

How new technologies and remote connections are influencing online child sexual abuse



PRESENTED BY

Emma Hardy

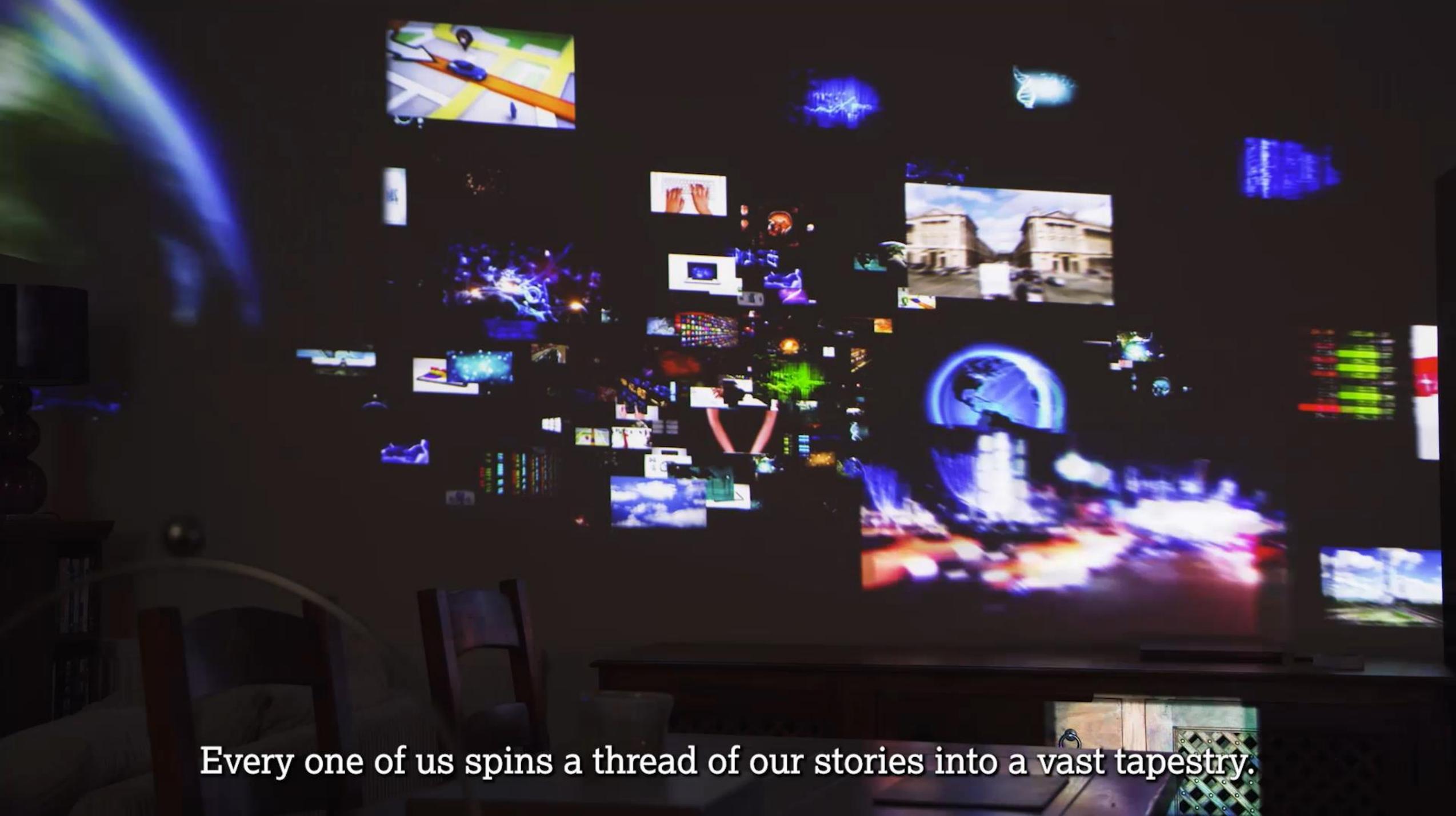
Internet Watch Foundation Communications Director
& UK Safer Internet Centre Co-Director

Who we are



- We're a **not-for profit child protection organisation**.
- We **identify images and videos** showing the sexual abuse of children, wherever they are found on the internet. We then work **with partners and law enforcement globally** to have them removed.
- For 27 years we've given people a safe place to report child sexual abuse imagery, anonymously – now **in 50 countries**.
- More than **190 global technology companies** make up our membership.





Every one of us spins a thread of our stories into a vast tapestry.

Finding child sexual abuse imagery

Public reports

We take public reports in the UK and from our 50 international portals.

Proactive

Our analysts proactively search all public areas of the internet including forums and the dark web; their experience and expertise means they know where criminal content is exchanged.

Crawling

We use technology to automatically crawl from site to site looking for known content.

Report Remove

Children can report to us, via Report Remove, an IWF & Childline partnership.

Child Abuse Image Database (CAID)

We've worked with the Home Office to assess and hash (create digital fingerprint) 2 million of the worst child sexual abuse images found by UK law enforcement from CAID.

We continue to use CAID daily to upload images, intelligence and for victim identification work.

Every one and a half minutes, IWF analysts assess a webpage.

Every two minutes, that webpage shows a child being sexually abused.



