitation of children and as a major source of unknown [child sexual abuse material] CSAM using capping, which entails covertly recording the victim (i.e., in a video call/live-streaming session).*²³

For clarity, this report treats “*webcam interactions*” and “*livestream*” as interchangeable terms, as both refer to real-time video communications through camera-enabled smart devices. When interpreting the data, it is important to note that the location of the children with whom survey respondents livestreamed sexually is unknown, meaning

they could be children in the UK or overseas. Also, when respondents reported engaging in sexual webcam activity with a child, their responses may involve different *modus operandi*. Men could have conspired with and paid a trafficker to livestream child sexual abuse, engaged directly with a child through coercion (e.g., grooming), or livestreamed their direct sexual contact with a child. Regardless of the circumstances, common live online video services and apps are allowing offenders to produce, disseminate, and consume live sexual abuse of a child, absent of any effective tech sector intervention to detect, disrupt, or report this form of child exploitation.

This report provides select findings related to men who reported engaging in sexually explicit webcam interactions with children. Data was drawn from three samples of men aged 18 years or over in Australia (n = 1,939), the UK (n = 1,506), and the U.S. (n = 1,473). Surveys were administered through CloudResearch, an online recruitment platform used by over 1,200 universities with access to over 100 million participants globally.²⁴ Census-matched quotas and post-stratification weights were used to obtain a cross-sectional sample of adult men in the UK representative of the 2021 census according to age, annual household income, residential location, educational attainment, marital status, and workforce participation. The survey included almost 150 items spanning eight broad domains: (i) demographic characteristics, (ii) online technology use, (iii) physical and mental health, (iv) social adversity, (v) attitudes towards technology facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse (CSEA), (vi) pornography use, (vii) sexual feelings and interests towards children, and (viii) personal engagement in child sexual exploitation and abuse.

Surveys were administered between November and December 2022 and included rigorous quality controls encompassing attention checks and honesty assessments used throughout the survey, in addition to a pre-survey screener that pre-emptively filtered out inattentive and dishonest participants, as well as bots and AI. Participants were assured of their anonymity, where each respondent was assigned a unique random ID, and no personally identifiable information was recorded. However, the findings of this survey must be interpreted within the context of its limitations. Specifically, the use of online survey platforms may introduce selection bias into the sample, as individuals who choose to participate in online surveys may not fully represent the broader male population, particularly those with limited internet access or distrust in online research platforms.²⁵ Nonetheless, the study reveals alarming behavioural patterns among survey respondents who livestream child sexual exploitation and abuse that are consistent with prior studies and demand urgent action.

This report will focus exclusively on select findings from the UK sample. Of the 1,506 UK men who participated in this study, 1.4% (n = 21) indicated that they had *webcammed in a sexual way with a child*. Presented below are bar charts of the proportion of men who do (orange) and do not (blue) livestream CSEA by demographic characteristics, use of privacy tools, pornography consumption, and engagement in CSEA. Because studies rely on samples and not the entire population, results always have a degree of uncertainty. This is measured using the 99% Confidence Interval (CI), which provides a range of proportions within which there is a 99% degree of confidence that the true proportion lies somewhere in between. At the end of this brief is a supplementary description of men who have an interest in but have not engaged in livestreaming CSEA, as well as the data underpinning the following bar charts presented in tables 1–4 (see pages 33–35).

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Compared with respondents who do not livestream CSEA, respondents who livestream CSEA more often live in a city, are more often university-educated and employed, and are more likely to have children at home and to work with children; partnership status and heterosexual identity are similar overall (see Table 1 for data, pg 33).

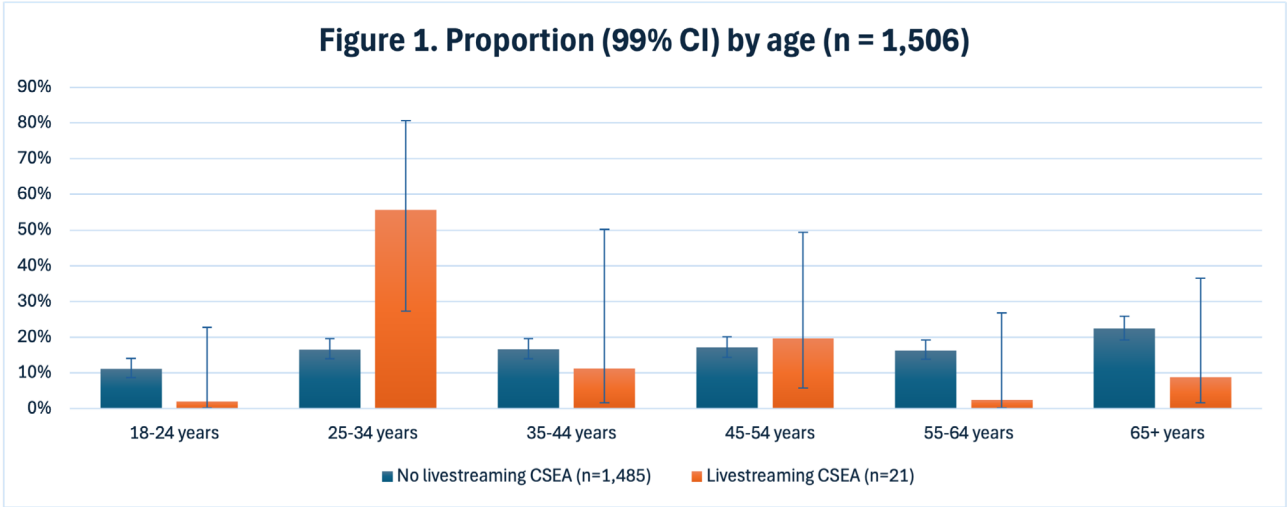
22 eSafety Commissioner. (August 2025). *Baseline for online safety transparency: Snapshot of the first regular report on child sexual exploitation and abuse, and sexual extortion*. Basic Online Safety Expectations periodic reporting series. Available from: <https://www.esafety.gov.au/sites/default/files/2025-08/BOSE-Snapshot-first-regular-report-on-CSEA-sexual-extortion-periodic-notice-August2025.pdf?v=1754435223208>; See also Tech Coalition. (14 October 2024). *Develop Good Practices: Combating Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse*, which states: “Live-streamed child abuse, also known as online streaming, allows abusers to create child sexual abuse content in real-time. Livestreaming of child sexual abuse may include adult offenders who direct the child abuse whilst the acts are streamed live to an audience, or coerce children into using livestreaming platforms to produce child sexual abuse material.” Available from: <https://technologycoalition.org/re-sources/developer-good-practices-combating-online-child-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/>

23 Europol. (2024). *Internet Organized Crime Threat Assessment (IOCTA) 2024*. Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, at page 24. Available from: <https://www.europol.europa.eu/cms/sites/default/files/documents/Internet%20Organised%20Crime%20Threat%20Assessment%20IOCTA%202024.pdf>. Note that “***” indicates “unknown CSAM, also called first-generation CSAM,” and “refers to CSAM that authorities are encountering for the first time.”

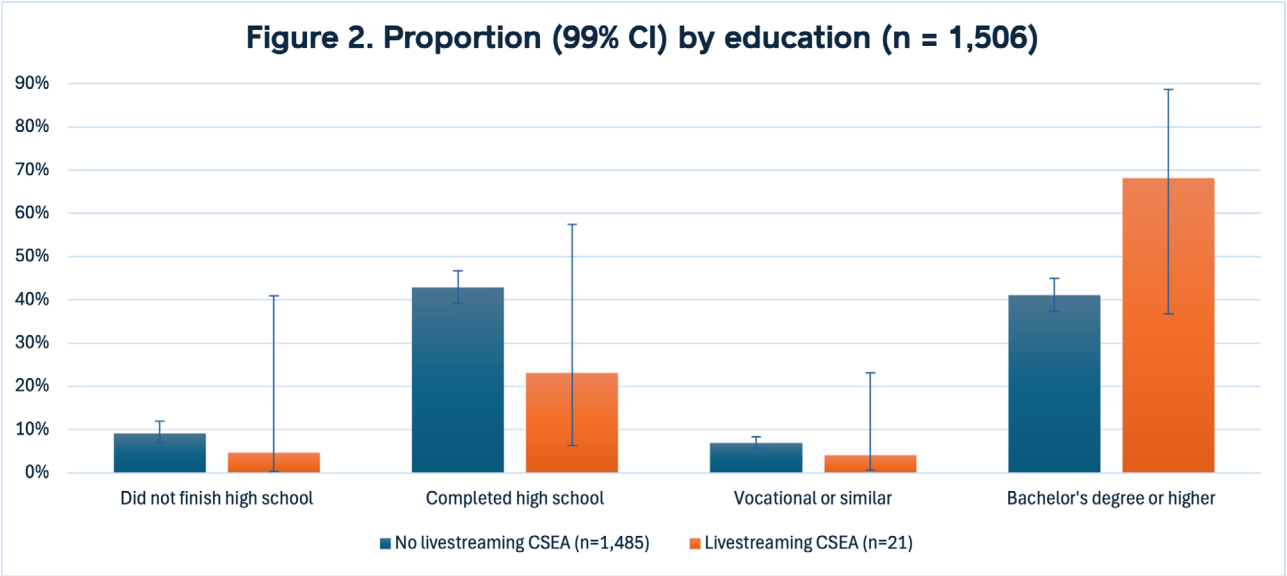
24 For more information about CloudResearch, please refer to <https://www.cloudresearch.com/> and <https://www.cloudresearch.com/products/prime-panels/>

25 For more information about the research methodology, please refer to the report *Identifying and understanding child sexual offending behaviours and attitudes among Australian men* (pgs. 8–9). Available from: <https://www.humanrights.unsw.edu.au/sites/default/files/documents/Identifying%20and%20understanding%20child%20sexual%20offending%20behaviour%20and%20attitudes%20among%20Australian%20men.pdf>. Although the report focuses on Australian men, the same methodology was used for the study focused on men in the U.S. and UK.

- Age.** Respondents who livestream CSEA strongly skew to ages 25-34 years (56% vs. 17%). They were less common at all other age bands except at age 45-54 years, which were broadly similar for both groups of men (20% vs. 17%) (Figure 1). Note that caution is needed when interpreting these age patterns, as the relatively small number of livestreamers spread over six independent age categories heightens the risk that subtle changes in raw counts can lead to large changes in proportions.

