



Vulnerability Knowledge
& Practice Programme



National Analysis of Police-Recorded Child Sexual Abuse & Exploitation (CSAE) Crimes Report

January 2022 to December 2022

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Foreword



It's a huge privilege to be the Child Protection and Abuse lead for policing, developing our approach in how we prevent and respond to abhorrent offences of child sexual abuse and exploitation (CSAE).

Our ambition is to continually improve in this area, and adapt to the ever-changing environment children live in, both today and tomorrow. Our collective ambition should of course be to eliminate the sexual abuse of children from our society and significantly reduce the appalling statistic that one in six girls and one in 20 boys will be sexually abused before they are 16.

I see the amazing work that is going on up and down the country, every day, by dedicated child protection teams, and with partners at a local and national level. They work on extremely tough and emotionally demanding cases, often stretched by a growing workload and evolving threat picture.

In 2013 policing recorded just over 20,000 crimes of CSAE, in 2022 we have recorded nearly 107,000 crimes.

When I came into role, I wanted to be clear on the current and future demand and meet national requirements associated with CSAE's status as a specified priority threat in the Strategic Policing Requirement. This will ensure we develop the capability and capacity of both our workforce and our leadership to deal with this demand in a professional, caring and compassionate way, learning from the seven years of evidence provided to the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) and the courageous testimony of thousands of victims.

This report is the most comprehensive analysis of the scale, nature, and characteristics of all reported Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation crimes. I am grateful to all those at the Vulnerability Knowledge and Practice Programme (VKPP) for this crucial analysis.

This work really helps to provide an evidence base for our approach to tackling child sexual abuse and offending, across policing and critically with partners when layered across the wider child protection system. It is our ambition to continue this work and with partners address knowledge gaps to enable the IICSA recommendation of developing a singular authoritative source of data and insight to inform responses to become a reality.

Some readers may be surprised and concerned to see child-on-child offending present in over 50% of crimes. This analysis follows previous reporting around 'Everyone's Invited' and the subsequent Ofsted review of sexual violence and harassment in schools as well as concerns raised by the Children's Commissioner in

England's regarding children's use of pornography and its prospective impact.

The scale and associated nature of child offending needs to be recognised and understood if we are to address harmful sexual behaviours in a child-centred way, prevent abuse and take appropriate action including formal criminal justice sanctions where serious harm occurs. At the heart of this is matters relating to 'consent' and the need to build greater understanding and application in different real-life contexts.

As you will see, online harm continues to pose real challenges to policing. Reports are rising, and complexity is deepening. Developments in technology will increase demand – but also enhance our ability to investigate it.

There is a great deal of work ongoing between the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) and the National Crime Agency (NCA) and I believe the Online Safety Act is the most important piece of legislation for years in the protection of children in today's society.

Whilst there is a great deal of focus on other threat areas, we must remember that over a third of crimes are carried out by people within the family environment.

Although group-based offending makes up less than 5% of all reported CSAE, we know from the recent His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) inspection that whilst policing has made improvements, there is still inconsistency in our approach which is why we have accelerated our developments through a government funded taskforce.

Our collective offer must be to prioritise prevention - we must stop abuse happening to prevent the lifelong physical and mental harm it causes through universal and targeted activity.

We must give confidence to victims to come forward whether abused yesterday or many years ago, confident that they will receive a service that is of the utmost professionalism wrapped in care and compassion and we must bring more offenders of these abhorrent crimes to justice.

This analysis of police-recorded crime helps us at a national and local level review our current approach, adapting and developing our service, ensuring that the voices of children and victims are at the heart of everything we do.

Ian Critchley QPM, NPCC lead for Child Abuse Protection and Investigation

About the VKPP

The Vulnerability Knowledge and Practice Programme (VKPP) was formed to improve and coordinate policing's collective response to the protection of individuals experiencing vulnerability from abuse, neglect, and exploitation as well as improved partnership responses. Working with the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) and College of Policing, and funded by the Home Office, the VKPP undertake a wide range of activities to reduce threat and harm, bring more offenders to justice, and improve outcomes for victims. The VKPP identifies promising practice, practice gaps, and shares wider knowledge to shape future responses, with an emphasis on the vulnerability strands of public protection. Specifically, the VKPP have a multi-disciplinary team who work with national police bodies, forces and partners to:

- Provide policy advice and analytical insight to inform policing responses to CSAE and VAWG;
- Develop and drive the NPCC and College of Policing National Vulnerability Action Plan (NVAP);
- Conduct primary research to inform an overall evidence base into policing and vulnerability;
- Consolidate learning from statutory reviews into death and serious harm;
- Map, link, and promote promising practice;
- Provide a supportive Peer Review function for forces;
- Explore ways to improve data sharing, collection, and analysis;
- Support delivery of local children's safeguarding partnerships;
- Track the scale and nature of Domestic Abuse related deaths.

This work specifically has been delivered through a Home Office policing grant which funds a regional network of CSAE analysts who are coordinated centrally through the VKPP working to the NPCC Child Protection and Abuse Investigation (CPAI) lead Ian Critchley.

In addition the VKPP are operating in partnership with the National Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel and are funded to provide a data and insights function to support their core business.

To find out more about the VKPP's work and to see our other publications and resources please visit our website – www.vkpp.org.uk. The VKPP are currently hosted by Norfolk Constabulary but will be moving to the College of Policing from April 2024. This will strengthen the collective offer to policing and wider partnerships and help build the capabilities needed to meet future demand.



Vulnerability Knowledge & Practice Programme



Introduction

Introduction

The National Analysis of Police-Recorded Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation Crimes Report is the first of its kind. A transparent, public-facing and in-depth analysis of all police recorded Child Sexual Abuse & Exploitation (CSAE) crime in 2022.

Based on data collected from 42 police forces across England and Wales, its aim is simple: **to throw further light on the scale and threat of CSAE**. In particular, it pays close attention to the breadth of recorded offences, including crime types, where they were committed, and includes profiles of both victims and perpetrators. CSAE includes contact child sexual abuse and exploitation crimes and those relating to Indecent Images of Children (IIOC) and sexual communication with a child.

Keeping children safe

Understanding the fuller picture across CSAE helps policing, partners and the public to work more effectively together to keep children safe. The report helps everyone stay up to date with the issues that are most commonly reported to the police, and helps us understand and respond to changes in offending. This way, we can better meet the needs of children.

Summarising the full report

To give you more overall clarity, we've consolidated the main findings and learnings into a series of easily digestible summaries. Using plain-speaking language and clear graphics, we've pulled out the key points and flagged the areas of particular interest. These include:

- 🕒 **Scale & Nature of CSAE**
- 🕒 **Child-on-child CSAE**
- 🕒 **CSAE in the Family Environment**
- 🕒 **Online CSAE**
- 🕒 **Group-based CSAE**

It is hoped that the **National Analysis of Police Recorded Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation Crimes Report**, along with the following summaries, will allow us all to identify and understand the threats and harms that our children face today. The aim is that we can come together as a society to find meaningful, long lasting solutions that protect children from abuse.

We hope you find the following summaries useful.

Key points

The key points

The report has revealed some significant key points along the way which we hope will influence and inform both policing, partners and the public. For a little more background, please remember to spend some time reading the full summaries later in this document. For now, we've brought together some of the main take-outs:

There were around 107,000 offences reported in 2022 – a 7.6% increase compared to 2021. In fact, it's a number that has nearly quadrupled in 10 years. Evidence continues to suggest many crimes remains unreported.

Around 75% of CSAE offences related to sexual offences committed against children, and **around 25% relate to offences of Indecent Images of Children.** It's worth noting that CSAE covers sexual assault and rape..

The crime types regarding CSAE are changing. For example, historically **child-on-child abuse** accounted for around third of offences. The data in the report suggests that today this is **just over half.**

CSAE within the family environment remains a **common form** of reported abuse, accounting for an estimated **33% of reported contact CSAE crime.** Parents and siblings were the two most common relationships featuring.

Group-based CSAE accounts for 5% of all identified and reported CSAE ranging from unorganised peer group sharing of imagery, to more organised complex high harm cases with high community impact.

Reported CSAE is heavily gendered, as expected, with males (82% of all CSAE perpetrators) predominantly abusing females (79% of victims). Sexual offending involving male victims are more common in offences involving indecent images and younger children.

The number of recorded incidents of Online Sexual Abuse continues to grow. It accounts for at least 32% of CSAE. We believe this is partly because of the increased growth and popularity of mobile phones and technologies available in our lives.

The majority (52%) involved reports of children (aged 10 to 17) offending against other children with 14 being the most common age. This is a growing and concerning trend (previously thought to be a third) involving a wide range of offending. Whilst some include exploratory online sexual behaviours, some of the most prevalent forms include contact abuse up to rape.

Scale & nature

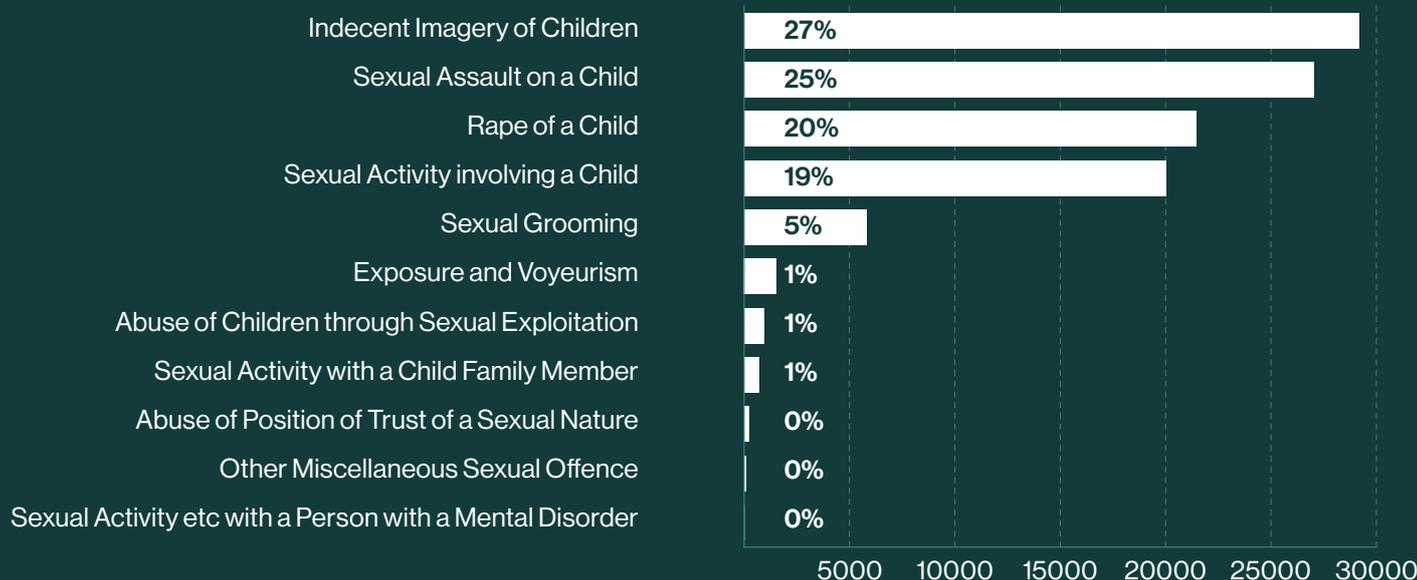
This section gives you a general picture of the Scale & Nature of police-recorded CSAE between January and December 2022. Through clear and informative graphs and statistics, we'll highlight all the salient points gleaned from the data. From the male/female victim split, to the region where most offences are reported.