Scale of the problem in 2022

255,588

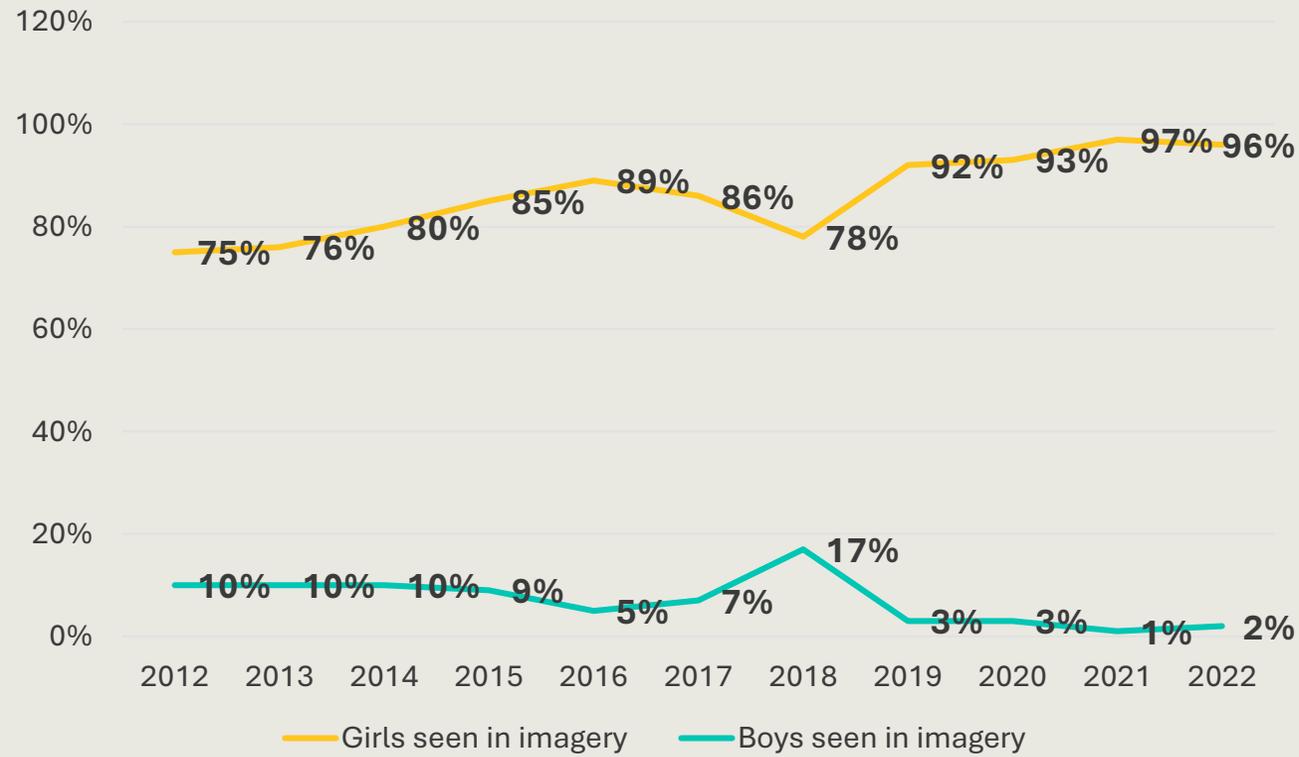
Reports were confirmed to contain images or videos of children suffering sexual abuse

199,363

reports included child sexual abuse images/videos where children are often **groomed/coerced/exploited online** – “self-generated”

As each report contains at least one, and sometimes thousands of images, **this equates to millions of criminal images** removed from the internet.

Sex of victims over 10 years



In 2022

96%

of the reports showed girls
(242,989)

2%

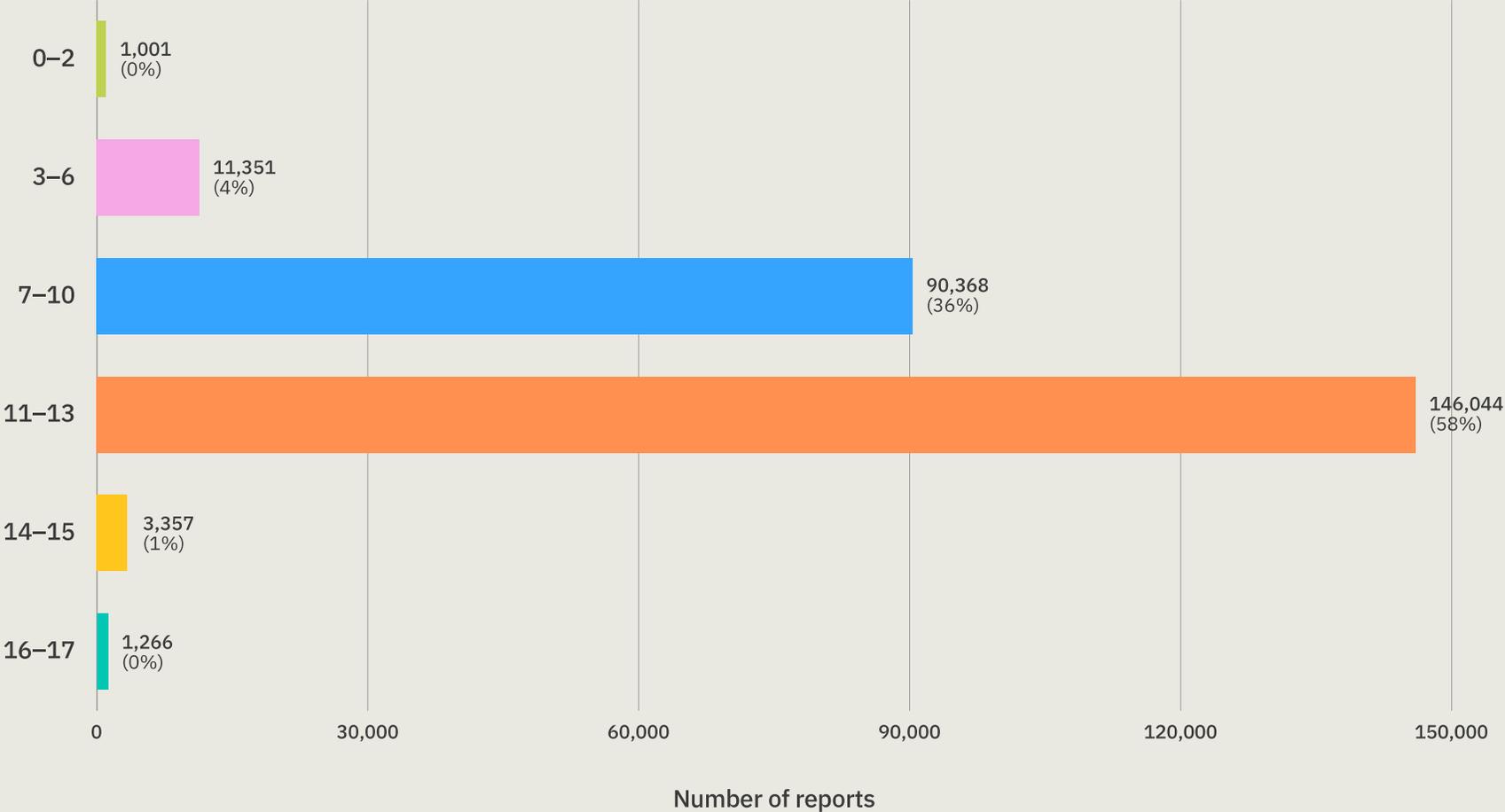
of the reports showed boys
(6,253)

2%

of the reports showed both sexes
(4,016)

