

# What Do We Know about Child Pornography Offending?

## An overview of recent research

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Carleton University

Tuesday, September 17<sup>th</sup>  
Vienna, Austria



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## RIP



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## Collaborators- Online Sexual Offending



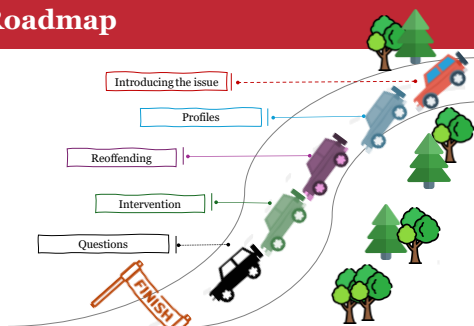
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## Students



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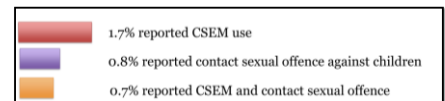
## Talk's Roadmap



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## CSEM Prevalence in the General Population

- German sample of adult men ( $n = 8,718$ , Dombert et al., [2016](#))

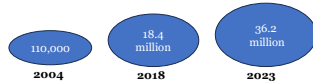


- 41 million men in Germany as of 2019, represents ~984,000 CSEM users (2.4%)

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## Detected content rising

- Global number of referrals received by National Center for Missing and Exploited Children for possible CSEM:



- Darknet: 2,000 x more prevalent than the Clearnet (Gannon et al., 2023)

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## Interesting to learn more about the Darknet and CSEM?

- Open access article by Gannon et al.



- <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11757-023-00790-8#Sec3>

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## Profile of Darkweb Users



$N = 4,395$  online survey



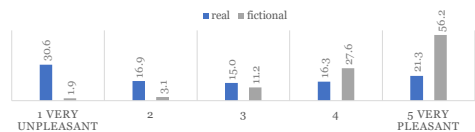
56% viewed CSEM depicting a real child, 94% viewed CSEM depicting a fictional child

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## Profile of Darkweb Users



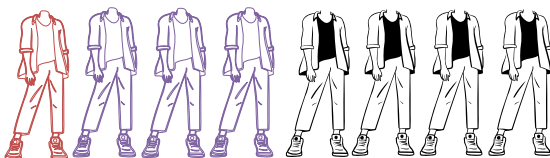
- 80% have access to children inside their family, 73% outside their family
- 5% CSA
- Mdn* hours a day online = 6 hours
- 34% sought some level of help (66% have not yet sought help)
- Variety of sexual interests
- Viewed fictional CSEM as more pleasant than CSEM depicting real children



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## Key Concern: Risk of Contact Offending

- 1 in 8 individuals with CSEM offending (and up to half if based on self-report) will have contact sexual offence



Source: Babchishin et al. (2011, 2015, 2018); Seto et al. (2011)

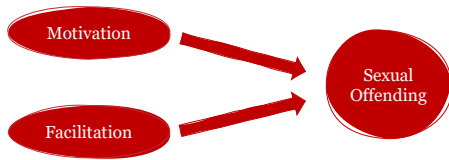
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## Prevention



- What if we could prioritize police investigation to identify cases most at risk to have a contact sexual offence?

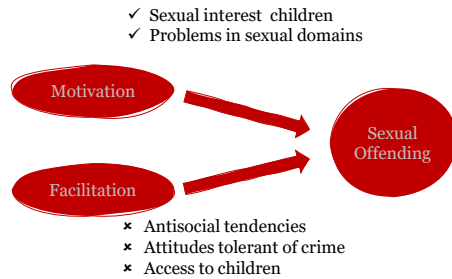
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Seto (2018). Motivation-Facilitation Model of Sexual Offending

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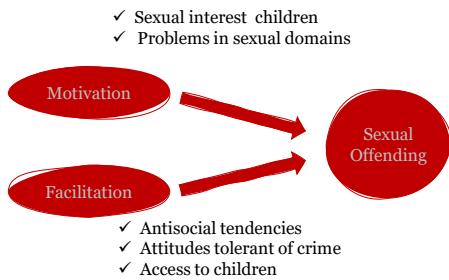
CSEM-EXCLUSIVE



Source: Babchishin et al., 2015, 2018

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MIXED



Source: Babchishin et al., 2015, 2018

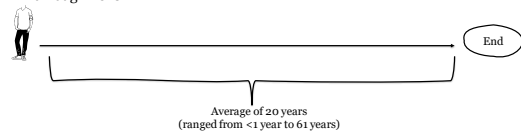
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## After 20 Years: Who are more likely to be mixed?