Before we get into the details, it's worth noting that this **National Analysis of Police Recorded Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation Crimes Report** consists of input from **42 police forces across England and Wales**. What sets it apart is that it provides a fuller picture of nationwide CSAE. That's because it includes reported offences involving sexual assault of children over 13 and reported rapes of 16 and 17 year olds. Not only that, but our data allows us to drill down into our victims' and perpetrators' natures and characteristics like never before. Given two forces data are missing, nationally the figures will be slightly higher than what is contained in this analysis. We aim to have all 44 forces data in future analysis.

An overview

Throughout 2022, there were a total of 106,984 offences recorded in relation to Child Sexual Abuse & Exploitation (CSAE). Of that number, **73% were in connection with CSAE** (including sexual grooming and rape), while **27% were for Indecent Images of Children (IIOC)**. We also found out that **52%** of CSAE cases were classed as Child-on-Child.

Recorded CSAE offences within the National Analysis of Police-Recorded Child Sexual Abuse Crimes Report dataset



The data also told us that girls were a lot more targeted than boys:

- **79% of victims recorded were female**
- **21% were male**

However, we must be aware that these figures don't account for underreporting of this kind of crime, especially by boys and minority communities, migrant groups and those with disabilities.



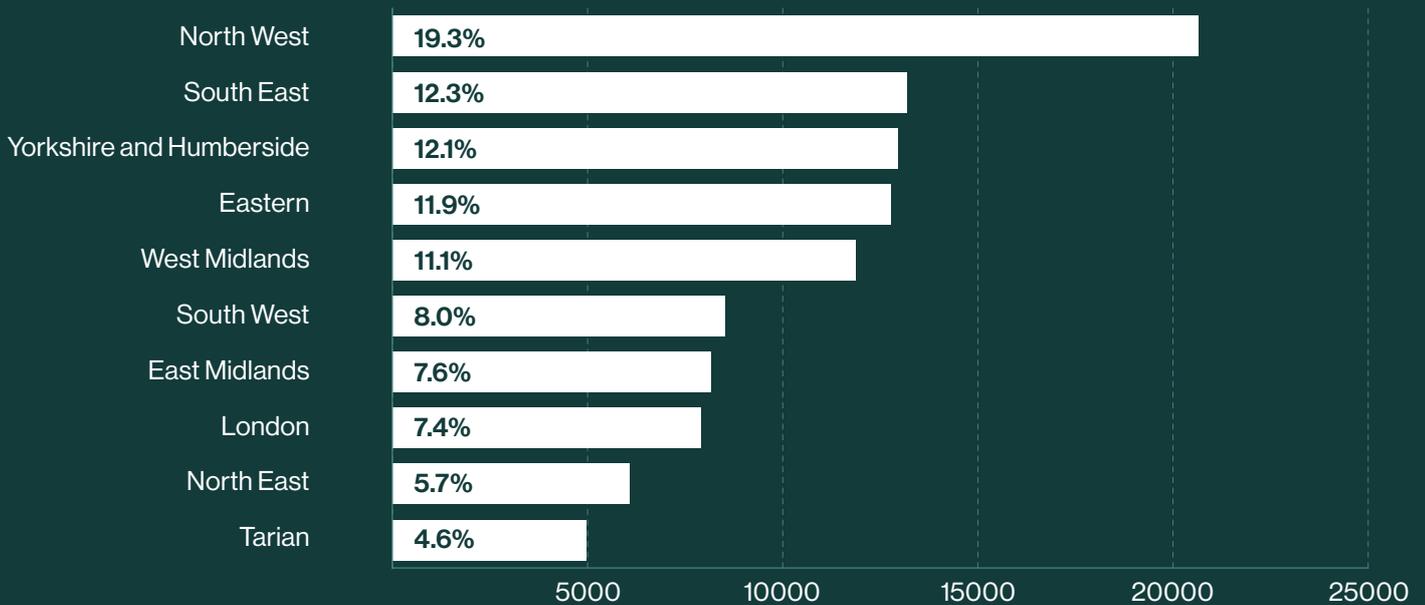
Quick stat

87% of identified victims were recorded as 'white', 4.2% as 'black', 3.8% as 'Asian', 2.7% as 'mixed' and 2.4% as 'other. 'Mixed' relates to those whose parents or ancestors are from different ethnic backgrounds.

Regional & force data

But which policing regions in England and Wales did these offences get reported the most? As we can see, top was the North West, reporting 19.3% of all CSAE offences. The highest percentage of offences correspond to population density. A list of policing regions and the forces they include can be found [here](#).

Recorded CSAE Offences per region in England and Wales

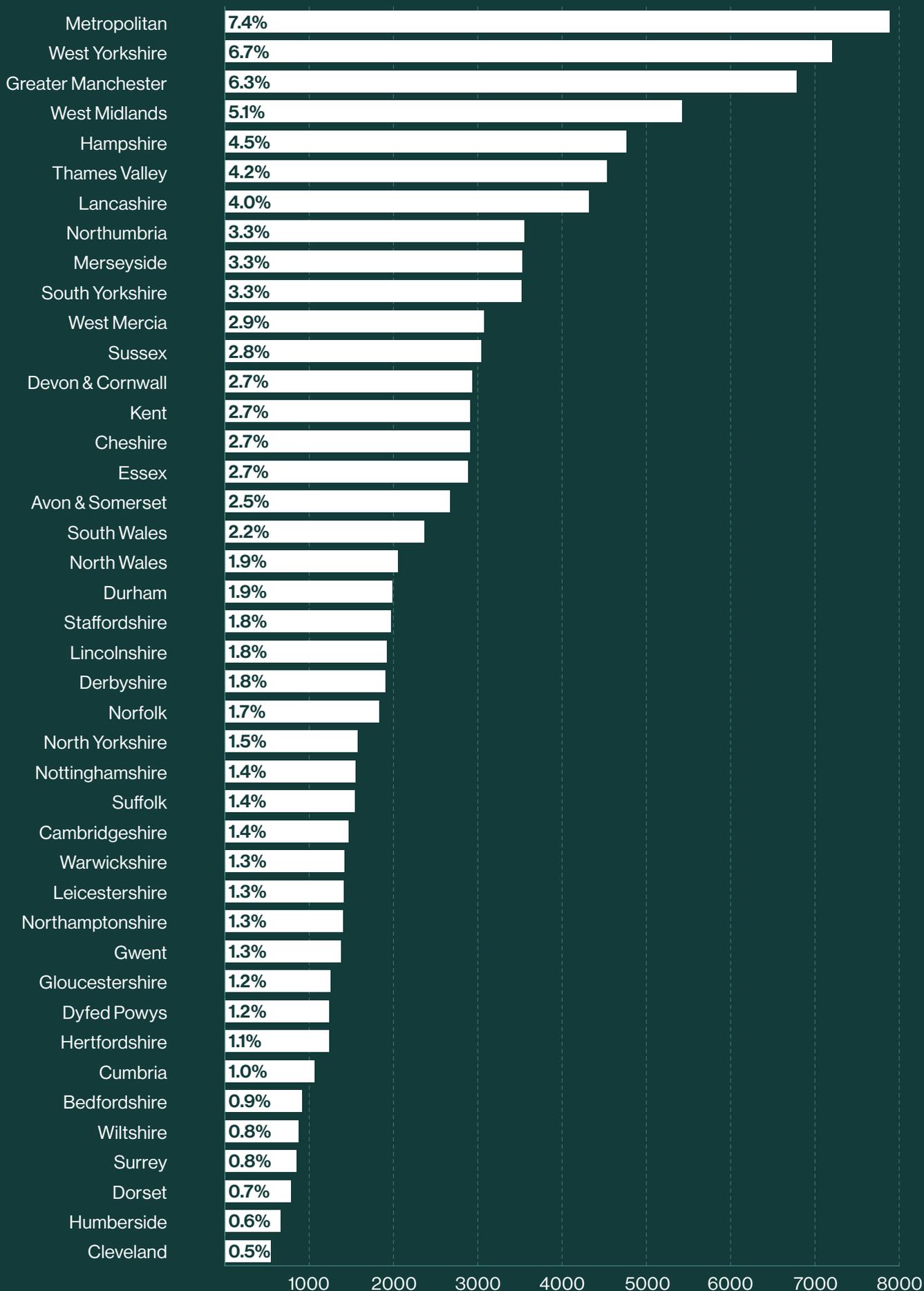


A breakdown of reporting volumes by individual police forces is also provided. Larger metropolitan forces typically experience the highest levels of reporting as would expect but further exploration around how this corresponds to child populations, local crime recording integrity and other socio economic factors will be explored in future.

Quick stat

The most common age for victims of CSAE is 14 years old (15% of victims)

Recorded CSAE offences per forces from region in England and Wales

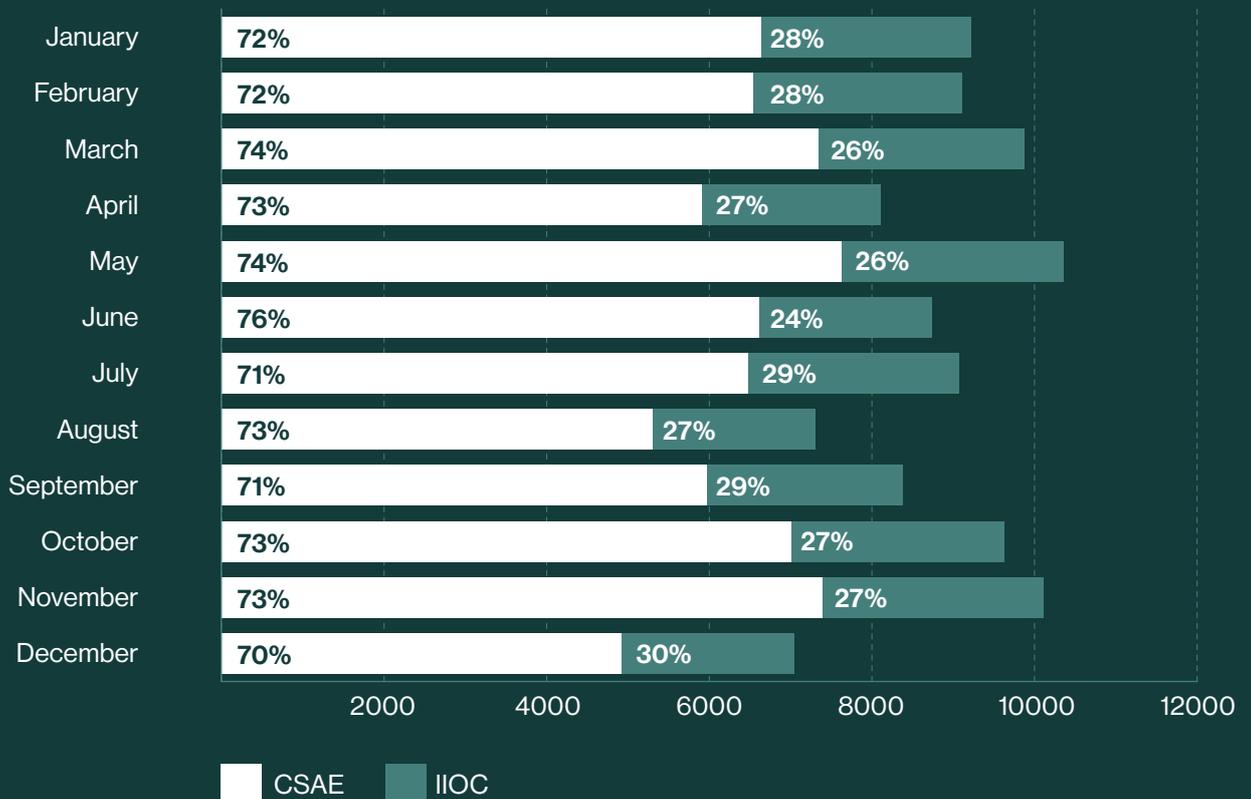


Reporting

How long it took victims who were willing to disclose their abuse to do so or for third parties to identify and refer it to the police makes for some interesting reading. From the study we discovered that more than **three quarters (76%) of abuse was reported within one year of it occurring**, whereas non-recent abuse (reported more than a year after offence) made up 23%.