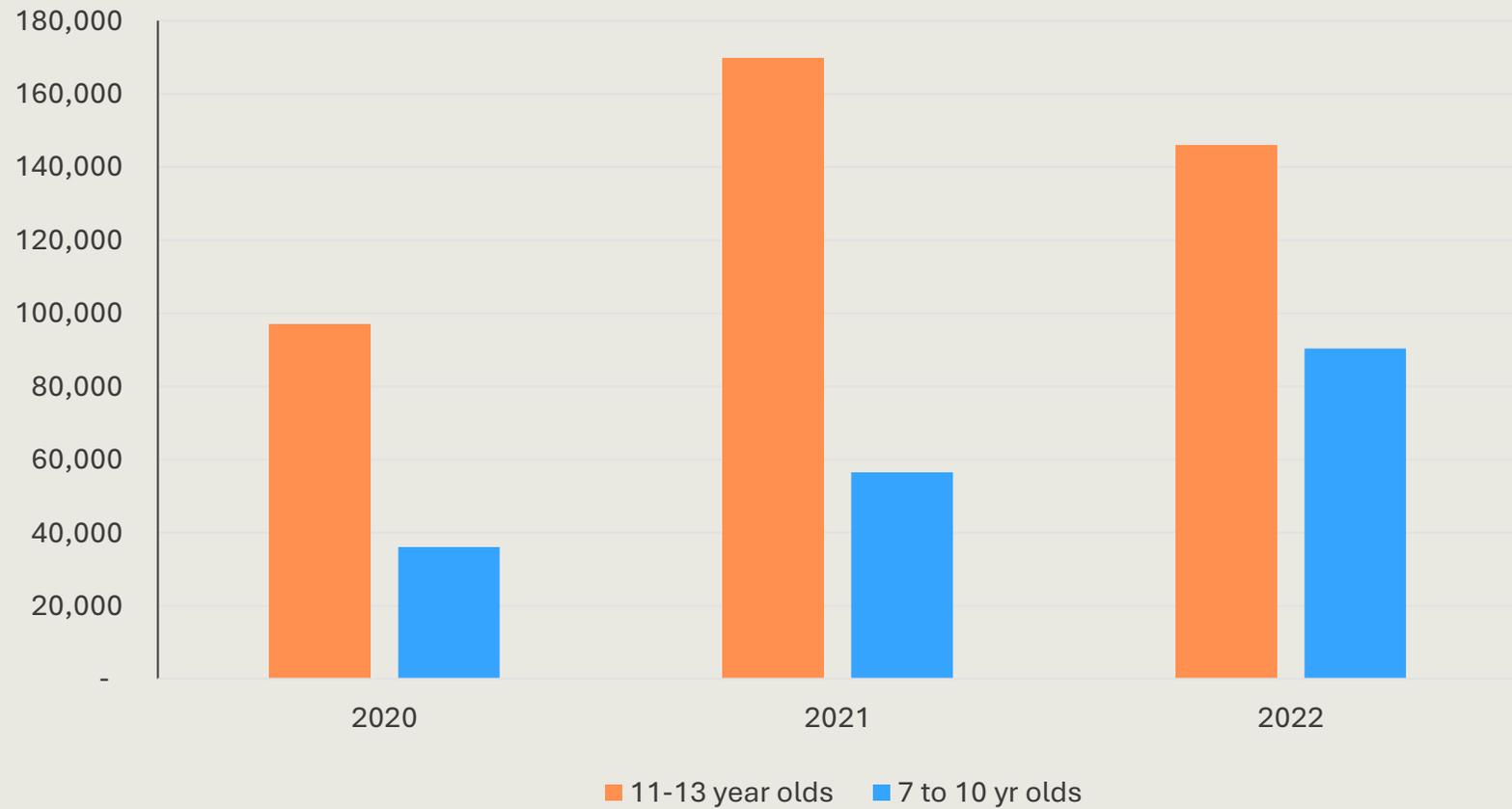
A small number
were unidentifiable.

2022 reports by age breakdown



● Age 0-2 ● Age 3-6 ● Age 7-10 ● Age 11-13 ● Age 14-15 ● Age 16-17

Age of victims – comparisons year on year



Location of content 2022



North America
41,464 Reports | 16%

Grand Total:
255,571 | 100%

Hidden Service:
1,067 Reports | 0%

Report Remove:
101 Reports | 0%

South America
6 Reports | 0%

Europe
(Including Russia & Turkey)
167,809 Reports | 66%

Africa
60 Reports | 0%

Asia
45,048 Reports | 18%

Australasia
16 Reports | 0%

UK-hosted child sexual abuse: 2022

The **UK hosted 0.25%** of all child sexual abuse URLs which IWF identified in 2022

3 Minutes

Fastest removal time

- The UK hosts a small volume of online child sexual abuse content.
- Since 2003, UK hosting is less than 1%.
- In 2022 this figure was just **0.25%**.
- All **16** companies whose services were abused were **not IWF Members**.

A large, white, stylized quote icon consisting of two facing chevrons.

In the UK, **the IWF sits at the heart of the national response** to combating the proliferation of indecent images of children.

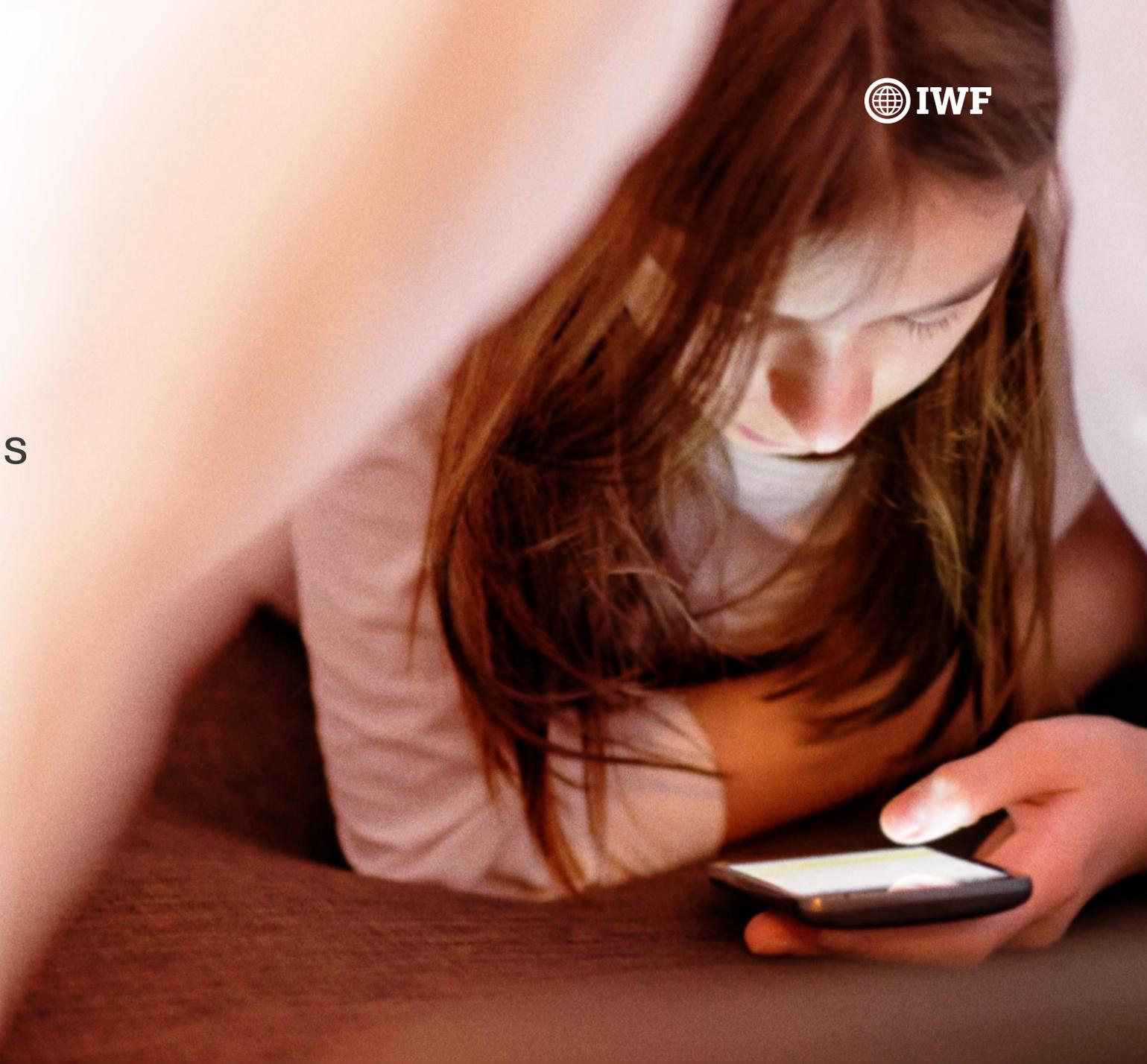
It is an organisation that deserves to be publicly acknowledged as being a vital part of how, and why, comparatively little child sexual abuse material is hosted in the UK.”

