

Together to #ENDviolence

Global Policy Briefing

Key Messages

Make the internet safe for children

2030 Policy Objectives

Make the internet safe for children: Governments and the private sector (technology, media, information, communication and technology companies (ICT) companies, etc.) should actively ensure that digital platforms, networks, products and services are safe for children and free of child sexual abuse material (CSAM). They should also make financial investments to scale-up solutions to tackle online child sexual exploitation and abuse (CSEA).

KEY MESSAGES

- 1. Online child sexual exploitation and abuse is growing exponentially.** The world is becoming more interconnected, and because of the internet, opportunities for children are constantly growing. But unfortunately, this has also resulted in a rapid increase in online harms, such as online child sexual exploitation and abuse (CSEA), which is impacting more and more children every day.
- 2. Any electronic service provider or digital platform that allows individuals to host, share and/or livestream images and videos is being used to post child sexual abuse material (CSAM).** While some platforms are proactively and aggressively detecting, removing and reporting CSAM, others are taking virtually no action.
- 3. The lack of human and financial resources and capacity at all levels and from all key partners remain the biggest obstacle to an effective response to online CSEA.** (i) Uneven and inconsistent prevention, detection and response models for industry with no coherent accountability mechanisms and best practices to tackle online CSEA; (ii) The fragmented nature of each nation's online safety response, spanning from law enforcement, justice systems, social services, and education; and, (iii) Limited international and cross-sectoral collaboration, learning, and knowledge sharing in tackling online CSEA.
- 4. There is a gross mismatch between the magnitude and severity of the problem and the resources invested to tackle online CSEA, both from industry and governments.** We must fix the resource mismatch and build capacity to tackle online CSEA across the globe. We need to ensure that adequate human and financial resources at all levels and from all key players, including governments, regional and international bodies, industry, civil society, and others. Current levels of investment are simply not enough. By failing to make the internet safe for children, we are endangering their future.
- 5. No one actor can combat this alone.** Multi-stakeholder frameworks, communities of practice, tech solutions and networks like the End Violence Safe Online Portfolio, WeProtect Global Alliance (The Alliance), Model National Response (MNR) and Technology Coalition must be further developed and invested in to strengthen country-level capacity, international cooperation and develop tailored, sustainable approaches to eradicate online CSEA.
- 6. Governments and private sector companies should adopt and implement comprehensive child online safety policies.** These policies should be based on children's rights to access the digital world in ways that are safe and secure in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) General Comment (No25) on children's rights in relation to the digital environment.
- 7. Governments and the private sector should increase investments to scale-up solutions that keep children safe,** particularly those that tackle grooming and distribution of CSAM.
- 8. Governments and the private sector should commit to preventing, detecting and stopping all activities that may harm children online,** including grooming and distribution of CSAM. This work should build on frameworks like the WeProtect Global Alliance's Model National Response and the six actions outlined by the Broadband Commission Report on Online Child Safety.

KEY STATISTICS

- One in three internet users worldwide are children.
- At any one time, 750,000 individuals are estimated to be looking to connect with children online for sexual purposes.
- The number of reports of suspected child sexual exploitation keeps growing at a startling rate – 2020 has seen a nearly 106% increase from 2019 (from 983,734 to 2,027,520).¹ Videos of abuse have outnumbered photos in reports, showing the need for new tools to address this trend.
- 92% of CSAM depicts children under 13 years of age.²
- In the recently published [Economist Intelligence Unit's Out of The Shadows Index](#) that benchmarked the response of 60 countries to sexual violence against children, including online, only nine of them established in their legislation mandatory reporting, content blocking, deleting and record-keeping of CSAM. Research from the International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children (ICMEC) comparing legislative standards across the world found that 118 countries have legislation sufficient to combat CSAM, but the strength of these legislations varies greatly from country to country.³
- COVID-19 has reinforced the need for effective action to protect children online – yet, industry's inconsistent approach to tackling online CSEA, coupled with regulatory bottlenecks, is hurting children. A devastating example of this has recently gained attention with a new EU e-privacy directive that has resulted in a 51% decrease in EU-related reports six weeks after it was enacted in December 2020, despite the fact that law enforcement, hotlines and helplines are seeing a striking increase in online CSEA during this same time.⁴

WHY NOW?

