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What Drives Online Child Sexual Abuse Offending? Understanding Motivations, Facilitators, Situational Factors, and Barriers

Insights from a Survey of Undetected Child Sexual Abuse Material Offenders

Protect Children
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COUNCIL OF THE BALTIC SEA STATES

Children at Risk

UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN FINLAND

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Project 2KNOW

Children growing up in the digital age are increasingly exposed to risk of sexual abuse and exploitation online. Project 2KNOW aims to understand these crimes and build sustainable and effective mechanisms to support victims and their families.

Project 2KNOW is a two-year project funded by the European Commission, dedicated to improving the ecosystem of prevention and response to online crimes of sexual violence against children. The project aims to support and improve data collection on violence against children by developing a data collection model, conducting innovative research, and translating knowledge into direct preventative action to protect children from harm.

Learn more: https://www.protectchildren.fi/en/2know

Consortium

Protect Children is a non-governmental child-rights organisation based in Helsinki, Finland, working globally to end all forms of sexual violence against children. Protect Children leads Project 2KNOW. Learn more about Protect Children: www.protectchildren.fi/en

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Executive Summary

This report explores the drivers of online child sexual abuse offending by analysing data from an anonymous survey of child sexual abuse material (CSAM) offenders. Key motivations include sexual interest in children, high sex drive, and emotional regulation, while facilitators such as sensation-seeking, adverse childhood experiences, desensitisation to pornography, negative affect, and substance abuse amplify the risk. Additionally, situational factors such as the anonymity of the internet and the ease of accessing CSAM online further enable these behaviours. Offenders highlight fear of legal consequences and targeted interventions as effective deterrents. The report calls for stronger prevention strategies and enhanced legal and support frameworks to more effectively combat CSAM and protect children worldwide.

→ **Interactive version of the report available on our website https://www.suojellaanlapsia.fi/en/2know-research-report**

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Introduction

The proliferation of child sexual abuse material (CSAM) inflicts profound and lasting harm on victims, survivors, and society as a whole. Alarmingly, recent data suggests that more than 300 million children fall victim to online child sexual abuse and exploitation annually, underscoring the magnitude of this global crisis.[1]

In recent years, the volume of CSAM circulating online has escalated at an unprecedented rate, driven in part by the growth of offender communities and the increasing accessibility of advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI). These technological advancements have not only lowered the barriers to producing and distributing CSAM but have also enabled offenders to exploit digital platforms with greater anonymity and efficiency. The rapid evolution of these digital tools presents new and complex challenges for those working to combat online child sexual abuse.

To address this pressing issue, it is essential to deepen our understanding of the factors that contribute to CSAM offending. While a sexual interest in children is a recognised motivation, research suggests that it is not the sole driver of such behaviour. Additionally, a number of psychological, social, physiological, and situational factors play critical roles in facilitating these offences. This report seeks to explore these multifaceted influences, drawing from the theoretical basis of Seto's Motivation-Facilitation Model (MFM) of sexual offending, which provides a framework for identifying the motivations and facilitators that contribute to CSAM offending.[2]

This report leverages data from an anonymous survey conducted as part of the EU-funded Project 2KNOW, offering direct insights from individuals engaged in CSAM offences. We aim to uncover the complex interactions between motivations, facilitators, and situational factors that lead to the production and consumption of CSAM. Additionally, we examine the barriers that offenders perceive as effective in preventing their behaviour.

The ultimate goal of this report is to contribute to the development of effective measures to combat CSAM offending. By offering a nuanced understanding of the enablers of this behaviour, along with practical recommendations, we aim to support ongoing efforts to eradicate online child sexual abuse and exploitation. This report is intended to serve as a resource for policymakers, researchers, law enforcement, and child protection professionals.

Research Questions

What specific motivations for CSAM use do offenders self-identify in an anonymous online survey?

What facilitators do offenders report as contributing to their engagement in CSAM offending?

What situational factors do offenders identify as facilitating their access to and commission of CSAM offences?

What barriers do offenders perceive as effective in preventing CSAM offending, and how might these barriers be strengthened?

Methodology

This report explores self-reported data collected from an anonymous survey of individuals who have searched for child sexual abuse material on a dark web search engine. The survey asks respondents to reflect on their use of child sexual abuse material, with an aim of understanding the pathways and motivations that lead to this form of offending against children, as well as the facilitators and situational factors that contribute to the offending behaviour.

The ethical aspects of the research plan were evaluated by the University of Eastern Finland Committee on Research Ethics, which stated that the research is scientifically justified, and the essential ethical aspects have been considered properly. The Committee granted the survey an ethics approval on 16 June 2023 (Statement 25/2023).

Recruitment

Participants to the survey are voluntarily recruited when they search for CSAM on a dark web search engine. All participants provide their informed consent to participate and confirm that they are over the age of 18 before answering the survey. The recruitment methodology also directs the respondents to relevant online and offline resources, including Protect Children's ReDirection Self-Help Program, an online tool aimed at supporting behavioural change and reducing use of CSAM.

Recruitment to the 'Help us to know' survey

User opens a dark web search engine

User conducts a search that indicates that they are seeking CSAM

All search results are blocked

User is offered to answer voluntary and anonymous research surveys

User is offered links to help resources

Survey Items

The survey includes 37 questions and gathers quantitative and qualitative self-report data from respondents. All questions of the survey are mandatory, however respondents may choose the option 'Prefer not to say'. The survey gathers basic demographic information by asking the participants' age and gender. We utilise a combination of validated survey measures and other measures developed by the research team for this study.

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Sample

This report presents analysis of 4,549 survey responses collected between 1 July 2023 and 30 June 2024. In 12-month period, the survey received 5,394 responses. We removed from analysis 845 respondents who reported that they were 'not honest at all' when answering.
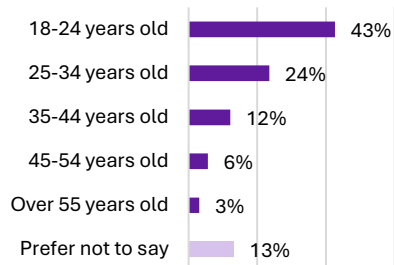
	n
Total responses	5,394
Honest responses	4,549
Sample	**4,549**

16%

84%

- Honest
- Not honest at all

Demographics

The majority of respondents, who have encountered the survey whilst searching for CSAM on dark web search engines, identify themselves as young men, predominantly aged 18-34 years old.

Age of respondents

18-24 years old	43%
25-34 years old	24%
35-44 years old	12%
45-54 years old	6%
Over 55 years old	3%
Prefer not to say	13%

Gender of respondents

Man	68%
Woman	10%
Non-binary	5%
Prefer not to say	17%
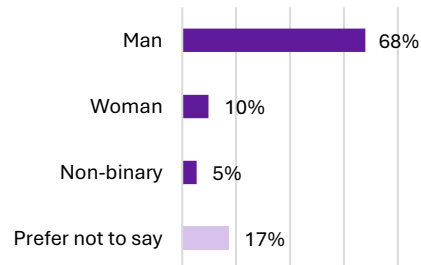
Language of respondents

The 'Help us to know' survey is available in 15 languages. The majority of respondents answered the survey in English, Russian, Portuguese, and Spanish. Responses in English make up over 73% of the total.

Language	Data collection start	Respondents	% of total
English	01/07/23	3,335	73.31 %
Russian	15/09/23	415	9.12 %
Portuguese	27/09/23	366	8.05 %
Spanish	05/09/23	293	6.44 %
Italian	10/10/23	41	0.90 %
Polish	19/09/23	31	0.68 %
German	15/11/23	26	0.57 %
Czech	25/09/23	17	0.37 %
Dutch	22/09/23	10	0.22 %
Croatian	21/12/23	5	0.11 %
Swedish	01/07/23	3	0.07 %
Finnish	01/07/23	3	0.07 %
Danish	03/11/23	2	0.04 %
Serbian	21/12/23	1	0.02 %
Bosnian	21/12/23	1	0.02 %
Total		**4,549**	**100.00%**

The report contains direct quotes from survey participants, retaining original linguistic features and formatting. Quotes provided in any language other than English have been translated using online translation tools and checked by specialists, and the original quotes are presented below.

