



Reducing Child Victimization:

An Overview of Relevant Conventions, Legislation,
Policy and Research Concerning the Victimization
of Children in Cyberspace

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In Association with
For the Alliance for the Rights of Children
&
The City of New Westminster

"Reducing Child Victimization" serves as an in-depth analysis and action plan aimed at protecting children from online dangers, such as exploitation by predators and exposure to inappropriate content. It explores the complexities of digital threats, discusses the international legal measures in place to address these issues, and outlines the roles of various global organizations committed to safeguarding children. The purpose is to equip stakeholders with the necessary knowledge and strategies to create a safer online environment where children can engage without the risk of harm.





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Introduction

The development and rapid adoption of the Internet is making many changes in our communities and culture. One distressing change is the opportunities for predators and pedophiles to sexually exploit children in new and unexpected ways.

With the introduction of every new form of media, questions and concerns arise. At one time the introduction of writing changed the way humans thought about themselves and their world. The introduction of the telegraph released communication from its physical limitations - a message could be telegraphed faster than a person, horse, or train could travel. Some said that the introduction of radio would kill books; others predicted that the introduction of television would destroy radio.

Despite these early predictions, computers have been the biggest leap in communications media since the invention of television. Along with the computer has come the Internet and some would argue the Internet is going to have more rapid and far wider implications to our world than anything that has come before.

One aspect of the Internet that many individuals, organizations and governments are grappling to cope with is the use of the Internet to victimize children.

How can communities, governments, child welfare advocates, law enforcement groups, educators and parents ensure that the Internet is accessible for children and safe at the same time?

Some prevailing discourse about online sexual exploitation has been polarized into a dialogue between 'freedom of expression' arguments versus regulation and law enforcement concerns. It is not the aim of this paper to try to resolve the resulting standoff that seems to have stymied energy that might be directed towards more productive discussions. Instead, this report will summarize the existing international, national and global attempts to minimize the victimization of children online.

We will exam the background and activities of concern, then the relevant international treaties and covenants as they pertain to the sexual exploitation of children. An overview of relevant Canadian legislation will be offered then the legalities, policies, and a summary of global academic research and perspectives.

This collection of relevant legislation has a variety of aims. Some aim to protect children, some designed to assist law enforcement, some designed to raise public awareness, some concerned with basic civil rights, and some try to find solutions within the Internet industry. This collection of laws, conventions, and policy has not as yet been cohesively coordinated.

"I think there is a world market for maybe five computers."

Thomas Watson (1874 - 1956), Chairman of IBM, 1943

The laws lack consistent statements of purpose and application throughout the international, national and local levels. This reflects one of the main challenges of approaching the issue of child victimization on the Internet, namely the many interests and perspectives at work.

It should be noted here that this collection of relevant legislation has a variety of aims. Some of it aims to protect children, some of it is designed to assist law enforcement, some is designed to raise public awareness, some is concerned with basic civil rights, and some try to find solutions within the Internet industry. This collection of laws, conventions, and policy has not as yet been cohesively coordinated. The laws

lack consistent statements of purpose and application throughout the international, national and local levels. This reflects one of the main challenges of approaching the issue of child victimization on the Internet, namely the many interests and perspectives at work.

Prioritizing the best interests of children, and approaching the issue from a children's rights perspective, can resolve this dilemma. If policy makers consistently choose the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child* as a philosophical starting point ensures that the discourse will be centered in an existing internationally ratified set of principles that specifically addresses child exploitation.

"There is no reason anyone would want a computer in their home."

Ken Olson, president and founder of Digital Equipment Corp., 1977



Tech History

The rapid adoption of the Internet into Canadian households has caused challenges for policymakers, law enforcement and youth-serving professionals. Some history about how the Internet developed, and why, is helpful for context.

The use of the Internet in 57% of Canadian homes in 2000 (up from 31% in 1997), and the projections for continued growth, means that we once again find ourselves on the cusp of the integrating of a new medium into our culture and our homes. Just as policy makers in the 1940's had to

decide how television would be used, families, communities, provinces, countries and international agencies now need to examine the use of the Internet and decide how it will be produced, regulated, and implemented.

Current policies need to be updated in order to address this ever widening, never before imagined range of issues.

