Preventing child sexual abuse material offending

Chair: Kelly M. Babchishin

IATSO 2025

Poznań, Poland

Deterrence Matters

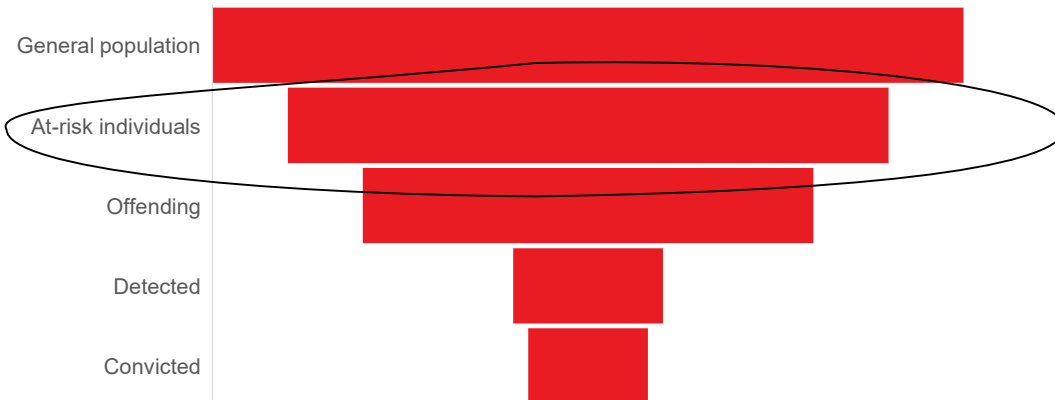|	
General population	
At-risk individuals	
Offending	
Detected	
Convicted	

Deterrence Matters

General population	
At-risk individuals	
Offending	
Detected	
Convicted	

Thanks to our Funders

Lehmann et al.

Ó Ciardha et al.

Safe Online | Tech Coalition

A lawless space – unless you get caught? Perceptions of the Internet and CSAM offending across contrasting samples
Laura Quinten
1

A survey of Darknet child sexual abuse material forum users on risk factors for sexual victimization of children
Alexander Schmidt
2

New forms of risk in the digital age: A cross-national, person-centered approach to child sexual abuse material prevention
Robert Lehmann
3

Optimising help-seeking messages for people at risk of online sexual harm
Caoilte Ó Ciardha
4

Carleton University

5

A lawless space–unless you get caught?
Perceptions of the Internet and CSAM offending across contrasting samples

Laura Quinten

18th IATSO conference, Poznań, August 2025

MSB Medical School Berlin
Hochschule für Gesundheit und Medizin

6

1996: Lawless Space Utopia

Medical **School** Berlin
Hochschule für
Gesundheit und Medizin

> "**Governments of the Industrial World**, you weary giants of flesh and steel,
> I come from **Cyberspace**, the new home of Mind.
> On behalf of the future, I ask you of the past to leave us alone.
> You are **not welcome** among us. You have **no sovereignty** where we gather.
>
> We are creating a world that all may enter **without privilege or prejudice**
> accorded by race, economic power, military force, or station of birth.
> We are creating a world where anyone, anywhere may express his or her
> beliefs, no matter how singular, **without fear of being coerced into silence or
> conformity**."
>
> John Perry Barlow, A Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace

https://www.eff.org/cyberspace-independence

2025: Lawless Space Dystopia

- Surveillance & Tracking: wealth and power for the few

- Virtually lawless spaces: hate, radicalization, illegal content, etc.

  - CSAM: new peaks

    - 1.73 million reports to EU hotlines in Q1 2025[1]

    - 291,273 CSAM-URLs in 2024[2]

Reuters
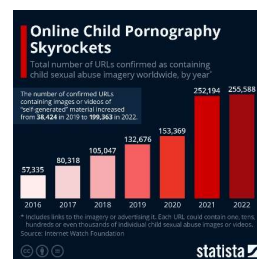Meta investors, Zuckerberg reach settlement to end $8 billion trial over Facebook privacy violations
18. Juli 2025

The Guardian
The EU wants to scan every message sent in Europe. Will that really make us safer?
24.01.2025

Online Child Pornography Skyrockets
Total number of URLs confirmed as containing child sexual abuse imagery worldwide, by year*

The number of confirmed URLs containing images or videos of "self-generated" material increased from 38,424 in 2019 to 199,363 in 2022.

2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
57,335	80,318	105,047	132,676	153,369	252,194	255,588

* Includes links to the imagery or advertising it. Each URL could contain one, tens, hundreds or even thousands of individual child sexual abuse images or videos.
Source: Internet Watch Foundation

statista

[1] BETTER INTERNET FOR KIDS - Record report volume and emerging content trends for hotlines
[2] EU countries urged to push for better laws to protect children at IWF's annual report launch in Brussels

Lawless Space Theory (Steel et al., 2023)

- Offenders are most likely to select and stay in online environments that:

  - **Best meet psychosocial and criminogenic needs**, while requiring minimal effort

  - **Support habituation and differential association**, reducing perceived risk

  - **Normalize deviant behavior**, increasing comfort and

  - **Allow countermeasures** unless they undermine usability

- A Lawless Space Theory (LST) **scale** should evaluate:

  - views of the Internet as being a separate and distinct ecological niche from the physical world

  - having lower capable guardianship, and

  - being a location where criminality occurs and is tolerated.

Steel, C. M. S., Newman, E., O'Rourke, S., & Quayle, E. (2023). Lawless space theory for online child sexual exploitation material offending. *Aggression and Violent Behavior, 68*. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2022.101809.

Research Questions & Hypotheses (1)

- **How do individuals from different samples perceive the internet as a lawless space?**

- **Study 1:**

  - Individuals **convicted of CSAM offenses** will report **lower** LST scores compared to