→ Find the full survey data here

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Results

Analysis of the self-reported data reveals several key themes that shed light on the motivations, facilitators, and situational factors that contribute to CSAM offending. These findings provide a nuanced understanding of the complex drivers behind this behaviour. In addition to identifying these contributing factors, we also examine the barriers that offenders perceive as effective in preventing their engagement in CSAM offending, offering valuable insights for developing targeted prevention strategies.

Motivations | Understanding the motivations behind CSAM offending is essential for gaining insight into the internal states and desires that motivate individuals to offend, which is crucial to inform effective prevention strategies. We define motivations as the underlying psychological drivers that propel individuals towards behaviour. Seto finds that key motivations for sexual offending include paraphilias, a high sex drive, and intense mating effort.[3] We identify similar motivations among respondents to the 'Help us to know' survey, in particular: sexual interest in children and paraphilias, high sex drive, and emotional regulation.

Facilitators | Motivation alone is not sufficient to result in offending. Facilitators are internal and external factors that lower the barriers to act on motivations. We examine several factors that seem to facilitate CSAM offending within the sample, including sensation-seeking, negative affect and drug use, and the impact of pornography use. We also explore how adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) can create

long-term vulnerabilities that may, in some cases, facilitate offending behaviour.

Situational factors | Situational factors play a crucial role in enabling CSAM offending by providing opportunities to offend and reducing perceived risks. Cohen and Felson's Routine Activity Theory suggests that for a crime to occur, there must not only be a motivated offender but also an opportunity for the offence to occur.[4] Technological advancements, the availability and ease of access to CSAM online, and the perceived safety and anonymity of the internet, are key situational factors that we find to contribute to offending.

Barriers | Understanding the barriers to CSAM offending is vital for developing effective prevention measures. The primary barrier identified in the 'Help us to know' survey responses is the fear of legal consequences. Additionally, we find interventions and deterrence messaging to be effective and practical barriers to offending behaviour. Encouragingly, many respondents believe that behavioural change is possible, and that offending can be stopped, offering hope for successful prevention strategies. By identifying the factors that deter offenders from acting on their motivations, we can strengthen our efforts to combat CSAM.

Although it is impossible to establish a definitive blueprint encompassing the specific motivations, facilitators, and situational factors for every CSAM offender, enhancing our understanding of these elements is essential for developing more effective prevention and intervention strategies, and for mitigating the risks of harmful behaviour towards children. We will now present detailed findings uncovered from the self-report data.

1. Motivations for Online Child Sexual Abuse Offending

Research has identified several underlying drivers behind CSAM offending, with sexual interest in children being a common but not exclusive motivation. Studies reveal that there are distinct yet overlapping motivations for this behaviour.[5] Recent research highlights that terms like hypersexuality and sexual compulsivity are often used to describe chronic high sex drive associated with distress or impairment, and these terms may overlap.[6]

Motivations for online child sexual abuse offending identified in prior research include sexual interest in children and arousal, incorporation of CSAM into broader offending patterns, pleasure in collecting CSAM, impulsivity and curiosity, facilitation of online relationships, replacing negative offline relationships, using CSAM as 'therapy' for personal issues, financial gain, and manifestations of the internet's 'addictive' aspects.[7]
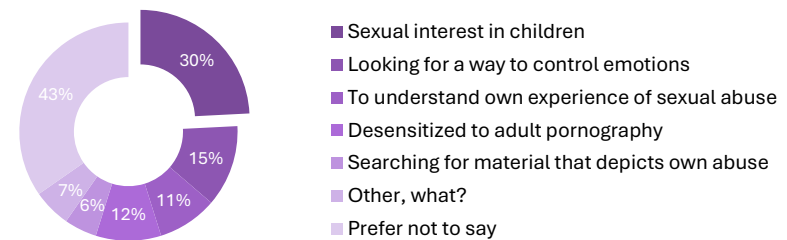
While many respondents to the 'Help us to know' survey report they are motivated to use CSAM by their sexual interest in children, they also identify other motivations for CSAM use, including emotional self-regulation and high sex drive. Moreover, some respondents report they view CSAM to search for or understand their own experiences of abuse. These responses support the notion that CSAM offending can start even without a prior sexual interest in children and can be triggered by a variety of factors.[8] We explore three key motivations that we identified in our analysis of the survey responses.

1.1. Sexual Interest in Children and Paraphilias

It is evident that sexual interest in children is a significant driver of online CSAM offending; a pattern clearly reflected in our survey data as 30% (n=1,375) of respondents self-identified sexual interest in children as a key reason why they search for CSAM. Moreover, when directly asked about their sexual interests, 58% (n=2,649) report experiencing sexual interest towards individuals under the age of 18 – the majority identifying that they are interested in postpubescent adolescents aged 15-17 years old (19%, n=863).

There are a number of reasons why people search for child sexual abuse material. Which reason(s) do you relate to most?
N=4,549

Legend:
- Sexual interest in children
- Looking for a way to control emotions
- To understand own experience of sexual abuse
- Desensitized to adult pornography
- Searching for material that depicts own abuse
- Other, what?
- Prefer not to say

These results align with previous research, which identifies certain paraphilias as primary motivations to commit crimes of sexual violence against children.[9] The American Psychiatric Association define paraphilia as "any of a group of disorders in which unusual or bizarre fantasies or behaviour are necessary for sexual excitement", and it is considered a paraphilic disorder "only if it causes distress or impairment to the individual or if its practice has harmed or risked harming others".[10] Paedophilia and hebephilia, which are paraphilias associated with crimes of sexual violence against prepubescent and pubescent children respectively, have been identified as the main

motivations for sexual offending against children.[11] Other paraphilias associated with sexual offending are biastophilia, non-consensual sexual sadism, exhibitionism, and voyeurism.[12]

Do you feel a sexual interest towards individuals under the age of 18?
N= 4,549

Yes, infants and toddlers (age 0-3)	9%
Yes, prepubescent children (age 4-10)	10%
Yes, pubescent children (age 11-14)	16%
Yes, postpubescent adolescents (age 15-17)	19%
Some sexual interest towards children	4%
No sexual interest in children	17%
Prefer not to say	33%
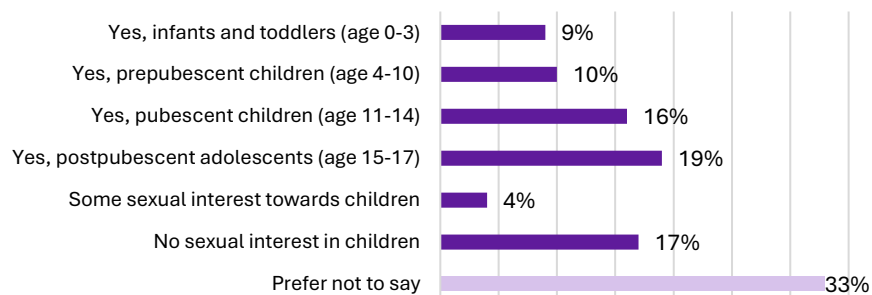
These findings reinforce the assertion that sexual interest in children is a prevalent motivation to commit CSAM-related crimes, also among the population of survey respondents.

1.2.   High Sex Drive

In addition to sexual interest in children and paraphilias, prior research finds high sex drive to be a key motivation for sexual offending against children.[13] Sex drive can be defined as the strength of sexual desire, influenced by factors such as age, hormones, relationship status, and physical health.[14] High sex drive can manifest in perpetual and strong sexual preoccupation, very frequent engagement in sexual activities, excessive consumption of pornography, and rapid change of sexual partners despite experienced negative impact on everyday life.[15] High sex drive can manifest in online child sexual abuse offending when an individual's

desire for sex overcomes all inhibitions about forcing another person to have sexual relations, or having sexual relations with someone who cannot consent.[16]

Our analysis of the open-ended survey responses indicates that high sex drive is a significant motivation for some CSAM offenders. Several respondents describe how their heightened sexual drive compels them to engage in behaviours they acknowledge as wrong:

→ *"I am divided into two. One part of me understands how bad and perverted all this is and that it is a mistake of consciousness. The other part constantly wants "something like that" because the arousal is very strong, and it seems that nothing can be stronger."*

Original quote in Russian: "я делюсь на двое. одна часть меня понимает насколько это всё плохо и извращено и что это ошибка сознания. другая часть постоянно хочет "чего-то этакого" потому что возбуждение очень сильное и кажется что выше него ничего не может быть".