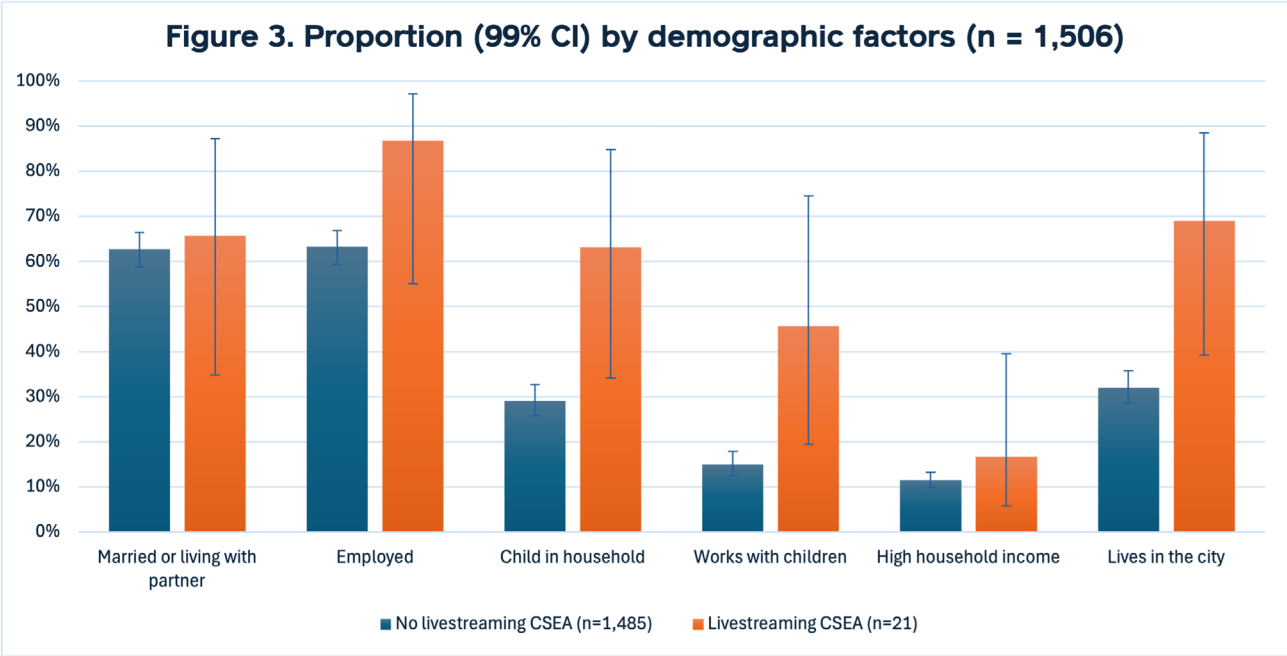


- Education.** Most men who livestream CSEA had a bachelor's degree or higher (68%) compared to less than half of non-livestreamers (41%) (Figure 2).



- Income and employment.** Distributions of annual household income were slightly higher for men who livestream compared to those who do not livestream CSEA. A greater proportion of men who livestream reported employment, whether casual, part-time, or full-time, in the past three months (87% vs. 63%). These men were also three times as likely to work in fields involving contact with children (46% vs. 15%) (Figure 3).

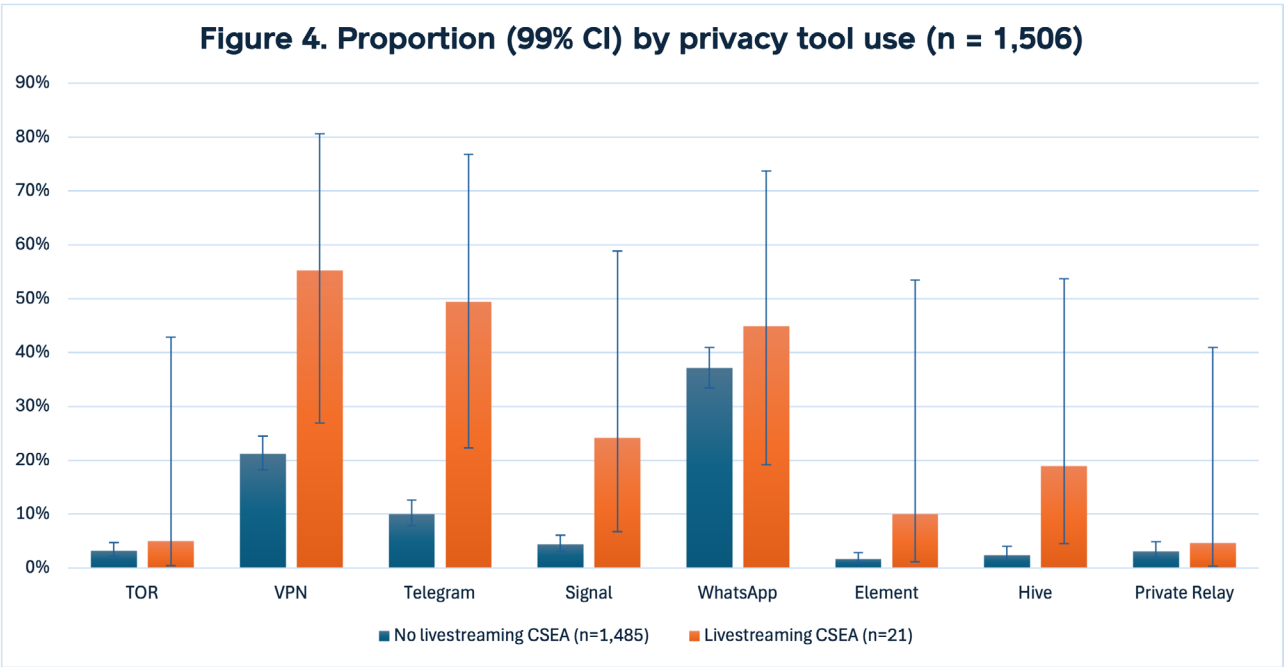
- Location and family.** Around two-thirds of men who livestream CSEA (69% and 63%), compared to one-third of non-livestreamers (32% and 29%), lived in a city or had a child in the household. A similar proportion in both groups was married or living with a partner (Figure 3).



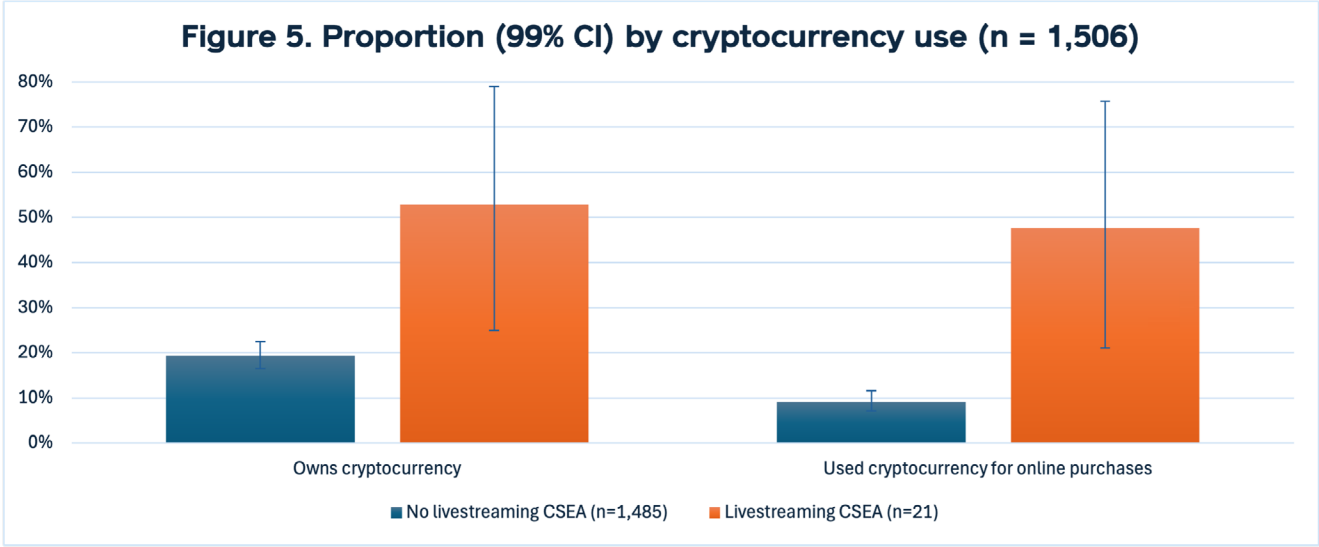
PRIVACY TOOLS

Men who livestream child sexual exploitation and abuse report broader and heavier use of privacy/encryption tools and cryptocurrency than non-livestreamers, with the sharpest differences for Virtual Private Networks (VPNs), Telegram, Signal, and crypto ownership and spending. (see Table 2 for data, pg 34).

- Anonymity networks and encryption.** The proportion of men who used VPNs were more than double for livestreamers than non-livestreamers (55% vs. 21%), while the proportion who used TOR browser (“The Onion Router”) (5% vs. 3%) or Apple’s Private Relay (5% vs. 3%) was relatively low for both groups (Figure 4).



- **Messaging apps.** Men who livestream CSEA were around five times as likely to use Telegram (49% vs. 10%) and six times as likely to use Signal (24% vs. 4%). These men were also more likely to use other privacy platforms, Element (10% vs. 2%) and Hive (19% vs. 2%), although the overall usage rate was low. WhatsApp use was common in both groups, only modestly higher among livestreamers (45% vs. 37%) (Figure 4).
- **Cryptocurrency.** Livestreamers were markedly more likely to own cryptocurrency (53% vs. 19%) and to use it for online purchases (48% vs. 9%), pointing to potential attempts to obscure or conceal payments (Figure 5).

