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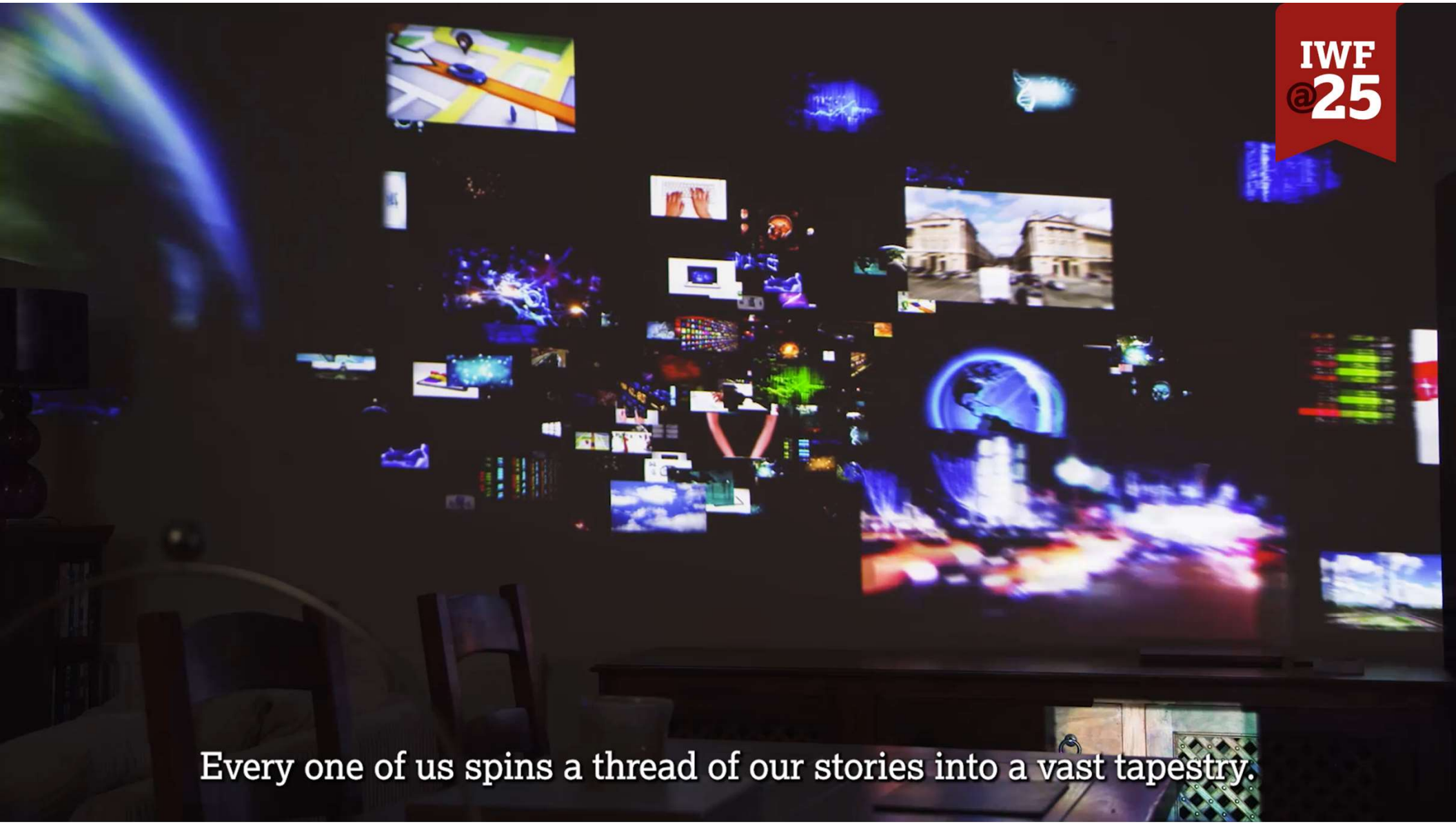
IWF @25

Understanding the changing nature of online child sexual abuse imagery

Emma Hardy, IWF Communications Director
& Co-Director UK Safer Internet Centre

Search 'Internet Watch Foundation'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@25
Every one of us spins a thread of our stories into a vast tapestry.

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Helpful Links

UK Safer Internet Centre : saferinternet.org.uk

Project Evolve, free toolkit for schools : projectevolve.co.uk

IWF YouTube account : youtube.com/c/IWFhotline

Girls' campaign : gurlsoutloud.com

Parents' campaign : talk.iwf.org.uk

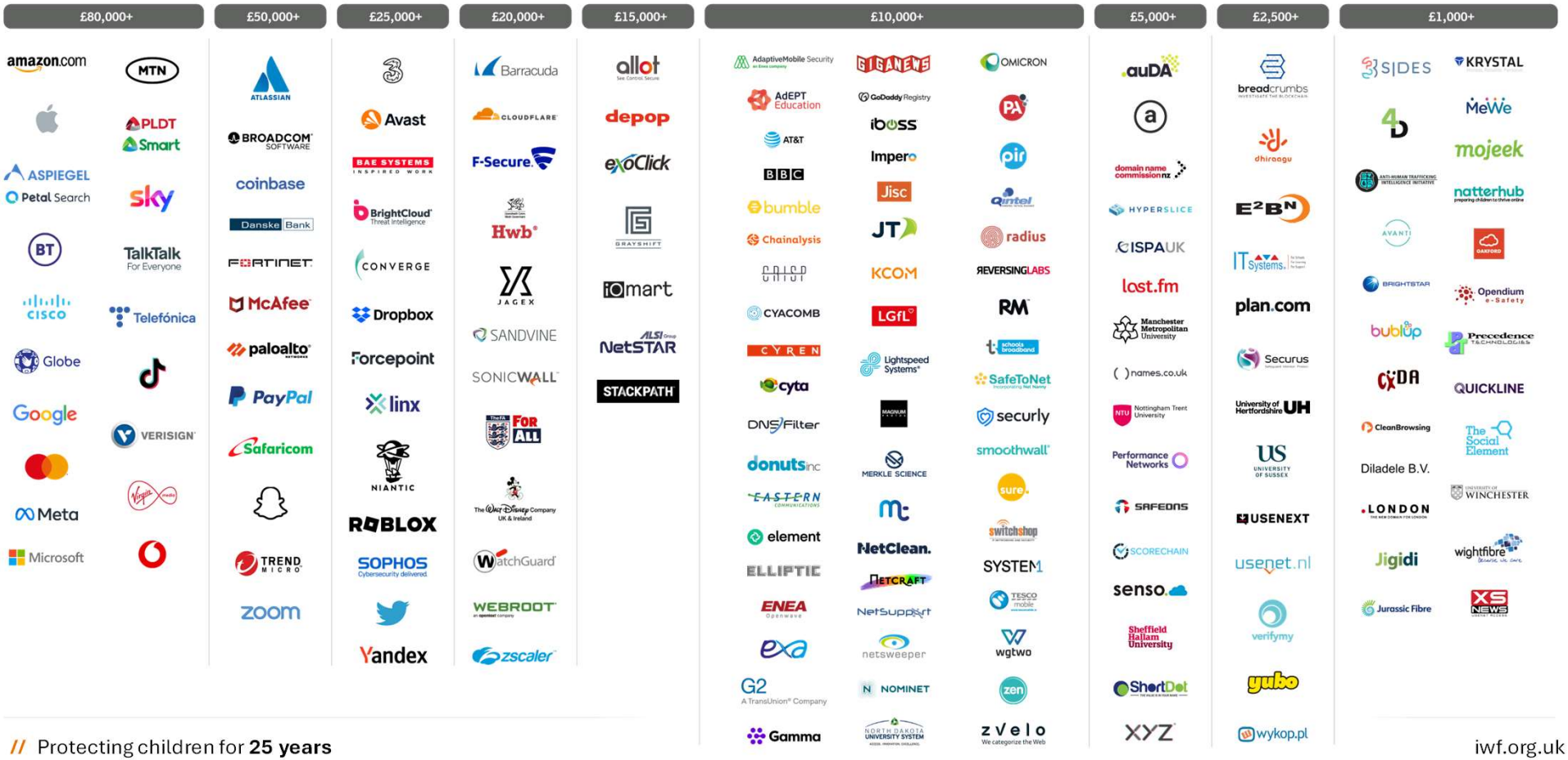
Report Remove - for children and young people to remove a nude : childline.org.uk/remove