High sex drive can blur barriers to coercing another person to a sexual act, perpetuating criminal behaviour. However, on its own, it does not necessarily result in offending; it must be combined with other facilitating and situational factors. For example, in the online environment, where individuals operate under the perceived safety and anonymity of the internet, and can easily access explicit and harmful content, a high sex drive can potentially become dangerous. Read more about situational factors of online CSAM offending in Section 3: Situational Factors.
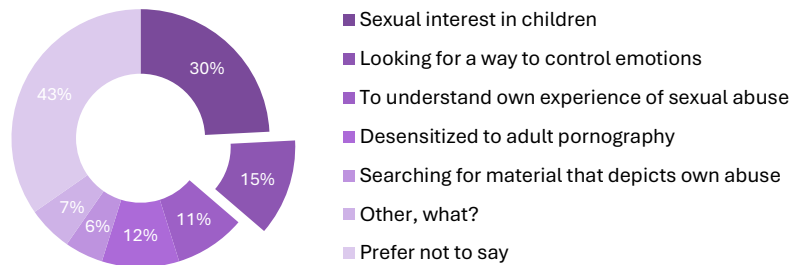
1.3. Emotional Regulation

Studies have found that, aside from sexual interest and high sex drive, a key motivation to search for and view CSAM can be self-regulation, i.e., understanding and controlling sexual urges, finding distraction from mundane problems, and regulating emotions.[17]

Similarly, our analysis indicates that emotional regulation is a key motivation identified by some respondents. Notably, 15% (n=684) of respondents report that they search for CSAM as a way to manage their emotions. Emotional regulation of feelings such as loneliness, isolation, depression, and anxiety, among others, is frequently cited as a driving factor behind engagement in CSAM-related crimes.[18]

There are a number of reasons why people search for child sexual abuse material. Which reason(s) do you relate to most?
N=4,549

- Sexual interest in children
- Looking for a way to control emotions
- To understand own experience of sexual abuse
- Desensitized to adult pornography
- Searching for material that depicts own abuse
- Other, what?
- Prefer not to say

Some respondents to the 'Help us to know' survey report using CSAM as a way of processing emotions that they have no other way to cope with. Notably, a number of respondents explain that they search for CSAM in an attempt to control their sexual urges and to avoid committing harm to children in person.

→ "Lack of any other way to have a sexual experience. I wouldn't ever do anything irl or hurt anyone. Going without any sexual outlet for a lifetime is unbearable."

→ "Ultimately, I would not want to hurt someone. It is better to jerk off to a video than to commit a contact crime."

Original quote in Russian: "Но в конечном итоге я бы не хотел причинять кому-то боль. Уж лучше подрочить на видео, чем в реальности совершить преступление."

→ "I am consciously trying to not harm children. One of the measures in this effort is to not consume actual porn, and the other is to not actually have any relation with a child."

Additionally, some respondents suggest that they use CSAM as a way to cope with their past experiences.

→ "I want to at least see on video what I didn't get as a teenager."

→ "I expierienced repeated sexual mental and physical abuse, which I couldn't predict. I had my limbs broken and was almost suffocated on one ocassion. I self harm and continiously relieveve my trauma by hurting myself. seeing my blood and videos of abuse help.. I dont see children as sexual target. Instead of them I see myself."

Other respondents report that they search for CSAM depicting individuals of a similar age to themselves. This behaviour may reflect a desire or need to understand their own experiences through viewing content that depicts their own age group. It may also be influenced by the widespread availability of CSAM online, and involuntary exposure to this content during childhood.[19] Involuntary exposure to violent or abusive sexual content has been shown to be highly damaging to children and young people, and can lead to adverse effects such as the development of risky and harmful sexual behaviours in the future.[20] This behaviour highlights the need to implement educational programs targeting young people to encourage healthy relations and attitudes towards sexuality, and ultimately prevent and address harmful sexual behaviours.[21]

→ *"Sexual attraction to peers."*

Original quote in Russian: "сексуальное влечение к ровесницам."

→ *"18 so kinda still attracted to 15-17 range"*

→ *"I'm 17 and I'm looking for pornography with people my age"*

Original quote in Russian: "мне 17 и я ищу порнографию с лицами моего возраста."

→ *"I am myself a teenager and i am looking for pornography dewpiciting my age group."*

→ *"I'm 15 and looking for girls of my age."*

Original quote in Russian: "Мне 15 я ищу ровестниц."

→ *"[…] sometimes the curiosity to see if the sites or telegram groups have been taken down. I am glad some get taken down, abusive material is not that intrseting for me nor am i intrsted really but if i were to reflect I think I search for it becuse I like the rush of trying to find difficult things and do it for the adreniline, I hate that I do THIS for adreniline sometimes."*

Note: Whilst we took measures to ensure that participants confirmed they were over the age of 18 before answering the survey, the anonymous nature of the online survey means we could not fully guarantee this. Consequently, some respondents claimed to be under 18. We also recognise that it is common for CSAM offenders to be dishonest about their age, possibly in an attempt to reduce their perceived culpability.

Some respondents report that they search for CSAM as a way to cope with feelings of loneliness and isolation. This behaviour is often driven by a desire for connection, community, and social interaction, as they seek relatedness in an environment where they feel disconnected from others.

→ *"I'm lonely and depressed."*

→ *"[…] I am attracted to children and I feel alone too!"*

Original quote in Portuguese: "[...] mas tenho atracao po criancas e me sinto so tambem!"

→ *"The impossibility of meeting normal adult girls. I'm always alone."*

Original quote in Russian: "Невозможность завети знакомство с нормальными взрослыми девушками. Я всегда один."

In summary, emotional regulation emerges as a key motivation for some individuals who engage in CSAM offending. Approximately 15% of respondents indicated that they turn to CSAM as a means of managing emotions such as loneliness, depression, and anxiety. Many respondents suggest that they view CSAM as a way to avoid causing direct harm to children, using it as an outlet for emotions they feel unable to cope with in other ways. Additionally, some respondents use CSAM as a tool to process their own past traumas or to understand their own experiences by seeking content that reflects their age group.

These findings underscore the need for targeted educational programs and interventions to address the emotional and psychological factors that contribute to CSAM offending, particularly among young people.

For more information on the motivations behind CSAM offending, read the '2KNOW Preliminary Findings Report'

www.protectchildren.fi/en/post/2know-preliminary-findings-report

2. Facilitators of Online Child Sexual Abuse Offending

Motivation alone is not enough to result in offending behaviour. Even individuals with strong sexual interest in children, a high sex drive, or those seeking to regulate their emotions may still resist these urges. According to the Motivation-Facilitation Model, and consistent with the general theory of crime, robust inhibitions can counteract even the strongest motivations to offend.[22] This model underscores that strong internal or external inhibitions can prevent the translation of motivation into actual offending behaviour.

Self-control can manifest as stable traits across different individuals, or as dynamic states that fluctuate based on mood, exposure to stressors, or other factors like substance use.[23] Additionally, state facilitators such as negative affect (e.g., feelings of anger, stress, or depression), and alcohol and substance use can increase the likelihood of offending.

We identify from the survey responses several factors that may facilitate CSAM offending, including sensation-seeking, adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), negative affect, drug use, and the influence of pornography. These facilitators may intertwine, lowering inhibitors to offending behaviour. For instance, ACEs have been found to correlate with higher prevalence of substance abuse and risk-taking behaviour.[24] At the same time, negative affect and drug use are associated with sensation-seeking behaviour.[25] Sensation-seeking, in turn, can facilitate habitual and excessive use of pornography.[26]

Facilitators by themselves do not cause offending; they simply enable offending behaviour when a motivation is present.