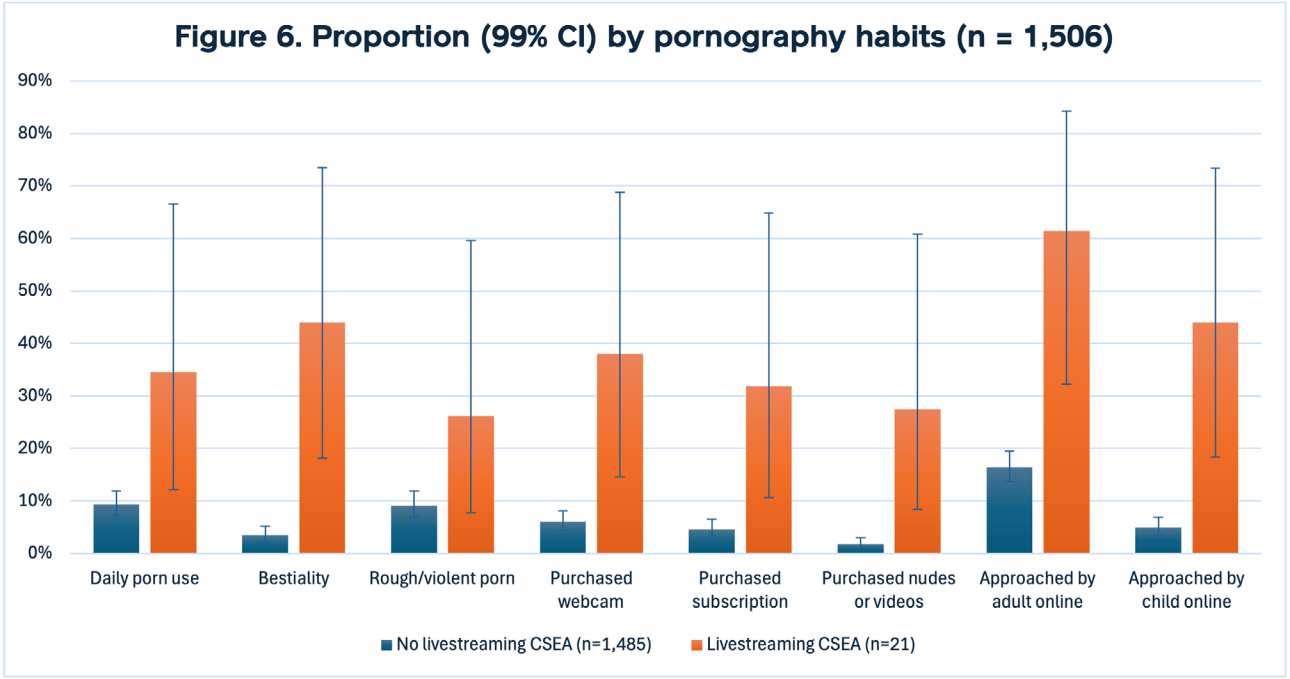


PORNOGRAPHY CONSUMPTION

Men who livestream CSEA report substantially more frequent pornography use, consumption of extreme content, engagement in paid sexual content, and rates of online approaches (see Table 3 for data, pg 34).

- **Frequency of use.** Around one in three men who livestream CSEA (35%) consume pornography daily, compared to around one-in-10 (9%) non-livestreamers (Figure 6).
- **Extreme content.** Among men who livestream CSEA, almost half intentionally watch bestiality²⁶ (44%) and one-quarter intentionally watch rough or violent pornography (26%), compared to 4% and 9% of non-livestreamers, respectively (Figure 6).
- **Commercial transactions.** Compared to men who do not livestream CSEA, men who livestream CSEA were around six times as likely to purchase sexually explicit adult content online, including webcams or livestreams (38% vs. 6%), subscription services (32% vs. 5%), and almost 14 times as likely to purchase private nudes or videos from people online (27% vs. 2%) (Figure 6).
- **Online approaches.** Most livestreamers had been approached online by adults (61%), and almost half by children (44%), selling sexual content and services, compared to 16% and 5% of non-livestreamers, respectively (Figure 6).

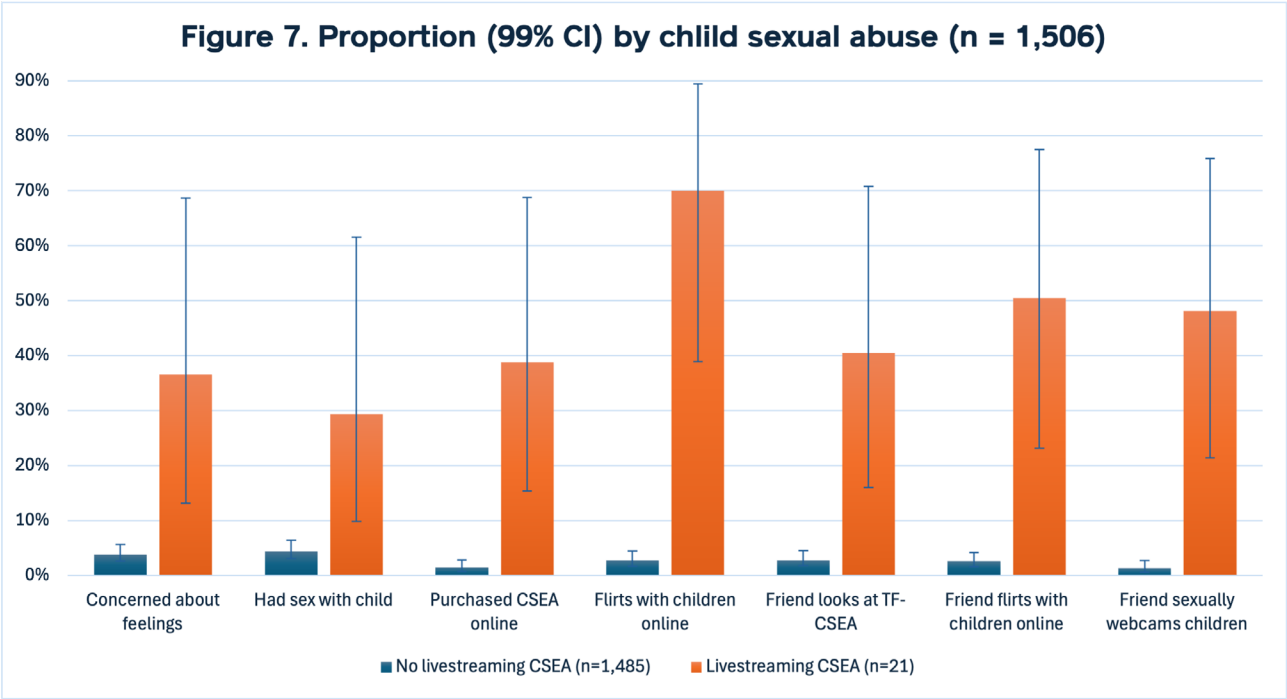
²⁶ Participants were asked, "Have you ever knowingly and deliberately viewed pornography that included sex between human and animals?"



ENGAGEMENT IN CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE

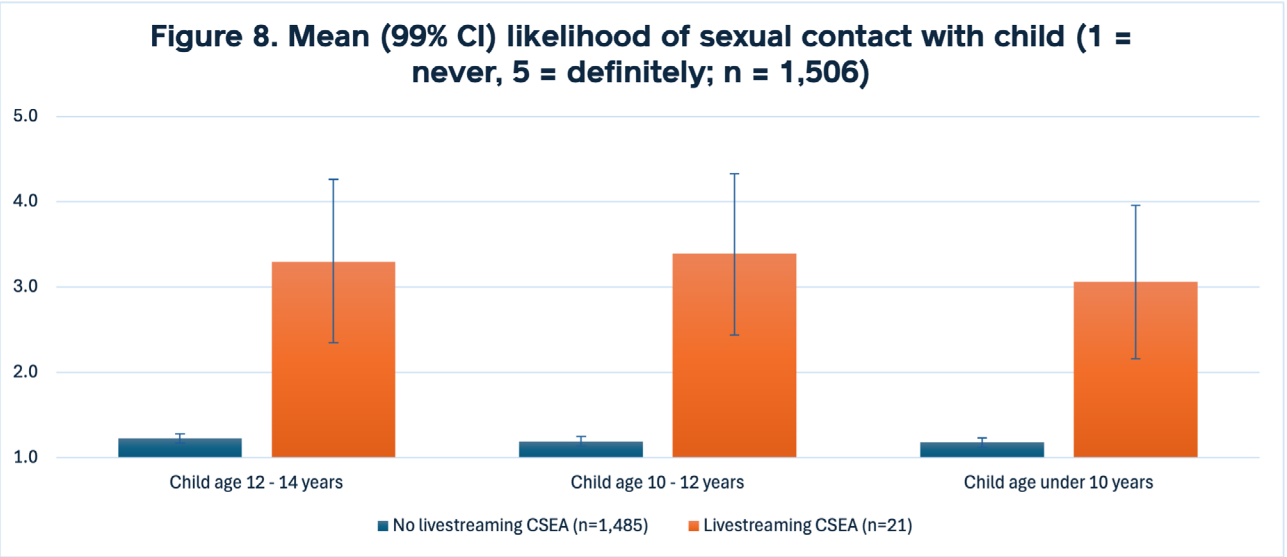
Compared with non-livestreamers, men who livestream CSEA reported exceptionally high rates of offending behaviours and feelings, peer exposure, and stated likelihood of sexual contact with minors (see Table 4 for data, pg 35).

- Personal concern and conduct.** Men who livestream CSEA were around nine times as likely to report concerns or worries about their sexual feelings toward children (37% vs. 4%), and around seven times as likely to have had sexual contact with someone under 18 (29% vs. 4%) (Figure 7).
- Online offending behaviours.** Livestreamers were around 20 times as likely to have purchased child sexual exploitation and abuse material online (39% vs. 2%) and flirt with children online (70% vs. 3%) (Figure 7).
- Peer environment.** Around half of men who livestream CSEA, compared to a very small minority of non-livestreamers, have friends who view technology-facilitated CSEA (41% vs. 3%), flirt with children online (51% vs. 3%), or sexually webcam children (48% vs. 1%), indicating that livestreamers have greater exposure to offending behaviours within their social networks (Figure 7).



- Perceived likelihood of sexual contact with minors.** Participants indicated the likelihood that they would have sexual contact with a child of a certain age range if they would not get caught. Responses were coded on a Likert scale, ranging from 1 = never to 5 = definitely. Average ratings were consistently higher among livestreamers across all age bands: ages 12-14 (3.3 vs. 1.2), 10-12 (3.4 vs. 1.2), and under 10 (3.1 vs. 1.2) (Figure 8). The proportion of livestreamers and non-livestreamers who indicated very likely or definitely was 55% vs. 5% for ages 12-14, 56% vs. 3% at ages 10-12, and 45% vs. 3% at under age 10.

Respondents who livestream CSEA indicated a higher likelihood that they would have sexual contact with a child under 14 if they would not get caught.