387 men who had been charged or convicted of at least one CSEM offence in Ontario from 1996 to 2011; reoffending data pulled through 2018

✓ Police files and federal sources of reoffending (i.e., recidivism)

✓ Complete criminal history



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## Who are more likely to be mixed?

- Lifelong patterns of sexual offence rare among CSEM
- Those more likely to have contact sexual offences:



More indicators of sexual interest in children



Younger age at first police involvement (18 vs. 30 years old)



Unemployed at time of CSEM offence



More substance use issues

- CSEM was rarely the first offence that brought the individuals in contact with police

Babchishin et al. (2022)

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## Reoffending with Contact Sex

- Minority
- Matches sex of CSEM
  - Sex offence against girl: more girl CSEM than boy CSEM
  - Against boy: more boys than girl CSEM
- Intrafamilial vs. extrafamilial victims
  - 14 CSEM men reoffended with a contact sexual offence against 17 children during follow-up

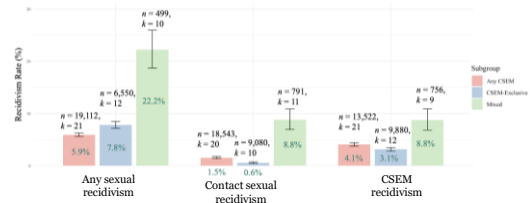
Eke & Seto (2023); Owen et al. (2016)

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## Updated Recidivism Meta-Analysis

- Past meta (Seto et al., 2011):
  - Short follow-up
  - Did not separate mixed from exclusively CSEM offending individuals
- Baskurt et al. (2024)
  - $k$  [studies] = 52 (30)

## Recidivism Rates



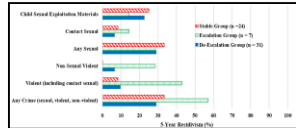
Baskurt et al. (2024). Percentages reflect fixed-effect meta-analysis, average follow-up 4.8 years

## Sex Offence Order Matters

- 387 men with CSEM offences in Ontario, Canada
  - Most (65%) exclusively had one CSEM as their sexual offending history
- Of those with another sexual offence occasions:
  - 47% stable (CSEM → CSEM)
  - 41% mixed de-escalation (contact → CSEM)
  - 12% mixed escalation (CSEM → contact)

The management and treatment of individuals with CSEM offending should be sensitive to their sexual offending patterns.

5-year recidivism rates after the second sex offence:



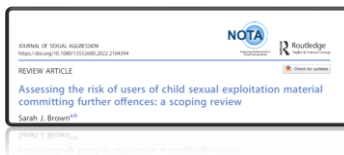
Babichin et al. (2022)

## Challenges for Risk Assessment

- Many have no contact sexual history
- Many have no criminal history at all
- But:
  - Current tools: lots of criminal history items (static items)



## Brown's (2024) Review of Risk Assessment



- Professionals:
  - Lack of risk assessment tools for CSEM
  - Same jurisdiction, different tools
- Only two tools validated in more than two studies
  - RM2000 & CPOT
- Limited evidence-base for this population

\*online first in 2022, published in 2024



### Risk Assessment of Child-Pornography-Exclusive Offenders

#### Public Significance Statement

A growing number of individuals with no criminal history are sentenced to federal prison each year for child pornography offenses. The Child Pornography Offender Risk Tool (CPORT) is commonly used to assess the risk of recidivism among these offenders. We critically review the research base of the CPORT in this article and **discuss how it is insufficient to justify the use of the CPORT in forensic settings and to inform important legal determinations.**

**Limitations of the CPORT Review:** The empirical studies in the CPORT review were limited by their small sample sizes, extremely small samples of recidivism, inadequate amounts of missing data, and potentially outdated samples. Further, none of the studies have tested the CPORT as a sample of offenders in the United States. An illustrative example of how the instrument has been misapplied in forensic settings and courtroom testimony is provided. **Conclusions:** These issues make it inappropriate to use the CPORT on child pornography-exclusive offenders in the United States at this time. We conclude by describing avenues for future research that can advance our understanding of this distinct and growing population of offenders.