2.1.   Sensation-Seeking

Sensation-seeking is a key trait facilitator for online child sexual abuse offending. This trait is characterised by individuals who chase "varied, novel, and complex sensations and experiences", often engaging in risk-taking behaviour to pursue these experiences.[27] As described, sensation-seekers are drawn to experiences for their own sake and may undertake risky actions to achieve them.

In the context of CSAM offending, sensation-seeking can manifest as a desire for the adrenaline and thrill associated with engaging in illicit activities.[28] On its own, sensation-seeking would not drive someone to search for CSAM, but when paired with a strong motivation, such as sexual interest in children, this trait may facilitate such offending behaviour. The risk and excitement of viewing explicit material may inspire continued offending behaviour and increased measures to evade detection, making identification and removal of CSAM more challenging.

The survey responses highlight that, for some, the thrill of risk-taking is a strong facilitator for offending behaviour. For these individuals, the illegal and taboo nature of CSAM enhances the excitement, leading them to push boundaries and seek increasingly harmful content. Respondents describe experiencing a powerful adrenaline rush or a strong sense of excitement when viewing CSAM, which further fuels their offending behaviour.
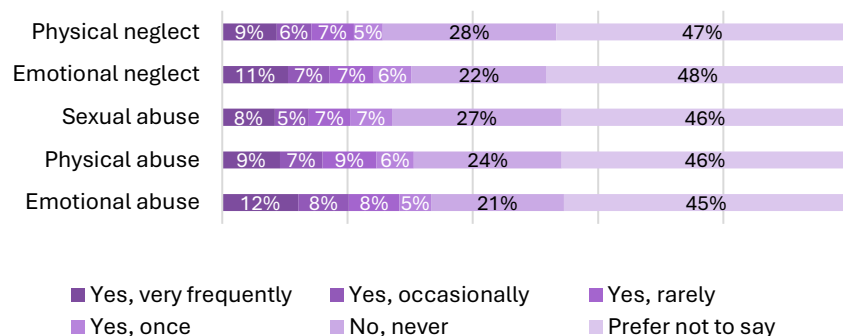
→   "I think I'm interested of illegal thing because we know that's illegal."

→   "That which is taboo is exciting."

→   "I just wanted to play a forbidden game."

Original quote in Russian: "Я просто захотел поиграть в запрещенку."

2.2.   Adverse Childhood Experiences

Many respondents to the 'Help us to know' survey disclose a history of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). 34% (n=1,527) of respondents report that they experienced emotional abuse, 12% (n=556) very frequently, and between 27-31% report experiencing physical or sexual abuse, or emotional or physical neglect. Extensive research on ACEs has established a strong connection between childhood abuse or neglect and negative health and behavioural outcomes in adulthood.[29]

The onset of child sexual abuse offending and the subsequent progression of further engagement with searching and using CSAM have both theoretical and practical significance.[30] Previous research emphasises the link between childhood victimisation and an increased risk of developing criminogenic risk factors associated with online sexual offences against children.[31] The use of CSAM may follow a progressive trajectory and therefore it is crucial to focus on early intervention along this pathway to prevent the reinforcement of offending behaviour.[32]

	Yes, very frequently	Yes, occasionally	Yes, rarely	Yes, once	No, never	Prefer not to say
Physical neglect	9%	6%	7%	5%	28%	47%
Emotional neglect	11%	7%	7%	6%	22%	48%
Sexual abuse	8%	5%	7%	7%	27%	46%
Physical abuse	9%	7%	9%	6%	24%	46%
Emotional abuse	12%	8%	8%	5%	21%	45%

■ Yes, very frequently   ■ Yes, occasionally   ■ Yes, rarely
■ Yes, once   ■ No, never   ■ Prefer not to say

Some respondents discuss how their adverse childhood experiences facilitate their engagement with CSAM, for example by causing difficulties with socialising leading to isolation.

→   "I have been alone all my life…I was also brought up essentially without a father and mother, and it is very difficult for me to interact with people anyhow."

   Original quote in Russian: "Я всю жизнь был один …также я вопитывался по сути без отца и матери, и мне очень сложно хоть как-то взаимодействовать с людьми"

→   "I was not physically or sexually abused, but I am neurodivergent in a way that I think had a large impact on my childhood. I have felt isolated and alienated my whole life. One parent was absent for most of my childhood, and the other always made me feel broken or inferior in some way. I don't feel loved and I don't feel that I have parents. I stopped going to school during puberty and lost contact with the outside world, including with children my age. I am still in this situation. I don't have social relationships outside the internet, I am a virgin, I have never fallen in love etc. Perhaps I am chasing a lost childhood in some perverse way, or perhaps adults sexually intimidate me."

→   "I have been abused in my childhood and I didn't get over it quite well."

→   "I really don't know, but I wasn't molested. Although I am a virgin and grew up isolated from children my age."

10% (n=480) of respondents report their motivation to search for CSAM result from their desire to understand their own experience of sexual abuse, and 6% (n=287) of respondents report they are searching for material that depicts their own abuse.

These findings illustrate that ACEs often contribute to an increased vulnerability and may increase the risk of engaging in criminal behaviours. However, it is important to note that whilst ACEs may be seen as one possible facilitating factor, there is not a direct causal relationship between ACEs and CSAM offending.

The roots of sexual offending against children are multifactorial and result from a complex interplay of various factors including intellectual, social, emotional, physical, and behavioural processes. Although some respondents claim that ACEs have been the main motivator and explanation for their offending behaviour, no single distinct cause-and-effect relationship has been identified. The connection between ACEs and sexual offending against children needs to be further researched.

2.3.   Negative Affect and Drug Use

Research suggests that negative affect, including feelings of anger, stress, and depression, can act as a state facilitation factor of child sexual abuse offending.[33] Some respondents to the 'Help us to know' survey report an increased interest in CSAM during moments of negative affect, indicating that these emotional states may heighten the likelihood of engaging in such behaviour.

→ "Interest in sexual content of girls under 18 is only a problem when I am depressed."

→ "[…] when I am extreemly frustrated and want to rebel I search for it."

→ "[…] only been watching 15-17 year olds after i got depression and started cutting, actually only started using the dark web then."

Other significant state facilitation factors include alcohol and substance use. Research shows that offenders who commit sexual violence are more likely to be intoxicated during their crimes compared to those committing other offences.[34] Respondents to our survey reflect similar experiences, indicating that drug use and abuse can impair their moral judgement and decision-making abilities, leading to difficulties in resisting CSAM use.

→ "Being a heavy drug addict, I have lost grip with the comon concept of morals shared by society . While sober, I can avoid this type of content as I recover sensitivity to everything in this regard. And while sober I can also fear the consequences such practice can bring upon me."

→ "I often feel completely torn into not reparable pieces and hopeless about the life i live, the drugs and pornography i cannot part ways with."

→ "every 2-3 months im doing this shit for once (only with alcohol) and then gonna feel shit for a week for this."

The connection between ACEs and substance abuse has been extensively researched, showing also a link to offending behaviour.[35]

2.4.   Influence of Pornography

According to the conditioning theory, extensive consumption of adult pornography might contribute to seeking alternative sources of sexual reward over time, leading some individuals to seek more extreme or violent material to achieve the same level of sexual arousal.[36] 12% (n=536) of respondents to the survey report that this process of desensitisation is a factor driving them to search for CSAM.

