

From Insight to Impact

An Overview of the 2023
Research into Child Sexual
Exploitation and the Need
for Collective Action

2023

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Executive Summary

Throughout 2023, we have seen significant and comprehensive research undertaken into the complex and heinous crime of child sexual abuse and exploitation - particularly focusing on how this crime can be facilitated online. This report reveals some of these alarming statistics about crimes against children, the response from the community, and identifying gaps that would benefit from a more robust response.

As technology evolves, so do the tactics of perpetrators, with technology-facilitated child sexual abuse and exploitation being ever present and difficult to contain. This report highlights much of the Australian focused research and findings from 2023, as well as international studies, but it does not purport to be all-encompassing. Our intent is to provide an overall picture of 2023 research pieces. The findings ultimately underscore the urgent need for a whole-of-system approach, examining legislative gaps, global dimensions, and the profound impact on victim-survivors.

The protection of vulnerable children demands swift and collaborative action to confront the complex and evolving landscape of technology-facilitated child sexual exploitation.

Australian Child Maltreatment Study

Published on April 3, 2023, the Australian Child Maltreatment Study (ACMS) sheds light on the pervasive nature of child sexual abuse and its far-reaching implications across the country. The study marks a significant milestone in understanding the realities of this heinous crime, and emphasising its prevalence throughout Australia.

The ACMS, which surveyed 8,503 randomly selected Australians aged 16-65+, provides a comprehensive examination of multi-type maltreatment, considering five distinct forms: physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, and exposure to domestic violence.

Prevalence of child sexual abuse

28.5%

of Australians have experienced child sexual abuse



More than 1 in 3 girls experience child sexual abuse



Almost 1 in 5 boys experience child sexual abuse

Types of child sexual abuse

1 in 4 Australians experienced one or more types of contact child sexual abuse

almost **1 in 5** experienced non-contact child sexual abuse

Multiple forms of child maltreatment

2 in 5 Australians have experienced more than one type of child maltreatment.

The ACMS has identified for the first time how many Australians have experienced multi-type maltreatment.

Frequency of child sexual abuse

Child sexual abuse rarely occurs as an isolated incident.

11% of children who experienced child sexual abuse reported it happening **more than 50 times**.

42% experienced it **more than six times**.

78% experienced it **more than once**.

The ACMS underscores the alarming prevalence of child sexual abuse in Australian society, calling for a robust and comprehensive response to address this pervasive issue. The study highlights the urgent need for societal awareness, preventive measures, and support systems to protect vulnerable individuals.

Furthermore, the research emphasises the long-term impacts of child sexual abuse, with those who have experienced maltreatment being more susceptible to mental health disorders and increased health risks throughout adulthood. Acknowledging the gravity of these findings is crucial in formulating effective strategies to prevent child sexual abuse in the future, and mitigate the impact on those who have experienced it already.

Identifying and understanding child sexual offending behaviour and attitudes among Australian men

Spanning the months of December 2022 to January 2023, a groundbreaking online and anonymous study was undertaken, surveying 1,965 Australian men. This research not only unveils the disturbing reality of child sexual abuse perpetration, but also distinguishes itself as the first nationally representative study in Australia and the largest globally to date.

Prevalence unveiled

1 in 6 Australian men reports sexual feelings towards children.

1 in 10 Australian men have sexually offended against a child.

- Approximately half this group acknowledge doing so without experiencing sexual feelings.
- Equally alarming, the other half of those who had engaged in sexual offences against children confess to also having sexual feelings.

Collectively, **almost 1 in 5** Australian men grapple with sexual feelings and/or have committed sexual offences against children.

Online aspects of this crime

Of concern, the study indicates that 1 in 20 Australian men have sexual feelings towards children and have acted on those impulses.

Online behaviours contribute significantly, with

6.7%

of Australian men knowingly engaging with child sexual abuse material.