    - individuals from the general population and

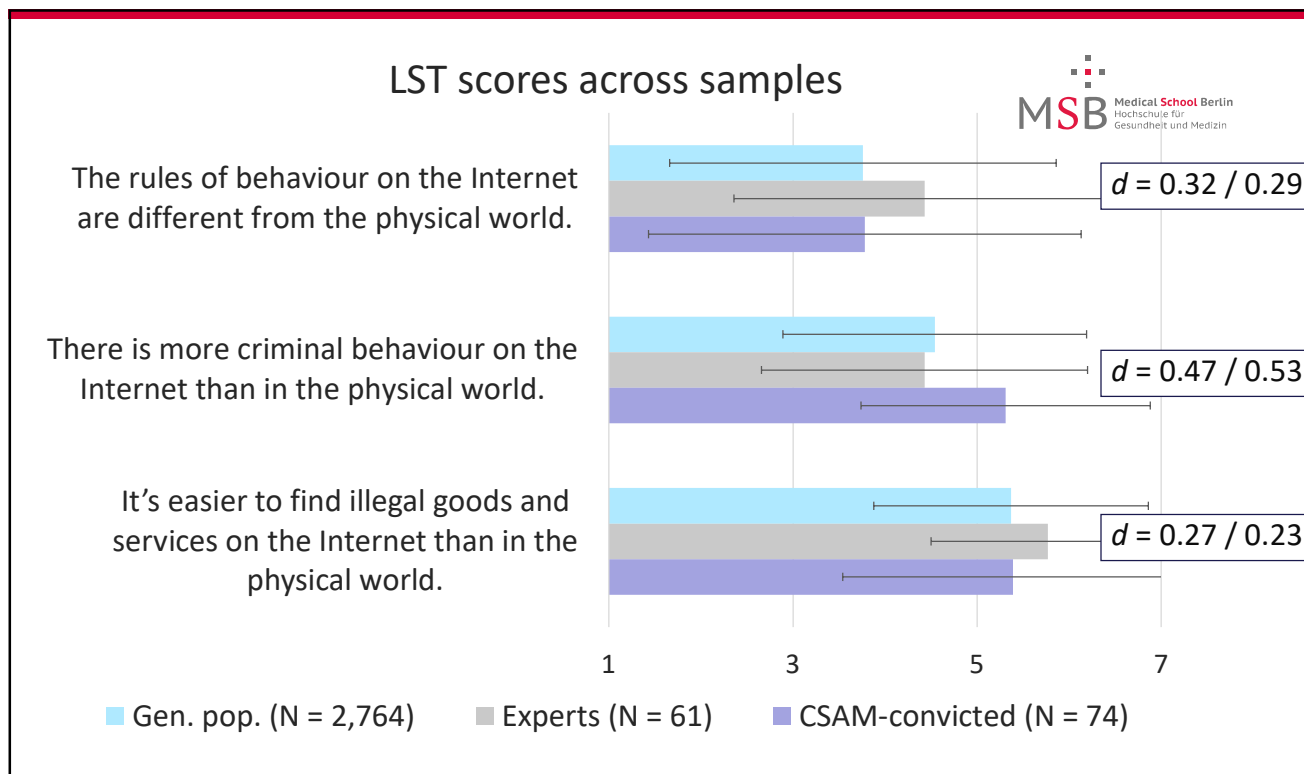   - professionals with expertise in darknet investigations.
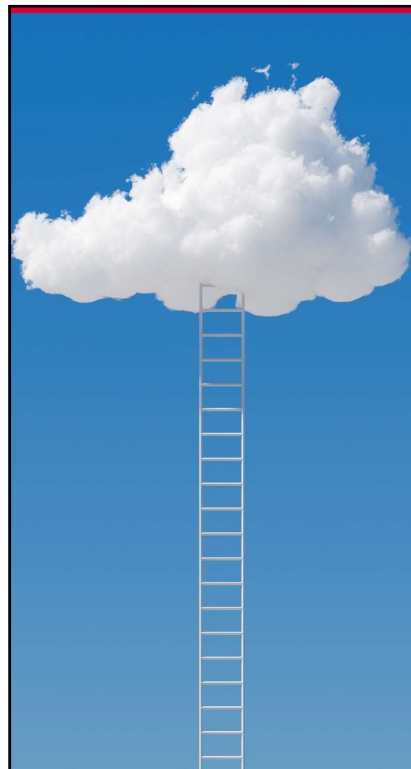
Samples (1)

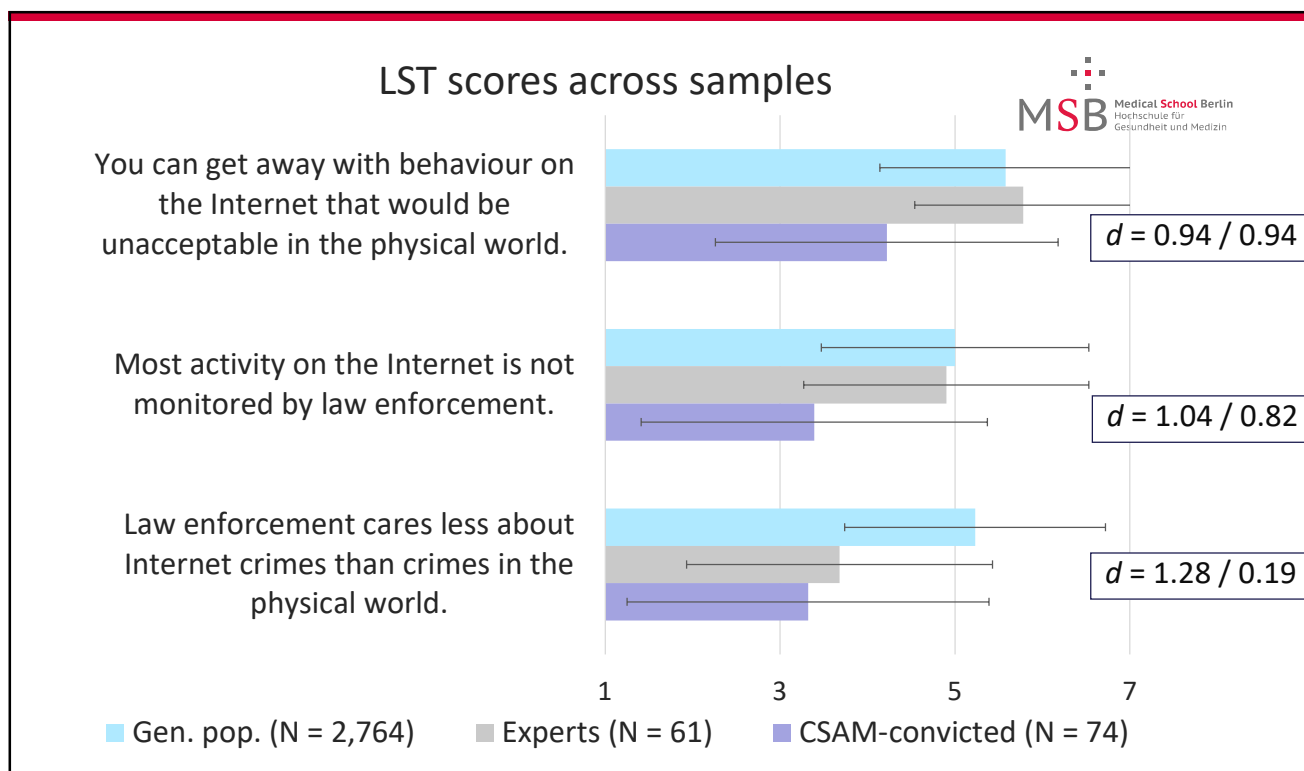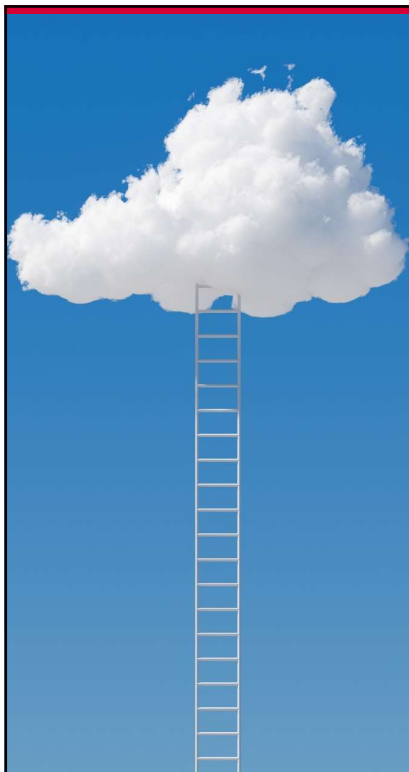| General population (N = 2,764)	Experts (N = 61)	CSAM-convicted (N = 74)
• German online sample, 53% female	• Interdisciplinary experts on CSAM in the darknet, 57% female	• Men convicted for CSAM use
• Age: M = 24.52, SD = 7.08	• Age: M = 37.43, SD = 10.65	• Age: M = 47.11, SD = 12.48
• No sex differences in LST scores	• No sex differences in LST scores	
• Low CSAM propensity		

LST scores across samples

LST total score

d = 0.44 / 0.33

1   2   3   4   5   6   7

■ Gen. pop. (N = 2,764)   ■ Experts (N = 61)   ■ CSAM-convicted (N = 74)

LST scores across samples

The rules of behaviour on the Internet are different from the physical world.
d = 0.32 / 0.29

There is more criminal behaviour on the Internet than in the physical world.
d = 0.47 / 0.53

It's easier to find illegal goods and services on the Internet than in the physical world.
d = 0.27 / 0.23

Gen. pop. (N = 2,764)   Experts (N = 61)   CSAM-convicted (N = 74)

LST scores across samples

You can get away with behaviour on the Internet that would be unacceptable in the physical world.
d = 0.94 / 0.94

Most activity on the Internet is not monitored by law enforcement.
d = 1.04 / 0.82

Law enforcement cares less about Internet crimes than crimes in the physical world.
d = 1.28 / 0.19

Gen. pop. (N = 2,764)   Experts (N = 61)   CSAM-convicted (N = 74)

Research Questions & Hypotheses (2)

- **How do individuals from different samples perceive the internet as a lawless space?**

- **Study 2:**
    - **At-risk** samples for CSAM offending will report **higher** LST scores compared to
    - individuals from the general population.