SUPPLEMENT: 5.2 % OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS WERE INTERESTED IN LIVESTREAMING CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE

Of the 1,506 UK men who participated in this study, 5.2% (n = 78) indicated that although they had *not* yet livestreamed CSEA, they would engage in a sexually explicit webcam interaction with a child if they were offered. Most of these men were in the 18-24 years (35%) or 25-34 years (28%) age brackets. Men with interest only, compared to the no-livestreaming/no-interest and livestreaming groups, were less likely to report a high household income (9% vs. 12% vs. 17%) and be married or living with a partner (55% vs. 63% vs. 66%). However, a greater proportion of men with interest only than the no-livestreaming/no-interest group, but a lower proportion than the livestreaming group, had a bachelor's degree or higher (53% vs. 41% vs. 68%); were employed (75% vs. 63% vs. 87%); lived with children (53% vs. 29% vs. 63%); and worked with children (29% vs. 15% vs. 46%).

A similar pattern emerged for privacy tool use (e.g., Telegram (23% vs. 10% vs. 49%); Signal (15% vs. 4% vs. 24%); Element (6% vs. 2% vs. 10%); Hive (9% vs. 2% vs. 19%)); owning cryptocurrency (31% vs. 19% vs. 53%); and using cryptocurrency (21% vs. 9% vs. 48%); pornography consumption (e.g., watched bestiality (10% vs. 4% vs. 44%); rough or violent porn (23% vs. 9% vs. 26%); webcams or livestreams (19% vs. 6% vs. 38%); purchased pornography subscriptions (16% vs. 5% vs. 32%)); approached by a child online (39% vs. 5% vs. 44%); and engagement in CSEA (e.g., concerned about sexual feelings towards children (20% vs. 4% vs. 37%); sexual contact with someone under 18 (25% vs. 4% vs. 29%); purchased CSAM online (13% vs. 2% vs. 39%); and having a friend who looks at technology facilitated CSEA (13% vs. 3% vs. 41%)).



Insights and Analysis

BY INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE MISSION

A. THE AVAILABILITY AND CONSUMPTION OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE IMAGES AND VIDEOS HAS BECOME WIDESPREAD

Individuals who watch, consume, and direct live videos of children being sexually abused or assaulted most likely did not begin their offending journey there. Research shows that many offenders first encounter child sexual abuse images and videos inadvertently or become curious after habitually consuming and becoming desensitised to adult pornography on pornography websites.²⁷ According to Lucy Faithfull Foundation, an organisation that works with people who pose a risk to children, people arrested for online sexual offences against children describe their use of adult pornography as a significant factor in their pathway to viewing child sexual abuse images and videos.²⁸ In fact, the 2025 U.S. Federal Trade Commission (FTC) action against Pornhub and other pornographic sites reveals that CSAM was easily accessible on such platforms, thus facilitating offender progression.²⁹ Furthermore, a recent

27 Wortley et al. (August 2024). *Accessing child sexual abuse material: Pathways to offending and online behaviour*. Child Abuse & Neglect Volume 154. Available from: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0145213424003260>; See also Bailey, A. and Moran, F. (May 2024). *What's porn got to do with it? The link between viewing adult pornography and online sexual offending against children*. Lucy Faithfull Foundation. Available from: https://www.lucyfaithfull.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/2024_05_Faithfull_Paper_Viewing_Pornography_Link_-_Final_Spreads.pdf; See also Protect Children. (20 February 2024). *New Research Reveals How Offenders Use Technology Platforms for Online Child Sexual Abuse*. Available from: <https://www.suojellaanlapsia.fi/en/post/press-release-200224>

28 Bailey, A. and Moran, F. (May 2024). *What's porn got to do with it? The link between viewing adult pornography and online sexual offending against children*. Lucy Faithfull Foundation. Available from: https://www.lucyfaithfull.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/2024_05_Faithfull_Paper_Viewing_Pornography_Link_-_Final_Spreads.pdf

29 Federal Trade Commission. (September 3, 2025). *FTC Takes Action Against Operators of Pornhub and other Pornographic Sites for Deceiving Users About Efforts to Crack Down on Child Sexual Abuse Material and Nonconsensual Sexual Content*. Available from: <https://www.ftc.gov/news-events/news/press-releases/2025/09/ftc-takes-action-against-operators-pornhub-other-pornographic-sites-deceiving-users-about-efforts>

study found that 59% of people who search for or view child sexual abuse images and videos were first exposed to CSAM by age 18 and 13% by age 10, revealing a troubling truth that child sexual abuse images and videos are easily accessible for young people and early exposure not only harms them as viewers of abusive content but also can escalate to offending behaviours.³⁰

What often begins with exposure to child sexual abuse images and videos can escalate to livestreaming offences over time, with evidence from various research showing that most livestreaming offenders actively seek and possess multiple forms of child sexual abuse images and videos.³¹ Non-profit organisation Protect Children found in their research “a worrying increase in the prevalence of livestreamed CSAM,” with almost half of the respondents to the *Help us to help you* survey indicating that they watch livestreamed CSAM.³² This emergent pattern of escalating behaviour, corroborated by Childlight’s data, **indicates that access to and consumption of child sexual abuse images and videos has become both widespread and normalised, and, for at least some men, dangerously escalates to directing live sexual abuse of children online and potential contact offending.**

The data backs up the assessment that access to CSAM is increasingly prevalent. Of the 20.5 million reports submitted to the NCMEC’s CyberTipline in 2024, 19.9 million (97%) were categorised as CSAM.³³ The average number of NCMEC reports from 2021 to 2024 was 29.5 million, and CSAM has consistently accounted for more than 95% of those reports.³⁴ Furthermore, in 2024, “[electronic service providers] ESPs submitted 28 million [CSAM] images to the CyberTipline of which 12.4 million (44%) were unique. Of the 33.1 million [CSAM] videos reported by ESPs, 8.1 million (25%) were unique.”³⁵ The Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) has stated that 2025 was the worst year on record for online CSAM, with IWF taking action on 312,030 reports where analysts confirmed the presence of images or videos of children suffering sexual abuse.³⁶

Offenders often misuse encrypted messaging apps (e.g., Telegram, WhatsApp, and Signal) to conceal their abuse due to the user privacy and security offered by end-to-end encryption.³⁷ This places vast quantities of child sexual abuse images and videos, including livestreams, beyond the reach of current tech sector proactive detection measures

30 20,592 adults who actively search for CSAM on the dark web participated in a global, anonymous self-reporting survey. Protect Children. (2026). *CSAM Perpetrator Research Report: Findings from a Survey of CSAM Perpetrators on Digital Platform Use and Design*. Ofcom. Available from: <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/siteassets/resources/documents/online-safety/research-statistics-and-data/protecting-children/csam-perpetrator-research-report.pdf?v=413698>

31 Teunissen, C. and Napier, S. (2023). *The overlap between child sexual abuse live streaming, contact abuse and other forms of child exploitation*. Australian Institute of Criminology Trends & Issues in crime and criminal justice No. 671. Available from: https://www.aic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-05/ti671_overlap_between_csa_live_streaming_contact_abuse_and_other_child_exploitation.pdf; See also Drejer et al. (November 2025). *Live-streamed child sexual abuse: Analysis on Norwegian criminal cases*. Child Abuse & Neglect Volume 169, Part 2. Available from: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0145213425004156>

32 There were 5,171 respondents to the *Help us to help you* survey, which asks the respondents questions about their habits, thoughts, emotions, and behaviors related to their use of CSAM. See Protect Children. (26 September 2021). *CSAM Users in the Dark Web: Protecting Children Through Prevention*. Available at: [CSAM Users in the Dark Web: Protecting Children Through Prevention](#)

33 NCMEC. (2024). *CyberTipline Report 2024. National Center for Missing & Exploited Children*. Available from: <https://www.missingkids.org/gethelpnow/cybertipline/cybertiplinedata>; Although the CyberTipline Report uses the term “child pornography (possession, manufacture, and distribution)”, IJM is using child sexual abuse material (CSAM) to reflect the true nature of this crime.

34 The number of CyberTipline Reports increased from 2021-2023 (29.3 million, 32 million, and 36.2 million, respectively) before declining in 2024 (20.5 million). According to NCMEC, while U.S. companies are required to report CSAM, the recent decline in reports can be attributed to two main factors: reduced reporting from certain platforms and the increasing implementation of end-to-end encryption (E2EE), which makes detecting abuse more difficult. Available from: <https://www.missingkids.org/gethelpnow/cybertipline/cybertiplinedata>

35 NCMEC. (2024). *CyberTipline Report 2024. National Center for Missing & Exploited Children*. Available from: <https://www.missingkids.org/gethelpnow/cybertipline/cybertiplinedata>

36 IWF. (16 January 2026). *AI becoming ‘child sexual abuse machine’ adding to ‘dangerous’ record levels of online abuse, IWF warns*. Internet Watch Foundation. Available from: <https://www.iwf.org.uk/news-media/news/ai-becoming-child-sexual-abuse-machine-adding-to-dangerous-record-levels-of-online-abuse-iwf-warns/>

37 Protect Children. (20 February 2024). *New Research Reveals How Offenders Use Technology Platforms for Online Child Sexual Abuse*. Available from: <https://www.suojellaanlapsia.fi/en/post/press-release-200224>

and tools. This is due to the lack of child protective policies, not technical limitations. The significant CyberTipline numbers, therefore, do not provide an indication of the total amount of child sexual abuse images and videos shared or uploaded online, since providers of encrypted services remain unaware of CSAM on their platforms unless users report it, because of tech policy decisions not to detect CSAM within encrypted platforms.³⁸

Nevertheless, this alarming volume of CSAM is aided by emerging technology. Artificial intelligence (AI), for instance, has dramatically accelerated the creation, access, and distribution of photo-realistic images and videos of child sexual abuse, with the CyberTipline seeing a 1,325% increase in reports involving AI-generated CSAM, going from 4,700 in 2023 to 67,000 reports in 2024.³⁹ In 2025, IWF saw a frightening 26,362% rise in photo-realistic AI videos of child sexual abuse (from 13 to 3,440 AI videos), many depicting real and recognisable child victims.⁴⁰ Of such videos, 65% were so extreme that they were categorised as Category A, which includes images involving penetration, bestiality, and sexual torture.⁴¹

Moreover, the most widely used means of detecting child sexual abuse images and videos is hash matching, which can only detect known images and videos. This means that the vast majority of NCMEC reports represent users uploading and sharing known child sexual abuse images and videos on surface-web applications and services based in the U.S. It is clear that the proliferation of child sexual abuse images and videos on platforms used globally, including in the UK, is a common occurrence. This is alarming as the Childlight data and other research reveal that access to, and consumption of, child sexual abuse images and videos increases the risk of offenders escalating to livestreaming and contact offending.⁴²

Government and industry must act urgently to disrupt and prevent offenders attempting to create and distribute videos and photos of child sexual abuse, including sexual abuse watched live. Practically, this means moving beyond the reactive detection and reporting of child sexual abuse images and videos, and in addition, deploying proactive technology on every platform, app, and device to prevent this illegal and harmful material from being produced or distributed in the first place.