Professor Alexis Jay

The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA)

‘Self-generated’

The capturing of activities while there is no abuser physically present in the room with the child





THE HIDDEN CRIMES

in our children's bedrooms



“

IN CONVERSATION WITH

IWF Senior Analyst, Rosa

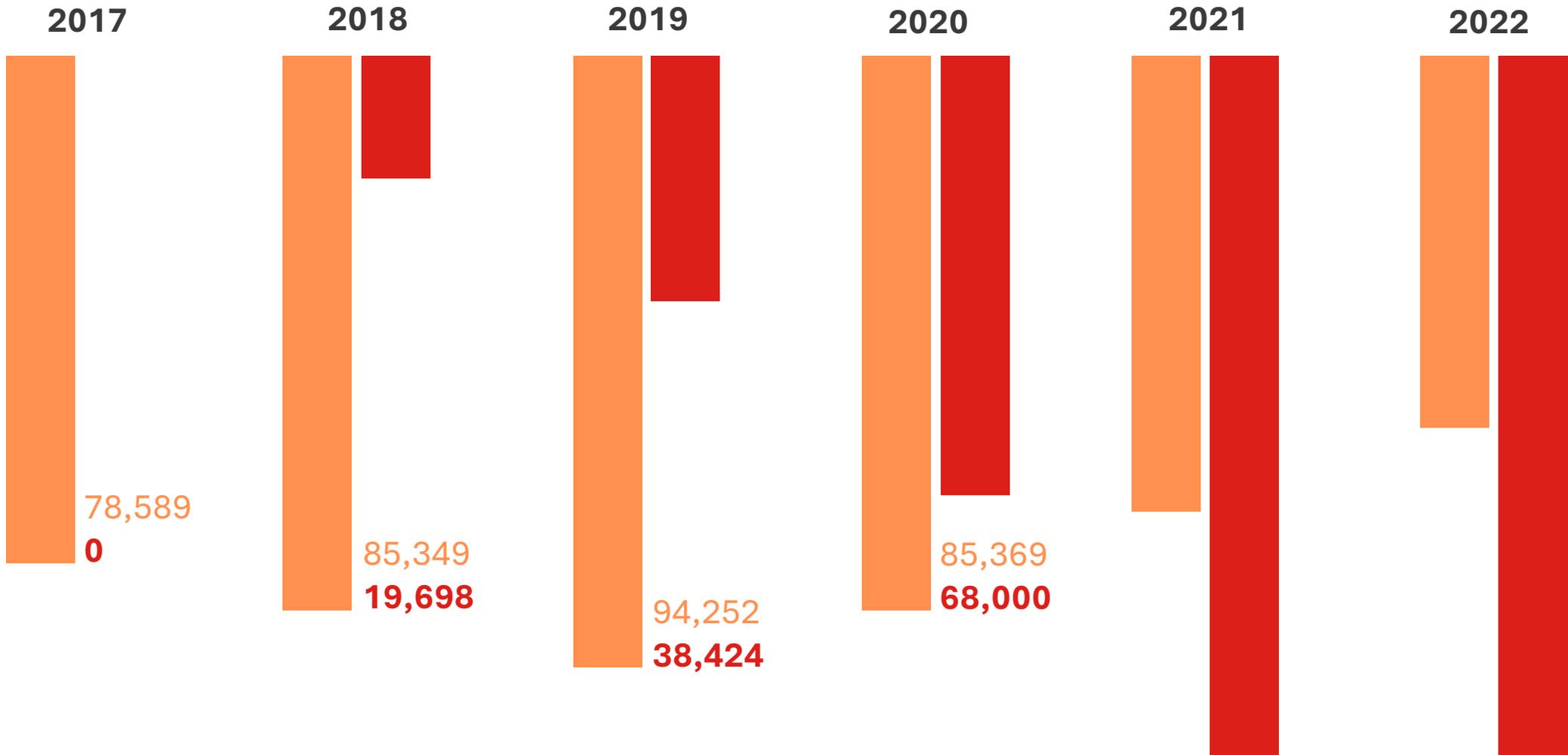


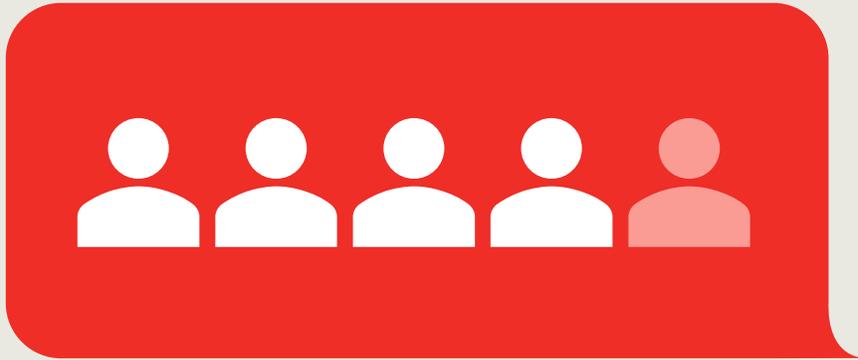
IWF
Internet
Watch
Foundation

iwf.org.uk/inconversation

Total number of actioned reports

Abuser present vs “Self-generated”





We found that sexual imagery created of children when they are online, often in the supposed 'safe spaces' of their bedrooms, now accounts for almost **four in every five** reports.

