



## Internet Watch Foundation Newsletter

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### IWF reveals commercial core of child sexual abuse 'brands' on the internet

The UK's Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) today published its [Annual Report 2009](#) reporting continued success at tackling criminal online content in the UK but revealing the existence of at least 450 distinct criminal 'brands' selling images and videos of the sexual abuse of children, worldwide.

These findings help to quantify the overall scale of the pay-per-view child sexual abuse business, with the ten most prolific 'brands' alone accounting for more than 650 unique web pages. By removing and disrupting these 'gateway' pages the Foundation is helping to disable access to many thousands of images as well as the membership and payment systems which support this horrific trade.

"Sharing this data with those investigating the criminal distribution of images at an international level brings us a step closer to eradicating the problem", **said Peter Robbins OBE, QPM, IWF Chief Executive**. "Although internet usage and the volume of content continue to rise globally, we are not seeing a proportionate rise in commercial child sexual abuse material which instead appears to have remained fairly static over recent years. This indicates that our international partnerships are having an impact however there is still a significant challenge. The techniques used by distributors are diversifying; becoming more complex, quicker, cheaper and more opportunistic than ever before. It is critical we understand and stay ahead of these changing patterns."

IWF intelligence also reveals a marked trend towards the exploitation of legitimate internet services for the distribution of child sexual abuse content: from free hosting platforms and image sharing websites to social networking areas and hacked websites. Content distributors use increasingly complex systems to evade detection, moving their distribution networks regularly between hosting providers and countries, with 92% of content hosted in those areas with advanced, cheap and accessible internet infrastructures and services (North America, Europe and Russia).

It is worth restating the sad fact that the severity of the content dealt with by the IWF is extremely serious with 72% of child victims appearing to be between 0 and 10 years old and 44% of images depicting the rape or sexual torture of a child.

The Foundation is planning to widen its links to the internet industry around the world, in partnership with Hotlines and law enforcement agencies, in order to speed up the removal of child sexual abuse images hosted outside the UK. It hopes that by extending and widening its membership it can help more companies rid their networks of child sexual abuse content and reduce the length of time images remain available.

#### 2009 figures:

- The IWF assessed 38,173 reports of online content;
- It took further action on 8,844 occasions against web pages depicting child sexual abuse

- content, across 1,316 websites around the world;
- 48% of all child sexual abuse content reports processed (commercial and non-commercial) were traced to networks in North America; 44% to Europe and Russia;
- IWF issued 40 notices to companies to remove child sexual abuse content in the UK.

**Recommendations:**

The IWF supports a combination of tactics to combat online child sexual abuse content:

- Swift removal at source;
- Deregistration of domain names dedicated to content sharing or selling;
- Blocking and filtering of web pages to disrupt supply and protect users from being exposed to criminal content;
- Stepping up international collaboration to share information between the internet industry, Hotlines and law enforcement.

**About the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF)**

The IWF was established in 1996 by the internet industry to provide the UK internet Hotline for the public and IT professionals to report criminal online content in a secure and confidential way. We work in partnership with the online industry, law enforcement, government, and international partners to minimise the availability of criminal content, specifically:

- Child sexual abuse images hosted anywhere in the world;
- Criminally obscene adult content hosted in the UK;
- Incitement to racial hatred content hosted in the UK;
- Non-photographic child sexual abuse images hosted in the UK.

We are an independent self-regulatory body, funded by the EU and the wider online industry, including internet service providers, mobile operators and manufacturers, content service providers, filtering companies, search providers, trade associations, and the financial sector.

For more information on the IWF and how we tackle child sexual abuse content online please visit: <http://www.iwf.org.uk/public/page.103.htm>

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