RAPPID – Risk Assessment for the Prevention & Promotion of Internet Deterrence

- Funded by the Tech Coalition Safe Online Research Fund

- Focus: Innovative, scalable, technology-driven solutions

- Project goals: Design and evaluation of evidence-based messages to deter offending

Colm Gannon
CEO ICMEC
Australia

Kelly Babchishin
Assistant Professor
Carleton University,
Ottawa, Canada

Alexander
Schmidt
Professor
University of
Mainz, Germany

Robert
Lehmann
Professor Medical
School Berlin,
Germany

Laura Quinten
Research Fellow
Medical School
Berlin, Germany

RAPPID – Risk Assessment for the Prevention & Promotion of Internet Deterrence

1 Identify *risk factors for transitioning from legal to illegal materials*
→ survey globally representative samples and at-risk users

1 LST Item:

~~It is~~ **I find it** easier to find illegal goods and services on the Internet than in the real world.

Samples (2): RAPPID

General Population (*N* = 6,027)	At Risk (*N* = 774)	High Risk (*N* = 3,143)

• Global North:
     • France: 1004
     • Mexico: 1000
     • USA: 1000
 • Global South:
     • Brazil: 1006
     • Philippines: 1017
     • South Africa: 1000
	• Fanfiction: 185
	 • Stopitnow Flanders: 29
	 • Stopitnow Netherlands: 55
	 • Stopitnow UK&Ireland: 460
	 • Aylo: 45
		• Darknet CSEAM forum

• 25% female • Age: M = 31.65, SD = 7.57	• 30% female • Age: M = 33.79, SD = 14.91	• 5% female • Age: M = 28.62, SD = 9.57

LST scores across RAPPID samples

I find it easier to find illegal goods and services on the Internet than in the real world.

Cor. with CSAM propensity:

$r = .17$

$r = .35$

$r = .28$

$d = 0.38 / 0.36$

Gen.pop. (N = 6,027) At risk (N = 774) High risk (N = 3,143)
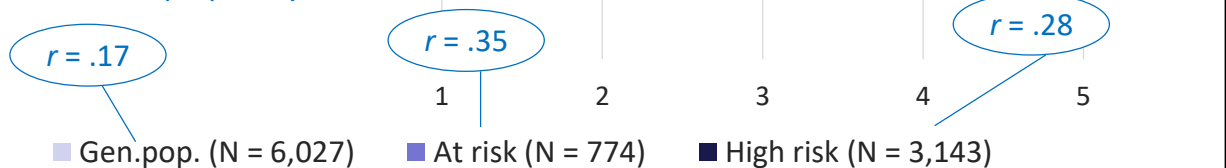
Key Points

- The Internet is widely seen as a **lawless space**

- **Exception:** Convicted online offenders – after being caught, tend to see it as **lawful / monitored**

- At-risk individuals are still within **reach for prevention**

- **Future work:** Explore drivers of LST score variation and links to offending

- **Prevention** should highlight that detection is **possible and likely** (use real examples)
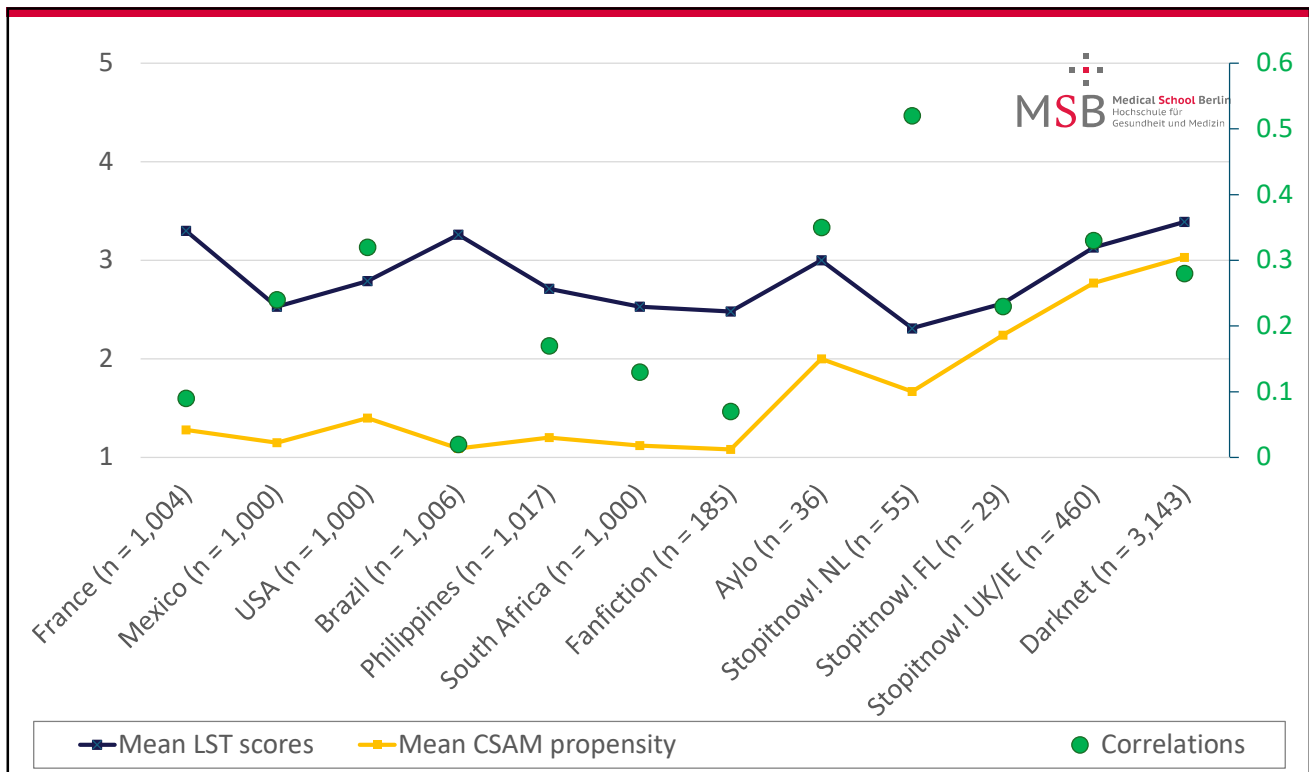
Thank you!