69,913
182,281

56,208
199,363



Vulnerabilities



-the child is **never** to blame*

- Key stage of sexual development (amplified feelings of anxiety, sensitivity + vulnerability, curiosity + riskier behaviours);
- Popularity – “likes” rule;
- Believe it’s just a game / some fun;
- Naivety about the honesty of others & a misplaced confidence in themselves;
- Special educational needs increase vulnerability;
- Having use of an internet-enabled device with a camera.

*Informed by research by BritainThinks on behalf of IWF, 2019

Tactics observed by our analysts

Offenders will:

- ‘Scattergun’ large volumes of requests
- Apply pressure / persuasion / coercion
- Encourage them into a “harmless game”
- Tell them how beautiful / pretty / grown up they are
- Show them recordings of other children doing sexual activities to ‘normalise’ it to their victim.

Hey, fancy doing a challenge? 🎮

what kinda challenge?

Prevention & Protection campaigns

Building resilience to the threat of self-generated sexual abuse of children, thereby reducing the number of incidences. Phase IV:

1. To raise awareness of the risks to **LGBTQ+ young people** in particular, including male identifying young people and **girls aged 11-13**. Help them recognise the actions of offenders, feel empowered to block, report & tell someone they trust.
2. Provide **more positive actions for parents** and carers to take to prevent their child becoming a victim of this type of abuse.
3. Campaign to run for 6 weeks starting on **9 February** – ending w/c **20 March**.

Funded by IWF. Supported by Snap and TikTok with ad credits.





Home Truths

Follow the **T.A.L.K** checklist:

Talk to your child about online sexual abuse.

Agree digital boundaries.

Learn about online platforms your child loves.

Know how to use tools and safety settings.

- **Parents' resource on microsite with conversation starters.**



WHAT CAN PARENTS AND CARERS DO?



Talk to your child about online sexual abuse. Start the conversation – and listen to their concerns.

Agree ground rules about the way you use technology as a family.

Learn about the platforms and apps your child loves. Take an interest in their online life.

Know how to use tools, apps and settings that can help to keep your child safe online.

Parent content creators



@powerthoughtsnc
(19.4K followers on Instagram)



@someone_s_mum
(37K followers on Instagram)



@robertjdouglas_
(14.7K followers on Instagram)



@annikisommerville
(19.8K followers on Instagram)

Parent content creators



Compilation film

**GURLS
OUT
LOUD**

Gurls Out Loud

Block. Report. Tell someone you trust.

- To help girls spot the signs of grooming / coercion.
- Series of educational social content.
- Empowering: inspired by women's marches, climate change protests and *Me Too* movement.
- Social influencer content.
- Places of support signposted on microsite.

gurloutloud.com

**TELL
SOMEONE
YOU
TRUST**



Social content examples



**GURLS
OUT
LOUD**

**BLOCK. REPORT.
TELL SOMEONE
YOU TRUST.**

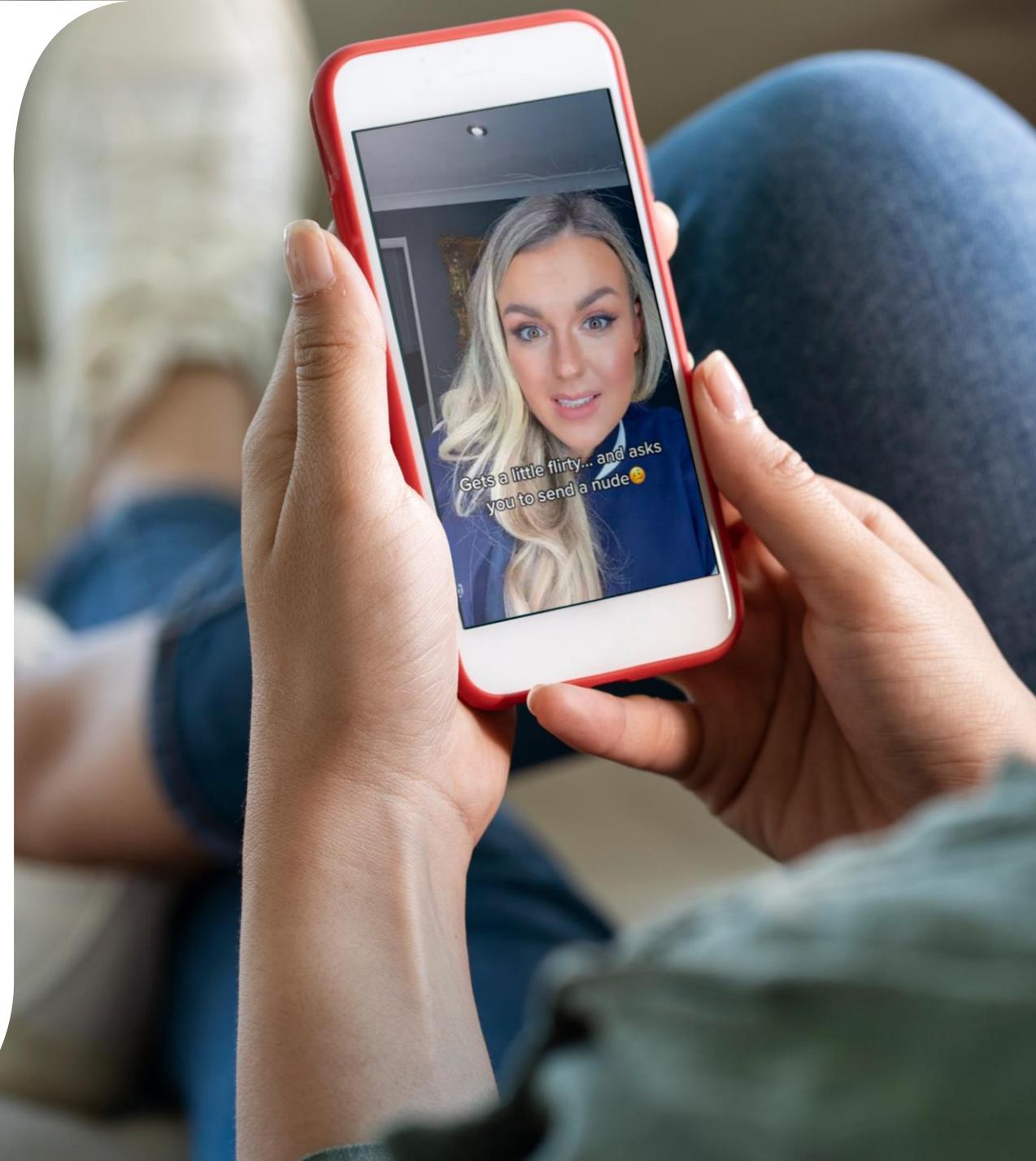
Influencer content

We worked with 25 social media influencers who created content on their TikTok and YouTube channels to support the campaign