What is the IWF?

- We're a not-for profit child protection organisation, building some of the world's best technology-for-good.
- We identify images and videos showing the sexual abuse of children, wherever they are found on the internet. We then work with partners and law enforcement globally to have them removed.
- For 25 years we've given people a safe place to report child sexual abuse imagery, anonymously – now in 50 countries.
- More than 170 global technology companies make up our membership.

Funders & partners

Our Members



// Protecting children for **25 years**

iwf.org.uk

UK Safer Internet Centre

Nominet funded project encouraging responsible use of technology and making the internet a safer place for children & young people.

- **Awareness Centre** to provide advice and support to children and young people, parents and carers, schools etc.
- **Hotline** an anonymous and safe place to report and remove child sexual abuse imagery and videos, wherever they are found in the world.
- **Helpline** to provide support to professionals working with children and young people with online safety issues.

UK Safer Internet Centre · Childnet · NOMINET · SWGfL Education that Clicks

In 2021, we assessed a webpage every one-and-a half minutes.

Every two minutes,

that webpage showed a child being sexually abused.

Data gathered from each report helps to build and curate the services we provide to companies to prevent the distribution of child sexual abuse images and videos.

Scale of problem in 2021

361,062
reports assessed by human analysts

252,194
reports confirmed as child sexual abuse imagery:

64%
increase from 2020

72% included ‘self-generated’ imagery

Just 0.15%
of child sexual abuse material is UK-hosted

11 to 13 year-old children were most seen age group

= 68% of all actioned content

By the end of 2021

1,004,611

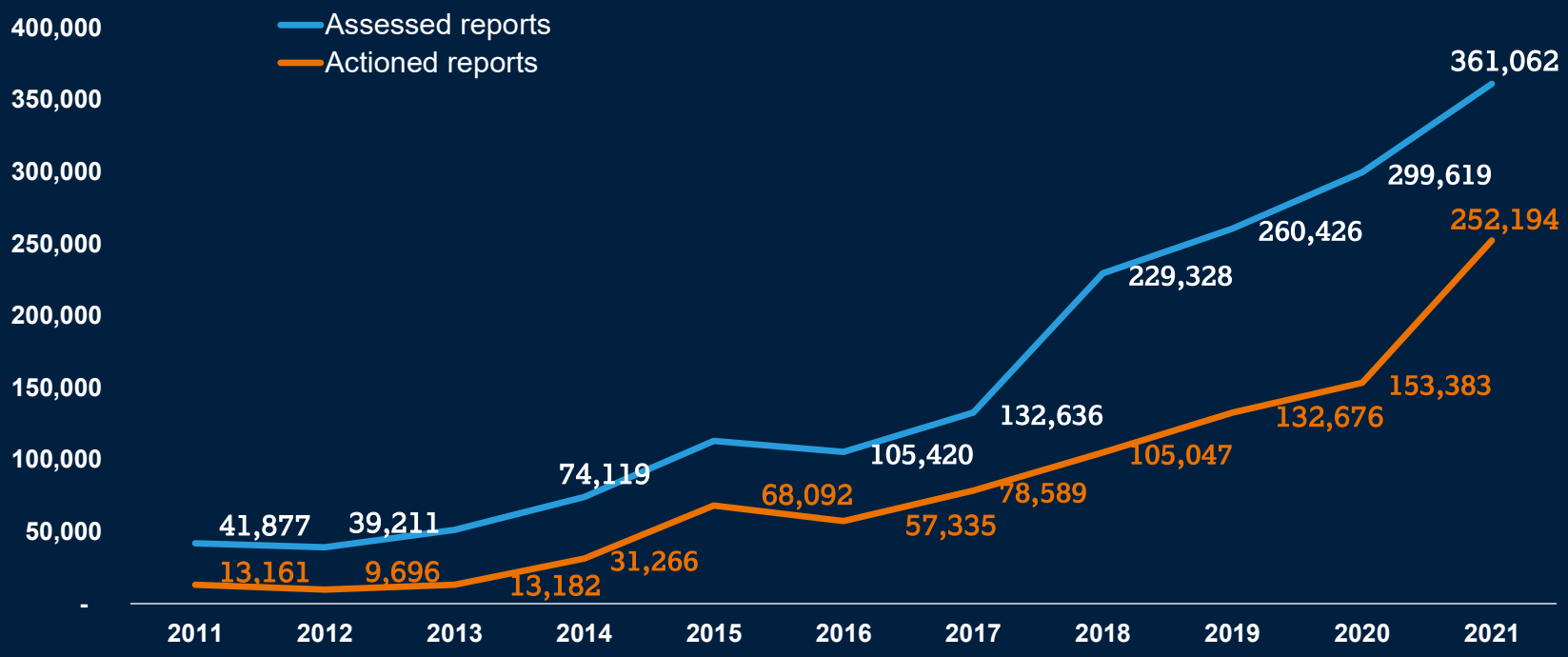
Digital fingerprints (hashes). Each was created from a unique child sexual abuse image. We add to this number daily.

A hash*

Is a unique digital fingerprint, or label, that identifies a picture of confirmed child sexual abuse.