Correlations and behaviours

Disturbing correlations emerge; the study shows that offenders are more likely to:

- be married,
- boast a household income exceeding \$150,000,
- and work with children.



Men admitting to sexual feelings towards children and expressing a desire for help (1 in 20 Australian men) underscores the critical need for early intervention services and preventative initiatives.

The findings offer a roadmap for primary prevention work, highlighting the need to recognise child maltreatment and violence against women as social determinants of child sexual abuse. Online purchasing can be an indicator, for example in the case of romance and dating sites, emphasising the urgency of integrating safety measures into online platforms. A call is made for regulation in the pornography industry, particularly for content that is violent and deviant, recognising its links to child sexual offending. Acknowledging the higher likelihood of offenders to be working with children, prevention efforts must prioritise the promotion and maintenance of child-safe institutions.

The study validates what victim-survivors have consistently reported, reinforcing the unsettling reality that abusers often hold esteemed positions in the community.

This research not only exposes the disturbing truth of child sexual abuse perpetration but also beckons society to a collective responsibility for change, urging a united front against the deeply rooted factors that contribute to this distressing phenomenon. The research ultimately underscores the feasibility of preventing child sexual abuse through collaborative efforts among stakeholders, policymakers, the private sector, and others.

Salter M et al. (2023). Identifying and understanding child sexual offending behaviour and attitudes among Australian men, University of New South Wales.

Preventing child sexual abuse material offending: An international review of initiatives

This comprehensive report meticulously reviews 74 initiatives across 16 countries, focusing on preventing Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM) offending. It identifies diverse prevention strategies, including helplines, therapeutic treatments, psychoeducation, online self-management courses, and education and awareness campaigns. Notably, with many initiatives in early developmental stages, the current academic discourse in this field remains limited. The study examines initiatives at three prevention levels—primary, secondary, and tertiary—highlighting their non-mutually exclusive nature.

Media and social media campaigns successfully reach both detected and undetected offenders, emphasising their potential impact in disseminating preventative information (p.ix).

Outcomes of prevention programs are diverse, reflecting the complexity of addressing CSAM offending.

Findings indicate that prevention initiatives can:

- encourage help-seeking,
- reduce risk factors,
- enhance protective factors,
- and decrease contact sexual offending against children (p.ix).

The report recognises the role of police in referring detected offenders to programs, emphasising the importance of collaboration with law enforcement.

Online initiatives, particularly those providing anonymity, demonstrate higher engagement, as evidenced during a Stop It Now! UK and Ireland campaign, which garnered

193,277 over six
website sessions months

(p.xi).

Challenges?



Identified in the evaluation of outcomes, with only a small number of studies adequately comparing reoffending rates across treatment and control groups. The overall quality of these evaluations is considered low (p.xi).

Online offending & Contact offending

The report addresses critical questions about the intersection between contact and online offending, exploring the commonalities and distinctions between CSAM offenders and those involved in contact sexual offences.

”Need for further robust evaluations of programs that aim to prevent CSAM offending’ to ‘reach individuals at risk of offending before they harm children.” (p.76)



The report raises concerns that contact sexual offending by CSAM offenders may be higher than suggested by criminal justice figures (p.2). This report also identifies some effective mechanisms, like that traditional 'Circles of Support and Accountability' (CoSA) designed for broad child sexual abuse offenders positively influence community and offender perceptions, with some studies suggesting a reduction in contact sexual reoffending.

Exposure to intimate partner violence and the physical and emotional abuse of children: Results from a national survey of female carers

This study, drawing from a sample of 3,775 female carers in Australia, investigates the substantial connection between intimate partner violence (IPV) and child abuse. It identifies multiple factors associated with an increased likelihood of children being subjected to direct abuse (p.vii).