## Disagreements in Literature



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## What risk tools can we use for CSEM offending?



<https://www.crimrxiv.com/pub/drmlmqo/release/1>

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## What Risk Tools Have Been Validated with CSEM Offenders?

- Sexual Recidivism/CSEM Recidivism
  - CPORT
  - Risk Matrix 2000/Sex
  - Static-99R
  - OSP/I (UK specific tool)
  - STABLE-2007
  - ACUTE-2007
- General Recidivism
  - PCRA
  - LSI-OR

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## What Risk Tools Have Been Validated with CSEM Offenders?

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  - **CPORT**
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  - **STABLE-2007**
  - **ACUTE-2007**
- General Recidivism
  - PCRA
  - LSI-OR

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## CPORT

CPORT Risk Factors	Item Present: 0 = No, 1 = Yes
1. Offender age at time of index investigation: 35 or younger	
2. Any prior criminal history?	
3. Any failure on conditional release, including charge at index?	
4. Any contact sexual offending, including a charge at index?	
5. Indication of pedophilic or hebephilic interests <i>If using CASIC to score this item (due to the absence of admission or diagnosis of sexual interest), you must have a CASIC score of 3 or more to score positively</i>	
6. More boy than girl content in the child pornography material (≥ 51%)	
7. More boy than girl content in the nude/other child material (≥ 51%)	
<b>TOTAL SCORE (0 to 7)</b>	

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## Risk Matrix 2000/Sex

**Table 11: Step One of RM2000/S**

Age	18-24 = 2 points; 25-34 = 1 point; Older = 0 points
Sexual Appearances	1 = 0 points; 2 = 1 point; 3,4 = 2 points; 5+ = 3 points
Criminal Appearances	4 or Less = 0 points; 5 or more = 1 point

**Table 13: Step Two: Aggravating Factors**

Aggravating Factors	Scoring
Male Victim of Sex Offence	No = 0; Yes = 1
Stranger Victim of Sex Offence	No = 0; Yes = 1
Single (absence of 2 year co-habitation)	No = 0; Yes = 1
Non-Contact Sex Offence	No = 0; Yes = 1

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## RM2000/Sex

- Designed to predict sexual recidivism among adult men convicted of sexual offences
- Can be combined with STABLE-2007 (Brankley et al., 2017)
- Predicts comparably to Static-99R (Helmus et al., 2013)

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## RM2000/Sex Coding Rules

- Adapted in 2017 to apply to CSEM cases
- Stranger victim: Not scored based on CSEM images
- Noncontact: Only scored if there's an offline sex offence as well
  - Captures dual offending
- Male victim: Nuanced rules regarding whether they searched for the content

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## Validations of CPORT RM2000/S with CSEM

- Meta-analysis
  - Men with any CSEM offences

Predictor	Fixed-effect		Random-effects		K	N	Q	I <sup>2</sup>
	AUC	95% CI	AUC	95% CI				
CPORT total score	.75	[.71, .79]	.75	[.71, .79]	5	1,411	3.44	0.0
CPORT with Cohen	.68							
RM-2000/Sex	.66	[.59, .74]	.66	[.59, .74]	2	1,340	0.22	0.0

Helmus et al. (2024)

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## Static-99R

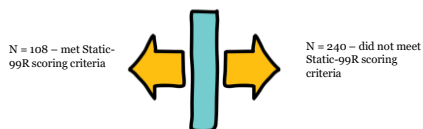
#	Item
1	Age at Release
2	Ever lived with lover for at least two years?
3	Index Non-Sexual Violence - Any Convictions?
4	Prior Non-Sexual Violence - Any Convictions?
5	Prior Sex Offences
6	Prior Sentencing Dates (excluding index)
7	Any convictions for non-contact sex offences
8	Any Unrelated Victims
9	Any Stranger Victims
10	Any Male Victims

- Items similar to RM2000/S but coding rules not suitable if only sexual offence is CSEM
- 2016 Coding Manual
  - Victim items (unrelated, stranger, male): CSEM images not counted
  - Non-contact: CSEM (exception creation with live child) is non-contact

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## Static-99R: Can it be Applied for CSEM?