When in the year an offence is identified, disclosed or reported is also noteworthy. Because many CSAE offences are identified or reported in a school environment, numbers of **reports are typically higher during UK school term time**. This is backed up by the fact that there was **a decrease in reporting on weekends and during non term time**, when schools are closed. From the following graph you can see a month-by-month comparison of CSAE reports to police.

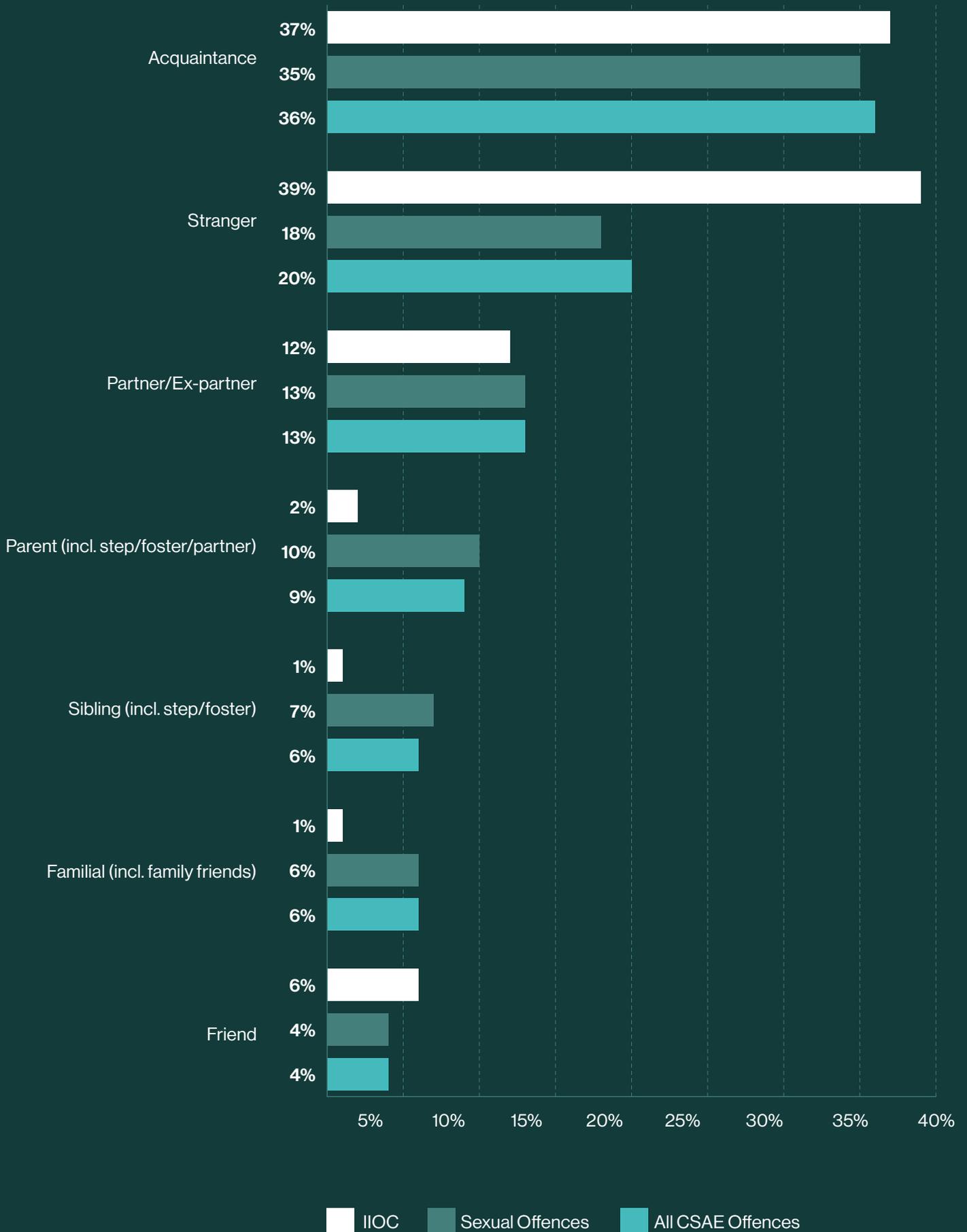
Month-by-month comparison of recorded CSAE



We'll now look at the relationship between victim and offender, 35% of all CSAE offences had a relationship recorded. Of these offences, our report shows that **80% of reported victims knew their abuser**. Meanwhile, **20% of CSAE victims didn't know** them at all.

It's a slightly different story For IIOC offences, however, only 16% of offences had a relationship recorded. Here, 62% of IIOC victims knew their abuser however **38% of IIOC victims did not know their abusers** ('strangers'). This is to be expected when we consider the online, anonymous nature of many IIOC offences.

Relationship breakdown of recorded Sexual Offences and IIOC offences





Quick stat

Perpetrators aged 10-17 accounted for 52% of cases. Males account for 82% of CSAE perpetrators and 90% of contact CSAE offences.

Main take-outs at a glance

- Available evidence outside policing suggests that **under reporting is common**. This is likely down to a number of factors including the control exerted by a perpetrator to silence a victim, whether victims can identify abuse/their abuser, whether warning signs are identified, and if appropriate action is taken.
- **The majority of offences are against female children (79%)**
- **52%** of CSAE cases were classed as Child-on-Child
- Just over **three quarters (76%) of crimes** involved reports of abuse within one year of it occurring.

Child-on-child CSAE

Child-on-child CSAE makes up just over half of all CSAE offences recorded between January and December 2022. In this section you'll see breakdowns of victim and perpetrator demographics, as well as an overview into the various types of offence.

Given we're talking about child-on-child abuse, it's worth mentioning that the age of consent in the UK is 16 years old, and some **children aged between 13 and 17 might try experimenting sexually and consensually with people of the same age**. At the same time we must recognise that taking and sharing indecent images or videos of under 18s is illegal. The data we've collected includes reported crimes which may be 'experimental' but also critically those with 'aggravated' features including rape. Understanding and tracking how many reported offences nationally feature aggravating features compared to experimental is a key focus for future analysis.

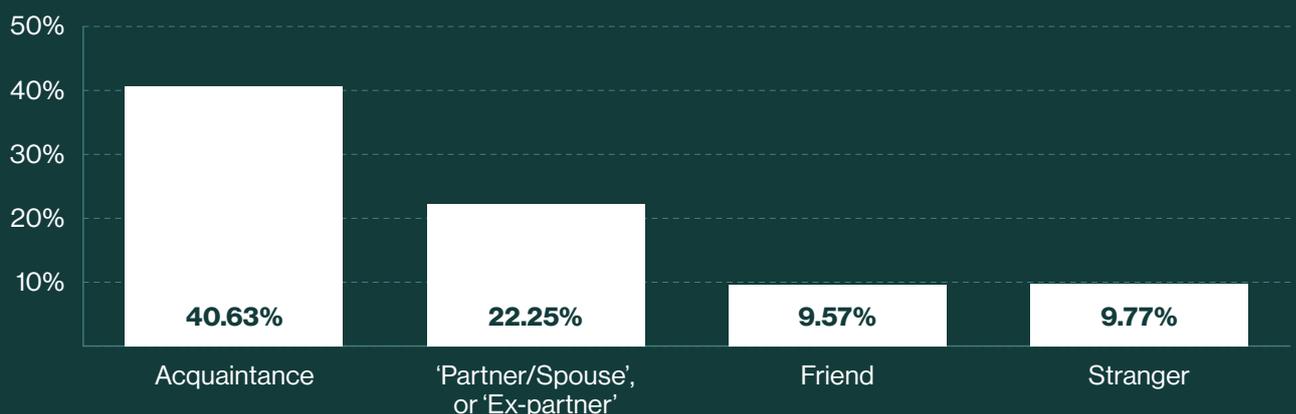
An overview

To start, let's look at 'child-on-child offences' compared to other CSAE offences. The data tells us that an overwhelming **52% of all cases are classed as child-on-child CSAE**. Drilling down further, we discover that the **three most common offences are 'Sexual Assault on a female' (15%), 'Rape of a female under 16' (12%) and 'take make share indecent images'**.

Victim details

In CSAE and IIOC offences committed by children aged 10-17 (within the age range of criminal responsibility) a relationship was recorded in 45% of offences. Within those, the perpetrator was **known to the victim in 91% of cases**. The most common relationship being **'Acquaintance' (51%** of all known relationships). **'Partner/Spouse' and 'Ex-Partner'** was the second highest recorded with 22%.

Bar graph showing most common recorded relationship types for child-on-child CSAE crimes



Regarding IIOC offences, the **percentage of female perpetrators increases dramatically**. This is likely to include a large proportion of Self-Generated Indecent Imagery (SGII) because in these scenarios, both parties are recorded as perpetrators.

The police have worked hard to develop a '**common-sense**', proportionate response which makes sure that children aren't criminalised inappropriately when engaging in experimental activity that involve SGII. This helps focus police efforts on taking stronger action when there is an aggravated feature, such as violence. The police have also worked with the UK Council of Internet Safety to develop guidance for use in **schools**.