Were you habitually viewing adult pornography before starting to search for child sexual abuse material?
N=4,549

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say
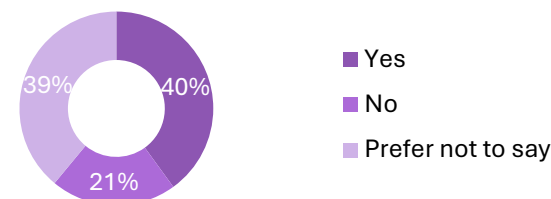
A significant portion of respondents (40%, n=1,822) report habitually viewing adult pornography before starting to search for CSAM. Most

respondents report having consumed adult pornography daily (45%, n=816) or regularly (22%, n=402). These responses suggests that extensive consumption of adult pornography can act as a facilitator for CSAM use.

In particular, some respondents report struggling with repetitive sexual impulses to view adult pornography, defining it as "pornography addiction". Others indicate that they search for more extreme or 'hardcore' content, due to becoming desensitised to mainstream pornography or finding adult pornography 'unattractive.' The reported progression and explanations given by respondents highlight the urgent need for further research on the connection between extensive adult pornography consumption and CSAM use.

→ "someone at school said they had seen it, i had struggled with porn since young and never seen it nor thought it was really out there […]"

→ "I have a battle with porn addiction, but I'm slowly getting better. I'm seeing a psychologist."

→ "Most adult porn has unattractive, buxome, old looking women. Teens are more attractive. not looking for young children. looking for hebe/ephebophilia."

→ "Actually looking for adult pornography that is not consensual."

Original quote in German: "Suche eigentlich erwachsenen pornografie, die nicht einvernehmlich ist."

Moreover, adult pornography use is a common gateway to child sexual abuse material offending as recent reports have found that many adult content websites contain CSAM, increasing a chance of accidental exposure, and host content depicting adults presenting to be younger than 18.[37] Viewing legal pornography depicting adults disguised as children can have negative implications, including by contributing to the sexualisation of children, perpetuating harmful

misconceptions about consent, and desensitising individuals to viewing actual CSAM.

If you were habitually viewing pornography, how many days a week would you spend watching it?
N=1,822

- Every day
- Most days
- One or two days
- Prefer not to say

Some quotes indicate that respondents initially accessed CSAM accidentally while searching for extreme adult pornographic content.

→ "i was looking for hardcore sex but i found this and thought why not, Im not interested in children no."

→ "We search for more hardcore porn and then land on a disgusting site of cp."

This highlights the complex dynamics of online environments, technology, and CSAM offending, which will be further explored in the next section. More research is needed to examine the progression from viewing legal and mainstream adult pornography to searching increasingly illicit and harmful content.

For multilingual perspectives on CSAM offending, read the '2KNOW Language-Focused Report'
www.protectchildren.fi/en/post/2know-language-focused-report

3. Situational Factors of Online Child Sexual Abuse Offending

For a crime to take place, motivation and facilitation factors must be combined with situational factors – immediate, actual, dynamic circumstances at the time of offending – that provide an opportunity to act.[38] We focus on environmental situational factors specific to online CSAM offending, exploring how the online environment facilitates such illicit activity.

The absence of comprehensive and future-proof regulation online significantly exacerbates the risk of child sexual abuse and exploitation, as there is a lack of sufficient legal obligations on online platforms to implement robust safeguards. Without clear, enforceable standards, many platforms prioritise user engagement and profit over safety, leading to environments where offenders can easily exploit loopholes and children are inadequately protected. The rapid pace of technological advancement, coupled with the lack of sufficient regulation, leaves significant gaps that offenders can exploit, enabling the proliferation of harmful content and contact.

In this section, we explore how the development of advanced technologies, the availability and accessibility of CSAM, and the perceived safety and anonymity of the internet all provide significant opportunities for offending in the online environment.

3.1. Technological Tools

The development and accessibility of technology has been identified as one of the main situational factors that enables the proliferation of child sexual abuse and exploitation. Survey respondents report that

digital environments are key platforms to access and disseminate large volumes of CSAM. Notably, some respondents report that dark web platforms enabled them to find and access content that they could not or would not choose to access on the surface web:

> → *"Easier to find fictional versions of it here than in the clear web"*

> → *"I searched and found it really easily, but only ever viewed it on tor."*

In contrast, other respondents share that they use gaming platforms, social media, and messaging apps to engage with CSAM and to contact children. Many interactive technologies provide robust anonymity features that allow offenders to commit crimes without the risk of being detected or reported. In particular, end-to-end encryption prevents crime detection, hinders law enforcement operations, and intercepts the possibilities to detect and remove CSAM.[39] In addition, offenders misuse in-built app features to access CSAM and contact children.[40]

Some respondents report that internet algorithms appear to guide them towards CSAM use by showing sexually or erotically suggestive content depicting children.

> → *"Internet algorithms seem to lead me to it, girls dancing erotically on social networks, they sexualize minors a lot and encourage them to see it as something good."*
>
> Original quote in Spanish: *"Los algoritmos de internet parecen insultarme a eso, niñas bailando eróticamente en las redes sociales sexualisan mucho a las menores he insistan a verlo como algo bueno."*

These findings align with recent research on the tech platforms used by online child sexual abuse offenders, which highlights the ease of access to CSAM on the surface web, particularly on pornography sites and social media platforms.[41] In this study, 77% of respondents to the survey of CSAM users reported that they had encountered CSAM or

links to CSAM on the surface web. Specifically, 32% on pornography sites, 29% on social media platforms, 12% on regular websites and 12% on messaging applications. These findings highlight the alarming spread and availability of CSAM, both on the dark web and on the surface web, which result in increased risks for children to be exposed to online sexual violence.

Read more in the report 'Tech Platforms Used by Online Child Sexual Abuse Offenders'
www.protectchildren.fi/en/post/tech-platforms-child-sexual-abuse

Furthermore, some respondents to the 'Help us to know' survey attempt to justify their consumption of certain types of CSAM that are created or altered by technology, by suggesting that such content is different or even 'less harmful' than other forms of CSAM, even though they acknowledge the illegality of such content:

→ *"I'm not Looking about sexual or abuse material. I know it's illegal, and rightly so! but for some reason I feel a bit drawn to anime lolis and even photo realistic. But I would never hurt or see any real content."*

When asked where respondents have sought contact with children, 31% (n= 245) signify that they use social media platforms and online games. The majority of those who clicked "Other, please specify" (8%, n=63), shared the names of specific platforms that they use to talk to children, such as:

→ *"TikTok", "facebook", "Animal Crossing", "Telegram, Kik, Snapchat", "VK", "Twitter" "teen chat", "whatsapp", "NaszaKlasa", "Freefire", "Minecraft, Roblox", "Instagram, discord", "QQ"*

A considerable group of respondents (28%, n=216) chose the option "prefer not to say". The proportion of those who contact children

online may be higher as offenders might be unwilling to disclose the platforms, they use to avoid detection or moderation.

Where have you sought contact with a child?
N=784

- In person
- Social media platform, which?
- Online gaming platform, which?
- Other, please specify
- Prefer not to say
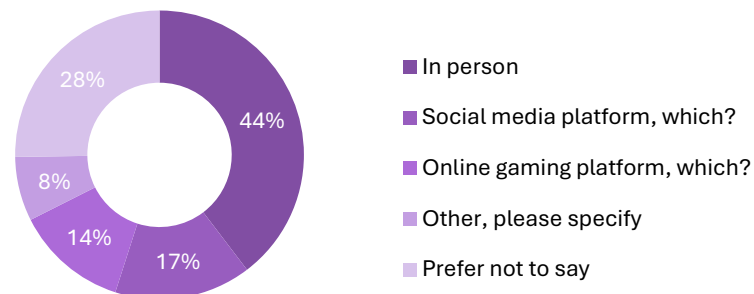
3.2. Availability and Ease of Access

Many practitioners have identified the ease with which CSAM can be accessed and disseminated, linked with the ability of children and young people to produce and share sexual imagery, as important factors leading to CSAM-related crimes.[42] The growing presence of children and young people on social media platforms and minimal barriers to accessing and engaging with these platforms have transformed existing forms of abuse and facilitated new ones.[43] There is a notable shift from a gradual progression through various stages of abuse to rapid interactions with large numbers of children, which quickly escalate to sexual and child exploitative behaviours.[44]