Children are growing up in a world driven by digital technologies. The internet holds great potential for children to connect, explore, learn and engage in creative and empowering ways. And as a result of COVID-19, universal connectivity has become ever-more essential to creating a more equitable, healthy, safe future, as evidenced by the rapid shift to digital platforms for work, education, social connection, and information for critical access to health and livelihoods support. However, such progress has catalysed new and emerging threats to children's safety.

The COVID-19 pandemic has sparked an even greater sense of urgency to address online CSEA, as it has exacerbated the exploitation and harm of children online. Virtual learning has meant children are spending significantly more time on the internet, while adults are spending more time away from their offices – and at on the internet at home – than ever before. With that shift, there has been a significant increase in online CSEA reports throughout 2020, with high rates of online sexual exploitation, cyberbullying, children's exposure to harmful content, and the misuse and sharing of personal data.

As progress is made towards universal internet connectivity worldwide, it is ever-more pressing and critical to invest in children's safety and protection online. The internet was not designed with children's safety in mind – but we have an urgent duty to reimagine what a safe internet for children looks like and to proactively create policies, technologies and spaces that put children's health and safety first.

All players across all countries must come together to urgently invest in adequate solutions to tackling online harms and protect children on existing and emerging digital platforms.

¹Data from NCMEC in 2020

²Data from INHOPE in 2019

³Child Sexual Abuse Material – Model Legislation and Global Review' (International Centre for Missing Exploited Children, 2018) available at: [icmec.org/child-pornography-model-legislation-report/](https://www.icmec.org/child-pornography-model-legislation-report/)

⁴We are in Danger of Losing the Battle for Child Safety' (National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, 2020) available at: missingkids.org/content/ncmec/en/blog/2020/we-are-in-danger-of-losing-the-global-battle-for-child-safety.html

HOW?

Efforts to achieve safer, better, fairer universal connectivity that ensures children are protected online must be accompanied by strong action from governments and private sector companies. This action must be taken in partnership with local civil society and multilateral institutions to create innovative and sustainable solutions and build national capacity to proactively address existing and emerging threats to children's safety.

We have the knowledge, tools, and solutions to better protect children, and we must implement them. We need to be bold in our call to action and neither sensationalize nor sanitize the nature and impact of online violence on children as a systemic, societal problem. To overcome the major obstacles to an effective response at local, national and global levels, we need to move from addressing safety as an afterthought to embedding safety by design into all policies and technology platforms that children are in touch with.

KEY ASKS

- 1. As a critical step in protecting children online and ensuring an aligned and coordinated national and industry response:** *Governments and private sector companies adopt and implement comprehensive child online safety policies based on children's rights to access the digital world in ways that are safe and secure. These policies should be in-line with the UNCRC General Comment (No25), on children's rights in relation to the digital environment.*
- 2. We know what key capacities and capabilities are needed to tackle online CSEA, and we keep learning through their continuous implementation across the world:** *Commit to preventing, detecting and stopping all activities that harm children online, including grooming and distribution of CSAM by building on frameworks such as The Alliance's Model National Response, and the six actions outlined by the Broadband Commission Report on Online Child Safety.*
- 3. To address the imbalances in capacity across countries and enable effective international collaboration and response:** *Increase investments to scale-up solutions that keep children safe, particularly those that tackle grooming and distribution of CSAM and sexual abuse.*

Join **Together to #ENDviolence**, the **Global Campaign and Solutions Summit Series**, to push the process forward and contribute. Once you do, you will be to a global movement toward action, one that is demanding increased awareness of the problem and solutions. Together, we are also working with technology companies and other partners to design new tools and pushing for increased investment to tackle this problem.

Support and Resources available

End Violence

- [Safe Online: the issue and the response](#)
- [COVID-19 and its implications for protecting children online](#)
- [Key resources to secure safe digital spaces for children](#)

WeProtect Global Alliance

- [Global Threat Assessment 2019](#)
- [Model of National Response \(MNR\)](#)
- [Working Examples of the MNR](#)

Voluntary Principles and eSafety by Design

- [Voluntary Principles and Guidelines](#)
- [UNCRC General Comment](#)
- [Safety by Design resources](#)

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