Looking through these various statistics we must remember that **many offences may go unreported**. This may be down to a number of reasons including **feelings of embarrassment, fear of exclusion by friends, afraid of adult reactions, being under the control of a perpetrator...** **These are all reasons that could stop a child coming forward.**

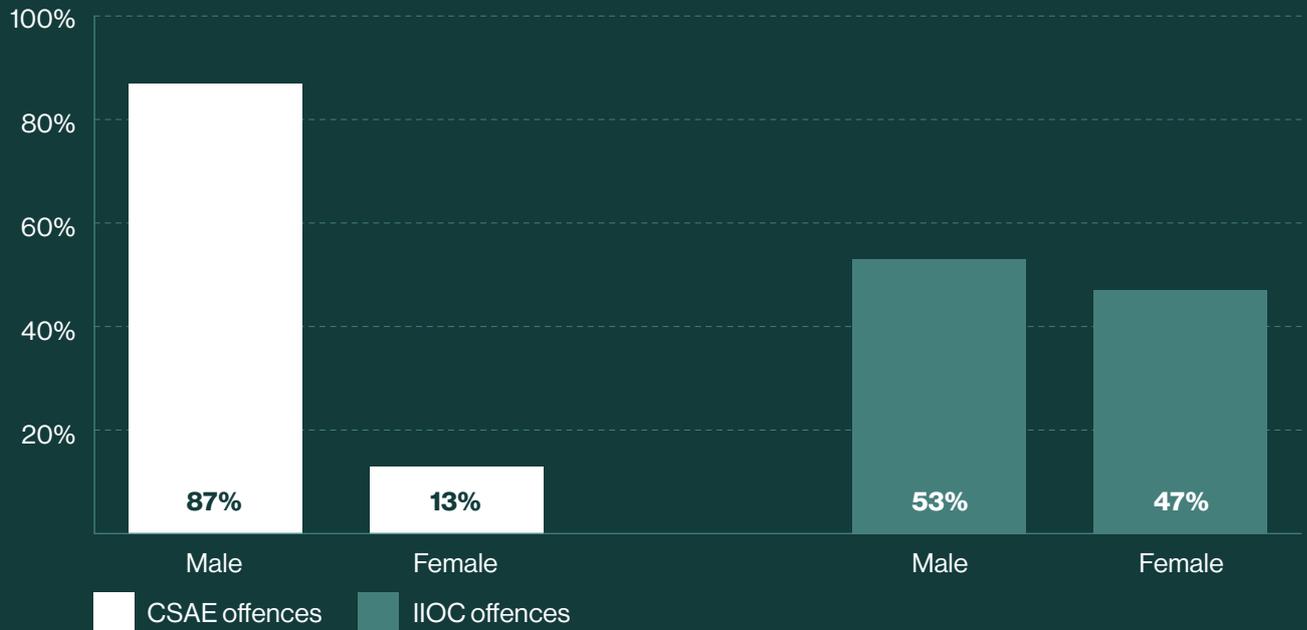
Quick stat

'White Northern European' was the most common type of police recorded ethnicity for child offenders (CSAE and IIOC).

Perpetrator details

The following graphs shows the perpetrator gender split between CSAE cases and IIOC cases.

Bar chart showing perpetrator gender breakdown of child-on-child CSAE crimes for IIOC and contact CSAE offences



Looking at CSAE cases, **the most common age for a perpetrator is 14 years old**, and the **least common age is 10**. These figures are echoed when dealing with IIOC cases, when 14 years old again appears to be the peak age: the age at which most children have reached puberty.

We're living in a time when anyone of any age can access harmful and abusive pornography online. The impact of the next generation can't be understated, with some children being exposed to pornography at nine years old. The [Children's Commissioner's research](#) makes very useful background reading for context.

Main take-outs at a glance

- 52% of all CSAE cases are classed as child-on-child
- The most common age of a perpetrator is 14 years old for CSAE offences
- Where the relationship was recorded, victims knew their abuser in 9 out of 10 cases
- The three common types of offending reported are sexual assault, rape and take/ make/ share indecent imagery.
- Whilst it is legal for children to have sex at 16, its illegal to take, share and possess indecent imagery till you are 18. Police are taking common-sense measures (Outcome 21) to see that children aren't criminalised inappropriately when engaging in experimental activity.
- Further work is needed to work out how much SGII contributes to child-on-child offending and the presence of aggravating features.

CSAE in family environment

CSAE in family environment is estimated to be the most widespread form of CSAE. In this section, we look at the details surrounding the victims and perpetrators, and highlight other factors including the length of time it takes a victim to report an incident.

An overview

Previous analysis in 2015 by the Children's Commissioner for England estimated that CSAE in the family environment comprises up to **two-thirds** of all reported CSAE, this figure is consistent with **further research by the CSA Centre of Expertise**. However, the 2022 data on police recorded crime data suggests it now accounts for a smaller proportion (**29%**) of all CSAE and **33%** of contact CSAE. This does not mean that this is less of an issue. It's highly likely that the lower proportion reflects the general **under-reporting of CSAE in family environment to the police** but may also, in part, be a result of growth in other forms of CSAE reported to the police and the breadth of definitions used.

This is in part supported when we look at the time it takes some victims to report an offence. Where the date of the offences was recorded, only **35% of victims reported abuse within 45 days** of it happening. **63% were reported after this period**. It's also thought that the **Covid-19 pandemic** may have exacerbated this. This challenging time of isolation and lockdowns meant there were fewer opportunities for authorities, teachers or friends to identify abuse signs. **It's highly likely that many of these crimes are going unreported and hidden for years.**

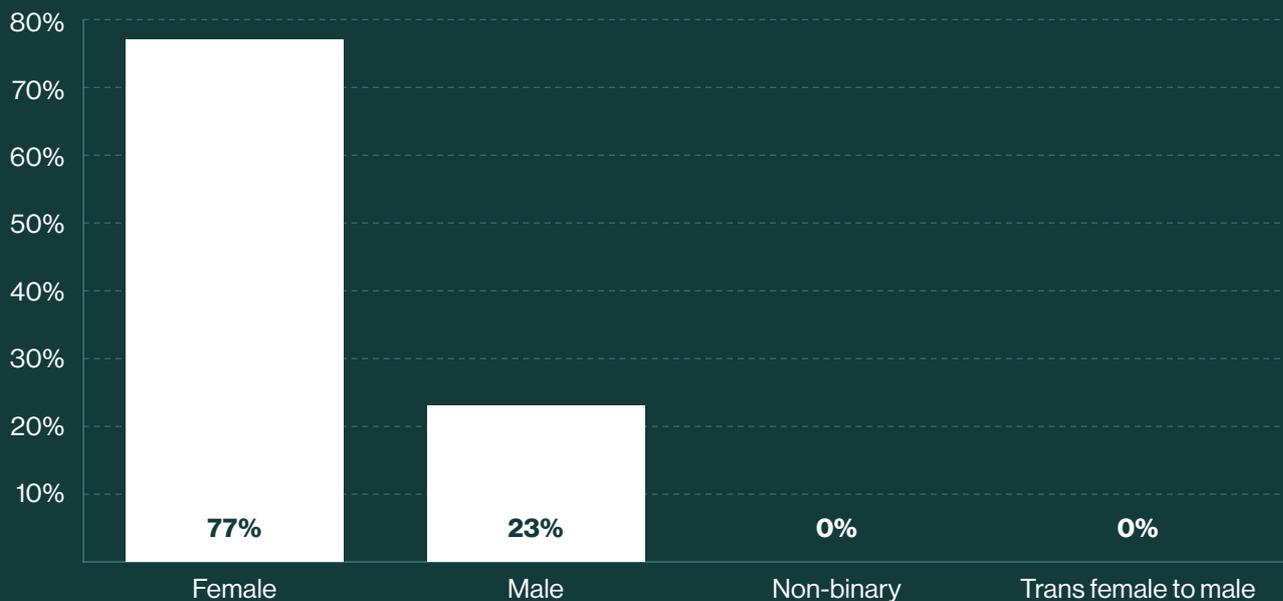
Definition

This analysis uses the term CSAE in family environment as defined by the **Children's Commissioner** for England in their previous work. Their definition seeks to recognise the different dynamics of domestic living and families and 'includes all relationships between the victim and the perpetrator which are mediated by the family or the family home.' Practically this includes CSAE by immediate family members as well as neighbours and family friends. There are some divergent views on how far this definition should extend out and further work is required to generate a universal cross partner definition on this.

The victims

First up, victim gender displays a consistent split compared to other types of CSAE offences.

Bar graph showing breakdown of victim gender for CSAE in family environment crimes



The following chart gives you a full breakdown into the various relationships between victim and abuser. As you can see, **Parent (incl. step/foster/partner) make up the highest percentage with 30.43% followed by sibling (incl. step/foster) (20%).**

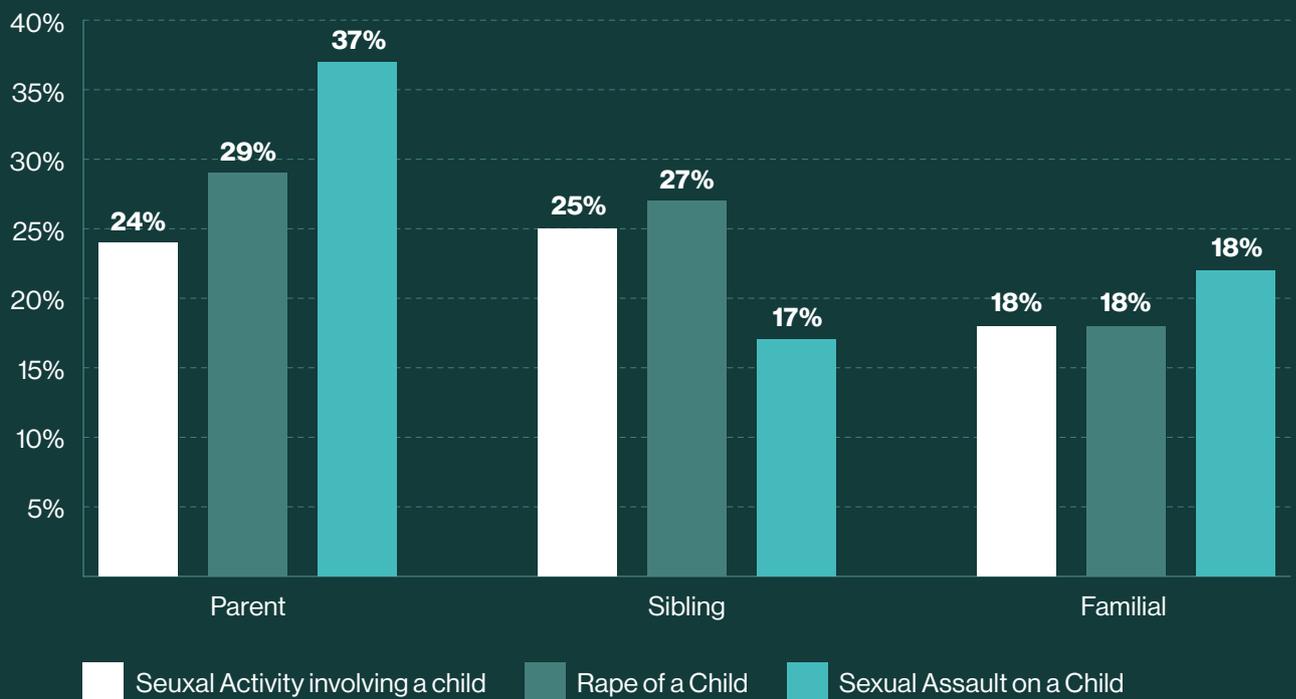
Relationship Type	Percentage
Parent (incl. step/foster/partner)	30.43%
Sibling (incl. step/foster)	20.11%
Familial (incl. family friends)	18.56%
Friend	17.28%
Grandparent	3.69%
Cousin	3.64%
Uncle/Aunt	3.39%
Neighbour	2.23%
Carer	0.50%
Childminder/babysitter	0.17%

The report found that there are three most common CSAE in family environment offences.

1. **Sexual Assault on a Child – 47%**
2. **Rape of a Child – 28%**
3. **Sexual Activity involving a Child – 17%**

You can see a more detailed offence breakdown in the graph below.