**Not to be confused with a # hashtag*

Change in scale: 10 years' growth in reports



Change in sex of victims over 10 years

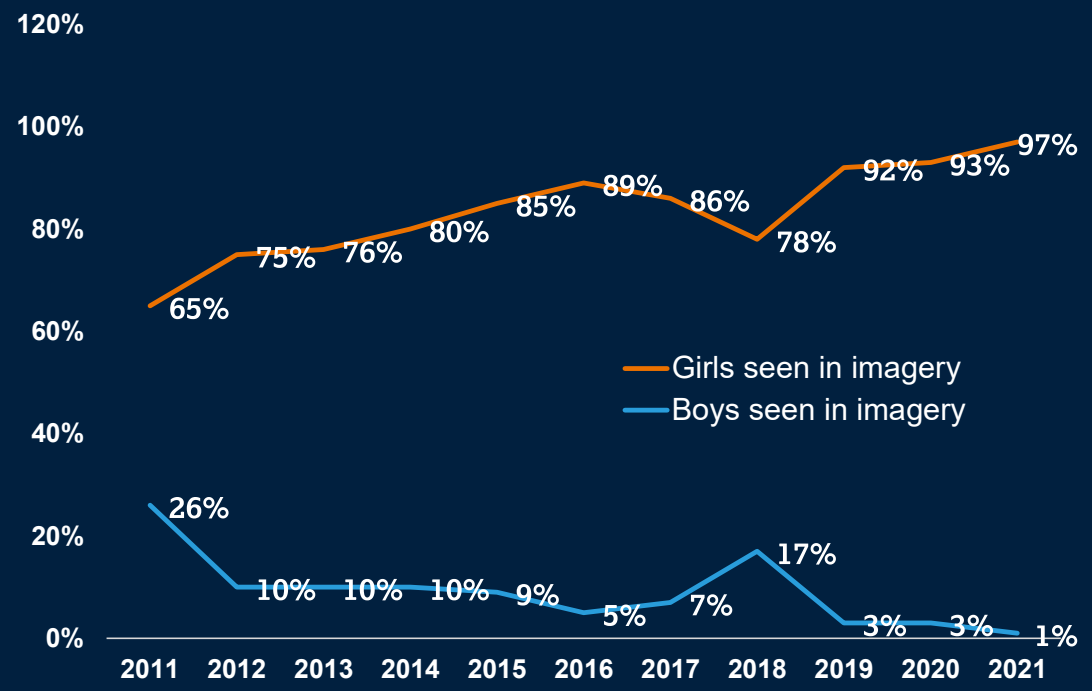
In 2021:

97% of the reports showed girls

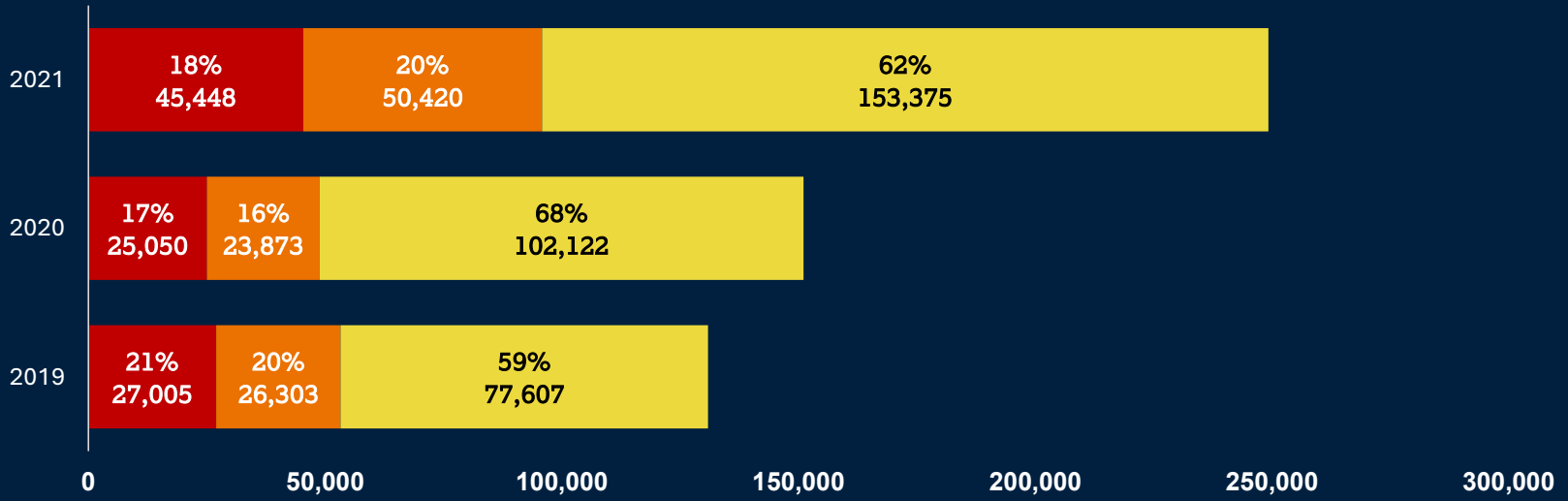
1% showed boys

2% showed both sexes

A small number were unidentifiable.



Severity of abuse: 2021



Category A:

Images involving penetrative sexual activity; images involving sexual activity with an animal or sadism.

