

THE SUPPORTING RESEARCH

Sexual Predators-

- Younger and younger children are being targeted “on an industrial scale” by internet groomers. In 2021, there was a three-fold increase in imagery showing 7–10-year-olds who have been targeted and groomed by internet predators. ([Internet Watch Foundation, January 2022](#))
- 91% of child sexual abuse is perpetrated by someone known and trusted by the child and/or the child’s family. ([U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention, April 2023](#))

Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM)

- The US Sentencing Commission’s October 2021 report, found that OSEAC (online sexual exploitation and abuse of children) has increased by 422% over the last fifteen years ([Federal Sentencing of Child Pornography Production Offenses, 2021](#))
- In 2023, NCMEC’s CyberTipline received 36.2 million reports of suspected child sexual exploitation online. Those reports contained more than 105 million images, videos and other files. ([NCMEC, January 2024](#))
- A 2022 survey of dark web users conducted by the Finnish nonprofit Suojellaan Lapsia Ry found that 37% of global respondents reported seeking direct contact with child after viewing CSAM ([Suojellaan Lapsia Ry, July 11, 2021](#))

Online Exploitation-

- Reports for online enticement of children for sexual acts dramatically increased from 44,155 in 2021 to 186,819 in 2023; a 300% increase. ([NCMEC, January 2024](#)).
- 4 in 10 minors (40%) said they have been approached online by someone they believe was attempting "to befriend and manipulate" them, with 47% of teen girls saying they have experienced this. ([Thorn: Online Grooming: Examining risky encounters amid everyday digital socialization, April 2022](#))

Lived Streamed Abuse-

- A 2018 study of 2,082 files (videos and images) captured from live streaming, found that 98% of victims were aged 13 or under. (*Trends in online sexual exploitation: Examining the distribution of captures of live-streamed child sexual abuse*, [Internet Watch Foundation, May 2018](#))
- That same study showed 96% of the depicted children were on their own, typically in a home setting such as a bedroom. (*Trends in online sexual exploitation: Examining the distribution of captures of live-streamed child sexual abuse*, [Internet Watch Foundation, May 2018](#))

Pornography-

- [Peer-reviewed research](#) and medical science confirms internet pornography is a fueling factor in the sexual exploitation and abuse of children, violence against women, addiction, decreased mental and physical well-being, compromised development of youth, sexual predation, and sex trafficking.
- 73% of teen respondents age 13 to 17 have watched pornography online—and more than half (54%) reported first seeing pornography by the time they reached the age of 13 ([Common Sense Media, "Teens and Pornography, 2023](#))
- In 2020, the British Board of Film Classification reported that 75% of parents felt their child would not have seen pornography online, but of those children, 53% said they had in fact seen pornography. ([BBFC, January 2020](#))
- The exposure of children to internet pornography is harming their developing brains. “Pornography consumption is associated with decreased brain volume in the right striatum, decreased left striatum activation, and lower functional connectivity to the prefrontal cortex.” ([Journal of the American Medical Association Psychiatry – 2014](#)).

Sex Trafficking-

- In 2020, 59% of online recruitment in active sex trafficking cases occurred on Facebook. ([2020 Human Trafficking Report, Human Trafficking Institute.](#))
- In 2022, NCMEC received more than 19,000 reports of child sex trafficking from all 50 U.S. States, Washington, D.C. and Puerto Rico which included every type of community: cities, small towns, and tribal land. ([National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, Accessed March 2023](#))

- Since 2000, traffickers have recruited 55% of sex trafficking victims online, usually through social media platforms, web-based messaging apps, online chat rooms, dating apps, classified advertisements, or job boards ([Federal Human Trafficking Report, 2020](#))

Sex Trafficking at the Southern Border-

- In FY 2023, HSI special agents conducted 33,108 arrests, assisted 7,110 identified victims at the U.S. southwest border, including 1,919 minors. Of these, 731 were identified as human trafficking victims. They further identified/assisted 1,806 as victims of child exploitation. ([Year in Review: ICE Fiscal Year 2023 Annual Report, DHS](#))
- During FY 2023, ICE Enforcement and Removal Officers removed over 142,000 noncitizens to more than 170 countries; including 3,406 known or suspected gang members; 139 known or suspected terrorists; and six human rights violators. Among those removed, 108 were foreign fugitives wanted by their governments for crimes including homicide, rape, kidnapping, drug trafficking, assault, and sex offenses. ([Year in Review: ICE Fiscal Year 2023 Annual Report, DHS](#))

Sexting/Sextortion-

- 1 in 5 girls and 1 in 10 boys say they have sent sexually explicit images; 40% of those surveyed believe this is normal behavior. ([Thorn, 2019](#))
- From October 2021 to March 2023, the FBI and Homeland Security Investigations received over 13,000 reports of online financial sextortion of minors. The sextortion involved at least 12,600 victims—primarily boys—and led to at least 20 suicides. ([FBI Public Affairs, Memphis, January 2024](#))
- More than half (54%) of young adults ages 18-22 admit to sexting as minors; 28% acknowledged sending photographic sexts; Girls send photographic sexts twice as often as boys. ([Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Network, 2014](#))

Cyberbullying-

- A study by LIGHT [54], focused on the analysis of the increase in online toxicity as a result of the COVID pandemic, reported a 900% increase in hate speech on Twitter toward China/Chinese people, a 70.0% increase in cyberbullying among children in chat forums and a 40.0% increase in toxicity on gaming platforms.