Tallia Storm



Caitlin and Leah



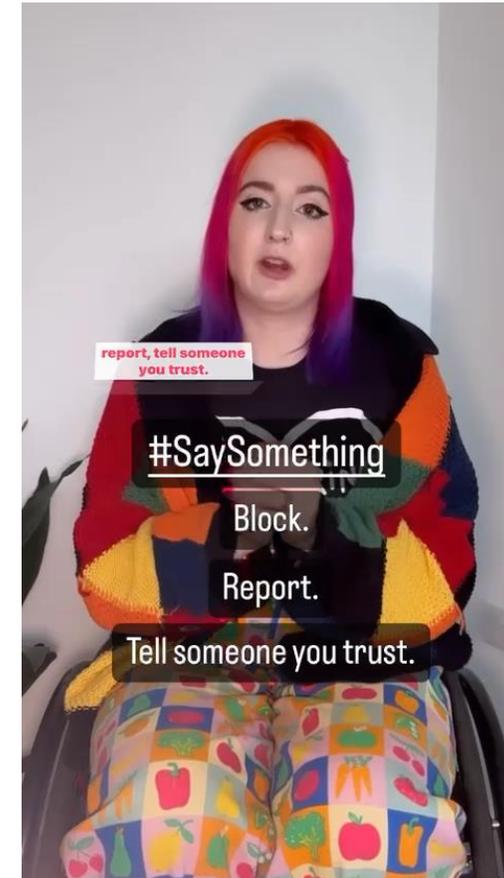
Young digital creators



@itsmillyevans
(10.2K followers on Instagram
400K on TikTok!)



@dillonkr_
(3.8K followers on Instagram,
90K on TikTok!)



@disabled_eliza
(89.9K followers on Instagram,
73.3K on TikTok)

Good quality conversations

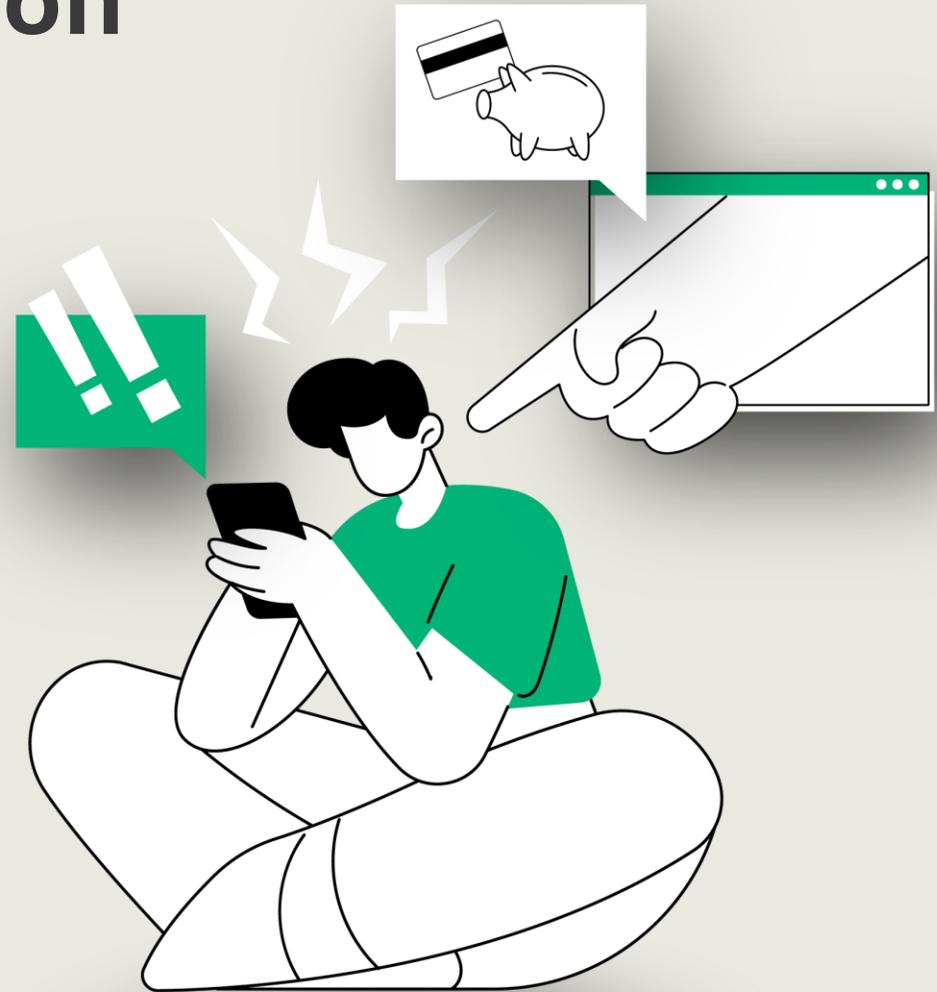
One good quality conversation about online grooming and online sexual abuse can make all the difference to both parents/carers and daughters.

- It breaks down barriers to future conversations.
- Parents who'd already spoken to their daughters were more confident their daughter would speak to them if a problem arose.
- Daughters who had been spoken to were more open to the possibility of their parents talking to them again.



Sexually coerced extortion

Blackmail, involving the exploitation of nude, explicit or sensitive images or videos to coerce victims to share more explicit imagery or paying to prevent further sharing.



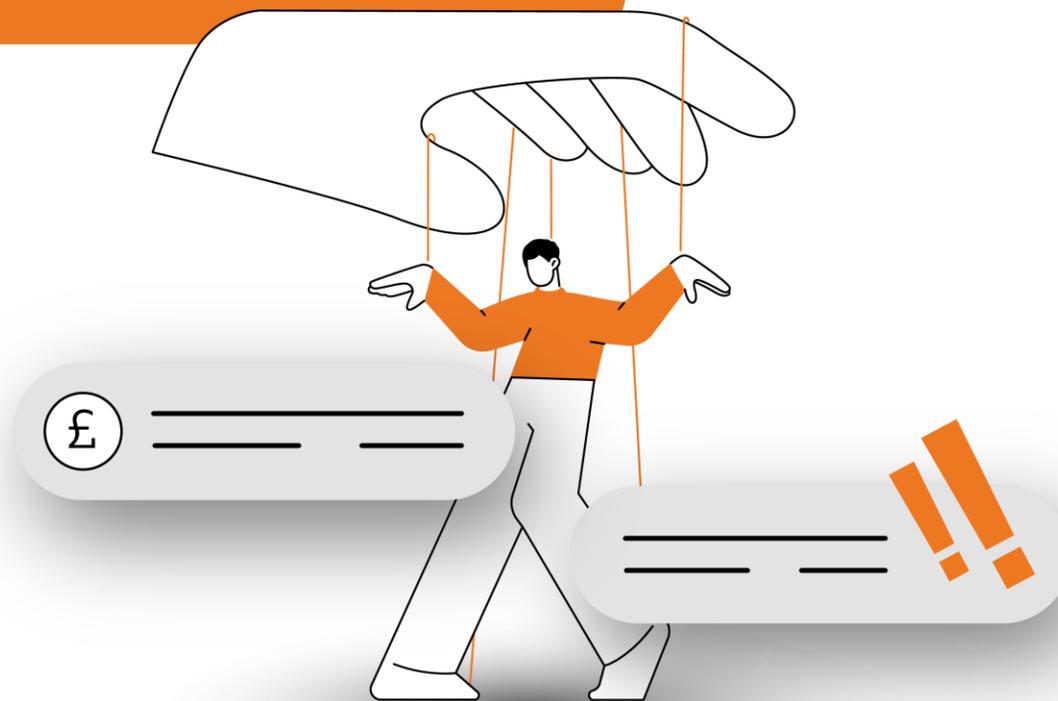
2023 'sextortion' data

Older teens (14-17 years old) are the most at risk, with boys apparently being targeted most often.