Dr. Laura Quinten
Dipl.-Psych., M.Sc. Rechtspsychologie
Wissenschaftliche Mitarbeiterin | Research Fellow
Department Psychologie | Department of Psychology
Medical School Berlin

laura.quinten@medicalschool-berlin.de

A survey of
Darknet child sexual abuse material forum users
on risk factors for sexual victimization of children

Alexander F. Schmidt

18th IATSO Conference Poznań, August 2025

23

Risk Factors for (Child) Sexual Offending

The Motivation-Facilitation Model of Sexual Offending

Michael C. Seto[1]

- **Pedophilia**
  (Viewing Time, sexual attractiveness ratings)

- **Other risk factors**
  (self-reported motivational and trait facilitators, e.g., sexual self-regulation, social needs; Quinten et al., 2025)

Trait Factors (e.g., antisocial personality)

facilitation + or -

Paraphilia High Sex Drive Intense Mating Effort

motivation

Situational Factors

+

Sexual Offenses

facilitation + or -

State Factors (e.g., alcohol use)
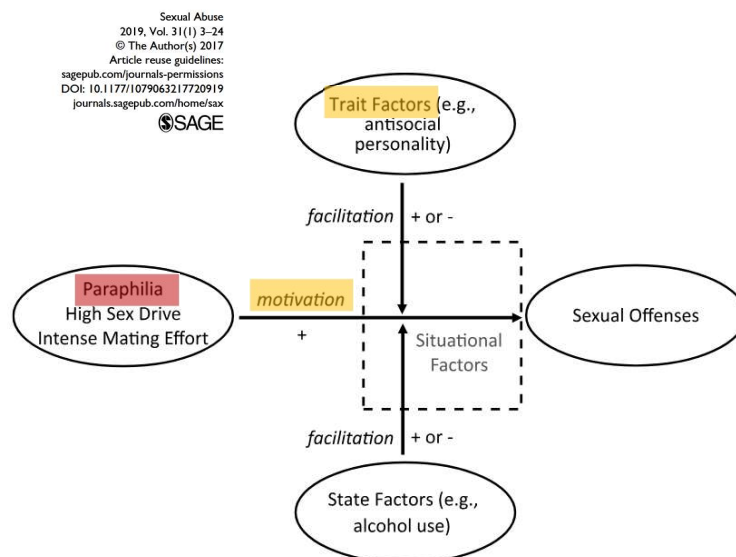
Seto (2019) *Sexual Abuse*
Quinten et al. (2025) *Sexual Abuse (forthcoming)*

JG|U

24

Viewing Time (VT) Measures of Sexual Interest in Children

Sexually unexciting 1—2—3—4—5 Sexually very exciting
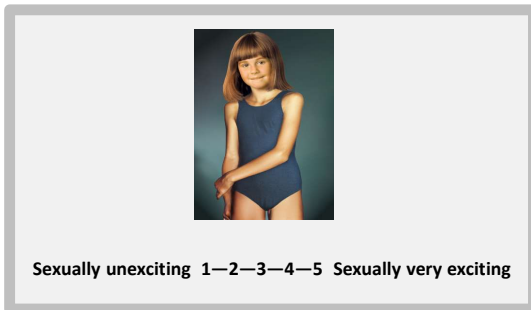
SPECIAL SECTION: THE PUZZLE OF SEXUAL ORIENTATION

A Meta-Analysis of Viewing Time Measures of Sexual Interest in Children

Alexander F. Schmidt[1] · Kelly M. Babchishin[2] · Robert J. B. Lehmann[3]

How Well Do Indirect Measures Assess Sexual Interest in Children? A Meta-Analysis

Chloe I. Pedneault[1], Joseph Hilgard[2], Cathrine Pettersen[1], Chantal A. Hermann[3], Kristen White[1], and Kevin L. Nunes[1]
[1] Department of Psychology, Carleton University
[2] Department of Psychology, Illinois State University
[3] Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, Kingston, Ontario, Canada

- **Direct measure:** Rating
- **Indirect measure:** Rating latency
- **Validity:** Child Sexual Abusers vs. Controls $d \approx 1.00$ (Children – Adults Difference Indexes)
- Easy to apply and robust indirect measure

Schmidt et al. (2017) *Archives of Sexual Behavior*
Pedneault et al. (2021) *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*

JG|U

RAPPID VT Picture Set (Brief Version)

Prepubescent (Tanner 1)   Postpubescent (Tanner 4)

Female

Asian   African   Hispanic   Caucasian

Male

Asian   African   Hispanic   Caucasian
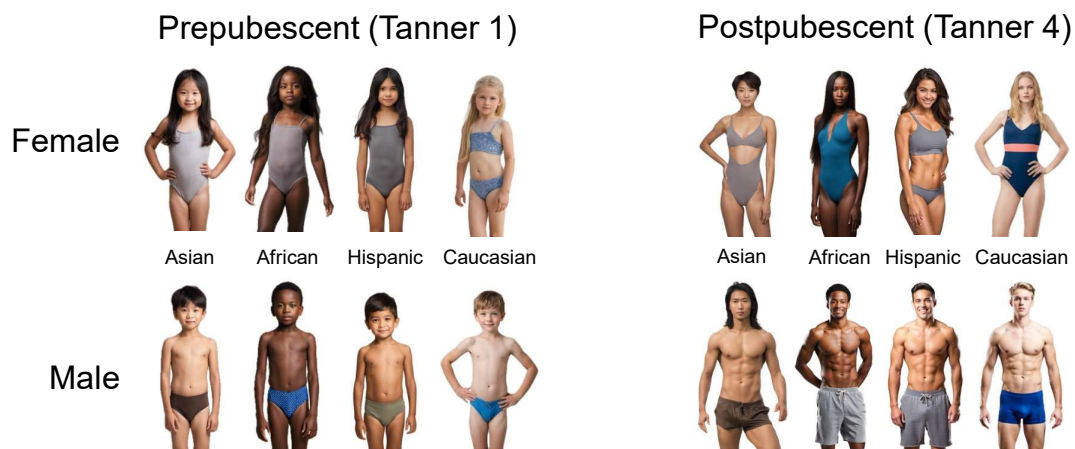
- AI-generated non-existing persons
- Designed to (better) represent ethnically diverse sexual interests than standard stimulus sets

JG|U

Research Questions

In a high-risk sample of Darknet child sexual abuse material (CSAM) forum members,

- does a newly designed, ethnically more diverse, and brief VT measure produce meaningful results?
  → High level of pedophilic preferences
  → Associations with child sexual abuse propensities and behaviors

- are we able to identify further risk factors that are incrementally valid above pedophilic preferences?
  → As shown in multivariate regression analyses with self-reported child sexual abuse behaviors as criterion

JG|U

Sample

- Recruitment via online survey with link posted in Darknet CSAM forum (with consent from moderators)

- Total survey response: N = 4,454
- Honesty, attention, consistency checks passed: **N = 3,143** (70.5%)

- **Sex:** Male 90.3%, Female 5.1%, Intersex 0.7%, Prefer not to say 3,9%
- **Age**: M = 28.6 years (SD = 9.6, min = 18, max = 99)

JG|U

Sexual Interest Scoring

- **Caveat:** VT raw latencies are categorical due to technical reasons (survey software needed to be compatible with TOR-browser access → measured in 1-second intervals)
- Raw Latencies > 10s truncated and log-transformed

- Aggregation: 2 (Target Sex) x 2 (Target Sexual Maturity), all **αs ≥ .77**
- **VT Pedophilic Difference Index** = max. child - max. adult, **α = .15**

- Attractiveness ratings (AR) follow the same rationale based on raw data
- All single category **αs ≥ .87**
- AR Pedophilic Difference Index **α = .92**

Pedophilic Preference Distributions in Darknet Forum Users

Ratings — *MD = -0.250* | *MD = -2.000*

Viewing Times — *MD = 0.025* | *MD = -.385*
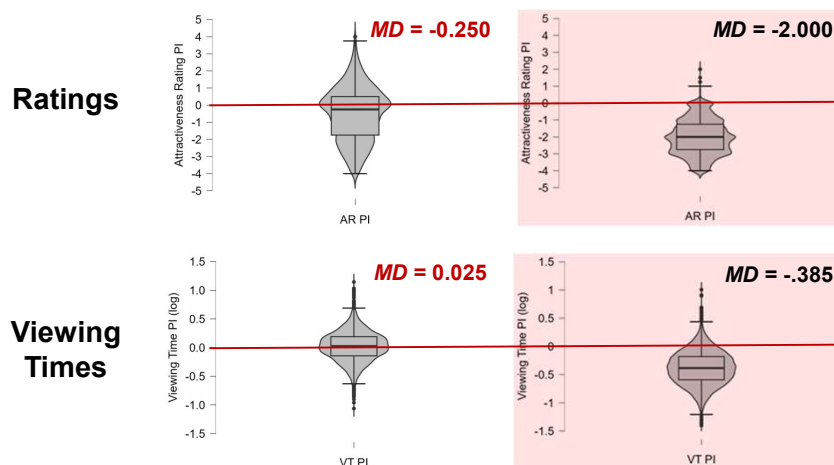
Comparison Dombert et al. (2016)