- Eke et al. (forthcoming)
  - 348 Individuals with both CPORT and Static-99R (from previous CPORT research) in Ontario sample and 136 CSEM cases from Quebec
- Separated into those that met S99 criteria, those that did not



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## Static-99R: Can it be Applied for CSEM?

	Combined sample (N = 484)		Met Static-99R Scoring Criteria (N = 181)		Did Not Meet Static-99R Criteria (N = 303)	
	Static-99R	CPORT	Static-99R	CPORT	Static-99R	CPORT
	C [95% CI]		C [95% CI]		C [95% CI]	
Sexual recidivism	.63 [.56, .70]	.70 [.63, .76]	.69 [.57, .80]	.78 [.70, .86]	.58 [.45, .66]	.61 [.52, .70]

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## Static-99R

- Predicts for Any CSEM group
  - Does not predict well for those who do not meet the criteria
  - Need larger Ns
- Coding rules/manual would need to be updated if CSEM would be codable

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## So... what Static Risk Tools Can Be Used for CSEM Cases?

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Consideration or Criterion	CPOPT	RM2000/5	Static-99R
Defensible to Use?	Yes	Yes (for CSEM as a whole)	Partially (for CSEM group as whole; too little research on non-dual offenders)
Predictive accuracy (discrimination)	Large AUC (.75) without outlier; moderate to large (.68 to .73) with outlier; moderate AUC for CSEM recidivism	Moderate AUC (.66 to .67)	Moderate to small (.58 to .60)
Closest match between tool and referral question	Predicts any sex and CSEM recidivism	Predicts any sex and CSEM recidivism	Predicts any sex and CSEM recid among full CSEM sample and those meeting criteria
Volume/quality of research	Most of any tool for CSEM; 7 predictive validity studies	2 predictive validity studies (one quite large)	2 small samples
Availability and quality of recidivism estimates	Preliminary	Generic; not CSEM population	Generic; not CSEM population
Inter-rater reliability	Strong	Strong	Strong
Comprehensive and empirically supported risk factors	Good sampling of static risk factors	Good sampling of static risk factors	Good sampling of static risk factors
Inform treatment targets and assessments of change	Indirectly only (general antisociality and atypical sexuality)	Some guidance for treatment need indicators	Indirect only (general antisociality and atypical sexuality)
Quality of training/implementation resources	Good	Good	Good

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## Dynamic Risk Assessment

- Static risk tools tend to be most predictive, BUT
- Dynamic informs treatment targets and change
- Particularly relevant for CSEM populations
  - Many have no contact sexual history
  - Many have no criminal history at all!
  - Makes static risk tools underperform for CSEM-E vs. mixed folks

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Sex Violence Score (see instructions)	Score	General Recidivism Score (see instructions)	Score
Victim Access	0 = No contact sexual history 1 = Contact sexual history	0 = No contact sexual history 1 = Contact sexual history	
Recidivism	0 = No contact sexual history 1 = Contact sexual history	0 = No contact sexual history 1 = Contact sexual history	
Sexual Pre-occupation	0 = No contact sexual history 1 = Contact sexual history	0 = No contact sexual history 1 = Contact sexual history	
Repetition of Sexual History	0 = No contact sexual history 1 = Contact sexual history	0 = No contact sexual history 1 = Contact sexual history	
		• Excessive College • Collapse of Social Supports • Substance Abuse	
Sex Violence Total		General Recidivism Total	

ACUTE-2007

Sex Violence Score (see instructions)	Score	General Recidivism Score (see instructions)	Score
Victim Access	0 = No contact sexual history 1 = Contact sexual history	0 = No contact sexual history 1 = Contact sexual history	
Recidivism	0 = No contact sexual history 1 = Contact sexual history	0 = No contact sexual history 1 = Contact sexual history	
Sexual Pre-occupation	0 = No contact sexual history 1 = Contact sexual history	0 = No contact sexual history 1 = Contact sexual history	
Repetition of Sexual History	0 = No contact sexual history 1 = Contact sexual history	0 = No contact sexual history 1 = Contact sexual history	
		• Excessive College • Collapse of Social Supports • Substance Abuse	
Sex Violence Total		General Recidivism Total	