38 Levy, Dr. Ian and Robinson, Crispin. (21 July 2022). *Thoughts on Child Safety on Commodity Platforms*. Available from: <https://arxiv.org/pdf/2207.09506>; In Conversation With. (29 July 2022). *Episode 1 Encryption vs. Privacy: In Conversation with Professor Farid and IWF Head of Policy & Public Affairs Mike Tunks*. Internet Watch Foundation. Available from: <https://www.iwf.org.uk/about-us/why-we-exist/our-podcast/in-conversation-with-podcast/>

39 NCMEC. (2024). *CyberTipline Report 2024*. National Center for Missing & Exploited Children. Available from: <https://www.missingkids.org/gethelpnow/cybertipline/cybertiplinedata>

40 IWF. (16 January 2026). *AI becoming 'child sexual abuse machine' adding to 'dangerous' record levels of online abuse, IWF warns*. Internet Watch Foundation. Available from: <https://www.iwf.org.uk/news-media/news/ai-becoming-child-sexual-abuse-machine-adding-to-dangerous-record-levels-of-online-abuse-iwf-warns/>

41 Ibid.

42 Teunissen, C. and Napier, S. (2023). *The overlap between child sexual abuse live streaming, contact abuse and other forms of child exploitation*. Australian Institute of Criminology Trends & Issues in crime and criminal justice No. 671. Available from: https://www.aic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-05/ti671_overlap_between_csa_live_streaming_contact_abuse_and_other_child_exploitation.pdf; See also Drejer et al. (November 2025). *Live-streamed child sexual abuse: Analysis on Norwegian criminal cases*. Child Abuse & Neglect Volume 169, Part 2. Available from: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0145213425004156>; See also Nearly half of respondents to a survey in the Stanford Internet Observatory's Journal of Online Trust and Safety said they had sought direct contact with children through online platforms after viewing CSAM, and 58% reported feeling afraid that viewing CSAM might lead to them committing abuse in person. Grant, H. (1 March 2022). *Viewers of online abuse at high risk of contacting children directly, study finds*. The Guardian. Available from: <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/mar/01/online-sexual-abuse-viewers-contacting-children-directly-study>; See also A 2015 U.S. DOJ study found that 85% of "offenders disclosed hands-on sexual abuse," concluding that the findings "suggest that crossover to hands-on offending may be more prevalent among internet offenders." Simons, D. (July 2015). *Chapter 3: Sex Offender Typologies*. Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering, and Tracking. Available from: <https://smart.ojp.gov/somapi/chapter-3-sex-offender-typologies>; See also The U.K.'s National Crime Agency (NCA) report a similar crossover: "The NCA is seeing a direct link between online offending and contact abuse. In the UK, we estimate that there are between 550,000 and 850,000 UK-based individuals posing various degrees of sexual risk to children – a figure which has grown in line with increased online activity." Grant, H. (27 September 2021). *Online child abuse survey finds third of viewers attempt contact with children*. The Guardian. Available from: <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/sep/27/online-child-abuse-survey-finds-third-of-viewers-attempt-contact-with-children>

This is entirely possible according to child protection and online safety experts:

*[T]here are zero excuses for allowing known child sexual abuse to be uploaded to a platform – the tools to prevent this from happening exist and have for years, explains Lianna McDonald, the Canadian Centre for Child Protection's Executive Director.*⁴³

Ian Stevenson, Chair of the Online Safety Tech Industry Association, similarly explains:

*Technologies to detect child sexual abuse material have advanced rapidly, and many platforms remain largely or completely unprotected which enables their use by abusers. This is often positioned as a choice between privacy and safety, but the latest technologies block abusive content without compromising on user privacy. We believe platforms can, and should, be doing more.*⁴⁴

B. ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND MACHINE LEARNING PRESENT SIGNIFICANT OPPORTUNITIES TO COMBAT LIVESTREAMING

A chasm separates what tech companies are doing to stop livestreamed child abuse from what they could be doing. It does not have to be that way. No one knows that better than Julie Inman-Grant, Australia's eSafety Commissioner; she has worked for major tech companies, including Microsoft and Twitter, before entering government service nearly a decade ago. Speaking about the Australian Government's ongoing engagement with the technology sector regarding livestreamed abuse, Julie said in a February 2025 interview with ABC Radio National:

*[... Big Tech companies] all have technologies that they can use to identify whether child sexual abuse is happening in real time. Most companies have said they're doing nothing because it's too expensive. These are trillion-dollar companies that have a responsibility to make sure that their platforms are not being misused for the most grievous kinds of harms. This has been happening for literally decades. Wilful blindness I would call it.*⁴⁵

Most recently, the eSafety Commissioner's February 2026 transparency findings report confirmed that although technology is available to detect live child sexual abuse, companies are only using it selectively, with Inman-Grant stating that tech "companies are no strangers to innovation and have the technological capability to develop new technologies to detect this harm in the fight to end live online abuse of children."⁴⁶ Tech company inaction represents a failure of industry will, and government regulation, not of technical capability.

43 Canadian Centre for Child Protection. (4 September 2024). *New report shares survivor experiences with tech companies' failures to address online child sexual abuse material*. Available from: <https://protectchildren.ca/en/press-and-media/news-releases/2024/new-report-csam-removal-survivor-experiences#:~:text=The%20study%20also%20concluded%20that,Twitter%2C%20threatening%20to%20dox%20me>

44 Tanagho, J. (22 February 2025). *Protect children from livestreamed sexual abuse – now*. Philstar Global. Available from: <https://www.philstar.com/opinion/2025/02/22/2423251/protect-children-livestreamed-sexual-abuse-now>

45 ABC Listen's Interview with eSafety Commissioner on February 24, 2025, 'An important message': eSafety on \$1m Telegram fine. Available from: <https://www.abc.net.au/listen/programs/radionational-breakfast/esafety-commissioner-julie-inman-grant-senate-estimates/104975774>

46 eSafety Commissioner. (5 February 2026). *eSafety report shows while tech giants have made some progress they still have a long way to go in stamping out online child sexual abuse*. Available from: [https://www.esafety.gov.au/newsroom/media-releases/esafety-report-shows-while-tech-giants-have-made-some-progress-they-still-have-a-long-way-to-go-in-stamping-out-online-child-sexual-abuse#https://www.esafety.gov.au/newsroom/media-releases/esafety-report-shows-while-tech-giants-have-made-some-progress-they-still-have-a-long-way-to-go-in-stamping-out-online-child-sexual-abuse#:~:text=%E2%80%9CWhile%20we've%20seen%20some,their%20service\)%20but%20not%20others](https://www.esafety.gov.au/newsroom/media-releases/esafety-report-shows-while-tech-giants-have-made-some-progress-they-still-have-a-long-way-to-go-in-stamping-out-online-child-sexual-abuse#https://www.esafety.gov.au/newsroom/media-releases/esafety-report-shows-while-tech-giants-have-made-some-progress-they-still-have-a-long-way-to-go-in-stamping-out-online-child-sexual-abuse#:~:text=%E2%80%9CWhile%20we've%20seen%20some,their%20service)%20but%20not%20others)



eSafety Commissioner's February 2026 Report – Responses to transparency notices: Child sexual exploitation and abuse material and activity⁴⁷

Although child sexual abuse images, along with recorded and live videos, are all illegal under UK law, in practice, companies allow criminals to produce and disseminate CSAM, including livestreams, on their platforms, services, and devices without adequate detection, reporting, or disruption. When pressed to implement stronger safety measures, the tech sector and its proxies often resist, citing concerns about free speech or privacy, when in fact technology exists to stop child sexual abuse while preserving both privacy and lawful free speech. Such arguments against proactive detection of child sexual abuse online rest on false dichotomies and half-truths. Moreover, such arguments overlook a fundamental contradiction: offenders have no legal right to create, possess, or share child sexual abuse images and videos, and these acts constitute egregious privacy violations of victimised children and adult survivors. The safety and privacy of victims and survivors of child sexual abuse are ignored daily online. Children are being abused while offenders watch live on their phones, tablets, and laptops with the images and videos shared over and over again for years to come. Joy*, who was abused for seven years from the age of 10 and is now a global survivor leader, shares her ongoing battle for privacy, dignity, and peace of mind:

*Survivors are still being retraumatized. Today, I am free. I am safe. I am not being livestreamed anymore, but my pictures and videos are still out there. Every time those videos and photos are viewed, I am traumatized again. Even as we speak, how am I supposed to move on with my life, because every day my privacy can still be violated. Survivors should have the right to have our pictures and videos deleted. I am free, but my pictures can be accessed by anybody. I have always wanted to travel, but I live in fear, about safely protecting my identity. Can you imagine, carrying the weight of constantly protecting your identity? I'm afraid someone will approach me, recognize me. When I apply for jobs, when I meet new people. When I travel. I am so afraid of my identity being revealed.*⁴⁸

47 eSafety Commissioner. (February 2026). *Basic Online Safety Expectations - Periodic reporting series on child sexual exploitation and abuse, grooming and sexual extortion*. Available from: <https://www.esafety.gov.au/industry/basic-online-safety-expectations/child-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse-material-and-activity#interactive-transparency-summary-and-snapshots>

48 Survivor leader, *Joy, recounts her story and meets with German members of Parliament and stakeholders. Available from: https://www.linkedin.com/posts/ijmendosec_german-demandside-activity-7087426146690093056-LcM8/

A group of survivors and advocates known as the *Phoenix 11* have posed a powerful question:

*What about our right to privacy? ... It is our privacy that is violated each time an image of our child sexual abuse is accessed, possessed or shared.*⁴⁹

While livestreamed child sexual abuse flourishes today, it can be prevented by the ethical and effective deployment of artificial intelligence (AI) machine learning (ML) tools, among other digital interventions, that simultaneously preserve user privacy. For instance, major tech companies like Apple⁵⁰, Meta⁵¹, and Google⁵² already use on-device machine learning tools to detect and disrupt nudity on child accounts while preserving user privacy and end-to-end encryption. Moreover, proving that such technology can operate on live videos in real-time, Apple uses tools on FaceTime to detect and blur nudity on-device in live video streams, particularly on child accounts, with the option for users to opt out.⁵³ On-device detection and disruption need not interfere with encryption because the content is detected through tools that operate locally on the user's device. Developments in on-device nudity disruption are relevant to this report with one online safety expert explaining that Apple's FaceTime tool is a “[r]ecent development in Apple tech that could help prevent livestreaming CSE [child sexual exploitation].”⁵⁴

At least one platform, Microsoft Teams, is beginning to address livestreamed child abuse:

*Microsoft stated that it is developing and piloting a program for Teams that was designed to identify and prevent potential new CSEA from being created or transmitted on live video calls made on the service. The end goal was for detection and mitigation of CSEA material in a timely manner, where Microsoft can detect, moderate, action, and report these accounts and individuals either before, during, or after the live video abuse occurs.*⁵⁵

It is entirely possible for tech companies to stop live online child sexual abuse. Apple, Microsoft, and every other company with a live video service should use all available technologies and measures, including signal sharing and AI-powered machine learning tools, to detect, disrupt, and prevent child sexual abuse live videos. This would create meaningful disruption by making it much more difficult for offenders to create, view, or share illegal videos and images in the first place, and stop online child sexual abuse.