For example;

- Internet use in the work place
- On-line surveillance cameras in daycare centres
- Financial exchanges
- Online auctions
- School use
- Public use

- Legal liabilities
- International banking
- Instant international lobbying
- Information distribution systems

Within this context exist two opposing concepts: the global, anarchic and lawless nature of the Internet, and the desire by society to control potentially harmful influences or illegal practices that are facilitated within this new medium.



Online Victimization

New channels of exploitation means children are victimized online, including inappropriate content exposure and direct interactions with malicious actors. The broad psychological and societal impacts of such online encounters require a wholistic approach.

The Internet offers many ways that information can be exchanged. It is multi-layered and made up of both private and public venues, commercial and personal websites, newsgroups, chat services, and bulletin boards.

Communications over the Internet can be accomplished through email, instant messaging, video conferencing, and audio transmissions; all these offering

ways to send and receive messages, images, and files.

Online activities that victimize children are limited only by the technology available, and that technology is experiencing a growth that does not appear to be slowing. The scope of the issue is large, however we can pinpoint specific activities conducted over the Internet that potentially victimize children.

Online Recruitment

Online predators target lonely, isolated, disenfranchised children and youth seeking validation and connection. They target children willing to talk about sex and high risk activities. Their tactics are cloaked in anonymity and their reach is international.

In Internet settings, pedophiles are able to contact potential victims where they attempt to lure the victims into physical meetings making them vulnerable to sexual assaults or even abductions into the sex trade.

In chat rooms, children can be exposed to pornographic images that have the effect of 'normalizing' these images.

This desensitizing is used by pedophiles to encourage children to engage in progressively more sexual conversations and activities.

Online Pornography

The issues surrounding the dissemination and accessibility of child pornography on the Internet have yet to be realized. The technologies utilized by perpetrators and the legal and ethical challenges in curtailing this form of exploitation are diversifying exponentially.

The Internet offers pedophiles an avenue of distribution for pornography and is perfect for the covert nature of their activities. On the Internet, pedophiles can exchange pornographic images of children cheaply, safely, and in unlimited volume. There are reports of individuals amassing enormous databases of child pornography. This has created a worldwide market for pornography that in turn fuels more victimization of children. Additionally, pornographers using computer software can take an innocent image of a child and "morph", or alter, it,

to make the child's image as either nude or engaged in explicit sexual activity. It is virtually impossible to determine whether or not an image is real or has been morphed.

Pedophiles can use actual or morphed images of children as tools in many ways: to lower children's inhibition, to sexually stimulate the child or themselves, to demonstrate the sexual acts desired with the child, or to blackmail the child into engaging in sexual activity.

Online Pedophilic Communities

The formation of online communities that promote and normalize pedophilic behaviours is changing the dynamics of sexual abuse. These communities complicate efforts to monitor and prevent child exploitation.

With the introduction and common use of the Internet, individuals who have previously been a deviant minority within a community are able to create virtual communities with other like-minded predators. These online communities reinforce and validate pedophilic values or beliefs and distribute technical information about how to engage in sexually exploitive activities. These venues also publicize locations, activities, practices, and ideas that enhance both the practice of exploitation and encourage their normalization.

Examples include online maps of 'kiddie strolls' in distant cities that identify areas where children are available. Some offer information on methods of encrypting or digitally securing information on

computers that stop law enforcement evidence gathering, should the pedophile be arrested or their computer searched.

The Internet allows pedophiles to share information, identities, and images of their victims. This has enabled this activity to gain a certain status, trust, and acceptance and has developed into a kind of psychological support system for other pedophiles around the world.

In the past several years law enforcement agencies around the world have been investigating organized groups of pedophiles that engage in trading thousands of images of child pornography. Three examples of these organized groups are Pedo University, The Wonderland Club, and the Orchid Club.

The Orchid Club

The use of conferencing technologies is just beginning to be accessible to the majority of the public but unfortunately, pedophilic individuals have been aware of its potential for a long time. In 1996, an international group called the Orchid Club was identified and members were arrested following the online rape of a child. It was alleged that in April of 1996, two California men used a digital camera to photograph a ten-year-old girl in sexually explicit poses. The images were broadcast to other members of the Club in a chat room. The viewers of the images then sent instructions to the California man, suggesting poses and requesting specific images.