→ *"I searched and found it really easily […]"*

Prior to the internet, the opportunities to access and view CSAM were limited due to the low availability of hard copy CSAM, making such material accessible only to the most determined offenders.[45] The spread of the internet has dramatically increased the ease of access

to CSAM, not only providing greater opportunities to offend to those individuals already inclined to commit crimes, but also to other individuals who would not have been motivated to offend otherwise.[46]

3.3.   Perceived Safety and Anonymity of the Internet

The environment can impact offenders and their behaviour, facilitating or preventing crime.[47] According to the lawless space theory, the internet, which serves as an environment in cases of online crimes of sexual violence against children, facilitates offending by significantly blurring the risks related to criminal activity.[48] The facilitation becomes possible through habituation – a drop in stimulation caused by repeated and often long-term use of CSAM – and differential association – indirect learning of criminal behaviour through interaction with other child sexual abuse offenders. Perceived anonymity of the internet may result in the normalisation of criminal behaviour and, ultimately, the emergence of the sense of comfort to use particular digital space for offending. The feeling of comfort also explains technological choices of offenders who frequently use outdated technologies or fail to employ sophisticated security measures.[49]
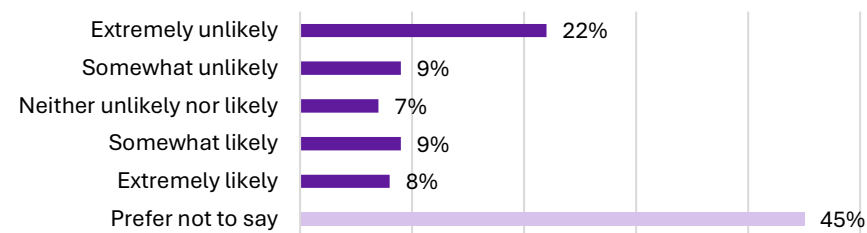
Several respondents to the 'Help us to know' survey indicate that the internet encourages behaviours they would not consider otherwise.

> →   "in real life i have not even the slightest urge towards children"
>
> →   "I looked for real-life stimuli but I'm not stupid enough to lead a person into something that's dirty. how some idiots call for a live or worse for real life, even leading to a kidnapping"
>
> →   "No.. im just like to watch video but not to do it to children"
>
> →   "I have never even considered doing anything with a real child"

One question in the 'Help us to know' survey asks respondents whether they would have sexual contact with someone aged 17 or younger if they knew that no one would know and that they would not be punished. 16% (n=745) of respondents shared that it is at least somewhat likely that they would have a sexual contact with a child. As nearly half (45%, n=2,075) of respondents preferred not to share a response to this question, the proportion of those likely to offend may be significantly higher. The results indicate that a considerable proportion of offenders would take the opportunity to offend in circumstances of anonymity and absence of legal consequences. As the internet ensures these circumstances, it creates a favourable environment for viewing, searching, and sharing CSAM.

If you could be sure that no one would know and that you would not be punished, would you have sexual contact with someone age 17 or younger?
N=4,549

Extremely unlikely	22%
Somewhat unlikely	9%
Neither unlikely nor likely	7%
Somewhat likely	9%
Extremely likely	8%
Prefer not to say	45%

The results also show that the respondents perceive the risks associated with contact offending to be higher than those associated with viewing CSAM. Proceeding to contact abuse would imply leaving the internet – a "safe" and lawless space, where criminal activity can remain undetected and unpunished.

2KNOW knowledge to prevent   Funded by the European Union   Protect Children Suojellaan Lapsia   Council of the Baltic Sea States   Children at Risk   UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN FINLAND
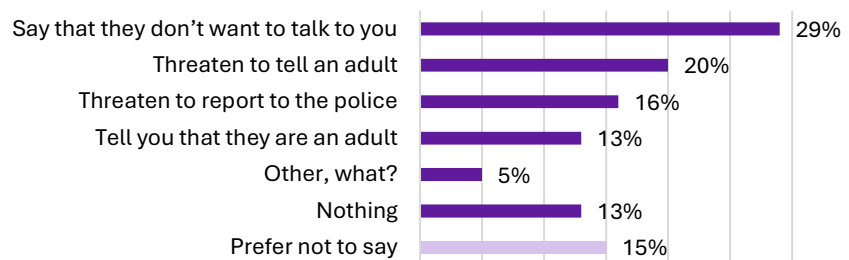
4. Barriers to Online Child Sexual Abuse Offending

A growing body of evidence shows that online child sexual abuse offences can be prevented if potential offenders encounter effective barriers.[50] A recent self-report study found that offenders can be deterred from searching for or viewing CSAM by negative emotions, self-control, unfavourable situations, or negative thoughts.[51]

Respondents to the 'Help us to know' survey indicate that they would cease communication with a child if the child expressed unwillingness to talk (29%, n=229), disclosed the chat to an adult (20%, n=157), or threatened to report it to the police (16%, n=124). These findings highlight that there are certain barriers that may prevent online child sexual abuse offending and protect potential victims. We identify additional barriers that may reduce or prevent offending. By understanding these barriers, we can develop targeted interventions and preventive measures that effectively deter offenders and enhance the safety of children.

What could a child say that would stop you from continuing to chat with them?

N=784

Say that they don't want to talk to you	29%
Threaten to tell an adult	20%
Threaten to report to the police	16%
Tell you that they are an adult	13%
Other, what?	5%
Nothing	13%
Prefer not to say	15%

4.1. Interventions and Deterrence Messaging

Increasing efforts focus on developing measures to prevent perpetration of CSAM-related offences.[52] Such therapeutic interventions aim to tackle the root causes of criminal behaviour by engaging with individuals at risk of offending or re-offending.

A diverse range of interventions are available online and offline and include, for instance, therapeutic treatment, helplines, self-help resources, deterrence messaging, advocacy and awareness campaigns, and educational resources and programs.[53] Recent studies have demonstrated the feasibility and effectiveness of online CBT-based interventions.[54] Although the internet is argued to have lowered the barriers for offending, it also provides space for effective interventions allowing anonymity and privacy features to be utilised to reach out to and rehabilitate active and often undetected offenders.

Additionally, there has been an increase in deterrence messaging and tech-based interventions to disrupt potential offenders or offenders from committing a crime, make them reflect upon their behaviour, prompt the change of harmful habits, and possibly access help. The 'Help us to know' survey acts as this form of intervention as it disrupts the offending environment when an individual attempts to access CSAM and offers an alternative action of responding to the survey or accessing help resources. Responses to the question about respondents' feelings after answering the survey demonstrate that it sparked varying emotions and reactions among the participants. A large portion of respondents highlight that responding to the survey made them stop and reflect upon their behaviour, signalling that the intervention was, at least in the short term, an effective barrier to their CSAM viewing.

→ "I feel deep regret, guilt and shame for having done this act in the past."

→ "Disgusting, but better. I am disgusted in myself that I have allowed myself to go so far as to have to use a questionnaire to potentially help myself get better, and stop looking at this kind of porn. I feel better because these questions have actually made me think a little more harder about myself."

→ "I don't know, it feels great and nice that there is support and that there are good people who offer us who are doing such terrible things. […] I would like help and support to get rid of this habit or neural connections in the brain that make me come back to this .[…]"

Original quote in Swedish: "Jag vet inte, det känns jättebra och fint att det finns stöd och att det finns goda människor som byr oss som håller på med sådant hemskt. […] jag vill gärna få hjälp och stöd för att bli av med denna vana eller nervkopplingar i hjärnan som får mig att återkomma till detta. […]."

The respondents shared that reflecting on and writing about their use of CSAM, often for the first time, was helpful and encouraging.

→ "A bit shaken, since this is the first time I ever expressed myself about it."

→ "Good to talk about the subject, being a female this is a very hard subject to broach and often feel alone."

→ "i feel like it would be nice to be able to speak about this without the absolute terror of asking for help. kind of glad this was here."