49 Canadian Centre for Child Protection. (24 August 2021). *Statement on behalf of the Phoenix 11: Survivors' voices must be part of debate over Apple's plan to tackle child sexual abuse imagery*. Available from: <https://protectchildren.ca/en/press-and-media/news-releases/2021/phoenix-11-apple-statement>

50 Apple Inc. (18 September 2025). *About Communication Safety on your child's Apple device*. Available from: <https://support.apple.com/en-us/105069>; See also Apple Inc. (2025). *SCVideoStremAnalyzer*. Available from: <https://developer.apple.com/documentation/sensitivecontentanalysis/scvideostreamanalyzer>

51 Meta. (11 April 2024). *New Tools to Help Protect Against Sextortion and Intimate Image Abuse*. Available at: <https://about.fb.com/news/2024/04/new-tools-to-help-protect-against-sex-tortion-and-intimate-image-abuse/>

52 Google. (22 October 2024). *5 new protections on Google Messages to help keep you safe*. Google Security Blog. Available from: <https://security.googleblog.com/2024/10/5-new-protections-on-google-messages.html>

53 Apple Inc. (2025). *SCVideoStremAnalyzer*. Available at: <https://developer.apple.com/documentation/sensitivecontentanalysis/scvideostreamanalyzer>

54 Amber Hawkes - former Facebook. (2025). *"Recent development in Apple tech that could help prevent livestreaming CSE."* LinkedIn. Available from: <https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7346503236754804737/>

55 eSafety Commissioner. (August 2025). *A baseline for online safety transparency: The first regular report on child sexual exploitation and abuse, and sexual extortion*. Basic Online Safety Expectations periodic reporting series. Available from: <https://www.esafety.gov.au/sites/default/files/2025-08/BOSE-full-report-CSEA-sexual-extortion-periodic-notices-August2025.pdf>, at p. 133.

Call to Action and Recommendations

1

The UK Government should legislate to require device manufacturers and operating system services to incorporate safeguards into device operating systems that disrupt child sexual abuse images and videos, including livestreaming – putting a stop to the abuse before it starts.

The UK Online Safety Act is an excellent starting point for addressing the online sexual exploitation of children. However, the scope of the act is limited to platforms and search engines. It is crucial to extend regulation to include device manufacturers and operating systems to prevent child sexual abuse images and videos, including livestreamed abuse, further upstream through a more sustainable and scalable approach.

The current Ofcom child protection codes include measures to protect the accounts of juvenile users. However, the measures do not address child sexual abuse livestreamed in video calls accessed on adult accounts and devices. Livestreaming of the sexual abuse of children, particularly when it is for profit, often happens between the devices of the adult perpetrating the contact abuse and the adult commissioning the abuse, meaning no child’s device is involved. While the UK Government is increasingly acknowledging the harm children face in digital spaces, with the Freedom from Violence and Abuse Policy Paper explicitly stating the government’s goal to “*make it impossible for children in the UK to take, share or view a nude image*,”⁵⁶ wider protection measures are essential to prevent adults from misusing their accounts and devices to harm children. Protecting children from grooming or sextortion where they might be manipulated into taking explicit photos of themselves is vital; however, it is equally important to recognise that adults also produce and share child sexual abuse images and videos.⁵⁷

Because offenders can use countless live video platforms (i.e., messaging, video conferencing, “cam” sites, etc.), the tech sector must adopt a layered prevention approach.⁵⁸ As device makers are increasingly required to age-verify customers to protect children from pornography, harmful algorithms, age-inappropriate content, and online predators, they should also take responsibility for designing and selling products that come with digital safeguards designed to prevent child sexual abuse material.

93% OF BRITISH ADULTS SAY TECH COMPANIES SHOULD BE HELD LEGALLY ACCOUNTABLE FOR PREVENTING LIVESTREAMED CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE ON THEIR PLATFORMS AND DEVICES.⁵⁹

Support is growing for on-device prevention approaches. NCMEC’s Global Policy Platform states that “[g]overnments should require and/or incentivize online platforms and device manufacturers to follow minimum safety

56 Government of the United Kingdom Home Office. (December 2025). *Freedom from Violence and Abuse: a cross-government strategy to build a safer society for women and girls Volume 1*. Available from: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/697c7e14043a4ade0f7b503f/31.260_VAWG_01_Strategy_Slip_FINAL_v5_290126_WEB.pdf

57 Internet Watch Foundation. (2025). ‘Self-generated’ imagery. Available from: <https://www.iwf.org.uk/annual-data-insights-report-2025/hash-ing-insights/self-generated-imagery/>

58 “[E]very sector of the tech industry from the device manufacturers, social media sites, search engines and app stores all have a responsibility to provide appropriate community safeguards through a “layered safety approach” [to] . . . ensure[] much broader tech industry responsibility and accountability.” https://www.linkedin.com/posts/activity-7330751678264029184-_snG/?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_desktop&rcm=ACoAAAF0IEQBmt7czld7YcAsLQFNv8DprPeg80k

59 In partnership with the Prophets and Savanta, IJM conducted a representative survey of 2045 adults (18+), online in May 2026. The study focused acutely on understanding public perceptions, awareness, and attitudes regarding online sexual exploitation of children (OSEC), as well as support for related policy measures. Publication forthcoming.

by design principles to promote protection of children from online harms.”⁶⁰ Moreover, the 2025 Five Country Ministerial victim, survivor, and advocate roundtable had as a key theme “*the need for more robust innovation, including device-level solutions, blocking CSAM at source*.”⁶¹ And a recent survey in 2026 finds that;

91% OF BRITISH ADULTS SUPPORT ON-DEVICE TECHNOLOGY THAT AUTOMATICALLY DETECTS AND PREVENTS CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE MATERIAL FROM BEING VIEWED OR CAPTURED.⁶²

Device manufacturers and operating system (OS) developers of camera-enabled smart devices that connect to the internet (e.g., smartphones, tablets, laptops, etc.) can play a key role in preventing CSAM on their products by deploying adequate measures and AI tools at the OS level (e.g., Android, iOS, Windows, etc.), designed to disrupt the rendering, capturing, or transmitting of child sexual abuse images, recorded and live video. The digital creation, sharing, and viewing of child sexual abuse images and videos is a reasonably foreseeable harm. Companies should therefore take effective steps to make their products safer from the start by ensuring safety by design. Device manufacturers should be required to configure their devices to only be compatible with compliant operating systems that include anti-CSAM technology. This includes rolling out necessary OS updates to their users and integrating the updated OS into existing devices in the consumer market.

If widely deployed, on-device tools can disrupt livestream child sexual abuse at scale, irrespective of the app or platform used. On-device CSAM prevention can coexist with end-to-end encryption, because by operating locally on the device, it detects content pre- or post-encryption, while no company or third party needs to be notified or granted access to the image or video when CSAM is recognised and blocked.⁶³ This might be one tool to help address the false dichotomy of user privacy vs. the protection and privacy of victim-survivors.

On-device CSAM prevention could be coupled with redirection messaging to influence offender behaviour and point to help-seeking resources, like Stop-it-Now.⁶⁴ This could create critical pause points where individuals reconsider their behaviour and seek help. This approach would send a powerful global message that governments, corporations, and societies find child sexual abuse material unacceptable and prioritise child protection. Disrupting the creation and distribution of CSAM would also respond to law enforcement pleas to deter individuals and prevent abuse before it starts.⁶⁵ We cannot wait for individuals to access CSAM, habitually view it on their devices, escalate to hands-on abuse, and then hope that law enforcement has sufficient actionable reports and capacity to find them or, worse, wait for abused children to make disclosures. Essentially, not prioritising CSAM prevention places a greater responsibility on victims to disclose.

60 Global Platform for Child Exploitation Policy. (2026). *Briefly: Safety by Design – Introduction to the issue and NCMEC’s position*. Available from <https://globalchildexploitationpolicy.org/policy-advocacy/safety-by-design>

61 UK Summary - FCM 2025 (on file). See also United Kingdom Government Home Office. (9 September 2025). *Policy Paper Five Country Ministerial 2025: Communique*. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/five-country-ministerial-2025-communique-and-statement/five-country-ministerial-2025-communique>

62 In partnership with the Prophets and Savanta, IJM conducted a representative survey of 2045 adults (18+), online in May 2026. The study focused acutely on understanding public perceptions, awareness, and attitudes regarding online sexual exploitation of children (OSEC), as well as support for related policy measures. Publication forthcoming.

63 If images are never allowed to enter electronic service providers’ (ESPs) servers, they cannot be stored or shared through those platforms, and mandatory reporting obligations would not be triggered. An on-device prevention-focused intervention is a policy decision that requires discussion on trade-offs. Requiring on-device prevention of child sexual abuse material without triggering a reporting requirement—because the relevant tech company is unaware when CSAM is prevented—would minimise any impact of false positives on innocent users.