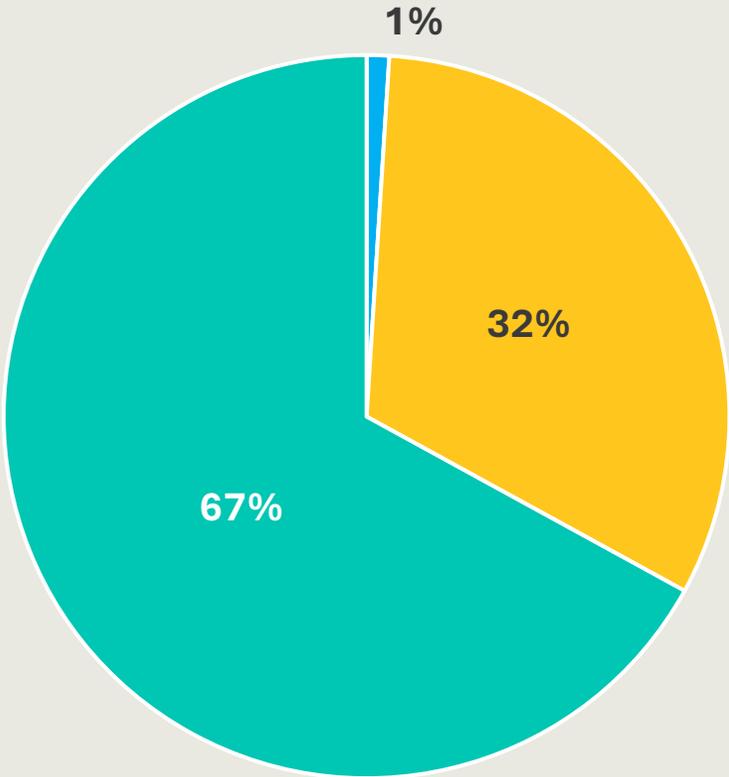
- Many abusers are adults posing as young girls, who trick teenage boys into believing that they are having an online conversation with a female peer.
- Once the image is received, abusers threaten to share imagery with friends, family or more widely on the internet if they are not paid money.
- Contact details of the victim's friends and family are often shared to make the abuser's threats appear more credible.

JANUARY – AUGUST 2023

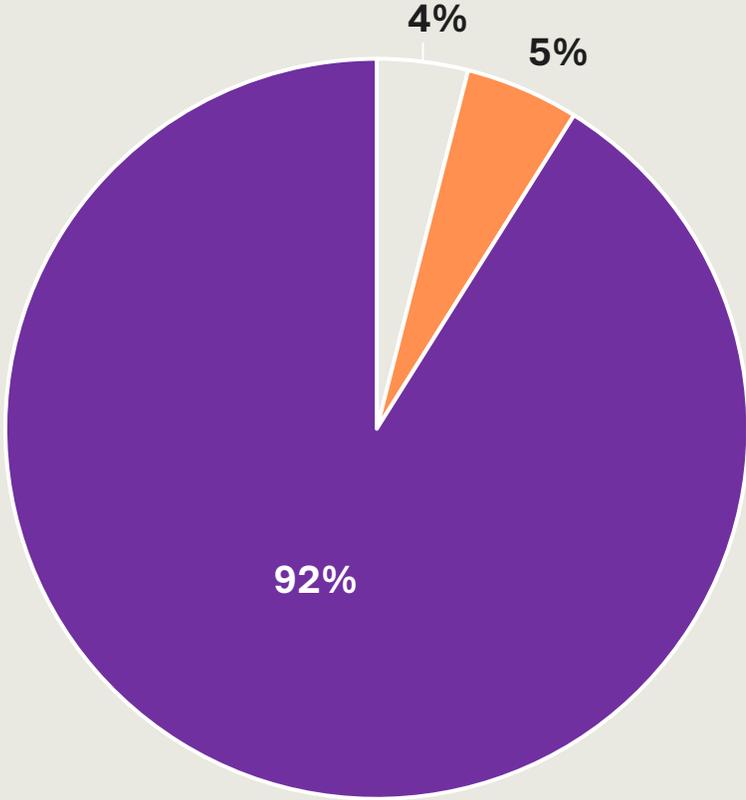
IWF received more reports of sexually coerced extortion than the whole of 2022.



Ages & sex of children in sextortion reports to 31 August 2023



■ 7-10 ■ 14-15 ■ 16-17



■ Both ■ Female ■ Male

Report Remove



Nude image of you online?
We can help take it down.



IWF & NSPCC developed Report Remove to support a young person in reporting their own sexual images or videos for removal from the internet.

The process is child-centred; does not identify them and ensures the child will not inadvertently be criminalised.

The child reports their image/video to IWF through Report Remove tool.