Offence breakdown of highest recorded offences against highest recorded csae family environment relationship



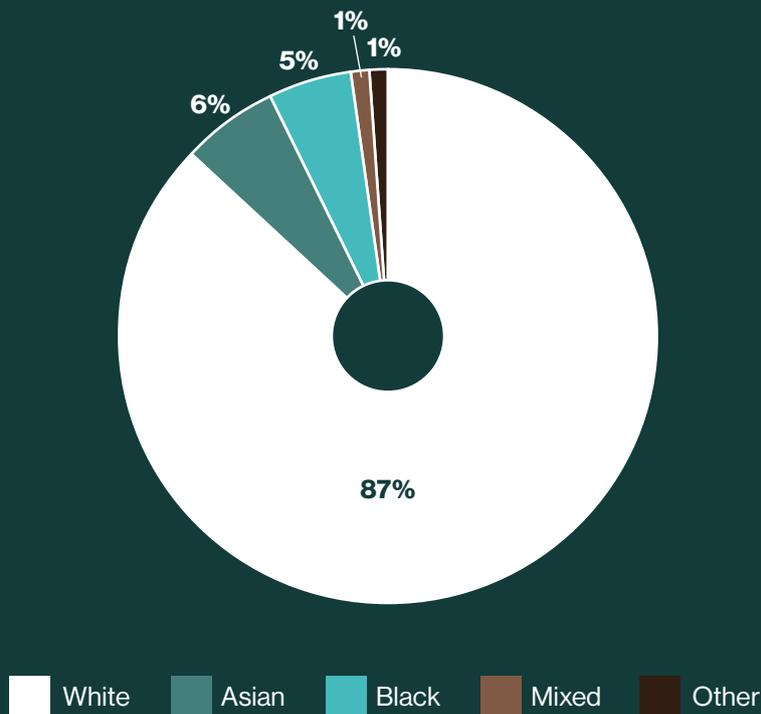
Quick stat

Victims take longer to report CSAE in family environment abuse. The average time for reporting is 17 years.

The perpetrators

The gender breakdown of CSAE in family environment offending follows a similar trend to wider CSAE cases. **Males make up 87% of offenders**, compared to **13% female**. And the pie chart below **divides the perpetrators into ethnicity**.

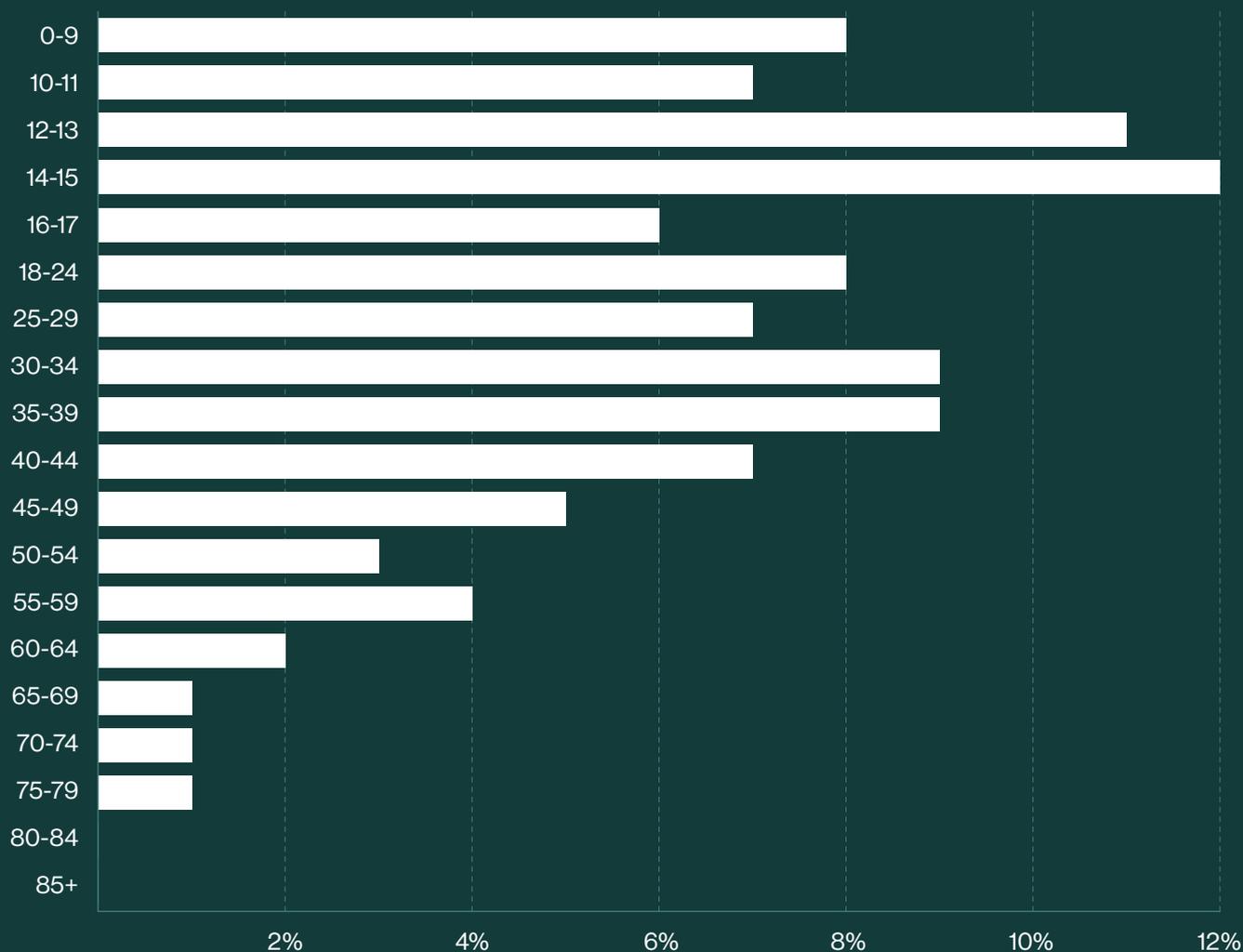
CSAE in family environment perpetrator ethnicity



Quick stat

The average age of a perpetrator is 28 years old, although this is skewed by older age groups.

% of Perpetrators of intra-familial abuse by age bracket



Main take-outs at a glance

- CSAE in family environment accounts for 33% of all police recorded contact CSAE crimes where a relationship is defined.
- Children under 10 are most likely to feature in recorded CSAE crimes in a family setting
- The top two relationships between victim and perpetrator are parents (including step / foster) and siblings.
- The full extent of abuse during the pandemic will not be fully known for a number of years
- The most common historical offence was rape
- Further work is required to define CSAE in family environment across partners.

Online CSAE

Online Child Sexual Abuse & Exploitation makes up at least 32% of all the CSAE offences in 2022. Worryingly, it has been increasing year-on-year. This is no doubt partly due to more and more smartphones, and digital devices and platforms using various mediums for communication. In this section we'll look at the salient facts and figures connected with online CSAE reported to the police.

An overview

The pandemic and the resulting lockdowns meant that more children than ever were accessing the internet – and were being exposed to its various risks. Police forces use an 'online flag' to highlight these crimes, but at the moment this isn't being applied consistently enough to suggest this data provides the full picture when it comes to online CSAE reported to the police. A wider national assessment of the CSAE threat with particular emphasis on online offending is provided annually by the NCA and can be found [here](#).

The victims

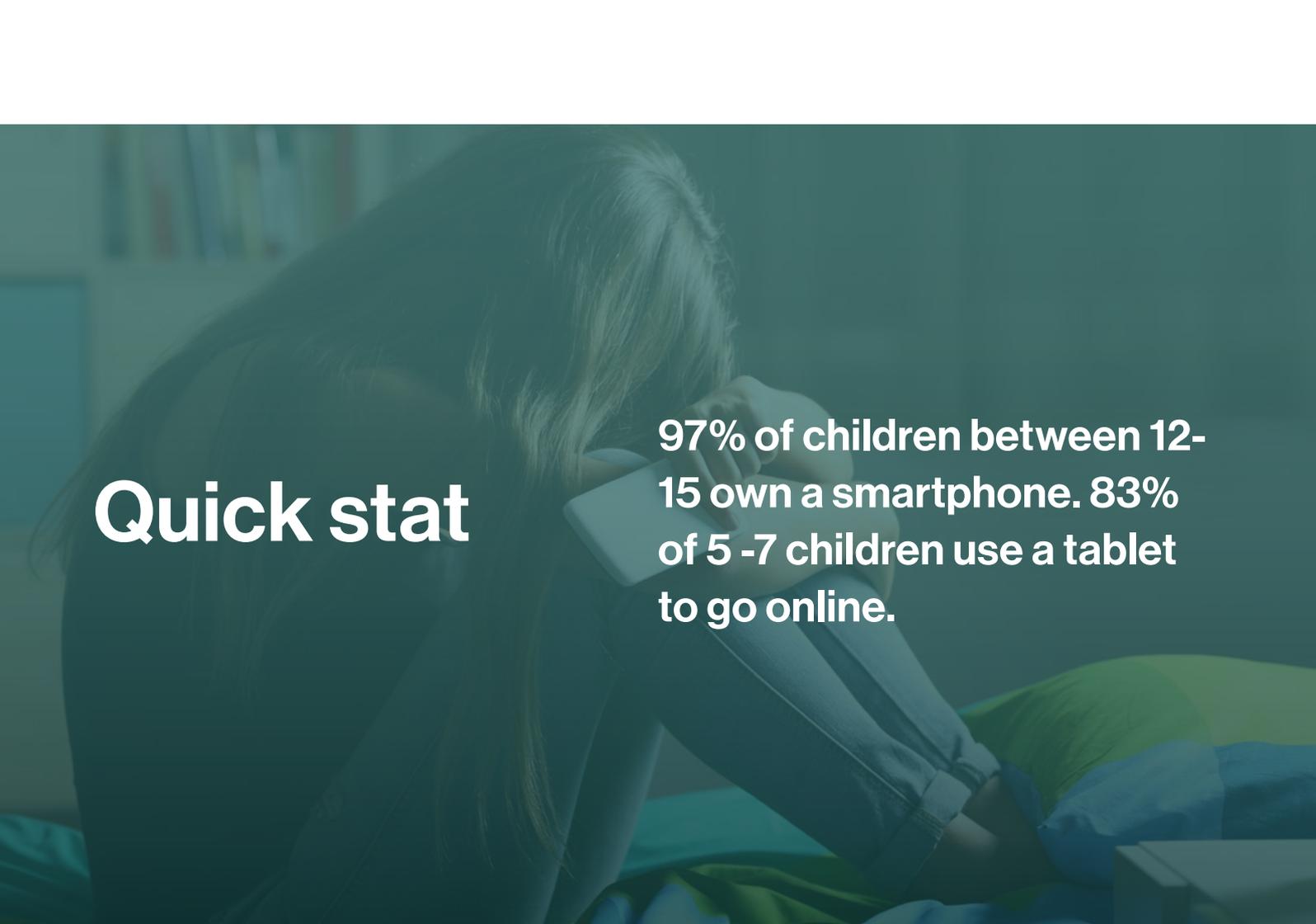
In IIOC cases, the victim in law is actually the state. This means that we can still prosecute those people sharing imagery when we don't know the person in the photo despite efforts to identify. When online CSAE reports are made and the victim can be identified or a direct report has been made, however, they are mostly aged 12-15 years old, with 14 being the most common. Here's the male and female victims split:

- **Female – 68%**
- **Male – 32%**

The highest recorded ethnicity was 82% White, followed by 10% Asian and 8% Black.