Male German Population (*N* > 8,500)

- Extremely high levels of pedophilic preferences (PI > 0) especially for VTs (>50%)

Dombert et al. (2016) *Journal of Sex Research*

Validity – Intercorrelations
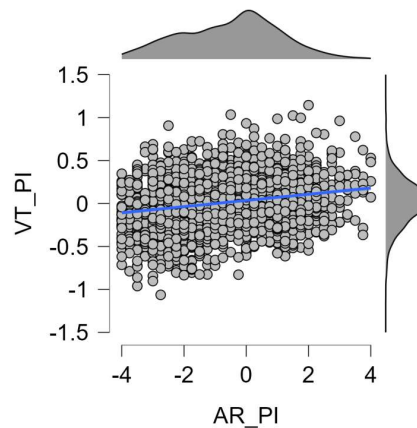
- Both measures show convergent validity (r = .213, p < .001)

Criterion Validity (Self-Reports) – Zero-Order Correlations

Criterion Target: Children	Base rate	AR PI	VT PI
Past Behavior			
CSAM use	**.579**	.364***	.090***
Online Flirt/Cam	.012	.087***	.022
Gifts/Money Online	.072	.173***	.003
Offline Sex	.047	.150***	.004
Propensities			
CSAM use	**.710**	.478***	.165***
Online Flirt/Cam	**.310**	.373***	.092***
Gifts/Money Online	**.436**	.437***	.126***
Offline Sex	**.450**	.465***	.104***

- Low social desirability in Darknet CSAM forum users
  → High base rates and propensities

- Self-report AR outperform VT in anonymous research context

Multivariate Criterion Validity (Logistic Regression Exp β)

Criterion Target: Children	CSAM use	Offline CSA
AR PI	**1.696*****	**1.560*****
VT PI	0.933	1.031
Access to Children	1.006	**1.244*****
Online Social Comfort	**0.800*****	.920
Antisocial Attitudes	**1.369*****	**1.924*****
Sociosexual Orientation	**1.210*****	**1.253***
Problematic Porn Consumption	1.069	1.011
Compulsive Sexual Behavior	**1.233*****	1.088
R^2	**.244*****	**.185*****

JG|U

Conclusions

- Preliminary evidence for **validity of newly developed and ethnically diverse VT stimulus set** → note that brief set-up is based on stimulus exemplars only hence an aggregated score is recommended → likely reason for low reliability of difference score

- Extensive surveying of Darknet CSAM forum users is possible
- Indeed **a high-risk population** as indicated by high 1) base rates for CSAM use, 2) child sexual abuse propensities, and 3) prevalences of pedophilic preferences

- Multiple incrementally valid risk factors for child sexual abuse call for **targeted prevention measures addressing individual (sets of) risk factors** above and beyond pedophilic interest

- **Limitation:** Single item/extensively shortened measures allow only rough construct estimators

JG|U

Thanks for your attention…
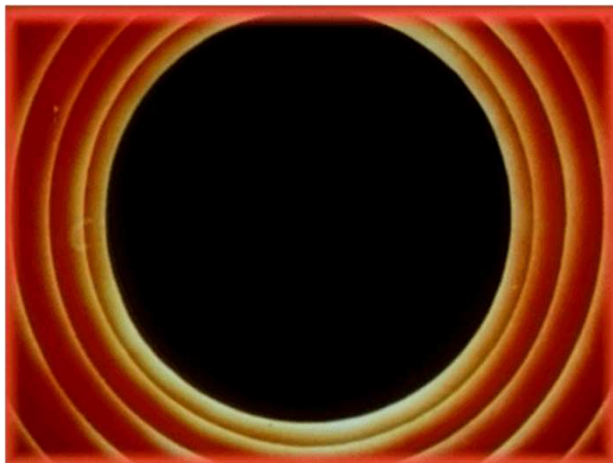
alexander.schmidt@uni-mainz.de

Risk Assessment for the Prevention &

Promotion of Internet Deterrence

(RAPPID)

IATSO Conference in Poznań, Poland

August 26th to August 29th, 2025

Aufblühen und entwickeln an der
MSB Medical School Berlin

What we know… is not who we need to understand.

Existing research focus on…
- Western, educated, industrialized, rich, and democratic sex offender samples
- Sexual Interest
- Antisociality

"What is neglected" — Broader at-risk reality
- Global Digital Population
- At-risk but unconvicted
- Focus on:
  - …?

Current research tells us who has crossed the line — but not who might.

What we know is not who we need to understand.

Stop it now From LFF

- **"What we actually hear from users at risk…"**
Common self-reported reasons for offending
(Source: StopItNow UK)

Emotional distress: boredom, loneliness, depression, low self-esteem, stress

Sexual escalation: pornography desensitization, sexual gratification, addiction

Cognitive/curious: curiosity, risk-seeking, boundary-testing

https://www.stopitnow.org.uk/concerned-about-your-own-thoughts-or-behaviour/concerned-about-use-of-the-internet/self-help/understanding-the-behaviour/understanding-why/

RAPPID – Risk Assessment for the Prevention & Promotion of Internet Deterrence

1

Identify *risk factors for transitioning from legal to illegal materials*

→ survey globally representative samples and at-risk users
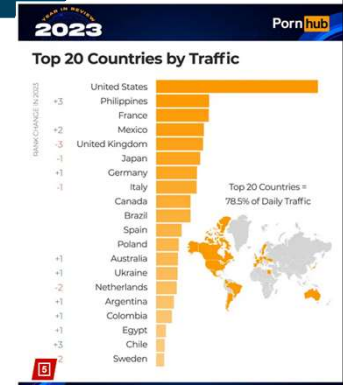
RAPPID samples – men only

General Population (N = 4,389)	At Risk (N = 513)	High Risk (N = 2,829)

• Global North:
   • France: 748
   • Mexico: 747
   • USA: 749
 • Global South:
   • Brazil: 756
   • Philippines: 760
   • South Africa: 746
	• Fanfiction: 18
	 • Stopitnow Flanders: 26
	 • Stopitnow Netherlands: 45
	 • Stopitnow UK&Ireland: 391
	 • Aylo: 36
		• Darknet CSEAM forum

• Age: *M* = 31.87, *SD* = 7.57	• Age: *M* = 39.01, *SD* = 15.14	• Age: *M* = 28.86, *SD* = 9.41

Collaboration Across Sectors

Guillermo Galarza Abizaid

Freya Lambrechts
Researcher and Policy Officer

Minne De Boeck
Criminologe - expertise in SGG en preventie

Stuart Allardyce
Director of Lucy Faithfull Foundation Scotland

aylo

Brands

BRAZZERS   Porn hub   REALITY KINGS   seancody.com   MEN.com   My Dirty Hobby

---

Key domains measured

Counterbalanced

Demographics   Criterion/ outcomes   Sexual domains   Childhood (e.g., witness violence)   Self-regulation / Interpersonal domains (e.g., impulsivity, relationships)   Viewing Time
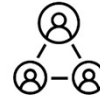
Attention and consistency checks

Variable-Centered Approach: Efficient Model Reduction

Goal: Identify a leaner predictor set **without reducing explanatory power**
→ Stepwise linear regression (N = 7,859, 35 candidates)