→ "like I want to talk more about these things"

→ "Well, I feel better that I have kind of talked about it"

→ "Bad, but it also feels good to share about this with someone. I do not believe that living with this condition is a choice. It's incredibly lonely, and I feel lonely now, but at the same time I feel some relief that I can share with someone. […] I honestly just want help at this point, but I am too scared to get professional help. It's a back and forth struggle. I don't want to hurt anyone."

Many were glad to learn about the research being conducted on CSAM offending and expressed hope that their response would help others and assist with the development of help resources:

→ "I hope it helps someone because csam is the worst thing ever"

→ "I feel good and I would like to see more of these study's done, and done more extensive."

→ "unexpected and extremely comforting that (some) people CARE about others and targeting "dangerous" environments."

→ "i appreciate to find an anonym project to help stopping searching child pornography"

→ "I really hope this helps you all, It's nice knowing that there are people out there taking a rehabilitative approach to this topic."

The responses indicate that posing interventions that disrupt offending behaviour can be effective in preventing it, not only in the short term but also potentially in the long term, as they may prompt reflection that could lead to lasting behavioural change.

4.2. Illegality and Security

Criminal penalties have been found to have the potential to deter people from committing crimes.[55] Awareness of legal consequences can influence an individual's decision to break the law. The decision rests on three pillars: certainty – probability of the criminal activity to be detected; celerity – speed of the punishment execution; and severity of the expected punishment.[56] It is important to note that the deterrence potential of illegality varies from case to case as, for instance, crimes have diverse drivers that may not imply a rational decision, and knowledge and perceptions of certainty, celerity, and severity may be inaccurate or distorted especially in the population of online child sexual abuse offenders.[57]

Responses to the 'Help us to know' survey signify that their awareness of the illegality of CSAM can reduce frequency or prevent CSAM offending. For example, acknowledging the risks to themselves made

some respondents reflect upon their behaviour and switch to "less extreme" content.

→ "I rarely (maybe once per year) watch child porn, since it illegal and require a lot of trouble for security"

→ "I have only started looking for the last few days out of curiosity, I haven't found anything and I am probably going to stop because if I actually do find anything I don't want to end up in jail"

→ "I'm not Looking about sexual or abuse material. I know it's illegal, and rightly so! but for some reason I feel a bit drawn to anime lolis and even photo realistic. But I would never hurt or see any real content."

4.3.   Help-Seeking and Behavioural Change

Interventions aiming to prevent sexual offending against children are increasingly being developed, and some interventions have begun to focus on self-guided and self-fuelled behavioural change as a way of preventing recidivism.[58] Help-seeking can be identified as an intentional, self-driven action to access treatment, support, and rehabilitation for the purpose of resolving a problem.[59] Consequently, we examined help-seeking and perceived probability of behavioural change as a possible barrier to online child sexual abuse offending.

A significant proportion of respondents (41%, n=1,885) to the 'Help us to know' survey believe it is possible to stop using CSAM. 11% (n=515) reported they believe it is possible to stop using CSAM, but only with professional support, and 6% (n=278) only with the assistance of technological solutions that block their access to CSAM. Notably, nearly half of respondents declined to answer.

N=4,549

- ■ Yes, it is possible
- ■ Yes, but only with professional support
- ■ Yes, but only with the assistance of technological solutions
- ■ No, it is not possible
- ■ Prefer not to say
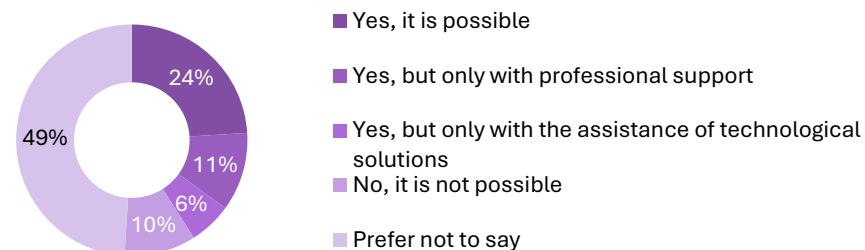
A number of respondents felt it was possible to stop CSAM use and expressed desire to change and seek help:

→ "I feel like that I defenetly need to stop this its getting out of hand."

→ "My mind changes 10% about child abuse"

→ "I feel more confident in my ability to get help, and that technology and medicine will have breakthroughs that help victims of child abuse and people like me with these attractions"

→ "A little more hopeful in getting rid of this evil."

→ "Putting myself on a better path"

These findings show there are many CSAM offenders motivated to change their behaviour and stop using CSAM. A large number of respondents (35%, n=1,596) even reported they found the 'Help us to know' survey when searching for help resources to control their sexual urges towards children or to reduce their use of CSAM. However, it's important to consider that this figure may be overinflated, as respondents might be inclined to present themselves in a more favourable light.

Whilst it seems many respondents would like to seek help, many express fear or anxiety about doing so:

→ "I honestly just want help at this point, but I am too scared to get professional help. It's a back and forth struggle. I don't want to hurt anyone."

→ "i have a terrible fear of seeking help because of fear of judgement, fear that i may be reported, and also fear that it will be so difficult i can't do it."

→ "i feel like it would be nice to be able to speak about this without the absolute terror of asking for help. kind of glad this was here."

→ "i would love to, and even want to get help, but i don't see it as an option due to the current state of our society. as it is, i am too afraid to seek help, because i believe it has the potential to easily ruin my life as it is."

→ "Still nervous about seeking help."

Moreover, recent research has shown that the majority of CSAM offenders who have actively sought help to change their behaviour have not been able to receive help.[60] The fact that almost half of respondents preferred not to answer this question, along with other respondents expressing fear about seeking help, in correlation with those offenders who have sought help and have been unable to find support, underscore the complexities of seeking help to stop using CSAM. It is therefore crucial not only to enhance mental health services, but also to offer different support resources. Providing perpetration prevention and specialised treatment programs is essential to ensure more people have access to the resource that best meet their needs and effectively receive the support they need to be able to change their behaviour and ultimately stop using CSAM.

All things considered, it is possible to introduce new and strengthen already existing barriers to CSAM offending to prevent crimes of sexual violence against children before the harm is done. Self-report data from offenders provides insights into what barriers respondents themselves perceive as effective. More intervention programs and deterrence messages are needed to disrupt seemingly anonymous and secure online spaces. Increased awareness of illegality and lengthy punishments for engaging with CSAM can stop or reduce the frequency of CSAM offending. Finally, a significant proportion of offenders believes it is possible to stop viewing CSAM. As such, low threshold, free of charge, and anonymous programs to stop CSAM use should be implemented across digital environments where these crimes occur to ensure active uptake of intervention resources and, ultimately, better protect children.

The ReDirection Program is an online self-help resource designed to stop CSAM use. Learn more about the program: www.redirectionprogram.com

Conclusion

The findings from the 'Help us to know' survey provide a critical window into the complexities of online child sexual abuse offending. By examining the motivators, facilitators, situational factors, and barriers to offending, this report illuminates the dynamics that underpin the alarming proliferation of CSAM.

Our analysis reveals that CSAM offending is driven by a complex interplay of motivations, including sexual interest in children, high sex drive, and emotional regulation. Facilitating factors such as sensation-seeking behaviour, ACEs, substance use, and adult pornography also play an important role in enabling offending. Additionally, situational factors such as the nature of the online environment make it easier for offences to occur.

While significant progress has been made in understanding the motivations behind CSAM offending, there remains much to uncover about the facilitators and situational factors, especially within the evolving landscape of online crimes.

This report underscores the need for a comprehensive approach to tackling CSAM. Prevention strategies must not only address the psychological factors driving individuals to offend but also address the social and technological environments that facilitate these crimes. To effectively combat CSAM, it is essential to enhance collaboration among law enforcement agencies, technology companies, policymakers, and child protection organisations.

Actionable Recommendations

Tech Companies: Detect, report, and remove CSAM; implement age assurance measures; and strengthen safeguards to reduce the situational factors that enable online child sexual abuse offending.