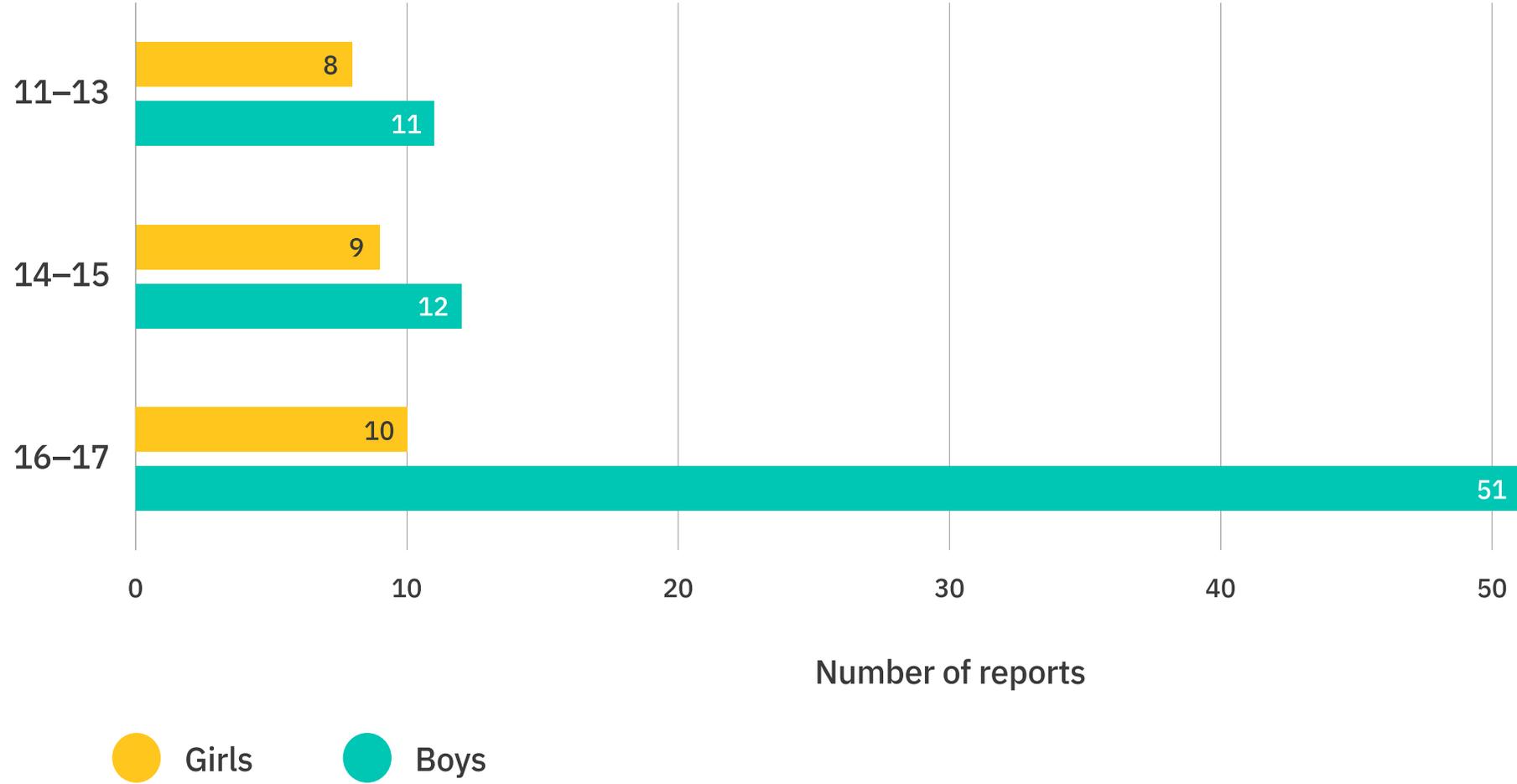


IWF analysts assess the imagery against UK law. A criminal image will be hashed & removed from internet, safeguarding the child.



Childline contacts the child to provide updates on their report & offers emotional support as well as tips & advice where appropriate, further safeguarding the child.

Report Remove – reports by sex & age



Nude image of you online?
We can help take it down.

AI-generated child sexual abuse images and videos

You are only limited by your imagination, and the words you can find to express it.



Text-to-Image Technology



Text-to-image UI (eg: Midjourney)

You type in what you want to see; the software generates the image.

- Available as local opensource (Stable Diffusion) or closed cloud (DALL-E, Midjourney) software.
- Accepts positive text **‘prompts’** (desirable attributes) and negative (non-desirable attributes).
- Trained on enormous tagged datasets of real imagery.

Perpetrators can turn to AI CSAM for many reasons

One dark web forum user provides a typical view in listing five benefits:



- ✓ **Users can create images on their own devices;**
- ✓ **Everything can be custom-made and edited to specification;**
- ✓ **AI CSAM can show what is impossible in the real world;**
- ✓ **It is very secure;**
- ✓ **AI is always getting better."**

To some extent, all these points are true.

Realism



AI CSAM: Prevalence



One month period, one dark web forum

SEPT - OCT 2023

20,254

In total, 20,254 AI-generated images were found to have been posted to **one dark web CSAM forum in a one-month period.**

11,108

Of these, 11,108 images were selected for assessment by IWF analysts. These were the images that were judged most likely to be criminal.

2,562

2,562 images were assessed as criminal pseudo photographs.

416

416 assessed as criminal prohibited images.

What's the risk?

Suojellaan Lapsia (Protect Children) and their Redirection Survey Report:

- More than half (52%) of the respondents have felt afraid that viewing CSAM might lead to sexual acts against a child;
- 44% said that viewing CSAM made them think about seeking contact with a child,
- More than a third (37%) said they had sought direct contact with a child after viewing CSAM.

These are truly stunning. Some of the realism in these is about 95% of the way to indistinguishable from real photos.

Anonymous dark web user

A picture of a couple random kiddies I seen playing outside at the park one day I went and made it a fake

Anonymous dark web user

 **Resources,
help & advice**



Helpful links

Internet Watch Foundation : [iwf.org.uk](https://www.iwf.org.uk)

Sextortion advice : [iwf.org.uk/sextortion](https://www.iwf.org.uk/sextortion)

AI-generated child sexual abuse : [iwf.org.uk/aireport](https://www.iwf.org.uk/aireport)

IWF YouTube account : [youtube.com/c/IWFHotline](https://www.youtube.com/c/IWFHotline)

Girls' advice / campaign : [gurloutloud.com](https://www.girlsoutloud.com)

Parents' advice / campaign : talk.iwf.org.uk

Report Remove - for children and young people to remove a nude : [childline.org.uk/remove](https://www.childline.org.uk/remove)

UK Safer Internet Centre : [saferinternet.org.uk](https://www.saferinternet.org.uk)



Helpful links

Safer Internet Day : saferinternetday.org.uk (Tuesday 6 February 2024)

Project Evolve, free toolkit for schools : projectevolve.co.uk

Professionals Online Safety Helpline (POSH) : saferinternet.org.uk/professionals-online-safety-helpline

360 Degree Safe (free online safety self-review tool for schools) : swgfl.org.uk/services/360-degree-safe/

UK Safer Internet Centre advice for Governors and Trustees : saferinternet.org.uk/guide-and-resource/governors-and-trustees

See how your area ranks nationally in the Online Safety School's Index : swgfl.org.uk/research/online-safety-school-index-2023/



iwf.org.uk/support

Support our work



- **Donate:** give a monthly or one-off donation.
- **Fundraise:** Does your school or organisation have a charity to support? Choose to support IWF.
- **Raise awareness:** help spread the word by sharing and liking our posts on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn.
- **Corporate partnership:** support us through gifts-in-kind, Pro bono, match giving or employee fundraising.
- **Effortless acts of support:** Easy ways to help that cost you anything!
 - [Collection 4 Clothes](#)
 - [Give as You Live](#)
 - [eBay for Charity](#)
- **Get in touch:**
fundraising@iwf.org.uk



Scan QR to donate to
IWF via JustGiving

Thanks for listening



Contact us:

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