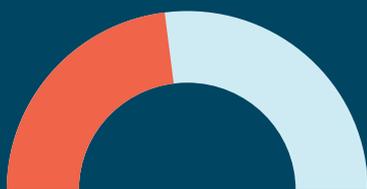
The study advocates for reshaping the language around children, challenging their portrayal as mere "risk factors" for IPV against women. It emphasises that **children's experiences of abuse should not be relegated to being contributors or consequences of violence against their carers** (p.viii).

A substantial proportion of female carers report instances of physical or emotional abuse experienced by a child in their care within the past 12 months.



Threatened and actual forms of direct physical abuse against children are identified, with a notable overlap between the two.

Exposure to intimate partner violence against female carers is explicitly recognised as a form of abuse against children, encompassing emotional and physical dimensions.



Nearly half of respondents reporting child exposure to physical violence had subsequent interactions with police or protective services.

Characteristics affecting the risk of abuse against children:

sociodemographic, relationship, and household characteristics.

Changes in economic circumstances, mobility, and social isolation are associated with an increased risk of direct abuse against a child.

11.5%

of respondents reveal that a child in their care has been subjected to direct abuse.

The pandemic is identified as a factor making **help-seeking more difficult** for female carers facing abuse.

Children residing with female carers facing health restrictions, identifying as First Nations, or in same-sex relationships are identified as more likely to experience abuse.

“Calls for children to be recognised as victims in their own right” (p.viii)

The findings underscore the pressing need to build on existing efforts for preventing child abuse and mitigating its impact on children (p.50). A holistic response to child sexual abuse is urged, involving policy, practice, education, and advocacy to shield children from harm. The emphasis is on responding with strength and comprehensiveness to address the complexities surrounding child abuse.

“You Feel Like You Did Something So Wrong”: Women's Experiences of a Loved One's Child Sexual Abuse Material Offending

This research delves into the often-overlooked experiences of female partners and relatives of Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM) offenders. Noting the scarcity of understanding and limited support available for these women, the study sheds light on how they develop their own social critique of child sexual exploitation as a form of gendered violence, advocating for a feminist reengagement with the politics of child sexual abuse.

The research draws on the findings of an evaluation of PartnerSPEAK, an organisation providing support for non-offending partners, family, and friends of CSAM offenders.

- **Between 21% and 65%** of CSAM offenders in treatment have a partner
- **25–47%** have at least one child

(Brown & Bricknell, 2018, p.3)

Secondary Victims

Partners and family surrounding these offenders are termed "secondary victims," acknowledging the indirect impact of the offending on their lives and wellbeing.

The majority of individuals convicted of CSAM offending are **male**.

Anonymous online surveys indicate that

2.2% - 4.4%
of men intentionally
view CSAM

(Dombert et al., 2016; Seto et al., 2015).

The **absence of social support and available information** compounds the complex situation these women and families find themselves in, leaving them in the dark and significantly traumatised.

The research highlights a pervasive theme among interviewees: the traumatic discovery of their partners' offending. The impacts on non-offending family members, particularly in terms of mental health, are myriad. The study underscores the urgent need for increased awareness, understanding, and support for the often-overlooked individuals impacted by a loved one's involvement in child sexual abuse material offending.

Parental Production of Child Sexual Abuse Material: A Critical Review

This research confronts a facet of child sexual abuse that often remains unspoken—the parental production of Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM). The critical review encompasses 66 pieces of research published since 1970, shedding light on this distressing aspect of child sexual exploitation.

Parental figures emerge as a substantial group of CSAM producers, with **parentally-produced CSAM more likely to involve the victimisation of prepubescent children and more severe forms of abuse.**

Parental CSAM production typically begins with a male offender, such as a biological father, step-father, or the mother's partner.

Victims and survivors of parental CSAM production are recognised as a profoundly traumatised and high-needs group, demanding a specialist and comprehensive response (p.2).

Biological mothers can be identified as facilitators of the exploitation of their own children.

An Organised Crime

Parental CSAM producers are frequently part of an organised system of abuse, indicating the gravity and complexity of this criminal behaviour.