STABLE-2007

## Babchishin et al. (2024)

- All individuals supervised by BC Corrections (2005-2013) and given Static-99R or STABLE assessment, picked men with:

Variable	Contact against Children (n = 1042)	CSEM-Only (n = 228)	Mixed (n = 80)
3-year Recidivism rate (%)			
Any sexual	4.2%	4.1%	9.3%
Any contact sexual	3.3%	0.5%	4.0%
Any CSEM	0.3%	3.6%	4.0%
Any violent (incl. sexual)	14.3%	2.6%	10.7%
Any recidivism	28.7%	11.7%	33.3%
ACUTE-2007	1.98 (SD = 2.07)	1.49 (SD = 1.82)	3.13 (SD = 2.91)
STABLE-2007	8.29 (SD = 4.61)	6.78 (SD = 4.28)	11.14 (SD = 5.91)

All mean comparisons  $p < .05$ , ds ranging from 0.24 to 0.92 ( $mdt = 0.56$ )

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## Key Insights

**WHAT DID WE FIND?**

- ✓ STABLE and ACUTE items tended to have similar if not larger effect sizes for CSEM groups (especially CSEM-exclusive)
- 🎯 Emotional identification with children  
One of the strongest predictors
- 🔄 Rapidly changing risk factors assessed by ACUTE-2007 is particularly relevant for CSEM-exclusive men

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## STABLE-2007 Item Analyses

**Table A2**  
STABLE-2007 Item-Level Discrimination for Any Sexual Recidivism

Item	Contact sexual offenses against children (N=1,036)			Any CSEM (N=16,307)		
	HR	[95% CI]	p	HR	[95% CI]	p
Significant social influences	1.01	[0.67, 1.52]	.98	2.91*	[1.54, 5.47]	<.001
Capacity for relationship stability	1.61	[1.04, 2.47]	.03	5.89	[1.57, 21.40]	.01
Emotional ID with children	1.43	[0.90, 2.25]	.13	4.23*	[2.19, 8.17]	<.001
Hostility toward women	1.15	[0.72, 1.84]	.55	2.11	[1.02, 4.36]	.04
General social rejection	1.46	[0.94, 2.28]	.09	3.15	[1.54, 6.44]	.002
Lack of concern for others	1.33	[0.89, 1.98]	.16	2.27	[1.24, 4.16]	.01
Impulsive	1.96	[1.32, 2.90]	<.001	2.05	[1.11, 3.79]	.02
Poor problem-solving skills	1.89	[1.22, 2.92]	.004	2.45*	[1.21, 4.97]	.01
Negative emotionality	1.22	[0.78, 1.90]	.38	2.02	[1.08, 3.78]	.03
Sex drive/sex preoccupation	1.40	[0.90, 2.16]	.13	2.20*	[1.11, 4.35]	.02
Sex as coping	1.42	[0.92, 2.19]	.12	1.94*	[1.02, 3.69]	.04
Deviant sexual preference	1.85	[1.02, 3.38]	.04	4.48	[1.63, 12.30]	.004
Cooperation with supervision	1.46	[0.98, 2.19]	.06	2.77*	[1.56, 4.92]	<.001

- STABLE items tended to have similar if not larger effect sizes for CSEM groups
- Especially CSEM-exclusive

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## Item Analyses

**Table A1**  
ACUTE-2007 Item-Level Discrimination for Any Sexual Recidivism

Item	Contact sexual offenses against children (N=1,036)			Any CSEM (N=16,307)		
	HR	[95% CI]	p	HR	[95% CI]	p
Victim access	1.59	[1.01, 2.50]	.047	1.91	[0.99, 3.71]	.055
Hostility	1.31	[0.74, 2.35]	.36	2.50	[1.34, 5.06]	.01
Sexual preoccupation	1.61	[0.98, 2.66]	.06	3.58*	[1.84, 6.97]	<.001
Rejection of supervision	1.63	[0.89, 2.99]	.14	3.08*	[1.85, 5.13]	<.001
Emotional collapse	0.59	[0.27, 1.28]	.18	1.35	[0.59, 3.08]	.48
Collapse of social supports	0.91	[0.47, 1.76]	.78	1.76	[0.89, 3.50]	.11
Substance abuse	1.27	[0.82, 1.96]	.28	2.23	[1.03, 4.82]	.04