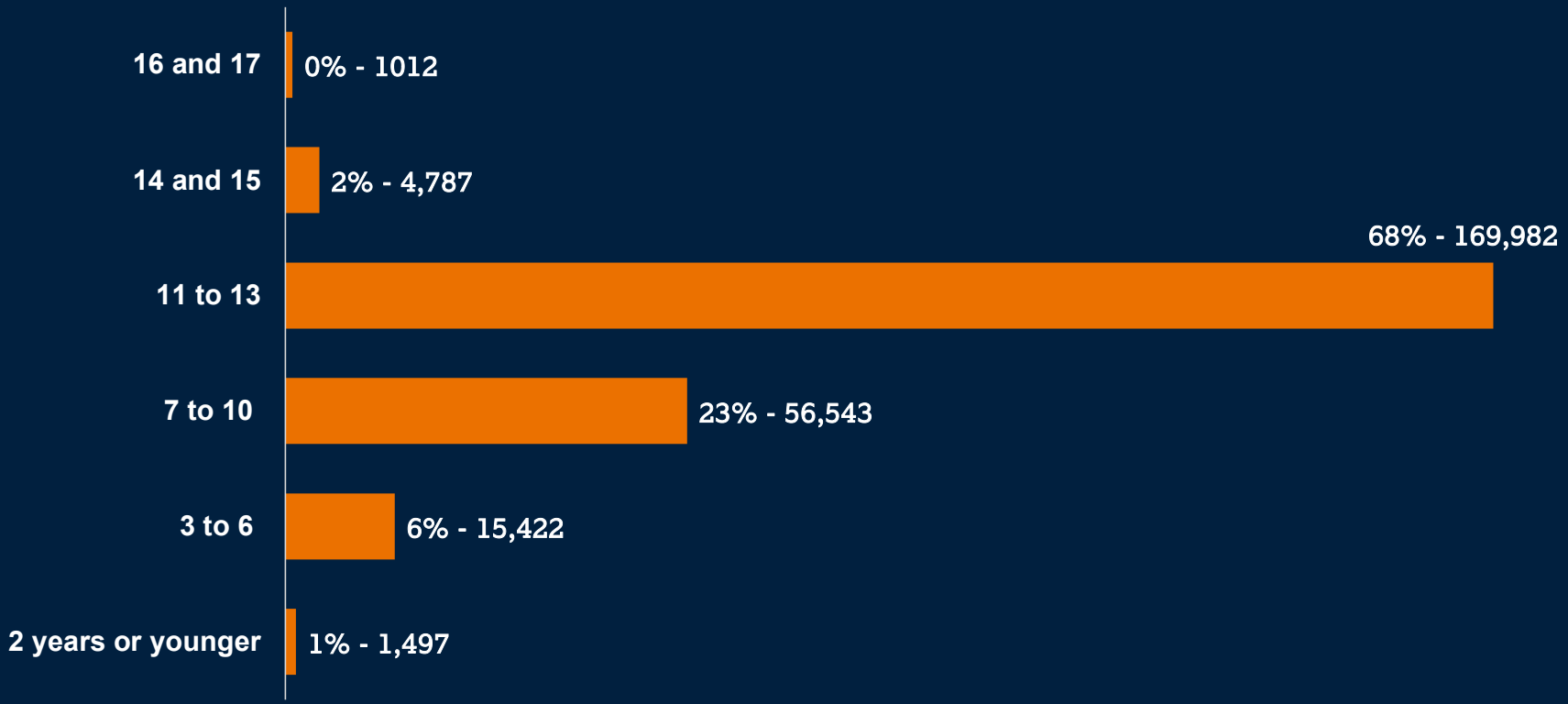
Category B:

Images involving non-penetrative sexual activity.

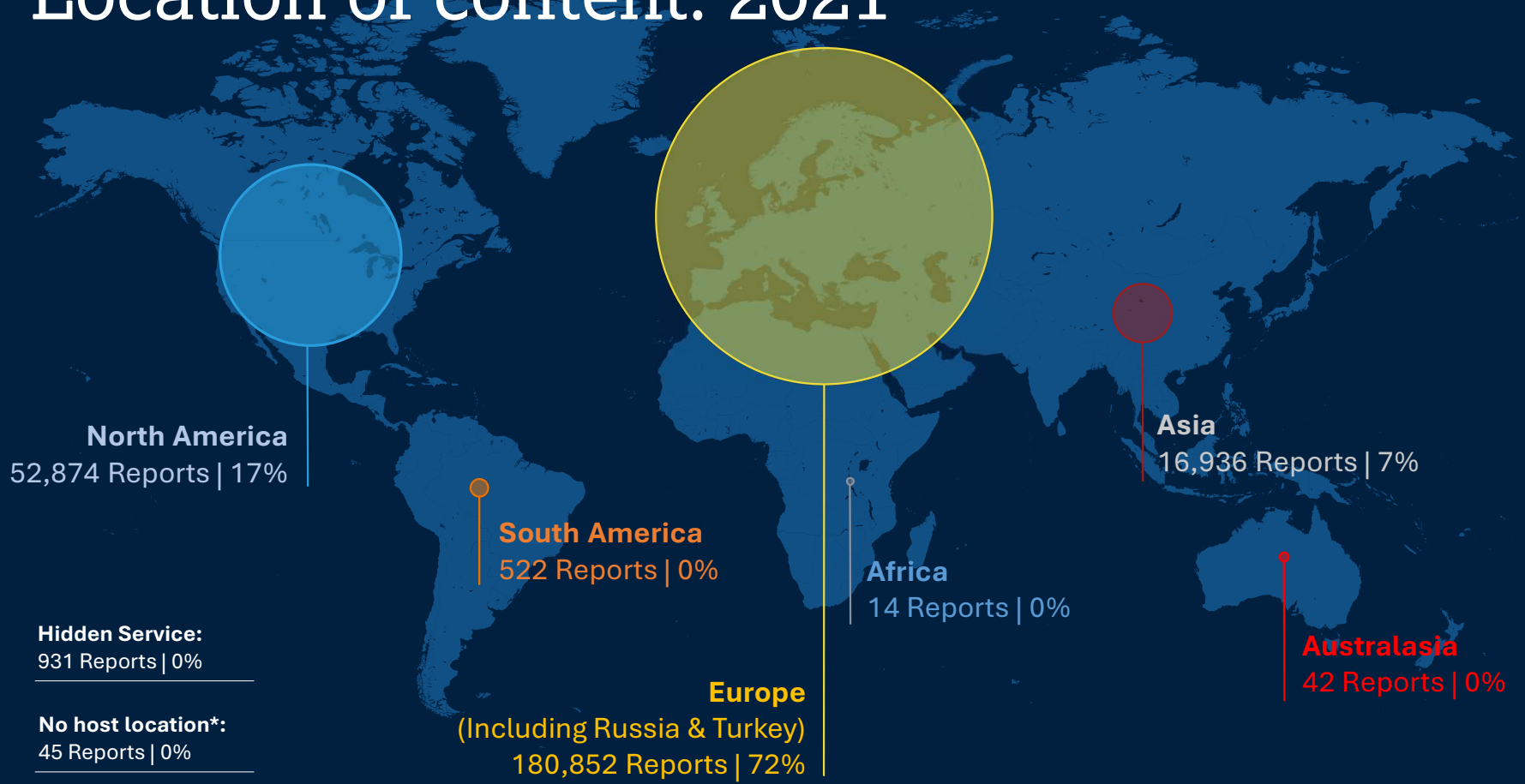
Category C:

Other indecent images not falling within categories A or B.