Legislators and Policy-Makers: Strengthen legal frameworks to address new challenges posed by digital technologies, including AI and encrypted communications, in the production and distribution of CSAM. Allocate resources to research and initiatives focused on preventing CSAM offending and to support victims and survivors.

Civil Society: Advocate for stronger child protection laws and policies, urging governments to prioritise the issue. Expand services that offer psychological, legal, and social support to victims and survivors of online child sexual abuse.

Offender-Focused Prevention: Develop and enhance intervention programs that address the drivers of CSAM offending. Regularly assess the effectiveness of prevention measures and adjust strategies based on emerging trends and research findings. Increase accessibility and lower the threshold to access intervention resources. Intervene and disrupt offending behaviour through search-based interventions and deterrence messaging.

Preventing Victimisation: Promote digital literacy by educating children, parents, and educators about online risks, including CSAM, and empowering them with the knowledge to navigate the internet safely. Enhance reporting and support systems.

Survey Data

What is your age?

N=4,549	n	Percent
18-24 years old	1938	42.6%
25-34 years old	1070	23.5%
35-44 years old	551	12.1%
45-54 years old	254	5.6%
Over 55 years old	140	3.1%
Prefer not to say	596	13.1%

What is your gender?

N=4,549	n	Percent
Man	3087	67.9%
Woman	442	9.7%
Non-binary	240	5.3%
Prefer not to say	780	17.1%

Did you find this survey when searching for help resources to control your sexual urges towards children and/or reduce your use of child sexual abuse material?

N=4,549	n	Percent
Yes	1596	35.1%
No	1121	24.6%
Prefer not to say	1832	40.3%

There are a number of reasons why people search for child sexual abuse material. Which reason(s) do you relate to most?

N=4,549	n	Percent
I am sexually interested in children	1375	30.2%
I am looking for a way to control my emotions (i.e. loneliness, isolation, depression, anxiety)	684	15.0%
I want to understand my own experience of sexual abuse	480	10.6%
I have become desensitized to adult pornography, and I am looking for more extreme or violent material	536	11.8%
I am searching for material that depicts my own abuse	287	6.3%
Other, what?	302	6.6%
Prefer not to say	1943	42.7%

Were you habitually viewing adult pornography before starting to search for child sexual abuse material?

N=4,549	n	Percent
Yes	1822	40.0%
No	976	21.5%
Prefer not to say	1751	38.5%

If you were habitually viewing pornography, how many days a week would you spend watching it?

N=1,822	n	Percent
Every day	816	44.8%
Most days	402	22.1%
One or two days	385	21.1%
Prefer not to say	219	12.0%

Do you feel a sexual interest towards individuals under the age of 18?

N=4,549	n	Percent
Yes, I am sexually interested in infants and toddlers (age 0-3)	423	9.3%
Yes, I am sexually interested in prepubescent children (age 4-10)	474	10.4%
Yes, I am sexually interested in pubescent children (age 11-14)	726	16.0%

	n	Percent
Yes, I am sexually interested in postpubescent adolescents (age 15-17)	863	19.0%
Maybe, I feel some sexual interest towards children	163	3.6%
No, I do not feel any sexual interest in people under the age of 18	793	17.4%
Prefer not to say	1484	32.6%

Where have you sought contact with a child?

N=784	n	Percent
In person	346	44.1%
Social media platform, which?	133	17.0%
Online gaming platform, which?	112	14.3%
Other, please specify	63	8.0%
Prefer not to say	216	27.6%

What could a child say that would stop you from continuing to chat with them?

N=784	n	Percent
Say that they don't want to talk to you	229	29.2%
Threaten to tell an adult	157	20.0%
Threaten to report to the police	124	15.8%
Tell you that they are an adult	102	13.0%
Other, what?	43	5.5%
Nothing	98	12.5%
Prefer not to say	120	15.3%

If you could be sure that no one would know and that you would not be punished, would you have sexual contact with someone age 17 or younger?

N=4,549	n	Percent
Extremely unlikely	1012	22.2%
Somewhat unlikely	413	9.1%
Neither unlikely nor likely	304	6.7%
Somewhat likely	397	8.7%
Extremely likely	348	7.7%
Prefer not to say	2075	45.6%

Did a parent or other adult in the household often or very often swear at you, insult you, put you down, or humiliate you? Or act in a way that made you afraid that you might be physically hurt?

N=4,549	n	Percent
Yes, very frequently	556	12.2%
Yes, occasionally	379	8.4%
Yes, rarely	383	8.4%
Yes, once	209	4.6%
No, never	974	21.4%
Prefer not to say	2048	45.0%

Did a parent or other adult in the household often or very often push, grab, slap, or throw something at you? Or ever hit you so hard that you had marks or were injured?

N=4,549	n	Percent
Yes, very frequently	420	9.2%
Yes, occasionally	310	6.8%
Yes, rarely	390	8.6%
Yes, once	273	6.0%
No, never	1075	23.6%
Prefer not to say	2081	45.8%

Did an adult or person at least 5 years older than you ever touch or fondle you or have you touch their body in a sexual way? Or attempt or actually have oral, anal, or vaginal intercourse with you?

N=4,549	n	Percent
Yes, very frequently	384	8.4%
Yes, occasionally	246	5.4%

Yes, rarely	299	6.6%
Yes, once	305	6.7%
No, never	1233	27.1%
Prefer not to say	2082	45.8%

Did you often or very often feel that no one in your family loved you or thought you were important or special? Or your family didn't look out for each other, feel close to each other, or support each other?

N=4,549	n	Percent
Yes, very frequently	476	10.5%
Yes, occasionally	298	6.6%
Yes, rarely	324	7.1%
Yes, once	273	6.0%
No, never	984	21.6%
Prefer not to say	2194	48.2%

Did you often or very often feel that you didn't have enough to eat, had to wear dirty clothes, and had no one to protect you? Or your parents were too drunk or high to take care of you or take you to the doctor if you needed it?

N=4,549	n	Percent
Yes, very frequently	396	8.7%
Yes, occasionally	251	5.5%
Yes, rarely	309	6.8%
Yes, once	207	4.6%
No, never	1261	27.7%
Prefer not to say	2125	46.7%

Generally speaking, do you believe that it is possible for someone to stop using child sexual abuse material?

N=4,549	n	Percent
Yes, it is possible to stop using child sexual abuse material	1092	24.0%
Yes, it is possible to stop using child sexual abuse material, but only with professional support (e.g. therapy, clinical treatment)	515	11.3%
Yes, it is possible to stop using child sexual abuse material, but only with the assistance of technological solutions that block CSAM in real time	278	6.1%
No, it is not possible to stop using child sexual abuse material	435	9.6%
Prefer not to say	2229	49.0%

While answering the questions in this survey I was:

N=4,549	n	Percent
Not honest at all	0	0.0%
Somewhat honest	369	8.1%
Mostly honest	582	12.8%
Completely honest	1186	26.1%
Not sure	269	5.9%
Prefer not to say	2143	47.1%

2KNOW
knowledge to prevent

Project Knowledge to Prevent (2KNOW)

PROTECTING CHILDREN FROM ONLINE CRIMES OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Project Knowledge to Prevent (2KNOW) aims to support and improve national and international data collection on violence against children by developing a sustainable and replicable data collection model that is suited to gathering information about online violence against children.

In the project, we will put this data collection methodology to use and gather data directly from anonymous offenders searching for child sexual abuse material on the dark web and the surface web, to understand more about the patterns, characteristics, and trends of online crimes of sexual violence against children today. The data collected will be analysed extensively, producing innovative and cutting-edge research on sexual violence against children online.

The findings of this research will be translated into direct preventative action to protect children from harm, through the development of a support guide for all parents on online safety skills for children in general and a separate guide for parents whose child has been subjected to sexual violence online.

Through Project 2KNOW we will also produce a model for parental peer-support groups and run groups in Finland and in another EU member state, to provide practical and psychoeducational support for parents, carers, and families - in turn providing essential support to child victims to protect them from further abuse.

The project will also collect invaluable information on child victims' and their families' experiences to broaden the understanding of online sexual violence against children.

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