The research emphasises that men who seek to father children or partner with women with children to exploit them constitute a serious yet overlooked group of child sex offenders, necessitating forensic and law enforcement attention (p.2).

The study concludes with a call for targeted and specialist policy and law enforcement responses to family-based sexual abuse and exploitation, both offline and online. Recognising the importance of diversity and intersectionality, the research urges a nuanced approach when addressing victims and survivors of parentally produced child sexual abuse material. Acknowledging the growing threat of technology-facilitated child sexual exploitation, the research highlights the need for a responsive and varied research and policy approach to counter the evolving ways offenders can harm children.

The overlap between child sexual abuse live streaming, contact abuse and other forms of child exploitation

This research investigates the intricate connections between child sexual abuse live streaming, contact abuse, and various forms of child exploitation. The analysis focuses on the chat logs of seven Australian offenders who collectively committed 145 child sexual abuse offenses. Despite the small sample size, the study sheds light on alarming dynamics within this criminal behaviour.

\$13 to \$100 AUD

Offenders often pay small sums to either the **facilitator** of Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM) or the victim directly.

Facilitators, involved in organised crime or identified as adult female relatives of victims, seek financial gain for basic living necessities.

Law enforcement agencies face challenges as offenders use live streams not only to exploit victims but also to create additional recorded content unbeknownst to the victims, extorting them further.

 The Philippines is identified as the epicentre of this crime, underscoring the global nature of the issue.

— “**Travelling abroad to sexually abuse children is an ongoing problem.**” —

The research highlights the persistent issue of offenders travelling abroad to sexually abuse children, with a significant portion of offenders engaging in online sexual exploitation in vulnerable countries (p.3).

The study reveals a **complex relationship** between CSAM engagement, CSA live streaming, and the risk of travelling to engage in contact offences.

The study identifies the need for further research to explore the intertwined nature of live streaming offending with both CSAM and contact CSA offending. Offenders identified in transactions related to CSAM live streaming should also be investigated for potential travel to vulnerable countries to offend against children. The study emphasises the importance of aligning investigative strategies with the evolving dynamics of online child exploitation.

How to implement online warnings to prevent the use of child sexual abuse material

This paper introduces a novel approach to preventing Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM) offending through the implementation of warning messages. This innovative strategy involves collaboration between technology platforms, government entities, law enforcement, and child welfare organisations. Automated online warning messages are identified as a form of secondary, offender-focused prevention, targeting at-risk individuals to prevent offences before they occur (p.3).

The study identifies a considerable opportunity to implement warning messages for the many internet users encountering widespread CSAM available online.

Peer-to-peer networks and the darknet are highlighted as popular means of accessing and sharing CSAM.

Limited available research

While CSAM is prevalent online, research into the efficiency of warning messages to deter online CSAM offending is limited. However, such messages can serve to remind users of the illegality of their potential actions.

The paper stresses the necessity for further research into the efficacy and cost-effectiveness of implementing warning messages as a preventive measure. Despite the potential benefits, the study acknowledges a myriad of barriers to making this approach feasible. The darknet, favored by offenders of child sexual abuse and exploitation, poses a significant challenge due to its encryption, making the delivery of warning messages difficult (p.7). The study emphasises the need for innovative solutions to overcome these encryption challenges and identifies the importance of addressing the unique landscape of the darknet in any preventative strategy.

eSafety Commissioner's Industry Codes

An important update:

Since going into effect, the eSafety Commissioner's Industry Codes have revealed concerning trends in online platforms' responses to requests for stronger safeguards. In particular, Twitter/X and Google received feedback urging enhanced measures, with Twitter/X displaying more significant negligence. After a change in ownership, the platform's proactive detection of Child Sexual Exploitation Material (CSEM) is understood to have **dropped from 90% to 75% over three months**.