It's worth noting that male victimisation is disproportionate compared to other CSAE offending stats. But why? Well, it's highly likely that this is because of **Self-generated Indecent Images (SGII)** and their distribution. This may be more commonly described as 'sexting' or 'sharing nudes' and can include both exploratory activity and cases with aggravating features including violence and exploitation with associated higher levels of harm.

Another worrying trend that came out of the report is around '**sextortion**'. This is when children are blackmailed with the threat of compromising images being sent to family or released on social media unless money is paid. More work is required to understand how common this is within police recorded crime.



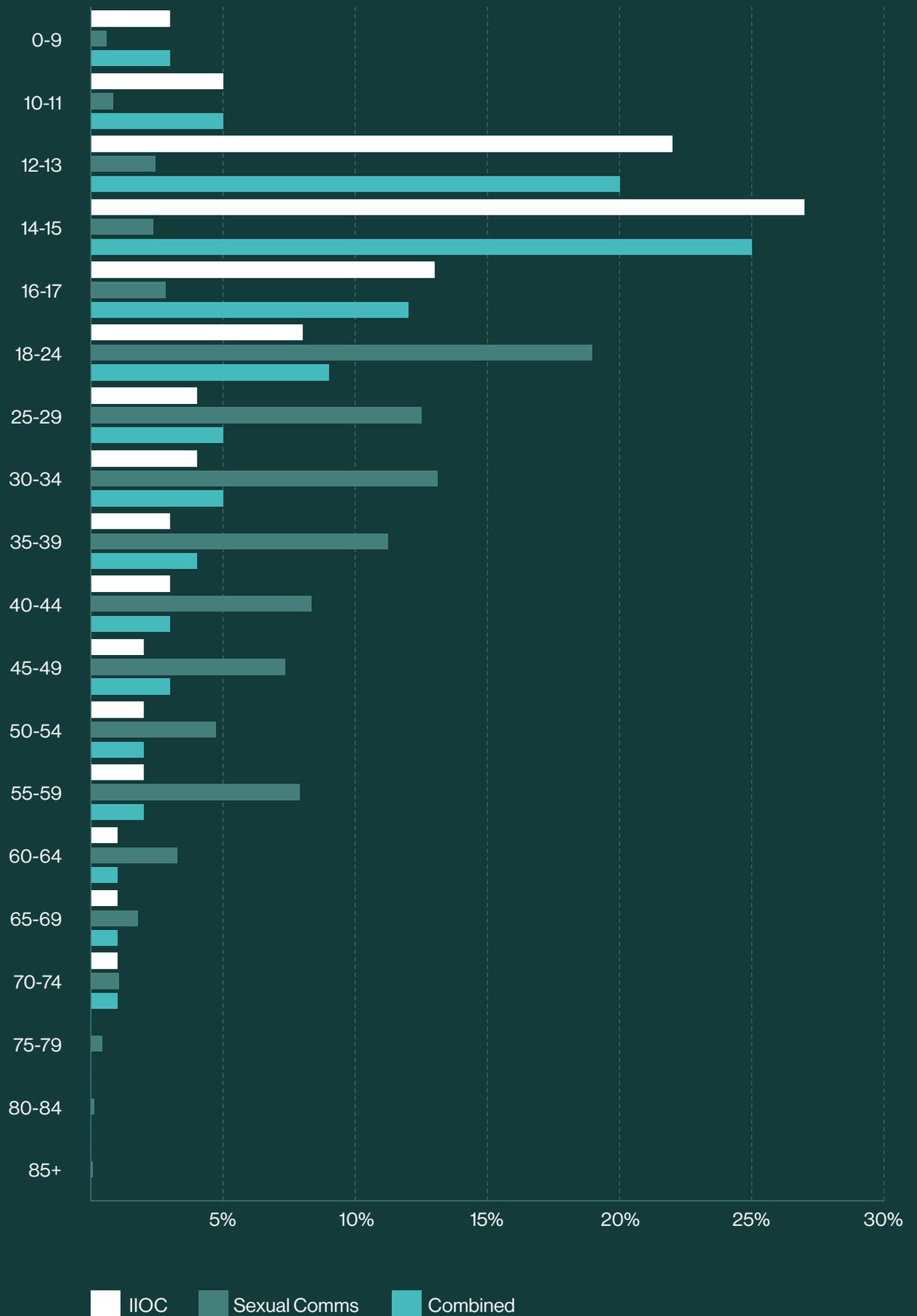
Quick stat

97% of children between 12-15 own a smartphone. 83% of 5-7 children use a tablet to go online.

The perpetrators

Looking through the data, where ethnicity was recorded, we learned that 91% of perpetrators were **white males with an average age of 26**, with the most common age being 14. Then, in order, 'Asian', 'Black', 'Mixed' and 'Other'.

Age breakdown of offenders involved in IIOC and sexual comms offending



Overall, perpetrators up to the age of **17 years old account for 64% of the online offending age demographic**. That works out as **16,401 of 25,561 offences**.

Take/Make/Distribute Indecent Photographs or Pseudo-Photographs of Children was, without doubt, the **most common offence category**.

Quick stat

32% of CSAE offences were identified as online CSAE, compromising 27% responsible for IIOC, and 5% for Sexual Grooming offences.

Main take-outs at a glance

- On the whole, victims are most commonly aged 12-15 years old
- Some perpetrators are using AI and Deep Fake technology to create and share IIOC
- Highest recorded victim ethnicity was 82% White, followed by 10% Asian and 8% Black
- Perpetrators up to the age of 17 years old account for 64% of the online offending.
- Further assessment of online threat can be found in the NCA national threat assessment.

Group-based CSAE

The subject of this section is group-based Child Sexual Abuse & Exploitation based on reported crimes in 2022. Put simply, group-based CSAE means CSAE perpetrated by two or more persons. It's worth noting that during this data period, it was not possible to further break down the offences beyond that detailed below and in particular separate out those relating to more complex or organised offending and those by peer groups. However, thanks to new work by the CSE taskforce and the Complex & Organised Child Abuse Database (COCAD), there are new ways of collecting and analysing data, which will provide a more informed picture of group-based CSAE in 2023 by the Spring.

An overview

To avoid confusion between the type of group-based offences, we've split the findings into two areas; group-based IIOC, and group-based contact CSAE (although this could also include online elements in terms of facilitating offending).

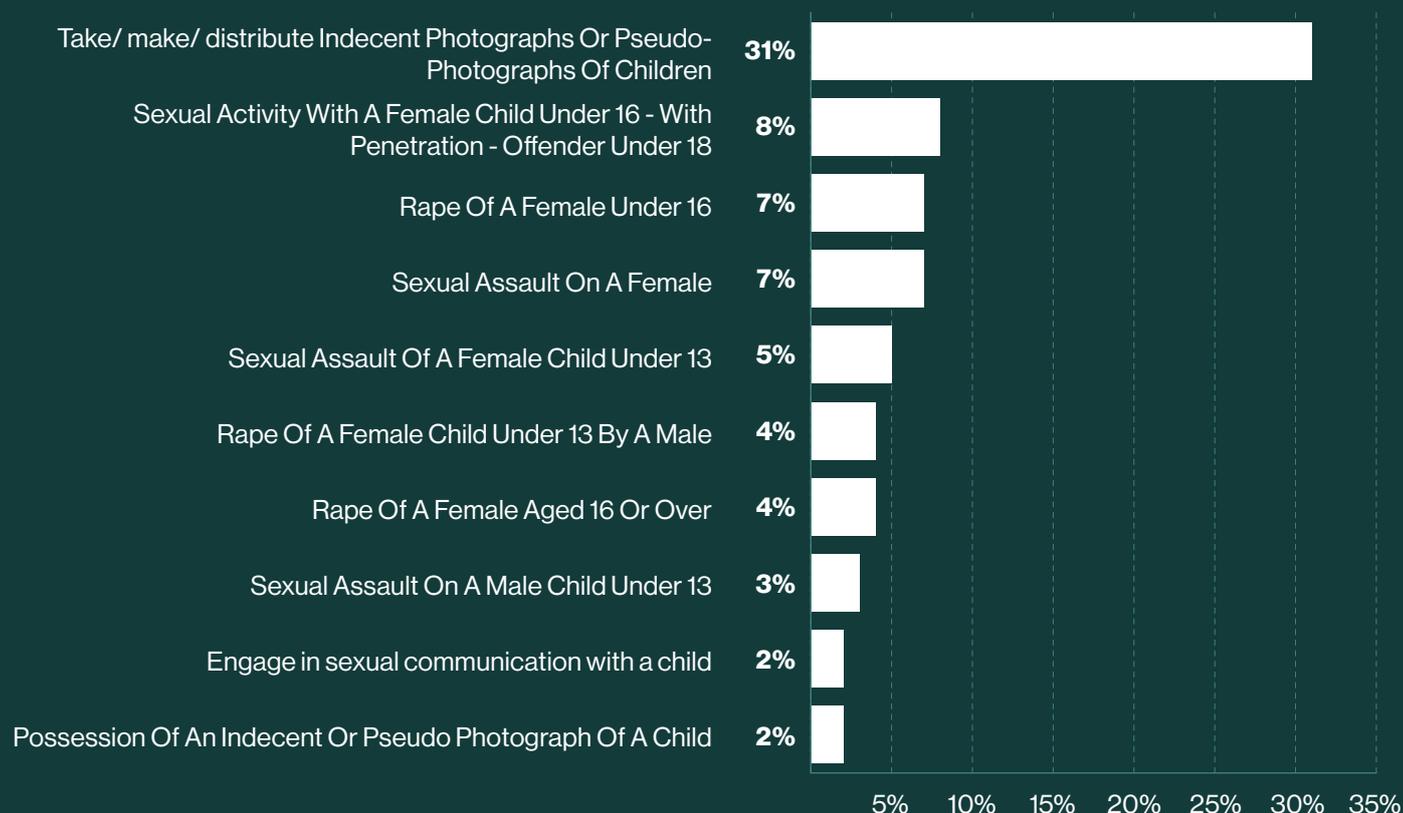
Group-based IIOC & sexual comms

35% of all group-based offences relate to this area. Individually the taking/making and online distribution of Indecent Photographs represents the most common individual crime type accounting for 31% of all group-based offences.

Group-based contact CSAE

65% of group-based offences were in relation to contact abuse. Cumulatively rape is the most common individual crime reflecting the heightened level of severity often seen in group-based contact offending.

Top 10 Home Office (HO) codes for group-based CSAE offences



Quick stat

Groups seeking to sexually exploit children may offer things which may be desirable and difficult to attain to enable them to get control and carry out sexual offending. This includes alcohol, drugs and other gifts (e.g. phones, clothes). More recently this has also included vapes.