64 Stop It Now! prevents the sexual abuse of children by mobilising adults, families, and communities through direct support, information, and resources to take actions that protect children before they are harmed. Available from: <https://www.stopitnow.org/>

65 “*The response to the continual child sexual abuse threat cannot be one for policing alone – a whole-system approach is the only way to protect children effectively. We all owe it to our children not to be a bystander – now is the time to really make a difference.*” National Crime Agency. (17 February 2026). *Child sexual abuse is increasing in severity, complexity and accessibility, say policing leads*. Available from: <https://www.nation.alcrimeagency.gov.uk/news/child-sexual-abuse-is-increasing-in-severity-complexity-and-accessibility-say-policing-leads>

While deeper discussions on this recommendation are beyond the scope of this paper, various tools in existence demonstrate this kind of technological intervention is possible. For instance, AI-driven Safer Predict by Thorn⁶⁶ leverages machine learning classification models to detect new or previously unreported images and videos of child sexual abuse. SafeToNet's HarmBlock uses AI-based visual classification technology embedded at the OS level to detect and block nudity, which by extension, is able to detect and block CSAM images, videos, and livestreams in real-time, along with other sexual content.⁶⁷

Together, we must change the narrative: Images, recorded videos, and live videos of children being abused and exploited in other degrading ways cannot merely be perceived as "content" for technology companies to "moderate." Instead, the internet and digital products must be inhospitable to these illegal images, recorded and live videos of child abuse in the first place. As CSAM becomes harder to access or consume online, many internet users will be deterred.

A paradigm shift is desperately needed, adopting prevention-first legal frameworks to stop the creation, consumption, and transmission of CSAM across all sections of the tech industry. The existing status quo of reactive reporting and removal of CSAM, which has already been shared online, has proven ineffective at protecting children and survivors, in the face of the scale of threat we now face. Every data point demonstrates a rapidly escalating crisis of child sexual abuse online.

Legislating to require device manufacturers and operating system services to deploy such preventative measures, as outlined here, would be a groundbreaking step in protecting children in the UK and around the world from online sexual exploitation and abuse,⁶⁸ showing global leadership by the UK.

2

Assess and strengthen legal frameworks enabling the financial sector to expedite reporting and interdiction of payments for child sexual exploitation.

As explained above, livestreamed child sexual abuse is often a financially motivated crime for those selling the livestreams. According to the Philippine Anti-Money Laundering Council, the UK is the second globally in payments to the Philippines flagged by financial institutions as suspicious transactions for child sexual exploitation.⁶⁹ As a result, financial institutions have a timely opportunity to detect and block suspicious transactions for these crimes. The UK Government should empower the financial sector to actively intercept suspected child sexual exploitation payments.

Financial institutions should shift from traditional anti-money laundering frameworks to proactive child safeguarding through the following measures:

- **Real-time payment blocking:** Expand the Payment Services (Amendment) Regulations 2024⁷⁰ to specifically call out child sexual exploitation and authorise banks to immediately block transactions flagged for child sexual

66 Safer Built by Thorn. Available from: <https://safer.io/solutions/>

67 HMD. (20 August 2025). World-first new smartphone designed for children blocks nude content from the camera and across all apps. Available from: https://www.hmd.com/en_gb/press/hmd-fuse-press-release-august-2025?srsltid=AfmBOorMT5yPWuc3wW3y9cYhn8Kqec2kz3g18CZL-GkrNm5-FNzrVUNEf; See also HarmBlock https://harmblock.com/?utm_source=SafeToNet&utm_medium=click&utm_campaign=header

68 For instance, if individuals in the UK are unable to access and consume CSAM in live video calls, the children on the other side of the screen may be protected from abuse by financially motivated offenders who are no longer able to create and sell live CSAM to individuals in the UK.

69 AMLC. (April 2023). *Online Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children in the Philippines: An Evaluation using STR Data*. Anti-Money Laundering Council. Available from: <https://assets-na.ijm.org/documents/Online-Sexual-Abuse-and-Exploitation-of-Children-in-the-Philippines.pdf>

70 HM Treasury. (3 October 2024). *The Payment Services (Amendment) Regulations 2024*. Gov.uk. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-payment-services-amendment-regulations-2024#:~:text=Details,sending%20significant%20sums%20to%20fraudsters>.

exploitation. While there are existing limitations to identify payments associated with child sexual exploitation, continued innovation in detection and prevention methodologies should be actively encouraged and supported to block transactions before a child is harmed.

- **Information sharing:** While the Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act (ECCTA) 2023 allows for voluntary anti-money laundering information sharing within the financial sector in some instances⁷¹, information sharing should be mandated when an adequate level of suspicion of involvement in child sexual exploitation exists. Additionally, a dedicated platform or fusion centre for this information should be instituted to allow for deconfliction and more timely recognition of factors that will trigger reporting.
- **New reporting pathways:** Establish a separate reporting channel for payments related to child sexual exploitation, as such payments should not simply be treated as a designated category offence for money laundering. Until another reporting venue is in place, the existing Suspicious Activity Reports (SARs) system needs to be strengthened to refer high-priority cases such as child sexual exploitation to law enforcement. In instances of high confidence indicators of imminent harm to a child, immediate reporting to law enforcement should be mandated, in addition to SAR submission.
- **Improved feedback:** Assess legal provisions that allow law enforcement to provide feedback to improve the financial sectors' ability to more accurately detect payments suspected of child sexual exploitation.
- **Dedicated personnel:** Appoint a Child Safeguarding Officer within each financial institution under the guidance of the Financial Conduct Authority to manage and oversee child protection duties, a model which has proven effective in IJM's experience.⁷²

3

Strengthen and expand international and local law enforcement operational actions.

IJM applauds the National Crime Agency (NCA) for its active role as a founding and ongoing member of the Philippine Internet Crimes Against Children Center (PICACC). Additionally, the NCA announced the launch of a "Child Sexual Abuse Livestreaming Amber Alert" to strengthen the financial sector's real-time response to suspicious payments for livestreaming.⁷³ This enhances members' understanding of the livestreaming of child sexual abuse threats, drawing awareness to the financial red flags, to support tactical and strategic activity.

Livestreaming offenders represent a uniquely high-harm threat, requiring urgent and specialised law enforcement response beyond the NCA, across all police units investigating these crimes. Offenders actively commission new abuse, directing sexual violence against children globally in real-time, with several concerning characteristics:

- **Direct threat to children:** Many livestreaming offenders have direct access to children in the UK, where 63% of survey respondents who livestreamed sexually with a child indicated that they have a child in their home and 46% work in fields involving contact with children. This is incredibly alarming given the fact that men in the UK who report online sexual offending behaviours against children also report a higher likelihood of sexually abusing

71 United Kingdom Government. (2023). *Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act 2023*. Legislation.gov.uk. Available from: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2023/56>

72 Ruggiero, D. (24 September 2025). *What is an acceptable level of risk?* IJM's Center to End Online Sexual Exploitation of Children. Available from: <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/what-acceptable-level-risk-ijmendosec-2dlpc/>

73 National Crime Agency. (May 2026). *"Banks could provide critical intervention to stop UK offenders who pay for livestreamed child sexual abuse overseas."* LinkedIn. Available from: https://www.linkedin.com/posts/national-crime-agency_banks-could-provide-critical-intervention-activity-7462145462469394433-ebTa/

or harming a minor in person. This is only the most recent in a series of studies indicating that offenders who view child sexual abuse images and videos are also likely to sexually abuse children in person.⁷⁴ Furthermore, UK law enforcement detection of offenders will lead to referrals to law enforcement around the world, to help safeguard children being abused in livestreamed offences directed by British men.

- **Likelihood of multiple victims:** The remote nature of livestreamed offences, global reach of the internet, and lack of evidentiary artefacts such as image and video files, make it common for an individual livestreaming offender to cause harm to a higher volume of children both domestically and globally. Due to the lack of detection of these offenders, they can typically operate in secret for a prolonged period of time and perpetrate abuse on numerous victims.
- **Technical sophistication:** Offenders are using tools such as Virtual Private Networks (VPNs), cryptocurrency, and secure messaging apps (e.g., Telegram, Signal, WhatsApp, etc.) to conceal their abuse, increasing the need to devote additional resources to bring these offenders to justice. The use of end-to-end encrypted services by livestreaming offenders severely limits the ability of law enforcement to curb these offences, but there are steps UK agencies can take to increase their response.

To assist with investigations and prosecutions, specialised law enforcement capacity can be utilised across UK law enforcement. This includes investigators trained in livestream offence detection and evidence collection, developing expertise in seizing electronic and financial evidence, as well as categorising and counting reports involving livestreamed child abuse, both domestically and internationally, to systematically show the prevalence of this heinous crime. In line with the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) recommendations,⁷⁵ stronger coordination is needed to identify UK-connected offences with an international nexus. This includes enhanced collaboration with the U.S.-based National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (which operates the CyberTipline⁷⁶), international law enforcement, and Electronic Service Providers. Furthermore, because many livestreamed offences involve remuneration, coordination with international financial intelligence units is crucial to identify transnational financial transactions from the UK that are suspicious for child sexual exploitation and abuse involvement.

74 Teunissen, C. and Napier, S. (2023). *The overlap between child sexual abuse live streaming, contact abuse and other forms of child exploitation*. Australian Institute of Criminology Trends & Issues in crime and criminal justice No. 671. Available from: https://www.aic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-05/ti671_overlap_between_csa_live_streaming_contact_abuse_and_other_child_exploitation.pdf; See also Drejer et al. (November 2025). *Live-streamed child sexual abuse: Analysis on Norwegian criminal cases*. Child Abuse & Neglect Volume 169, Part 2. Available from: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0145213425004156>; See also Nearly half of respondents to a survey in the Stanford Internet Observatory's Journal of Online Trust and Safety said they had sought direct contact with children through online platforms after viewing CSAM, and 58% reported feeling afraid that viewing CSAM might lead to them committing abuse in person. Grant, H. (1 March 2022). *Viewers of online abuse at high risk of contacting children directly, study finds*. The Guardian. Available from: <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/mar/01/online-sexual-abuse-viewers-contacting-children-directly-study>; See also A 2015 U.S. DOJ study found that 85% of "offenders disclosed hands-on sexual abuse," concluding that the findings "suggest that crossover to hands-on offending may be more prevalent among internet offenders." Simons, D. (July 2015). *Chapter 3: Sex Offender Typologies*. Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering, and Tracking. Available from: <https://smart.ojp.gov/somapi/chapter-3-sex-offender-typologies>; See also The U.K.'s National Crime Agency (NCA) report a similar crossover: "The NCA is seeing a direct link between online offending and contact abuse. In the UK, we estimate that there are between 550,000 and 850,000 UK-based individuals posing various degrees of sexual risk to children – a figure which has grown in line with increased online activity." Grant, H. (27 September 2021). *Online child abuse survey finds third of viewers attempt contact with children*. The Guardian. Available from: <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/sep/27/online-child-abuse-survey-finds-third-of-viewers-attempt-contact-with-children>

75 FATF. (2025). *Detecting, Disrupting and Investigating Online Child Sexual Exploitation: Using Financial Intelligence to Protect Children from Harm*. Financial Action Task Force. Available from: <https://www.fatf-gafi.org/content/dam/fatf-gafi/reports/Online%20Child%20Sexual%20Exploitation%20Report.pdf.coredownload.inline.pdf>

76 The CyberTipline is a U.S.-based reporting system operated by the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) that receives reports of child sexual exploitation from various countries, including the UK, which are then shared with UK law enforcement agencies like the National Crime Agency for investigation.