The time taken by providers to respond to user reports of child sexual exploitation varies widely. TikTok boasts a swift median response time of 5.2 minutes for publicly shared material, while Discord lags behind at 13 hours for direct messages. Notably, Google (Gmail and Google Messages), Twitter/X (Direct Messages), and Discord (Live Streams) lack in-service reporting options.

The issuance of legal notices under the Online Safety Act 2021 to major platforms, including Discord, Google, TikTok, Twitter, and Twitch, on 22nd February 2023 marked a significant move by the eSafety Commissioner. This action followed a December 2022 report on Apple, Microsoft, Skype, Meta, WhatsApp, Snap, and Omegle, revealing considerable variation in the steps taken by service providers to protect the Australian public. However, **Google and Twitter/X failed to comply with the issued notices**, highlighting a lack of industry-wide commitment.

In response to the platforms' inadequate compliance, eSafety Commissioner Julie Inman-Grant emphasised the need for increased efforts from the online industry. She urged companies to utilise their financial, intellectual, and technical resources to identify and remove child sexual exploitation material from their platforms. Failure to respond adequately led to Twitter/X missing the 28-day deadline set by the eSafety Commissioner, prompting considerations of other regulatory options, including civil penalties.

The intersection with Modern Slavery...

Drawing attention to the gravity of the situation, Australia's first Anti-Slavery Commissioner, Dr. James Cockayne of NSW, stressed the duty of governments to protect children from slavery.



“Governments have a duty to protect children from slavery, and companies have a responsibility to respect children’s right to be free from slavery - this is an important step to ensure accountability.

In NSW, the production and distribution of child abuse material, and the knowing administration of a digital platform that other people use to distribute such materials, are all modern slavery offences.

If federal authorities have information that these tech giants are aware that their platforms are being used in NSW to deal with child abuse material, they should refer this matter to NSW Police for investigation under section 91HAA of the Crimes Act 1900 (NSW).”

This aligns with the broader effort to ensure accountability and address the serious implications of child exploitation facilitated by online platforms.

The eSafety Commissioner's Generative AI position paper

The eSafety Commissioner's Generative AI position paper, reflecting its stance as of August 15, 2023, addresses the escalating concerns surrounding the use of AI in generating child sexual abuse material (CSAM). Already, eSafety has received reports of such AI-generated content, signalling a troubling trend that requires urgent attention.

The rapid growth in the accessibility and capabilities of generative AI technologies throughout the year has brought forth new challenges. The technology's widespread availability in the public realm has created a potential risk:



How can the capabilities of AI be harnessed, and how can regulations ensure its safe use?

Internationally, the use of Generative AI has witnessed a sharp increase, with offenders of child sexual exploitation leveraging these technologies to create illicit content. This alarming trend poses a significant threat to society, as generative AI facilitates the rapid production of explicit material. Law enforcement officers, already grappling with an overwhelming volume of materials, are faced with the additional challenge of addressing AI-generated content.

Children's images of abuse are being exploited to train AI models, creating a disturbing loop that perpetuates the generation of more harmful content. **Research has established a link between viewing CSAM and contact offending, demonstrating the urgency of addressing this issue** (<https://www.aic.gov.au/publications/tandi/tandi671>).

The position paper acknowledges that:

"generative AI can contribute to the generation and amplification of content that promotes bias and discrimination."

Stakeholder consultations undertaken by eSafety identified three categories of risks and harms associated with AI: its failure to perform as expected, malicious usage, and overuse, recklessness, or inappropriate use in specific contexts.

Furthermore, the paper emphasises that:

"generative AI can reinforce stereotypes and amplify existing biases even without human interference."

In light of these concerns, the need for regulatory developments is paramount, with a focus on prioritising prevention as a critical component of addressing the challenges posed by AI technologies in generating explicit and harmful content.