This represents the first time an online assault of a child has been documented resulting in criminal proceedings, and where others remotely participated in the assault.

Online Sexual Assaults

The incidents of sexual assaults broadcast live via the Internet is a previously unimaginable crime. This underscores the legal and societal challenges in responding to such crimes and the need for robust protective measures.

There are documented reports of sexual assaults being broadcast live to pre-selected viewers who email the perpetrator with suggestions on how to conduct the assault. This represents a completely new avenue of abuse that existing policies and laws are as yet unable to deal with.

Attempts to cope with the changing risks to our youth have taken a variety of forms. Groups based internationally and nationally, in government, academia and industry have all had preliminary responses to the issue of online sexual exploitation.



International Treaties

Conventions, treaties and covenants relevant to sexual exploitation include the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Optional Protocol.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) was introduced in December of 1989 at the United Nations (UN) General Assembly. This treaty is a statement of international priorities and expectations that are designed to ensure universal rights for children. The CRC was unanimously adopted by the UN General Assembly and quickly became the most widely ratified Human Rights treaty in history, with Canada as one of the original signatories.

The CRC is one primary tool to address the active protection of children's rights and is built upon four guiding principles: non-discrimination; best interests of the child; rights to survival and; development and participation.

The primary principle of the CRC is known as 'first call for children'. This principle states that the essential needs of children should be a high priority when international, national, community and familial resources are allocated.

Within this principle is the direct implication that children are full citizens of their countries and are entitled to consideration by governments, and that governments are obligated to prioritize children's needs when making decisions about national resource allocations and

The Convention outlines several areas where children are deserving of special protection befitting their state of development and level of vulnerability. Sexual exploitation is one such area.

Articles of the Convention that specifically pertain to sexual exploitation of children are Articles 19, 32, 34, 35, and 39.

These articles set out the following State Parties' obligations:

- To protect children from all forms of abuse, and to establish social programs to provide necessary support for prevention, treatment and follow-up of abused children and their families (Article 19);
- To protect children from economic exploitation (Article 32);

- To protect children from all form of sexual abuse and exploitation (Article 34);
- To prevent their abduction (Article 35);
- To promote the recovery and social reintegration of child victims of abuse, and to ensure that this recovery fosters the health, self-respect and dignity of the child. (Article 39).

There are also several Articles of the Convention that are specifically relevant to the use of the Internet, namely:

- Children's right to freedom of expression (Article 13);
- The obligation to protect children's privacy and to protect them from attacks on their honour and reputation (Article 16);
- The responsibility placed on the mass media to disseminate information and material of social and cultural benefit to the child (Article 17);
- The commitments of member states to protect children from all forms of exploitation, including pornography (Article 36).

Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child

In an attempt to expand and enhance the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Optional Protocol to the CRC was drafted in May of 2000. The Optional Protocol specifically addresses areas of concern identified around the Internet.

The Protocol calls attention to the "growing availability of child pornography on the Internet and other evolving technologies," and supports a call for the "worldwide criminalization of the production, distribution, exportation, transmission, importation, intentional possession and advertising of child pornography".

The Protocol supports the use of a holistic approach to the causes of child sexual exploitation and stresses the need for

public awareness in order to reduce the demand for children for exploitation purposes.



International Organizations

Other organizations concerned with children's rights internationally include UNICEF, Interpol, and the Interpol Standing Working Party for Offences against Minors.

UNICEF

"The nature of the sexual abuse and exploitation of children is complex - ranging from intra-familial to commercial sexual exploitation. There is a clear international dimension to the area of sexual exploitation of children that makes international cooperation absolutely indispensable.

The sexual exploitation of children knows no boundaries of a geographical, cultural or social nature. All too often, it is a hidden and clandestine phenomenon, highly organized, extremely profitable and so far carrying low risks, particularly of prosecution and punishment for those who profit from the exploitation of children."

The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), addresses the issue of sexual exploitation as global in nature and pervasive in its scope in its Staff Working Papers:

With this in mind, the role of Interpol as an international law enforcement and coordination body also has relevance to this area.