- ACUTE items tended to have similar if not larger effect sizes for CSEM groups
- Especially CSEM-exclusive

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## FAQ From saarna.org



- Supplements current coding manuals
- STABLE-2007 and ACUTE-2007 can be used for individuals whose only sexual offense conviction is for possession of CSEM
- Emotional identification with children item should be scored
- Provides additional scoring guidance

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Consideration or Criterion	STABLE-2007	ACUTE-2007
Appropriate to Use?	Yes	Yes, with STABLE-2007
Predictive accuracy (discrimination)	Large C (.78+) for any sex or CSEM recidivism	Large C (.74+) for any sex or CSEM recidivism
Closest match between scale and referral question	Predicts any sex and CSEM recidivism	Predicts any sex and CSEM recidivism
Volume/quality of research	1 field validity study	1 field validity study
Availability and quality of recidivism estimates	Combined with RM2000; Not tested for CSEM group	Not available
Inter-rater reliability	Strong	Good
Comprehensive and empirically supported risk factors	Good sampling of dynamic risk factors	Good sampling of acute risk factors
Inform treatment targets and assessments of change	Yes	Assesses more rapidly fluctuating changes
Quality of training/implementation resources	Good	Good

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So... What risk tools can I use for CSEM offending individuals?

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## Required Future Directions



- Calibration analyses
  - Should we use the expected recidivism norms?
- Validate combination of dynamic + static among CSEM
- Additional research for dynamic tools

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## Prevention



- How can we reduce CSEM?
  - Repeat offending?
    - Correctional/treatment programs
- In the first place?
  - Mitigation through deterrence and interventions

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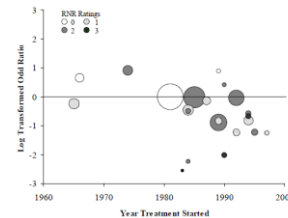
## RNR Principles

- **Risk:** Intensity of treatment fit risk (low risk = little to no treatment)
- **Need:** Target criminogenic needs
- **Responsivity:** Be sensitive to individual responsivity factors

Bonta &amp; Andrews (2003)

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## As adherence to the principles increase, recidivism decreases



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## Adapting Interventions

- Expect about half to 2/3 to be lower-risk
  - Baskurt et al., 2024: 2/3 CSEM cohorts are exclusively CSEM, about 1/3 mixed = few to no treatment sessions
- Can adapt contact sex offending programs, but:
  - Intensity
  - Treatment targets
- Separate track for CSEM-Exclusive

(Babchishin et al., 2018; Beier et al., 2015; Middleton, Mandeville-Norden, &amp; Hayes, 2009)

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## Rigorous Treatment Outcome Studies

Notable exception:

- German Dunkelfeld program reduces dynamic risk factors and offending related behaviour in a non-randomized waiting list control study that include some CSEM folks (Beier et al., 2015)
- Mews et al. (2017): Core Sex Offender UK Treatment Program from 2000 to 2012
  - Did not adapt
  - After a 2-year follow-up, CSEM treatment group had a higher reoffending rate (4.4%,  $n = 113$ ) compared to the CSEM comparison group (2.6%,  $n = 340$ ), which were matched based on propensity scoring techniques.



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## Online Intervention

- **So many!**
- Dunkelfeld, StopItNow, Stand tall/walk tall, Talking for Change, Help Wanted, Troubled Desire, Preventell, PreventSI, Dis No, Save the Children Finland, B4U-Act, Safe to Talk, I.T.E.R., etc.



