

Call for Inputs for the report of the Special Rapporteur on the sale and sexual exploitation of children, including child prostitution, child pornography and other child sexual abuse material.

Organisation responding: The Internet Watch Foundation (IWF)

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1. About the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF)

- 1.1 The Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) is an international hotline based in the UK which provides a secure and anonymous place for 2.5 billion people globally to report suspected child sexual abuse material (CSAM) in their local language. If these reports are confirmed as CSAM, our analysts work to have that imagery removed from the internet wherever it may be hosted in the world.
- 1.2 The IWF's vision is an internet free from child sexual abuse and we are a charity that works in partnership with the technology industry, law enforcement (including Europol and Interpol), and other Government's globally to achieve that aim.
- 1.3 The technical tools and services we provide help to keep technology companies platforms and services free from CSAM. The IWF has over 170 Members from the internet industry who deploy our services to combat the spread of CSAM on their platforms.
- 1.4 Along with 45 other hotlines around the world, the IWF is part of the International Association of Internet Hotlines (INHOPE.)
- 1.5 In 2020, more than half (57%) of all the unique child sexual abuse URLs exchanged through INHOPE's database in 2020 were identified by the IWF.
- 1.6 We are also one third of the UK Safer Internet Centre, a partnership of three organisations working to make the internet a safer place for children through providing our hotline, helplines and an awareness centre that provides educational resources to children, their parents and schools.

2. Child Sexual Abuse Material Statistics and Trends.

- 2.1 In 2020, we assessed 299,619 reports, 153,383 of which were confirmed as containing CSAM. This was a 16% increase from 2019. Each report can contain from one to thousands of individual images or videos, so this equates to millions removed in 2020.
- 2.2 Severity of Abuse In 2020, out of the images and videos our analysts assessed:

- 17% was Category A: sexual activity between adults and children including rape or sexual torture including self-penetration. This equates to 25,050 webpages.
- 16% was Category B: non-penetrative sexual activity.
- 68% was Category C: indecent images not falling within Category A or B.
- 2.3 Age of Victims In 2020, out of the images and videos our analysts assessed:
 - 1% showed victims aged 0-2. This is 1,582 webpages.
 - 7% showed victims aged 3-6. This is 11,232 webpages.
 - 24% showed victims aged 7-10. This is 36,060 webpages.
 - 64% showed victims aged 11-13. This is 97,128 webpages.
- 2.4 Sex of Victims In 2020, out of the images and videos our analysts assessed:
 - 93% showed only female victims.
 - 3% showed only male victims.
 - 3% showed both female and male victims.
- 2.5 Since 2011, the IWF has seen new trends when it comes to CSAM, partly exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and associated lockdowns.
- 2.6 In particular, the IWF has seen a dramatic increase in "self-generated" indecent images of children, often where young girls are groomed or coerced into sexual activity in front of a webcam or camera-enabled device which is then captured by an offender. Our analysts often see this taking place in the child's bedroom or other domestic settings.
- 2.7 So far in 2021 we have seen a 117% increase in this type of content. It now makes up over two thirds of the CSAM our analysts assess and remove.
- 2.8 Most victims of "self-generated" abuse are 11-13 year old girls.

3. The role of Hotlines.

- 3.1 There are many national hotlines around the world that do similar work to the IWF, aiming to stop the spread of CSAM and make the internet a safer place for children. However, there are only a small number of hotlines that are allowed to proactively search the internet for illegal content.
- 3.2 In the first full year that the IWF was allowed to proactively search for content, there was a 147% increase in the amount of CSAM we were able to remove.
- 3.3 We believe all hotlines should be able to proactively search and action the removal of content as trusted flaggers to internet companies. Hotlines should be given a clear explicit legal role, to utilise their knowledge and expertise.
- 3.4 In countries where there is no hotline, we would encourage Governments to partner with us to create a local reporting portal where citizens can report suspected CSAM in their own language, which is then assessed by our IWF analysts. There are 48 of these around the world currently.

4. Redefining Terms.

4.1 We would suggest that the UN updates certain terms and encourages national Governments to do the same. For instance, we would like the term "child pornography" to be updated to "child sexual abuse material" or "child sexual exploitation/abuse" and the term "child prostitution" to be updated to "child sexual abuse." No child can consent to their own abuse, so calling it "pornography" or "prostitution" can be misleading.