Internet Watch Foundation's Report: How AI is being abused to create child sexual abuse imagery

In 2023, the widespread accessibility and enhanced capabilities of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools have ushered in a new era, significantly impacting the creation of child sexual abuse and exploitation material. The Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) has undertaken crucial research shedding light on the alarming implications of the expansive capabilities of generative AI technologies.

20,254 AI-generated images

A staggering 20,254 AI-generated images were discovered posted on a single dark web Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM) forum within **just one month**.

Out of the total, 11,108 images were subjected to assessment by 12 IWF analysts, highlighting the severity and scale of the issue.

“If AI models can generate pornographic images, they can generate photorealistic CSAM”.
(p.15)

The research identifies a significant challenge posed by photorealistic images, as their realism **hinders the effective identification of children depicted in child sexual abuse material who are currently at risk**.

“AI CSAM [...] is happening now. Images are being shared online now. **It is a current problem that requires action.”**

In conclusion, the IWF emphasises that AI-generated Child Sexual Abuse Material (AI CSAM) is not a distant or future concern; it is a present and pressing issue. The material generated by AI is labelled by the IWF as criminal, underlining the urgency of addressing this evolving issue. The research underscores the immediacy of the problem, calling for prompt and decisive action to tackle the proliferation of AI-generated explicit content circulating online.

LGBTQ+ Youth Perspectives: How LGBTQ+ Youth are Navigating Exploration and Risks of Sexual Exploitation Online

This report identifies that LGBTQ+ children and young people, among other marginalised groups, face elevated risks of dangerous online behaviour, prompting a comprehensive exploration of their experiences in the digital realm.

2x more likely

to share explicit personal content

LGBTQ+ teens exhibit higher rates of engagement in explicit online activities, with a striking finding that they are over twice as likely to share personal explicit content compared to non-LGBTQ+ peers.

Cisgender non-hetero male teens report elevated rates of risky encounters and a greater inclination to handle unsafe situations independently compared to their peers.

Offline relationships, especially with caregivers and friends, emerge as the primary support network for LGBTQ+ youth when feeling unsafe, despite **an increasing reliance on online communities.**



A notable proportion (1 in 3) of LGBTQ+ teens express a preference for handling dangerous situations alone rather than seeking assistance from either online or offline communities.

The report underscores the critical need for more in-depth research in this domain, emphasising the urgency of integrating these findings into a targeted and informed response to combat the heinous crime of sexual exploitation online affecting LGBTQ+ youth.

International Justice Mission's Scale of Harm Report

This report provides a comprehensive examination of the prevalence of trafficking for the production of child sexual exploitation material (CSAM) in the Philippines, incorporating survivor perspectives into its findings.

1 in 100 children

In 2022, almost half a million Filipino children, constituting 1 in 100, were trafficked to produce new CSAM.



250,000 adults

Nearly a quarter of a million adult Filipinos engaged in trafficking children for the production of new CSAM in the same year.

Low reporting to law enforcement is influenced by social and cultural factors.

Family and community loyalty, coupled with traffickers concealing their online activity, hinder disclosure.

Research plays a vital role in raising awareness and providing visibility to young victims.

Inadequate community efforts and capacity at the local law enforcement level contribute to the persistence of child trafficking for CSAM production.

Trafficking for CSAM is perceived as **financially lucrative**, exacerbated by a lack of understanding about online exploitation and its harms.

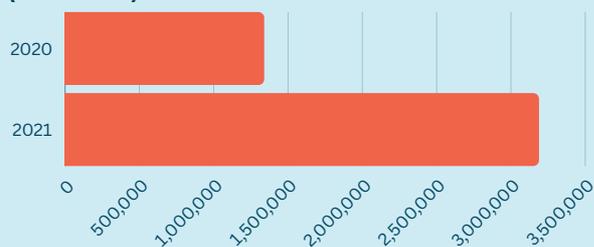
The report's findings lead to several significant recommendations:

- Cultivate community-based reporting
- Enhance criminal justice responses
- Implement robust community-based efforts
- Enforce anti-online sexual abuse and exploitation law tech provisions
- Expedite detection, reporting, and blocking of suspicious financial transactions
- Urgently pass online safety legislation with survivor consultation by demand-side governments
- Emphasise the critical need for further survivor-informed research

Online sexual exploitation of children in the Philippines: A scoping review

This paper sheds light on the pervasive nature of this crime within the Philippines. A scoping review analysed eight academic articles and 11 research reports, highlighting the extensive prevalence of online sexual exploitation of children (OSEC).