Approach

  Method: Stepwise selection (p-value based)
  Criterion: CSEAM tendency ("What would you do if...?")
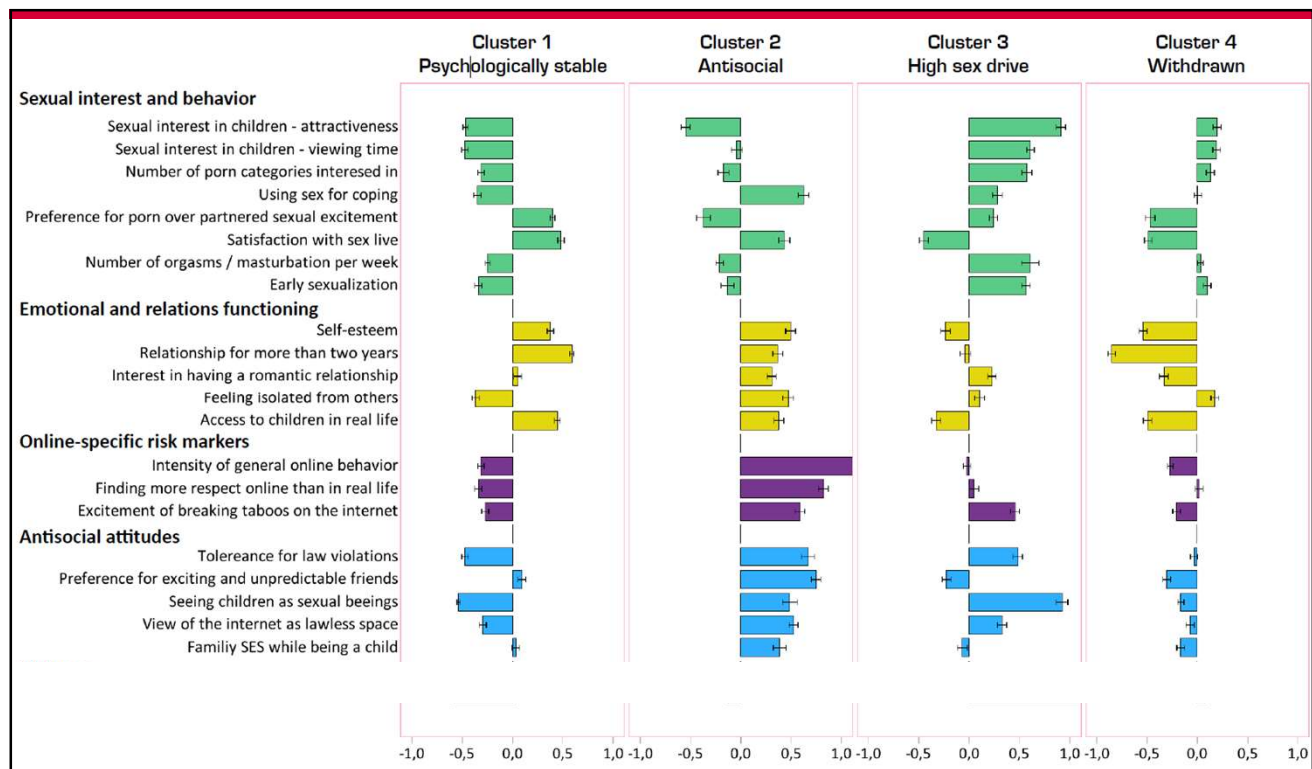 **Validation:** 1,000 bootstrap samples (95% CI)

Key Results
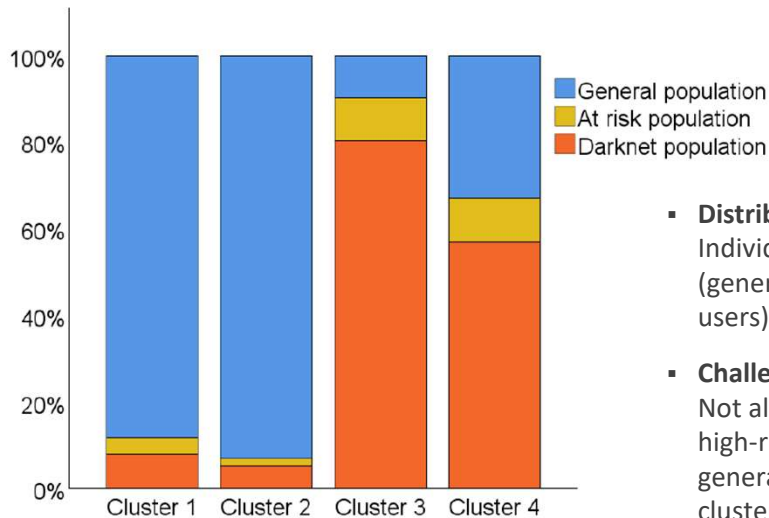
- **21 predictors** retained

- **R² = .64**

The model holds up in data split—**robust predictors, high explained variance, and consistent results across splits.**

Risk Profiles Span All Groups

- **Distribution across all clusters**: Individuals from all three groups (general population, at-risk, darknet users) appear in all four clusters.

- **Challenging common assumptions**: Not all darknet users fall into the high-risk cluster, and not all from the general population are in the low-risk cluster.
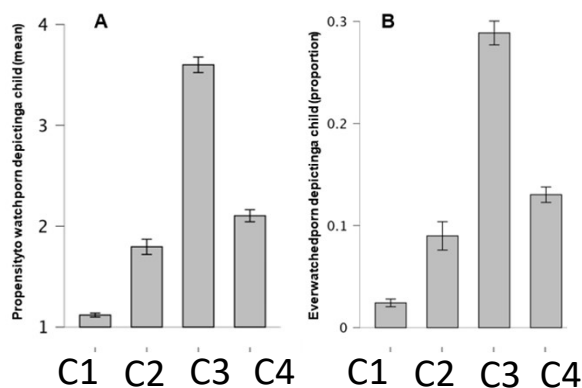
Cluster 1 Psychologically stable	Cluster 2 Antisocial	Cluster 3 High sex drive	Cluster 4 Withdrawn

Propensity for CSAM Use Varies by Cluster and Sample

- **Risk takes multiple forms**: Elevated CSAM use occurs not only in Cluster 3, but also in Clusters 2 and 4, pointing to different psychological risk pathways.

- **Cluster 3 stands out**, but Clusters 2 and 4 also show notable engagement.

- **Different psychological pathways** may lead to risky CSEAM-related behavior.

Cluster 1 Psychologically stable	Cluster 2 Antisocial	Cluster 3 High sex drive	Cluster 4 Withdrawn

Conclusion

- People with a proclivity for CSAM offending are a **heterogeneous group**

- Risk is **not limited** to those with strong sexual interest in children.

- Profiles show additional **withdrawn, or antisocial traits** clusters

- **Different psychological pathways** can lead to similar online behavior.

→ **we need targeted deterrence messages!**

49

What is next…

1 Identify *risk factors* for *transitioning from legal to illegal materials* to enable technology industry to prevent and deter online sexual offences
- survey *globally representative samples* and at-risk users (*bottom-up approach*)

2 Translate findings from Study 1 into practical, easy to implement method at *reducing online sexual offences*
- test targeted deterrence messages based on the user profile (*top-down approach*)

50

Optimising help-seeking messages for people at risk of online sexual harm
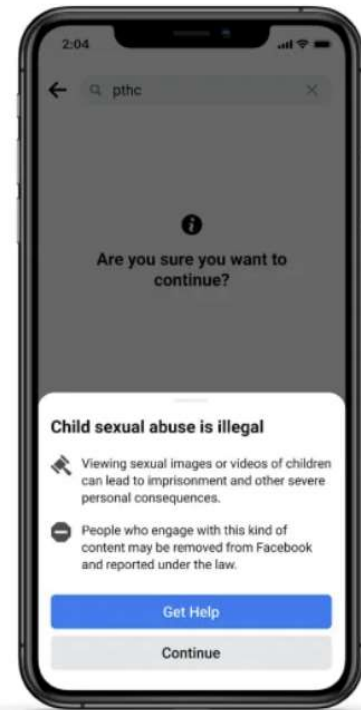
Caoilte Ó Ciardha, PhD