Age of victims: 2021



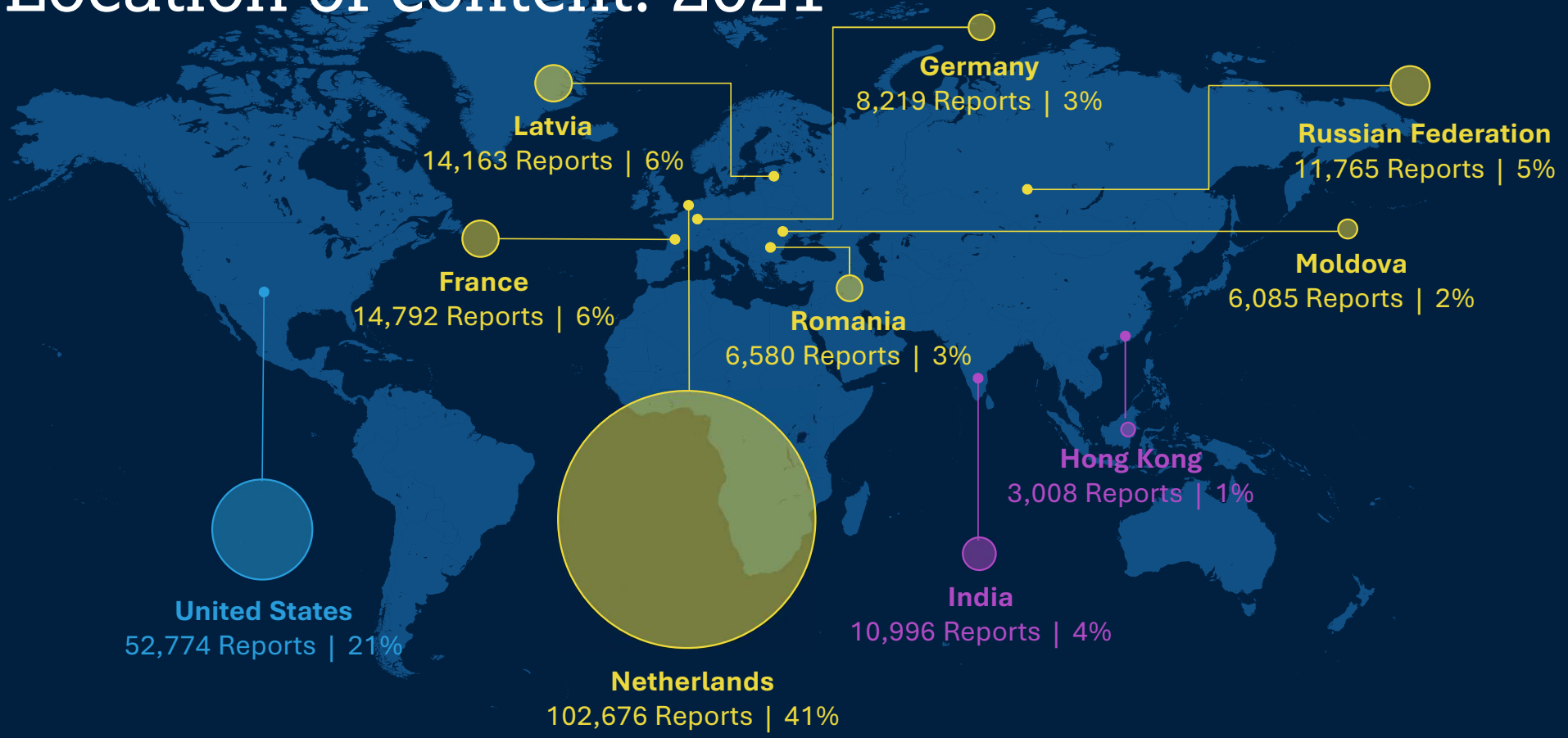
Location of content: 2021



Hidden Service:
931 Reports | 0%

No host location*:
45 Reports | 0%

Location of content: 2021

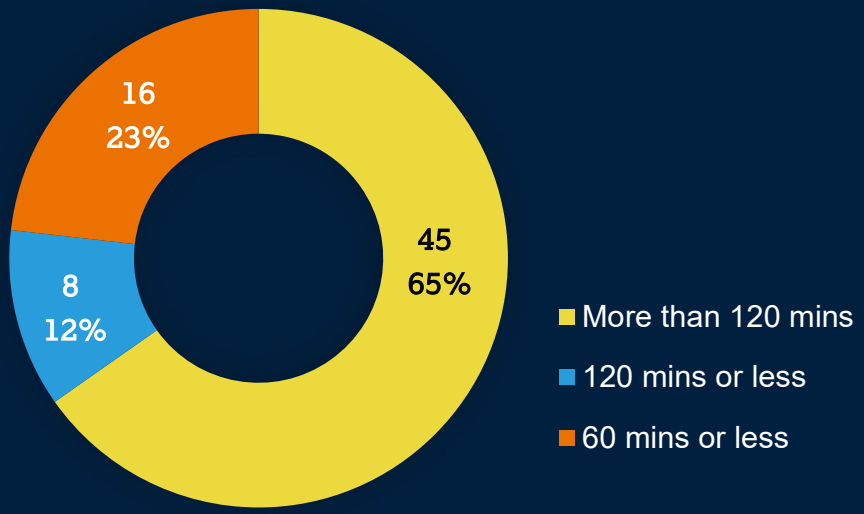


UK-hosted child sexual abuse: 2021

- The UK hosts a small volume of online child sexual abuse content.
- When we were founded in 1996, the UK hosted **18%** of the global total; in 2021 this figure was just **0.15%.**
- In 2021, **381** URLs displaying child sexual abuse imagery were hosted in the UK, an **increase of 112%** from 180 URLs in 2020.
- **24** companies who were abused were not IWF Members.
- **1** company was an IWF Member.

3 Minutes

Fastest removal time



‘Self-generated’ child sexual abuse imagery

This is now the predominant type of child sexual abuse imagery we see online.

In 2021, almost three quarters (72% or 182,281) of reports included “self-generated” child sexual abuse imagery. In 2020, this was 44% or 68,000 reports.

- Once captured, these images & videos can be recirculated for years after they were originally created.
- **No blame should be placed upon the victim.**