- Cost/funding
- Time
- Logistics (e.g., recidivism)

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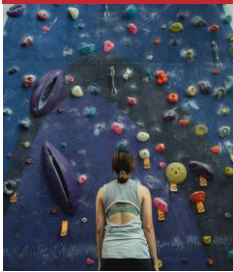
## Prevention



- How can we reduce CSEM?
- Repeat offending?
  - Correctional/treatment programs
- **In the first place?**
  - **Mitigation through deterrence and interventions**

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## Overwhelming Police Efforts



- Large case loads



15% of CSEM incidents reported to police between 2014 and 2020 were cleared by 2022

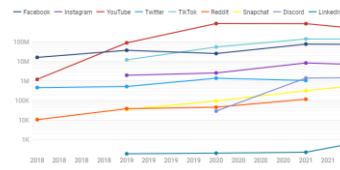
more than 8 in 10 (85%) not cleared

Source: Ibrahim (2022)

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## Industry partners are paying attention

Social media content and account removals for child abuse and safety - 2018 to Q3 2022



Data unavailable for 2022 for Twitter and Reddit. Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, and Discord data for Q1-Q3 of 2021. Snapchat and LinkedIn for Q1 and Q2 of 2021.

Twitter data combined content, comments, and accounts

Twitter data combined content and accounts

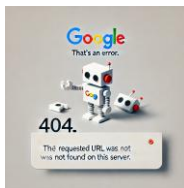
Discord data combined content, accounts, and servers

Chart: Compasoft - Get the data - Created with Datawrapper

NEW  
EU: Digital Services Act (DSA):  
Must include mitigation strategies

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## 404 error image



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## Warning / Avertissement

The content you have searched for could be illegal and harmful to you and others.

If you would like to talk with someone in Canada about your sexual thoughts of people under 18, Talking for Change is here to help you. It's free, confidential and anonymous. There is no shame in asking for help.

TalkingForChange.ca (includes live webchat).

Call: 1-833-703-3303

We take abuse and violations of our Terms of Service very seriously, to find out more visit our Trust and Safety Center.

[Go Back To Homepage](#)

Le contenu que vous cherchez pourrait être illégal. Si vous y accédez, vous risquez de vous faire vous-même du tort et d'en faire à autrui.

Si vous désirez parler à quelqu'un au Canada de vos sentiments sexuels au sujet de personnes de moins de 18 ans, le programme Parler pour changer peut vous aider. Il est gratuit, confidentiel et anonyme. Il n'y a aucune honte à demander de l'aide.

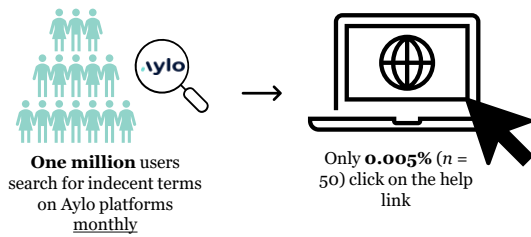
ParlerPourChanger.ca (avec avantage en direct)

Composez le 1-833-703-3303

Nous prenons très au sérieux les abus et violations de nos Conditions de service (page en anglais). Pour en savoir plus, consultez la page Confiance et sécurité (page en anglais).

[Retour à la page d'accueil](#)

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## Engagement



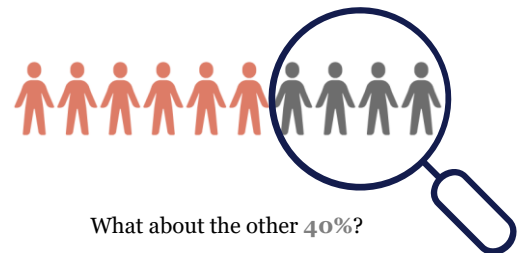
- Too hard to admit and click
- Not relevant?

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(Seto et al., 2006)

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(Seto et al., 2006)

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## RRAPID- Project 1

- What are other reasons for CSEM offending?
  - Fanfiction
  - Darkweb data (from CSEM sites)
  - Stopitnow!
  - Porn websites
  - General populations



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## Social Factors Also Matter



- Sexual interest in children is related to CSEM proclivity and CSEM offending
- Other psychological factors are also related
- Deterrence messages should be less specific

Quinten et al. (submitted)

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## Cole's Note

- CSEM continues to increase
- Most CSEM will not commit a contact sexual offence, some will
  - Sex offending history should be considered
  - Gender of CSEM
  - Risk tools are available
- Deterrence is essential
- Funding needed for CSEM treatment-outcome studies
  - Avoid too much dosage

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## Questions?

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