Gaye Ildeniz, PhD

Ben J. Ruisch, PhD

c.c.ociardha@kent.ac.uk

Get Help **messages are increasingly embedded in warning and deterrence messages**

Despite the increasing visibility of help, only a fraction of people searching for CSAM access help resources

Core Question: *Can messages be optimised to push more people to seek help?*

Functions of messages

- Deter
- Educate
- Encourage help-seeking
- Encourage reporting
- Signal ethos

Current/Recent practice

Warning
Child sexual abuse imagery is illegal

If you see sexually explicit imagery of under 18s, report it. If you need anonymous support to stop viewing this illegal material, you can seek help. Learn more

🌐 Report at report.iwf.org.uk   🌐 Seek help at stopitnow.org.uk

Current/Recent practice

Child sexual abuse is illegal

We think that your search might be associated with child sexual abuse. Child sexual abuse, or viewing sexual images or videos of children, can lead to imprisonment and other severe personal consequences. Child sexual exploitation causes extreme harm to children. Searching for and viewing abusive and exploitative material adds to that harm. There are organisations that can provide help and support if you're having sexual thoughts about children. If you see this kind of activity on Facebook, report it to us and law enforcement. If you've experienced child abuse, please consider contacting a helpline, friend or trusted adult for support.

Current/Recent practice

Access denied

Access has been denied by your internet access provider because this page may contain indecent images of children as identified by the Internet Watch Foundation.

Deliberate attempts to access this or related material may result in you committing a criminal offence.

The consequences of deliberately accessing such material are likely to be serious. People arrested risk losing their family and friends, access to children (including their own) and their jobs.

Stop it Now! can provide confidential and anonymous help to address concerning internet behaviour. They have helped thousands of people in this situation.

0808 1000 900 | help@stopitnow.org.uk | www.stopitnow.org.uk

If you think this page has been blocked in error, please click here.

Possible issues with these approaches

- Lack of established body of knowledge on *what works*
- Does framing the message on negative outcomes risk a short-term deterrent effect?
  - *Not here*
  - *Not today*
- Are the messages optimised for help seeking?
  - *Not ever*

Comparing Help Messages

Comparing messages

G **Warning**

If you see sexually explicit imagery of under 18s, report it. If you need anonymous support to stop viewing this material, you can seek help.

🌐 Report at report.iwf.org.uk   🌐 Seek help at stopitnow.org.uk

---

Legality — Child sexual abuse imagery is illegal. Accessing it puts you at risk of arrest and may cost you your relationships, your job, or your freedom.

Harm — Child sexual exploitation causes extreme harm to children. Searching for and viewing child sexual abuse imagery adds to that harm.

Attitudes — If you're worried about accessing child abuse imagery, getting professional help is a good thing and is shown by research to be effective.

Norms — Most people who find themselves attempting to access child sexual abuse imagery would think seriously about trying to get professional help.

Control — It's easier than you think to access professional help for people attracted to child sexual abuse imagery. Many help resources are free, anonymous, and confidential.

Distress — Please take a moment to think about how accessing indecent images of children is likely to cause you feelings of shame, guilt, and anxiety.

Stigma — Searching for child sexual abuse imagery is more common than you might think. You are not alone and not a monster. Compassionate professional help is available.

Sampling Strategy

Screening Tool

Since the age of 18...

Grey Area Behaviours

ISBS_30: *"...have your searches for pornography often brought you to websites or networks that you believe contain explicit material of underage individuals?"*

ISBS_27: *"...have you continued to chat to someone online that you were sexually interested in, despite suspecting they might be underage?*

Screening Tool

Illegal Behaviours

Since the age of 18...

ISBS_30: *"...have you knowingly and deliberately viewed pornographic material containing individuals below the age of 18?"*

ISBS_33: *"...have you knowingly and deliberately used chat sites or apps to communicate with individuals below the age of consent with the intent to build a sexual or romantic relationship?"*

Comparing messages

Sample 1
- N= 878
- Drawn from representative US sample
- No screening

Sample 2
- N= 551
- Mixed US/UK sample
- Disclosed some past grey/illegal behaviour or interest

Analysis method

Plackett–Luce Modelling (Plackett, 1975; Finch, 2022)

• Used for analysing ranked data

• Estimates the relative "worth" of each option

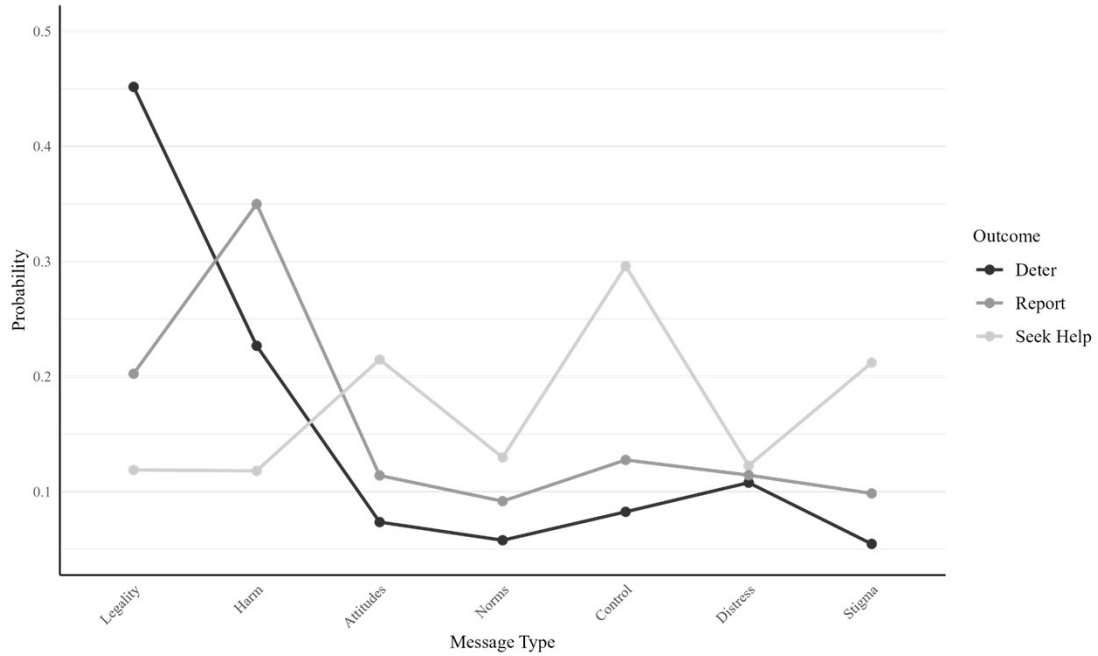• Considers the full ranking, not only first choice

Probability of message being ranked first (Sample 1)

Probability of message being ranked first (Sample 2)

Revised Messages

Legality — Child sexual abuse imagery is illegal. Accessing it puts you at risk of arrest and may cost you your relationships, your job, or your freedom.

Harm — Child sexual exploitation causes extreme harm to children. Searching for and viewing child sexual abuse imagery adds to that harm.

Attitudes — If you're worried about accessing child abuse imagery, getting professional help is a good thing and is shown by research to be effective.

Norms — Most people who find themselves attempting to access child sexual abuse imagery would think seriously about trying to get professional help.

Control — It's easier than you think to access professional help for people attracted to child sexual abuse imagery. Many help resources are free, anonymous, and confidential.

Distress — Please take a moment to think about how accessing indecent images of children is likely to cause you feelings of shame, guilt, and anxiety.

Stigma — Searching for child sexual abuse imagery is more common than you might think. You are not alone and not a monster. Compassionate professional help is available.

71

Legality — Child sexual abuse imagery is illegal. Accessing it puts you at risk of arrest and may cost you your relationships, your job, or your freedom.

Harm — Child sexual exploitation causes extreme harm to children. Searching for and viewing child sexual abuse imagery adds to that harm.