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THE HIDDEN CRIMES

in our children's bedrooms

IN CONVERSATION WITH

IWF Senior Analyst, Rosa

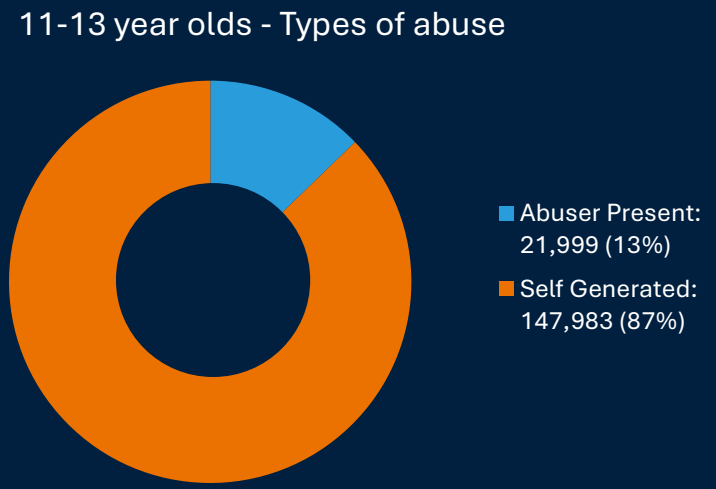
iwf.org.uk/inconversation

11-13 year olds

‘Self-generated’ child sexual abuse imagery

8/10

of self generated reports included an **11-13 year old girl**



7-10 year olds

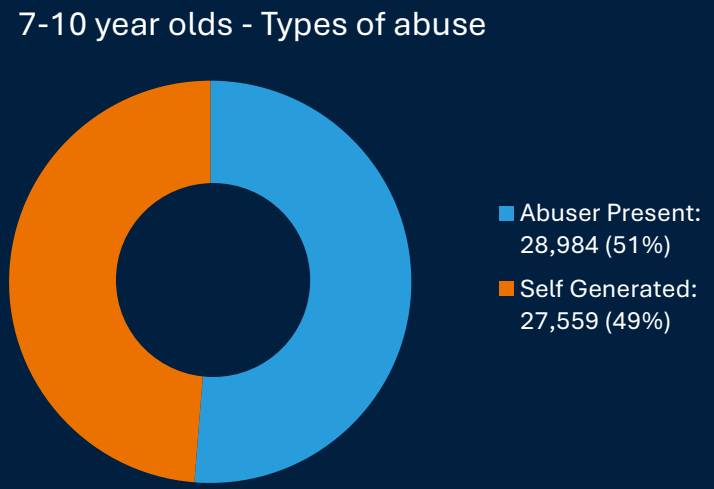
‘Self-generated’ child sexual abuse imagery

235%

Increase in reports including **7-10 year olds**

= fastest growing group.

In 2020 there were 8,231 instances. In 2021 there were 27,559.

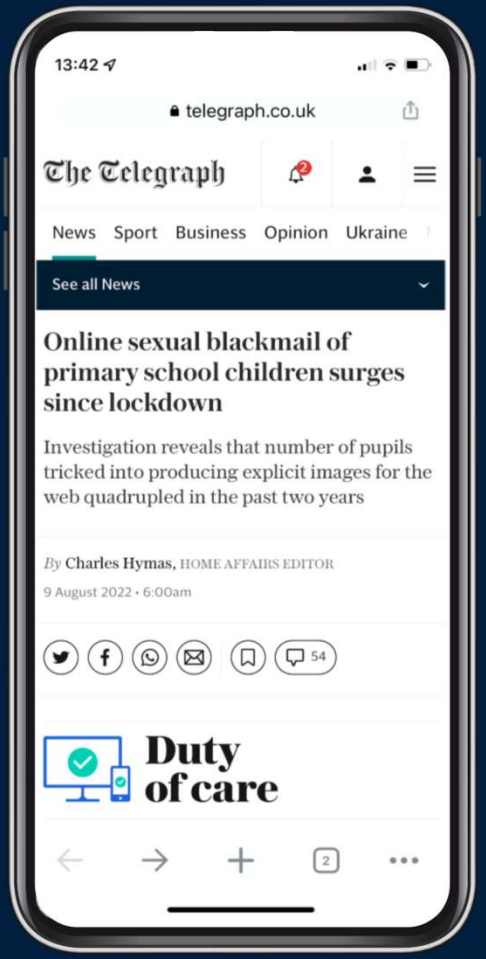


7-10 year olds

2022 data

- 20,000 reports of ‘self-generated’ sexual abuse imagery seen in first half of 2022 showed 7-10 year olds.
- 8,000 more instances than same period last year.

360%
increase



Sibling abuse

- Children are being tricked and coerced into abusing their siblings by offenders over webcam.
- **511** instances seen over 3 months / 8 times a day.
- **5/10** times involve penetrative sexual abuse.
- This happens in family homes, with parents/carers unaware.

We saw: Two 11-year-old girls offer to show their underwear for more 'likes'.

We saw: An embarrassed 11-year-old boy whose brother asks him for oral sex.

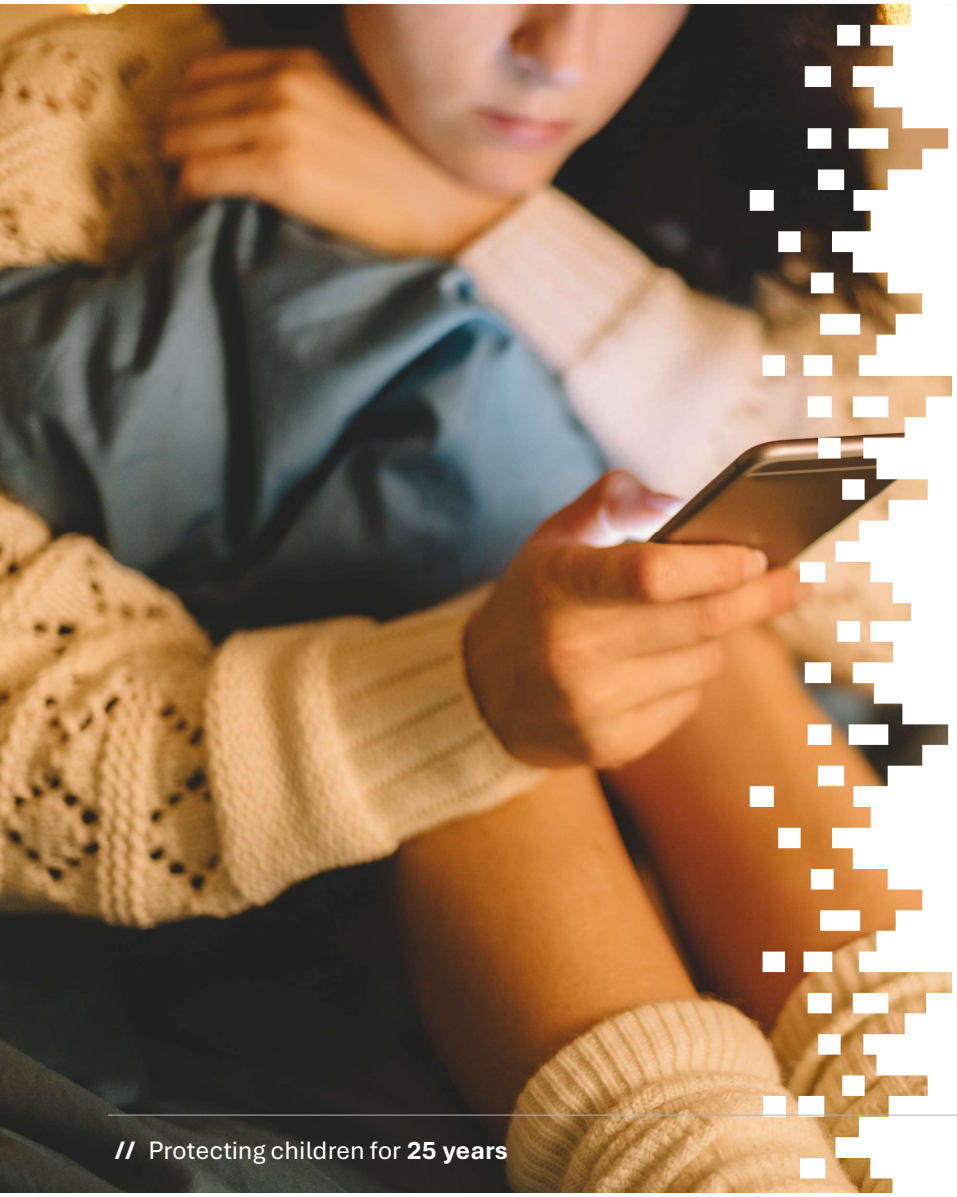
We saw: Three boys reading out instructions from a woman online who asks them to remove their underwear and touch each other.