Explore the use of public health programmes to disrupt offender progression into child sexual abuse online offences.

A comprehensive approach to combat child sexual abuse online should include targeting potential pathways to the consumption of child sexual abuse images, videos, and livestreams before offending escalates. In light of evidence that habitual consumption of extreme adult pornography may influence offender behaviour and contribute to progressions toward online sexual offending against children,⁷⁷ it is crucial to work with organisations like Lucy Faithfull Foundation⁷⁸ that support people seeking to stop their behaviour.

Early intervention services should be extended to include people with excessive and extreme pornography consumption, recognising that men who sexually abuse children online often first engaged with adult pornography more frequently than other men, and view other kinds of extreme and violent material. This includes establishing accessible, confidential intervention programmes for individuals struggling with excessive pornography use or experiencing sexual interest toward children. Prevention and public awareness campaigns should work in tandem with these services, increasing awareness of available support while clearly communicating both the devastating harm to real children and the life-changing consequences of exposure and criminal prosecution. Furthermore, prevention efforts must address the role of peer networks in normalising and escalating offending behaviour, recognising that online communities can reinforce harmful patterns and facilitate progression from consumption to more active forms of abuse.

77 Wortley et al. (August 2024). *Accessing child sexual abuse material: Pathways to offending and online behaviour*. Child Abuse & Neglect Volume 154. Available from: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0145213424003260>; See also Bailey, A. and Moran, F. (May 2024). *What's porn got to do with it? The link between viewing adult pornography and online sexual offending against children*. Lucy Faithfull Foundation. Available from: https://www.lucyfaithfull.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/2024_05_Faithfull_Paper_Viewing_Pornography_Link_Financial_Spreads.pdf; See also Protect Children. (20 February 2024). *New Research Reveals How Offenders Use Technology Platforms for Online Child Sexual Abuse*. Available at: <https://www.suojellaanlapsia.fi/en/post/press-release-200224>; See also Federal Trade Commission. (September 3, 2025). *FTC Takes Action Against Operators of Pornhub and other Pornographic Sites for Deceiving Users About Efforts to Crack Down on Child Sexual Abuse Material and Nonconsensual Sexual Content*. Available from: <https://www.ftc.gov/news-events/news/press-releases/2025/09/ftc-takes-action-against-operators-pornhub-other-pornographic-sites-deceiving-users-about-efforts>

78 The Lucy Faithfull Foundation is a UK-based child protection charity that works to prevent child sexual abuse by providing support, intervention programs, and treatment for individuals (including those who have abused or are at risk of abusing), as well as helping families and professionals safeguard children. Available from: <https://www.lucyfaithfull.org.uk/>

Conclusions

Livestreamed child sexual abuse is an urgent threat to child safety in the digital age, and this research provides critical insights into behaviours that demand immediate attention. These findings underscore the need for continued research into offenders' progression from consuming adult pornography to accessing CSAM inadvertently to intentionally seeking child sexual abuse images and videos to livestreaming abuse to abusing children in person. They serve as stark evidence that we cannot afford to wait. Every delay in implementing safeguards allows these devastating crimes to inflict untold suffering on children worldwide while fuelling a growing CSAM crisis.

The UK Government can lead globally by taking decisive action across four fronts. First, legislate to require device manufacturers and operating system services to deploy AI-driven tools that disrupt child sexual abuse images and videos at the source, preventing abuse before it starts. Second, establish a comprehensive framework enabling the financial sector to expedite reporting and interdiction of payments for child sexual exploitation, including real-time suspicious transaction blocking and dedicated reporting channels. Third, expand law enforcement operations prioritising livestream offence detection and enhance coordination with international partners. Finally, public health programmes should be explored to disrupt offender progression into online child sexual abuse through early intervention services and prevention campaigns targeting high-risk behaviours, including consumption of extreme pornography. Together, these measures offer a comprehensive pathway to protect children from exploitation and prevent countless instances of abuse before they occur.

THE TIME TO ACT IS NOW.

Data Tables

TABLE 1. DEMOGRAPHIC DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS (N = 1,506)		
	No livestreaming (n = 1,485) % (99% CI)	Livestreaming (n = 21) % (99% CI)
Age		
18-24 years	11.1% (8.7% - 14.1%)	2.0% (0.1% - 22.7%)
25-34 years	16.5% (13.9% - 19.6%)	55.7% (27.4% - 80.7%)
35-44 years	16.6% (13.9% - 19.6%)	11.2% (1.6% - 50.2%)
45-54 years	17.1% (14.4% - 20.1%)	19.7% (5.8% - 49.4%)
55-64 years	16.3% (13.8% - 19.2%)	2.5% (0.2% - 26.8%)
65+ years	22.4% (19.2% - 25.9%)	8.8% (1.6% - 36.5%)
Annual household income		
Low	18.9% (16.1% - 22.1%)	22.2% (6.2% - 55.2%)
Middle	69.6% (66.2% - 72.8%)	61.1% (32.4% - 83.8%)
High	11.5% (9.9% - 13.3%)	16.7% (5.8% - 39.5%)
Residential location		
City	32.0% (28.5% - 35.8%)	69.0% (39.2% - 88.5%)
Suburb	38.0% (34.3% - 41.8%)	14.2% (3.1% - 46.0%)
Regional or rural	30.0% (26.6% - 33.6%)	16.8% (4.5% - 46.2%)
Educational attainment		
Did not finish high school	9.1% (6.9% - 12.0%)	4.7% (0.3% - 40.9%)
Completed high school	42.9% (39.1% - 46.7%)	23.1% (6.3% - 57.4%)
Vocational or similar	6.9% (5.7% - 8.3%)	4.1% (0.6% - 23.2%)
Bachelor's degree or higher	41.1% (37.3% - 45.0%)	68.1% (36.8% - 88.7%)
Married or living with partner	62.7% (58.8% - 66.5%)	65.7% (34.8% - 87.3%)
Employed	63.2% (59.3% - 66.9%)	86.8% (55.1% - 97.2%)
Heterosexual	92.7% (90.5% - 94.5%)	89.7% (49.8% - 98.7%)
Ever had sex with men	16.2% (13.5% - 19.2%)	47.6% (21.0% - 75.6%)
Child in household	29.1% (25.8% - 32.7%)	63.1% (34.2% - 84.8%)
Works with children	15.0% (12.5% - 17.9%)	45.7% (19.5% - 74.5%)

TABLE 2. PRIVACY TOOL DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS (N = 1,506)		
	No livestreaming (n = 1,485) % (99% CI)	Livestreaming (n = 21) % (99% CI)
TOR	3.2% (2.2% - 4.7%)	5.0% (0.4% - 42.8%)
VPN	21.2% (18.2% - 24.5%)	55.2% (26.9% - 80.6%)
Telegram	10.0% (7.9% - 12.6%)	49.4% (22.3% - 76.8%)
Signal	4.4% (3.1% - 6.1%)	24.2% (6.7% - 58.8%)
WhatsApp	37.1% (33.4% - 40.9%)	44.9% (19.1% - 73.7%)
Element	1.7% (1.0% - 2.9%)	10.0% (1.1% - 53.4%)
Hive	2.4% (1.5% - 4.0%)	18.9% (4.5% - 53.7%)
Private Relay	3.1% (1.9% - 4.9%)	4.7% (0.3% - 40.9%)
Owens cryptocurrency	19.3% (16.5% - 22.5%)	52.8% (24.9% - 79.0%)
Used cryptocurrency for online purchases	9.1% (7.1% - 11.6%)	47.7% (21.1% - 75.7%)

TABLE 3. PORNOGRAPHY CONSUMPTION DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS (N = 1,506)		
	No livestreaming (n = 1,485) % (99% CI)	Livestreaming (n = 21) % (99% CI)
Daily porn use	9.3% (7.3% - 11.9%)	34.5% (12.2% - 66.6%)
Watches bestiality	3.5% (2.3% - 5.2%)	44.0% (18.2% - 73.5%)
Watches rough and/or violent porn	9.1% (7.0% - 11.9%)	26.2% (7.8% - 59.6%)
Purchased webcam/livestream	6.0% (4.4% - 8.1%)	38.0% (14.6% - 68.8%)
Purchased subscription service	4.6% (3.3% - 6.5%)	31.8% (10.6% - 64.9%)
Purchased nudes or videos	1.8% (1.0% - 3.0%)	27.4% (8.4% - 60.8%)
Approached by adult online	16.4% (13.7% - 19.5%)	61.4% (32.2% - 84.2%)
Approached by child online	4.9% (3.5% - 6.9%)	44.0% (18.3% - 73.4%)

TABLE 4. CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS (N = 1,506)		
	No livestreaming (n = 1,485) %/m (99% CI)	Livestreaming (n = 21) %/m (99% CI)
Concerned about feelings towards children	3.8% (2.6% - 5.6%)	36.6% (13.2% - 68.7%)
Had sex with under 18 while over 18	4.4% (3.1% - 6.4%)	29.4% (9.8% - 61.6%)
Purchased CSEM online	1.5% (0.8% - 2.8%)	38.8% (15.4% - 68.8%)
Flirts with children online	2.8% (1.7% - 4.4%)	70.0% (38.9% - 89.5%)
Friend looks at TF-CSEA	2.8% (1.8% - 4.5%)	40.5% (16.0% - 70.8%)
Friend flirts with children online	2.6% (1.6% - 4.2%)	50.5% (23.2% - 77.5%)
Friend sexually webcams children	1.3% (0.6% - 2.7%)	48.1% (21.4% - 75.9%)
Childhood sexual abuse (ACE)	9.7% (7.6% - 12.3%)	64.7% (35.3% - 86.0%)
Likelihood of sexual contact (1 = never, 5 = definitely)		
Age 12 - 14 years	1.23 (1.17 - 1.28)	3.30 (2.35 - 4.26)
Age 10 - 12 years	1.19 (1.14 - 1.25)	3.39 (2.44 - 4.33)
Age under 10 years	1.18 (1.12 - 1.23)	3.06 (2.16 - 3.96)



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