The victims

Group-based IIOC and Sexual communications

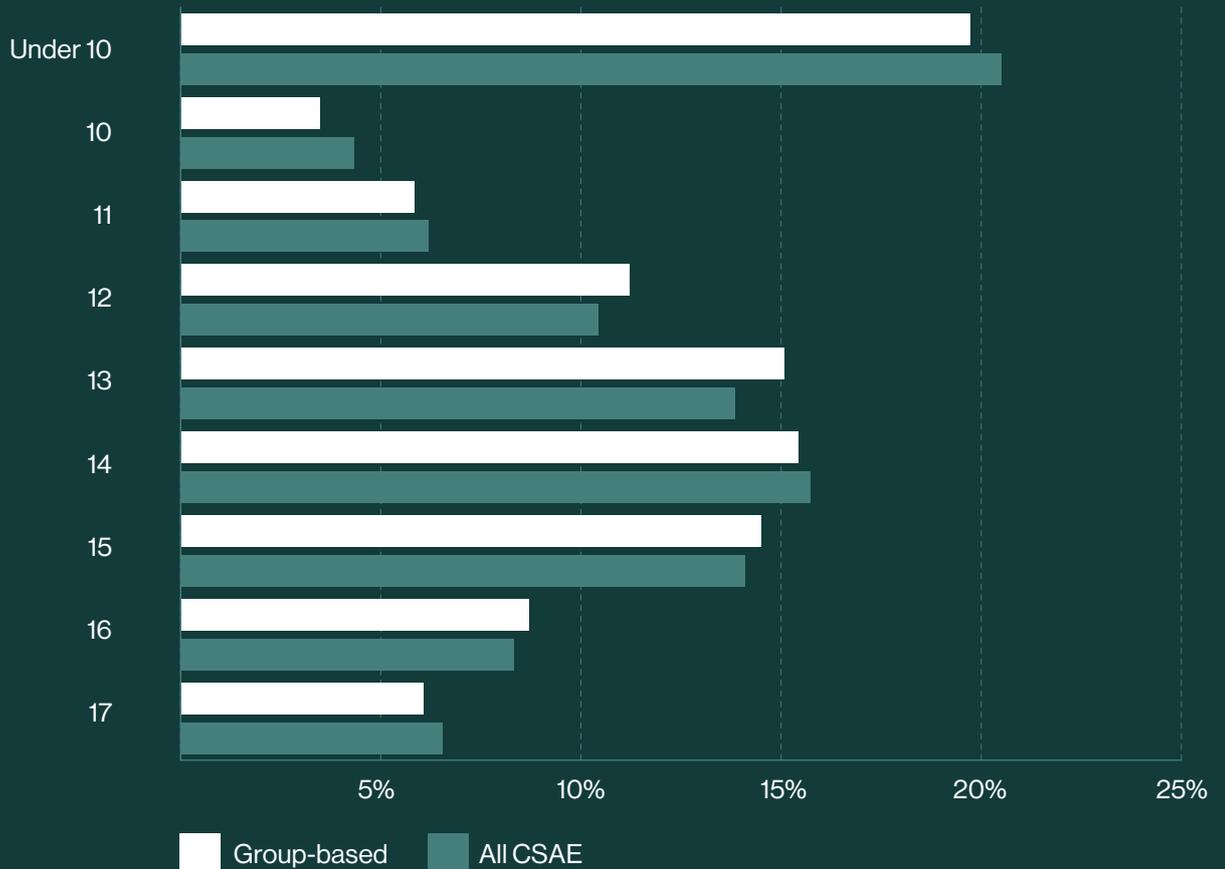
42% of victims were aged 10-13, followed by 28% aged 14-15, 12% aged 16-17 and 6% being aged under 10.

Group-based contact CSAE

When looking at the age of victims for contact CSAE only offences, the age distribution was consistent with the overall group-based picture above with 31% (n. 879 of 2821) of victims being aged 10-13 and 29% (n. 816) aged 14-15.

The data revealed that **three quarters of group-based CSAE victims were female**. And age-wise, if you look at the graph below, you'll see this more or less falls in line with the recorded crime dataset as a whole. **The most commonly reported age was 14**, for example. Victims aged 10 and under are grouped as a whole with reported crimes less common in younger age groups.

Victim ages of group-based offending compared to overall CSAE offending



However, the ethnicity of the victim is slightly out of kilter with the rest of the larger dataset. Here, **White victims accounted for the highest proportion (62%)**, followed by **Black (16%)** and **Asian (10%)**. Interestingly, this shows a lower proportion of White victims compared to other ethnicities when seen alongside other CSAE offences, although we should remember that ethnicity data is limited and has gaps.

The perpetrators

Gender was specified in 83% of group-based CSAE offending cases. Of these, **72% were male and 28% were female**. Perpetrator **ethnicity data is limited with only 29% of group-based CSAE perpetrators having self-defined ethnicity recorded** within the dataset. However, from the data we have we can see that **80% of perpetrators identified as 'White', 8% as 'Asian', 8% as 'Black', 3% as 'Mixed' and 2% as 'other'**. And where gender was specified, **72% of perpetrators were male and 28% were female**.

Group-based IIOC and sexual communication

The largest proportion of offences in this group involves reports of children offending against other children. **10-17 year old perpetrators** featured in **67% offences**. Those involving children are likely to include a range of activity including that which is **experimental and aggravated** with associated levels of harm.

It's also worth noting that there were **significantly more female perpetrators taking part in specifically group-based IIOC and sexual communication than CSAE in general (33% compared to 18%)**. Furthermore, 87% of female offenders were under 18, compared to 46% of males of Groupbased IIOC and sexual communication offences. This means it's very likely that the increased percentage of female child perpetrators is a result of the high levels of child-on-child IIOC offending being captured within the group-based IIOC and sexual communications data.

From the current data available, we can see that **88% of group-based IIOC and sexual communication CSAE perpetrators identified as 'White', 5% as 'Asian', 4% as 'Black', 2% as 'Mixed' and 1% as 'other'**.

Group-based contact CSAE

10-17 year olds accounted for 50% (n. 2517 of 5013) of group-based contact CSAE suspects whilst **44% (n. 2227) were adults**.

Perpetrators of group-based contact CSAE were **predominantly male (90%)** with 10% recorded as female perpetrators.

From the current data available, we can see that **76% of group-based contact CSAE perpetrators identified as 'White', 9% as 'Asian', 9% as 'Black', 3% as 'Mixed' and 3% as 'other'**.

Number of offenders in groups

Overall, although the number of perpetrators involved in group-based CSAE range from **two to 19** people, **76% of group-based contact CSAE offences were committed by just two perpetrators**. group-based IIOC and sexual communication offences were committed by just two perpetrators in 57% of offences.



Quick stat

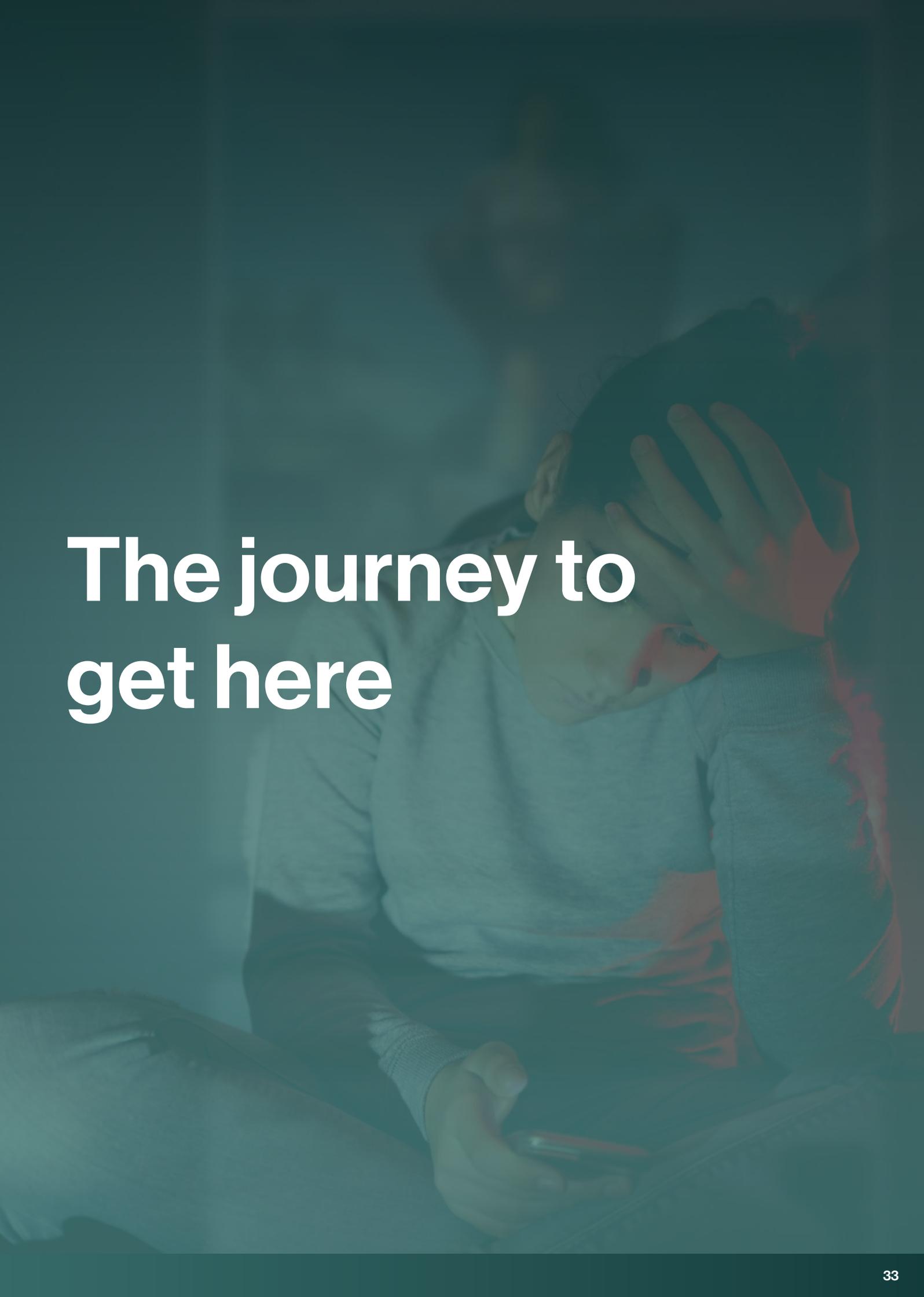
The number of perpetrators involved in group-based CSAE ranged from two to 19.

The CSE Taskforce

The CSE Taskforce was launched in April 2023 and is a collaboration of law enforcement organisations, policing programmes, together with their partners, to coordinate the response to group-based CSE. Part of its work will enhance the collection and analysis of data through the Complex and Organised Child Abuse Database (COCAD) This will improve the understanding of the scale, nature and prevalence of group-based CSE in England and Wales. It will start to publish reports in 2024.

Main take-outs at a glance

- Group-based CSAE account for 5% of all reported CSAE
- Contact abuse accounts for 65% of group CSAE offences, the remaining are predominantly online.
- 75% of victims are female, 25% are male
- Most offenders are male, and under 18 years old
- Where ethnicity data is available, 76% of contact group CSAE offenders identify as White, 9% Asian and 9% Black.
- The CSE Taskforce and COCAD will offer advanced data for us to share in the future

A person is sitting on a couch, looking down with a distressed expression. They have their right hand pressed against their forehead, and their left hand is holding a smartphone. The scene is dimly lit, with a teal overlay. The text "The journey to get here" is overlaid on the left side of the image.