This snapshot study took place in 2020

Vulnerabilities
- the child is never to blame*

- Key stage of sexual development (amplified feelings of anxiety, sensitivity + vulnerability, curiosity + riskier behaviours);
- Popularity – “likes” rule;
- Believe it’s just a game / some fun;
- Naivety about the honesty of others & a misplaced confidence in themselves;
- Special educational needs increase vulnerability;
- Having use of an internet-enabled device with a camera.

*Informed by research by BritainThinks on behalf of IWF, 2019



Tactics

- Will ‘scattergun’ large volumes of requests
- Will apply pressure / persuasion / coercion
- Will encourage them into a “harmless game”
- Will tell them how beautiful / pretty / grown up they are
- Will show them recordings of other children doing sexual activities to ‘normalise’ it to their victim.

*Observed by IWF analysts

Prevention campaign

Building resilience to the threat of self-generated sexual abuse of children, thereby reducing the number of incidences.

1. Help **girls aged 11-13** recognise the actions of offenders, feel empowered to block, report & tell someone they trust.
2. Raise **parental** awareness of this criminality and motivate and educate them to help protect their children.

Funded by IWF, Microsoft and UK Government's Home Office, TikTok + private funder and numerous advertising credits from relevant social media companies.

So what can parents & carers do to protect their child?

+ Parents' resource on microsite with conversation starters: **talk.iwf.org.uk**

Gurls Out Loud

Block. Report. Tell someone you trust.

- To help girls spot the signs of grooming / coercion.
- Series of educational social content.
- Empowering: inspired by women's marches, climate change protests and *Me Too* movement.
- Social influencer content.
- Places of support signposted on microsite.

gurlsoutloud.com

GURLS
OUT
LOUD

BLOCK. REPORT.
TELL SOMEONE
YOU TRUST.

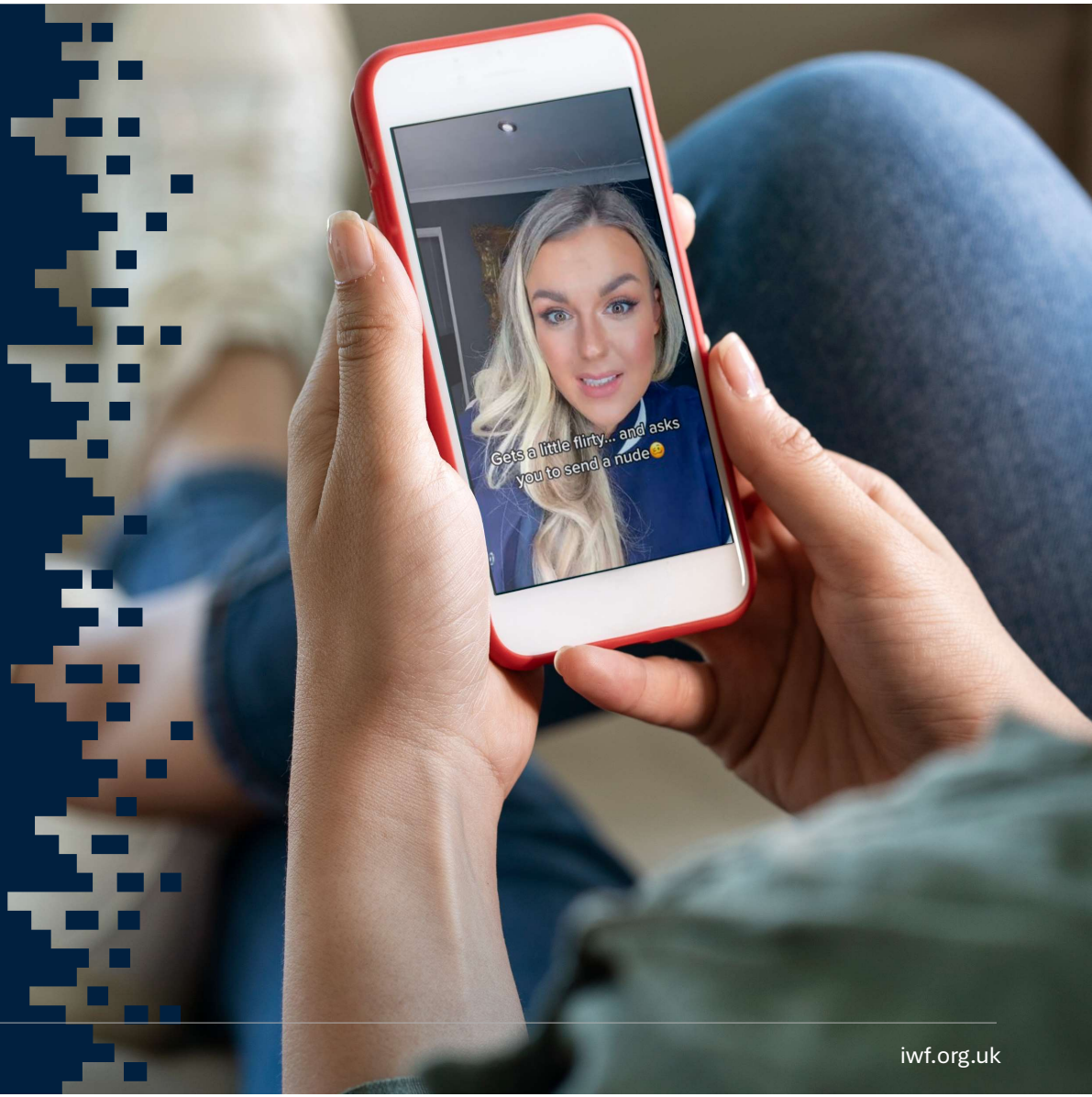
Influencer content

We worked with 10+ social media influencers who created content on their TikTok and YouTube channels to support the campaign

YouTube

Tallia Storm

Caitlin and Leah



Key conclusions

<u>Conversations</u> about online grooming and online sexual abuse can make all the difference to both parents/carers and daughters.