(National Library of Medicine, 2023)

- 46% of teens between 13-17 report experiencing some form of cyberbullying. Physical appearance is listed as a common reason why. ([Pew Research, December 15, 2022](#))
- Young people (10-16 years) who accessed or shared sexual content or images of cyberbullying or violence had up to a 50% higher risk for thoughts of suicide. ([JAMA Network Open, September 20, 2021](#))

Cycle of Abuse-

- A meta-analysis of 37 studies found that exposure to violent or rape pornography increased a child's odds of experiencing sexual exploitation 3-5 times. ([JAMA Network, September 22, 2020](#))
- Adolescents who view online pornography are more likely to engage in risky sexual activities or have anxiety and depression ([National Library of Medicine, 2023](#))
- The average age of first perpetration of sexual violence is 15 -16 and is associated with exposure to pornography ([Prevention Science, 2017](#))

Social Media Harms-

- 64% of adolescents are “often” or “sometimes” exposed to hate-based content through social media ([Common Sense Media, 2018](#))
- Bark processed 5.6 billion activities in 2023 on family accounts across texts, email, YouTube, and 30+ apps and social media platforms and found: 33% of tweens and 57% of teens were involved in a self-harm/suicidal situation; 19% of tweens/36% of teens used language or were exposed to language about anxiety; 67% of tweens/76% of teens experienced bullying as a bully, victim, or witness; 26% of tweens/38% of teens engaged in conversations about depression; 9% of tweens/21% of teens engaged with or encountered content about disordered eating; 8% of tweens/10% of teens encountered predatory behaviors from someone online; 68% of tweens/82% of teens expressed or experienced violent subject matter/thoughts ([Bark 2023 Annual Report](#))
- 40% of kids grades 4-8 say they are talking to strangers online. ([Ctr. for Cyber Safety and Education, 2019](#))

Online Gaming-

- A 2023 Pew study found that 83 percent of teens have access to a gaming console. ([Pew Research Center, 2023](#))
- A 2019 survey from Common Sense Media found that 64% of tweens 8 to 12 years old play online games ([Common Sense Media, 2019](#))
- Gaming disorder is defined in the 11th Revision of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11) as a pattern of gaming behavior (“digital-gaming” or “video-gaming”) characterized by impaired control over gaming, increasing priority given to gaming over other activities to the extent that gaming takes precedence over other interests and daily activities, and continuation or escalation of gaming despite the occurrence of negative consequences.

A.I./Deepfakes-

- In October 2020, researchers for Sensity AI reported over 100,000 computer generated fake nude images of women created without their consent or knowledge. These images were found to include depictions of underage individuals as well. ([U.S. Department of Homeland Security, “Increasing Threat of Deepfake Identities”, 2021](#))
- Sensity AI further reported that 90%-95% deepfake videos since 2018 were based on nonconsensual pornography. (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, “[Increasing Threat of Deepfake Identities”, 2021](#))

Nonconsensual Intimate Images/Revenge Porn-

- Since its inception in 2015, the Revenge Porn Helpline has received over 338,000 reports of image based sexual abuse. The number of reports received by the Helpline increased 106% in 2023 alone. ([2023 Revenge Porn Helpline Report](#))

Online Privacy-

- 56% of parents said their children's location sharing is turned on, making their location publicly accessible across several mobile apps; 31% said their children have been contacted by a stranger on their mobile device; Nearly one-third (28%) said the stranger referenced their child's location. ([Cox Mobile Survey, February](#))

[2024](#))

- 40% of kids in grades 4-8 reported they connected online with a stranger. Of those 40%: 53% gave a stranger their phone number, 21% talked to a stranger on the phone, 15% tried to meet a stranger in person; 11% met a stranger in their own home, the stranger's home, a park, mall or restaurant' 30% texted a stranger; and 6 % gave a stranger their home address ([Children's Internet Usage Study Center for Cyber Safety and Education, March 2019](#)).

Mobile Devices and Internet Use-

- Use of screen media is up 17% for teens and tweens since the start of the pandemic (from 2019 to 2021.) Between 2019 and 2021, the total amount of screen media used each day went from 4:44 to 5:33 among tweens, and from 7:22 to 8:39 among teens. This is a much faster increase in just two years than was seen in the previous four years. ([Common Sense Media: Media Use by Teens and Tweens, 2021](#))
- More than a third of parents with a child under 12 say their child began interacting with a smartphone before the age of 5. In 2020, nearly 1 in 5 parents (17 percent) of a child 11 or younger had given their child their own phone. ([Pew Research Center, July 28, 2020](#)).
- Forty-three percent of kids aged 8-12 own a smartphone (57% a tablet) and of kids aged 13-18, 88% own a smartphone (36% a tablet). In terms of new media technologies, about one in six tweens and teens now report having a virtual reality headset in the home. ([Common Sense Media, 2023](#))
- Although age 13 is commonly the required minimum age for users of social media platforms, nearly 40% of children ages 8 through 12 still use the platforms, according to the Federal Trade Commission. ([Surgeon General Advisory, 2023](#))