The journey to get here

The journey to get here

Producing and being transparent with analysis which looks across all forms of CSAE reported to police is important in terms of informing how we can work with partners to improve our services to prevent these appalling crimes, give confidence to victims to come forward and bring more offenders to justice.

The need for clarity

This analysis came about as a result of wanting to gain a bigger picture of the scale and nature of CSAE. And a better understanding would result in more informed practice and policy. It is enabled through Home Office funding of a regional CSAE analyst network, hosted by the VKPP, and forms part of the collective national response to CSAE being designated a national priority threat in the Strategic Policing Requirement.

Although the work started with a focus on individual elements of CSAE (including CSE and online), over time it was expanded to look across the entire threat. It recognised the need for a 'joined up' response, and how the nature and scale of reported crime is growing and changing. This includes CSAE in family environment and those offences committed by children on other children.

This analysis is also important in recognising that both victimisation and offending don't operate in silos. Its purpose now is to ensure that we're able to understand and respond in a cohesive way in order to meet need.



The way forward

The way forward

The publication of the **National Analysis of Police Recorded Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation Crimes Report** is just the beginning. We'd like to think that it will go on to form a significant part in the fight against CSAE. After all, developing effective responses requires law enforcement, safeguarding partners, academia, Government and the public to work together based on a shared understanding of the current issues facing children. This follows also the recommendations by the Independent Inquiry into CSAE (IICSA) also to this effect.

More visibility for policing

With this amount of data at hand, we hope law enforcement can continue to adapt, adjust, and develop its approach with partners and parents. The nature and methodology of the crimes are ever-changing, so the police and wider partnership approach should be more fluid too. Key to this is the need for targeted interventions alongside universal prevention activity to reduce offending and keep more children safe. Also ensuring that policing is providing a proportionate response including where it seeks to charge and progress cases through the criminal justice system and where other outcomes including diversionary activity maybe appropriate.

Alignment of response and support services

The insight provided from this analysis will we also help inform the work of Police and Crime Commissioners and wider safeguarding partnerships around the availability of local support services and responses to need.

Education and prevention

The report could also assist schools and centres of learning in areas of Education & Prevention. Being armed with relevant data could help them share the threats posed by CSAE with the next generation and develop robust safeguarding responses.

Working to fill the gaps

As comprehensive as the report is, it also flagged a few data and knowledge gaps. For example, the more granular features of child-on-child offending and data quality around the ethnicity of suspects due to inconsistencies at the offence recording stage. Some online offences are also difficult to breakdown into specific crimes. We'll be working hard with partners to enhance and build in wider insight, and address gaps in our knowledge, ready for the 2024 report.

Deeper analysis

This year we've brought in a new way of understanding complex and organised child abuse investigations. We hope to have a brand new data set available by the end of 2023, giving a more in-depth grasp of group-based offending and complex CSAE.

Following the report, we want to begin a deeper dive into areas such as online crimes, in particular child-on-child, in order to understand grey areas of criminalisation. We also aim to work more with partners to identify any gaps in our information that they could perhaps add to in time for the 2024 report.

Reporting when it matters most

We are engaging with Government consultations regarding the proposed introduction of enhanced mandatory reporting duties on CSAE. Central to this is the need to ensure that children are enabled to report, that appropriate action is taken and that we learn from lessons of the past including the views of survivors and previous victims. Should a duty be introduced, investing in its implementation and tracking its impact is critical to maximise its chances of success and meeting needs of victims. A copy of our consultation response can be found [here](#).

Making CSAE part of the conversation

Child Sexual Abuse & Exploitation is a huge risk to society, affecting the lives of victims for decades and decades. Yet for many it's still very much a taboo subject and an uncomfortable conversation to have, perhaps because of social awkwardness, or cultural reservations. We hope the report will get the headlines it needs to help open the topic up for more conversations at every level.

We want this support to be used to inform debate amongst professionals and public, and enable efforts to provide more effective response and prevent. We're also keen to build on this by working with partners to enhance and build in wider insight, and address gaps in our knowledge. There is also a need to keep it current and up to date with changes in ways in which CSAE is experienced by children now. By more and more agencies picking up the narrative, the messages of the report will reach a wider audience and bring about more debate.



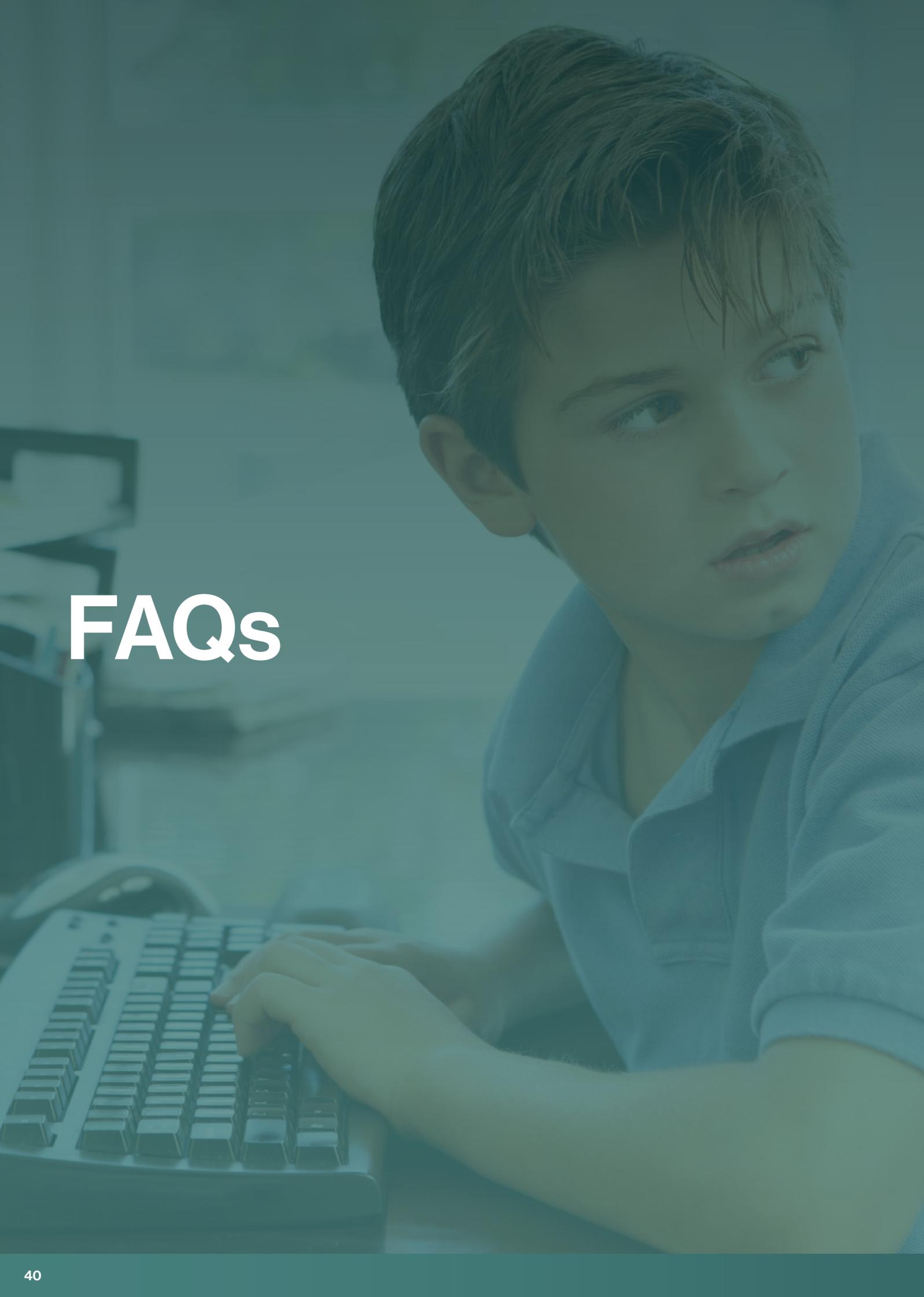
Conclusion

Conclusion

Child Sexual Abuse & Exploitation impacts everything. From the trauma on both mental health and physical health, to the effect on society. It is a major concern to the public and is a designated national priority threat in strategic policing requirement, alongside Counter Terrorism, Public Order, and Violence Against Women and Girls.

The summaries, key points and statistics you've seen today form part of our response to this. By using the data, more effective responses can be developed. Parents, carers, schools can be more aware of the warning signs that indicate child sexual abuse & exploitation. And children can be confident knowing that things are being done to stop abuse happening.

Put simply, developing better responses starts with understanding the full picture. 'The National Analysis of Police Recorded Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation Crimes Report helps everyone understand the problem in deeper detail.



FAQs

FAQs

What is the National Analysis of Police Recorded Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation Crimes Report?

The report provides a comprehensive picture of all police recorded Child Sexual Abuse & Exploitation (CSAE) crime. By focussing on all aspects of CSAE, we can get an idea as to the scale and reach of the offences, offenders and threats facing children.

Why is it so important?

The National Analysis of Police Recorded Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation Crimes Report will play a vital role for the police, partners, professionals and the public. The report supports for the right resources to be assigned to the right area to help prevent child abuse, and to pursue offenders. It also offers us a glimpse into how CSAE is changing in the modern world. For example, the increased role that digital and the internet plays.

What is it telling us?

The data tells us new and different things about the scale, nature and changing dynamics of recorded CSAE, the profile of those committing crimes, and the victims they target. The data also reframes some of the popular public narratives surrounding CSAE, helping people to understand where the main threats are. For example, historically child-on-child abuse accounted for a third of offences. The report tells us that today this is more like a half.

What impact do you hope this has?

Our aim is that the report will help keep children safe and address the issue of CSAE by encouraging police, partners and the public to work together. We hope that the report will also encourage wider data and information sharing to get a more complete picture of CSAE. This will help everyone better identify victims and prevent CSAE, while hopefully going some way in stopping perpetrators reoffending.

The findings will allow policing and partners to consider whether the current responses reflect the changes in threat. Put simply, are we in the right spaces, and is there things we should be doing differently?

Has the methodology of adult offending changed?

Only in the increase of overarching reporting and wider trends regarding online offending. However, given policing data is impacted by under reporting, a note of caution must be applied to this data and consideration given to where wider research can develop this evidence base.

How will it support/aid change to policing?

We believe it will help police forces be more proactive when it comes to identifying and dealing with CSAE. CSAE is a national priority area for the police, so knowing where the main threats lie will help police forces tailor their resources more accurately. And because the report is national rather than local, each police force can now get a wider picture, offering them valuable insights into adapting their approach to CSAE in an operational and strategic level. Are current CSAE strategies

up to date? Are victims and perpetrators profiling correct? Are victims being supported in the right way? What are the rising threats to be aware of? What can be done to encourage crime reporting from seldom heard groups, such as LGBTQ groups, children with learning difficulties etc?

How can people use the report?

Partners, professionals and stakeholders can get a heads-up on what the key trends are in recorded CSAE crimes.

Indeed, one or two of the findings in the report may be different to what these groups may have been expecting, particularly in the data uncovered for child-on-child crime type. The fact that such a high proportion of offences are actually committed by children might prove surprising. Parents, meanwhile, can get some insight into the extent of rising crime types.

Is there more to do?

Yes. This is an ongoing story. We plan to continue the journey by improving the quality and depth of our analysis, year-on-year.

Notes



Vulnerability Knowledge & Practice Programme