- It breaks down barriers to future conversations.
- Parents who'd already spoken to their daughters were more confident their daughter would speak to them if a problem arose.
- While daughters who had been spoken to were more open to the possibility of their parents talking to them again.

Top things parents need

1. Finding the right time and place to talk about it.
2. A better idea of what girls are doing online.
3. A better understanding of the risks.
4. Learning how other parents are doing this.
5. More support/materials from schools or charities.
6. Knowledge that allows them to deal with / appropriately react if their daughter/child revealed that she had been affected.
7. A better understanding of the tactics of sexual offenders online.

Resource for parents

IWF Internet Watch Foundation

MAKING SURE YOUR HOME DOESN'T HAVE AN OPEN DOOR TO CHILD SEXUAL ABUSERS

A guide for parents and carers

The guidance has three parts:

- **Part One**
  Helps you understand more about online child sexual abuse: what it is, who does it, and how it happens. It also tells you more about the ways children use social media, to explain why simply 'banning' it doesn't work.
- **Part Two**
  Answers the question: 'What can I do?' and gives you clear, practical advice to help keep your children safe.
- **Part Three**
  Tells you what to do if you **suspect or know** that a child is being sexually abused online, and lists specialist organisations that can also help.

Part Two

WHAT CAN YOU DO

So what do you do now?

How do you close your door to abusers? This section will tell you.

The **TALK** acronym breaks these steps into four main areas that gives you some practical ways to help your child reduce their risk and use the internet more safely. The key is to start now: whether your child has been using the internet independently for a while, or are about to get their first mobile phone, it is not too late to take these steps.

T A L K

Talk to your child about online sexual abuse. Start the conversation – and listen to their concerns.

Agree ground rules about the way you use technology as a family.

Learn about the platforms and apps your child loves. Take an interest in their online life.

Know how to use tools, apps and settings that can help to keep your child safe online.

TALK

TALK TO YOUR CHILD ABOUT ONLINE CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Start the conversation and listen to their concerns

Having this first conversation will probably be the hardest thing to do – talking about sex feels awkward, and no-one wants to think about something as shocking as sexual abuse. There won't be many parents and carers who feel confident or prepared to talk to their child about this – everyone will wish they didn't have to.

Unfortunately, you do have to. Not talking about it could make the difference between your child being safe, or not. Here are some tips on starting the conversation:

Pick your moment

There will never be an 'ideal' time to talk about online child sexual abuse, but try and make sure that your child is relaxed and calm, and open to having a chat. If they're hungry, or tired, or watching their favourite show, the conversation may not go well.

Try not to make a dramatic 'We need to talk' statement – a good time to talk about tricky things can be while you're walking, playing or doing an activity together, or during a car journey. Not having the intensity of being face-to-face or even having to look at one another can take the pressure off and help your child listen, and respond, more easily.

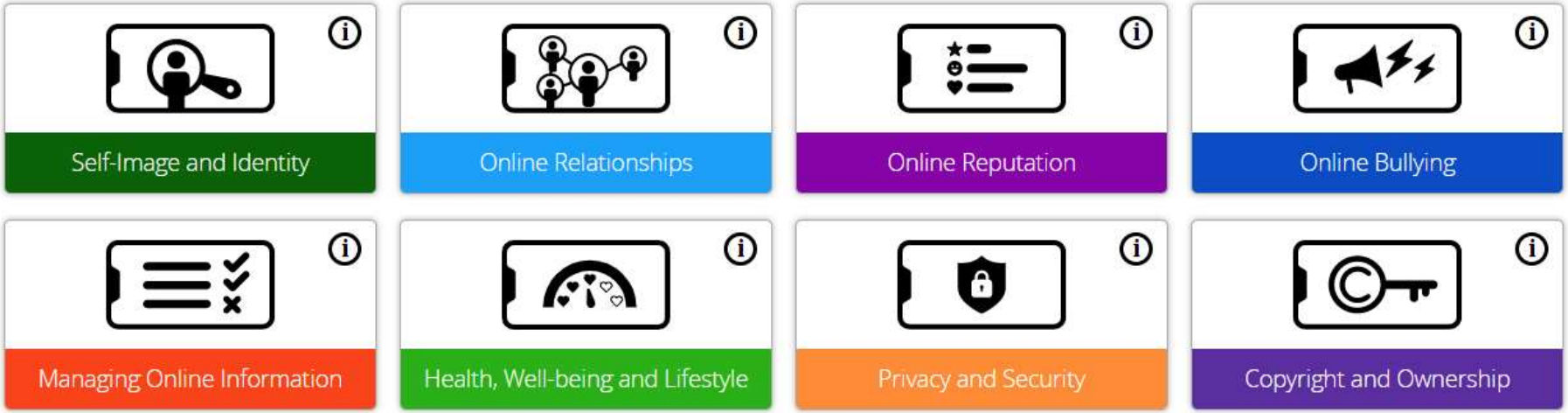
You could also seize an opportunity – for example, if you know their school is teaching about online safety, or the issue is on the news, you could carry on the conversation from there.

Pick your moment, but don't wait for the 'perfect' age or time. It is never too early or too late to have this chat: if your child is getting their first mobile phone, have an age appropriate conversation (more on this below) before or when they get it. However, if they have been using the internet unsupervised for a while, don't worry that you have missed the boat – you haven't.

Project Evolve

- **projectevolve.co.uk**
- Funded by the UK Safer Internet Centre, it's FREE to schools.
- For Primary and Secondary pupils (aged 4 – 18)
    - 10,500 schools registered across UK,
    - 38,500 teachers,
    - 550,00 assessment statements.
- Enables teachers to understand where their pupils are now, and measure improvements.
- It maps to all 330 statements from the UK Council for Internet Safety's (UKCIS) framework: "Education for a connected world".

Project Evolve:
Top Level Subjects Covered



Introducing

PROJECT

Report Remove

IWF & NSPCC developed Report Remove to support a young person in reporting in reporting sexual images or videos of themselves for removal from the internet.

- Childline supports and safeguards the child;
- The child reports their image/video to IWF through a dedicated portal, verifying their age with Yoti.
- IWF analysts assess the imagery against UK law. A criminal image will be removed from internet and hashed.
- Childline contacts the child to provide updates on their report.

The process is child-centred; the young person doesn't need to tell anyone who they are; they can always access support from Childline, and they don't need to worry about an unnecessary visit from the police.

REPORT REMOVE

Nude image of you online?
We can help take it down.

Want to take down an online nude?

childline

ONLINE, ON THE PHONE, ANYTIME

childline.org.uk | 0800 1111

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Thanks for listening

Contact us:

- iwf.org.uk
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- +44 (0) 1223 20 30 30