Reports of possible OSEC in the Philippines sharply increased from 1,339,597 in 2020 to 3,188,793 in 2021, as recorded by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC).



Key drivers of OSEC included:

- vulnerabilities stemming from poverty
- weak social protection
- limited awareness of the harms of OSEC
- the facilitation of technology, social media, and financial transaction systems.

Demand-side offenders of OSEC in the Philippines were typically English-speaking males aged 17 to 72, primarily from Western countries.

The paper emphasises the lack of specific and comprehensive research on the long-term impacts of OSEC on survivors in the Philippines, highlighting the critical need for further investigation in this area.

Steven Roche, Carmela Otarra, Imogen Fell, Christine Belle Torres, Sydney Rees, Online sexual exploitation of children in the Philippines: A scoping review, *Children and Youth Services Review*, Volume 148, 2023, 106861, ISSN 0190-7409, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2023.106861>

Investigations into financial transactions used in the online sexual exploitation of children

Online child sexual exploitation is a crime that often has a financial incentive attached to it. This means that there are additional touch points across sectors that might expose offenders. This paper delves into the financial aspects of online child sexual exploitation (OSEC), highlighting the crime's intricate connection with financial transactions.

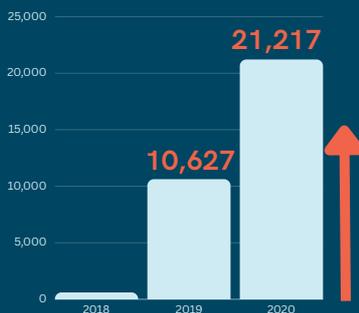
Live streaming OSEC stands out due to its **financial motivation** and the involvement of both **physical and virtual components**, often with family members of the victims committing physical sexual offences for financial rewards.

What is livestreaming?

Demand-side offenders from developed countries order 'virtual sessions,' remotely requesting sexual violence against children in developing countries, such as the Philippines.

The role of financial institutions

The financial sector plays a crucial role in combating OSEC, with financial intelligence serving as a powerful tool for law enforcement to identify perpetrators.



The Philippines Anti-Money Laundering Council recorded a drastic increase in suspicious transaction reports related to OSEC, from 606 reports in 2018 to 27,217 in the first half of 2020.

\$3,527,195 USD

was estimated to be spent on OSEC in the Philippines between 2015 and the first half of 2020.

“Identifying occurrences of OSEC is further complicated for ESPs, law enforcement, and other interested parties because evidence of the crime is often found across multiple platforms”

(p.6)

The difficulty in detecting this crime lies in the lack of live streaming tracking technology and supervision. Cross-industry collaboration is deemed essential to combat OSEC, as evidence is often spread across multiple platforms, posing a challenge for internet service providers, law enforcement, and other stakeholders.

Conclusion

The prevalence of child sexual abuse and exploitation cannot be understated. The research in this space might be confronting, but it's critical to underpin the way we navigate our response to this crime within the child protection sector, and ultimately protect more children from harm. The realities of child sexual abuse and exploitation cannot be denied, and researching and understanding the extent of this crime is imperative to reduce and prevent harm to children. The research summarised in this paper are important contributions to the conversations we all need to have, to facilitate the necessary strong, holistic response to protect children and ultimately prevent this crime. ICMEC Australia sincerely thanks all researchers and advocates who courageously confront and investigate this topic, so that together, we can build a safer world for children.





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