Norms — Most people who find themselves attempting to access child sexual abuse imagery would think seriously about trying to get professional help.

Distress — Please take a moment to think about how accessing indecent images of children is likely to cause you feelings of shame, guilt, and anxiety.

72

Legality	Child sexual abuse imagery is illegal. Getting professional help may reduce the risk of arrest and help you keep your relationships, your job, your freedom.
Harm	Viewing sexual abuse imagery causes ongoing harm to children. Searching for professional help is one way to stop that cycle of harm.
Norms	Thousands of people who have searched for child sexual abuse imagery have chosen to access professional help instead.
Distress	Accessing professional help is a good way to stop searching for child sexual abuse imagery and end feelings of shame, guilt, and anxiety.

73

Legality	Child sexual abuse imagery is illegal. Getting professional help may reduce the risk of arrest and help you keep your relationships, your job, your freedom.
Harm	Viewing sexual abuse imagery causes ongoing harm to children. Searching for professional help is one way to stop that cycle of harm.
Attitudes	If you're worried about accessing child abuse imagery, getting professional help is a good thing and is shown by research to be effective.
Norms	Thousands of people who have searched for child sexual abuse imagery have chosen to access professional help instead.
Control	It's easier than you think to access professional help for people attracted to child sexual abuse imagery. Many help resources are free, anonymous, and confidential.
Distress	Accessing professional help is a good way to stop searching for child sexual abuse imagery and end feelings of shame, guilt, and anxiety.
Stigma	Searching for child sexual abuse imagery is more common than you might think. You are not alone and not a monster. Compassionate professional help is available.

74
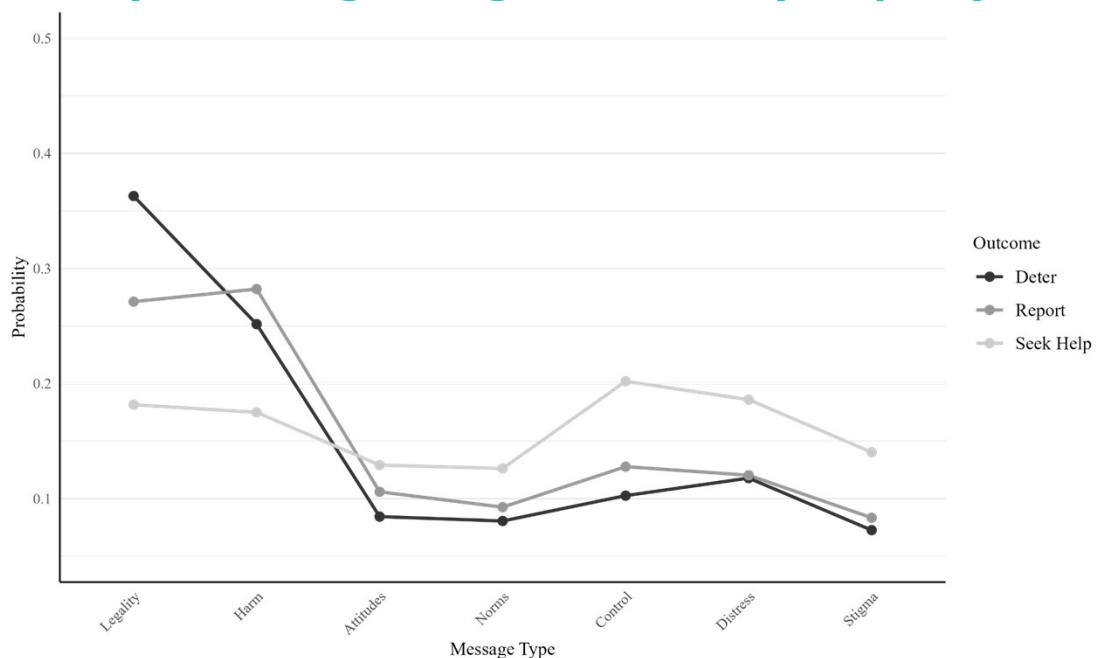
Comparing messages

Sample 3

- N= 1038
- Mixed US/UK/South Africa sample
- Gender balanced, no screening

Sample 4

- N= 1556
- Mixed US/UK/South Africa/Mexico sample
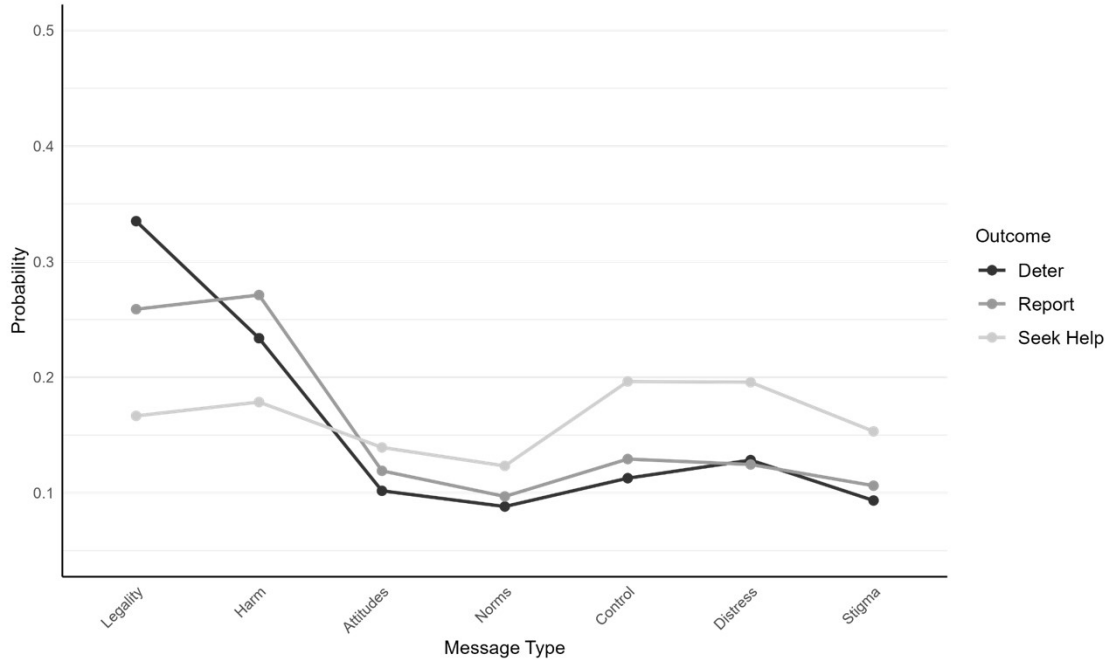- Disclosed some past grey/illegal behaviour or interest

Probability of message being ranked first (Sample 3)

Probability of message being ranked first (Sample 4)

Conclusions

- Different messages are perceived differently
- Optimised messages for help seeking are likely to be those that are framed around positive outcomes
  - Avoiding legal consequences
  - Reducing distress
  - Increasing control
- Note: we observed some country-level differences

Acknowledgments

Alisha Bell (University of Kent / Kent Police, UK)
Colm Gannon (ICMEC)
Donald Findlater (Lucy Faithfull Foundation, UK)
Gabi Gonzalez Otero (University of Kent, UK)
Juha Nurmi (Tampere University / Ahmia.fl)
Miguel Garcia Egido (Safe Online)
Montse Alvarado Arias (University of Kent, UK)
Natalie Shoup (Safe Online)

Nina Vaaranen-Valkonen (Suojellaan Lapsia, Finland)
Prof Catherine L. Ward (University of Cape Town, South Africa)
Prof Melissa D. Grady (Catholic University of America, USA)
Prof Noemí Pereda (Universitat de Barcelona, Spain)
Prof. Ayşe K. Üskül (University of Sussex, UK)
Stuart Allardyce (Lucy Faithfull Foundation, UK)
Tegan Insoll (Suojellaan Lapsia, Finland)