Interpol

The International Criminal Police Organization, known as Interpol, is an international co-operative body of law enforcement authorities that focus on law enforcement actions, prevention, training and other collaborative efforts in dealing with international crime. Interpol's primary function is to facilitate communication and to support a continuing exchange of information. It is the second largest international

organization in the world with 177 member states. At the 1992 General Assembly, the United Nations adopted a resolution that included recommendations about actions concerning offences against minors. The Interpol Standing Working Party on Offences against Minors was created to address these concerns. Today this working party has participants from approximately 30 states.

Standing Working Party for Offences against Minors

The Standing Working Party's mandate, as set forth by the UN General Assembly, is to combat sexual crimes against minors such as commercial sexual exploitation. National Criminal Boards from member nations are asked to nominate at least one specialized liaison officer within their country to act as a contact point for the Working Party for semi-annual meetings. The primary themes addressed at these conferences are sexual exploitation of children, child pornography, sexual tourism, illegal adoption and the trafficking of children.

Since 1992, the Standing Working Party has published a handbook containing guidelines on handling crimes against minors. The guidebook also includes a

comparative list of international child pornography legislation. This compilation shows there is a distinct lack of adequate legislation in a number of countries.

The increased use of information technology in offences against children has meant greater law enforcement activity in this arena. The Standing Working Party has facilitated the development of international training courses for law enforcement officers regarding computer-assisted crimes. Efforts are made to ensure that all member countries have access to the latest information and technology to assist them in fighting crimes against children that involve the Internet.



Canada

In Canada

There are many diverse governing bodies, relevant legislation, and pro-active organizations in Canada that are attempting to deal with issues involving sexual exploitation of children and the Internet. This is an overview of these activities, beginning with relevant Canadian legislation.

This is contained primarily within the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Criminal Code of Canada.

Provincially, British Columbia has no legislation that specifically addresses the issue of the Internet and sexual exploitation. Representatives from the Provincial Government have assisted in consultation processes with advisory groups examining the issue and have internal policies for Internet usage for government employees.

On local levels, some schools and libraries have Internet usage policies, but most are locally designed and implemented.

Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees “Freedom of thought, belief, opinion, and expression including freedom of the press, and other media of communication.” Recently this Charter Right has taken on significance because of the Supreme Court challenge launched by Robin Sharpe. The Sharpe case was based on the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and Robin Sharpe’s right to possess and produce child pornography based on those rights. The Supreme Court ruled in January 2000 that this Charter Right did not allow for

the distribution of child pornography. The production of child pornography was also ruled illegal except for personal use and as long as no criminal activities were depicted. That the Charter Rights allows for pedophiles to engage in abusive activities undermines the usefulness of the Canadian Charter to protect children. The implications of the Sharpe ruling have yet to be realized throughout the legal and social justice systems and it is expected that the Sharpe ruling will continue to be a contentious one.

Criminal Code of Canada

Under the Criminal Code of Canada, Sections relevant to sexual exploitation include;

- Age of sexual consent - Section 151
- Sexual interference with a minor - Section 151
- Sexual exploitation of a minor - Section 153
- Incest - Section 170
- Rape - Sections 271 & 273

- Child prostitution -Section 212
- Pornography – Section 163

It was Section 163 that Robin Sharpe challenged on constitutional violation of Charter rights to freedom of expression. It is also this section that would allow for the liability and criminal prosecution of Internet service providers in the distribution of pornographic materials.

Omnibus Bill C-15

In March 2001, Canadian Justice Minister Anne McLellan introduced a Bill containing recommendations for amendments to the Criminal Code of Canada. This Bill, Omnibus Bill C-15, attempts to better protect children from sexual exploitation by:

Creating a new offence that targets criminals who use the Internet to lure and exploit children for sexual purposes;

- Making it a crime to transmit, make available, export and intentionally access child pornography on the Internet;

- Allowing judges to order the deletion of child pornography posted on computer systems in Canada;
- Allowing judges to order the forfeiture of any materials or equipment used in the commission of a child pornography offence;
- Making prohibition orders, long-term offender designations and one-year peace bonds available for offences relating to child pornography and the Internet; and
- Amending the child sex tourism law enacted in 1997.

Omnibus Bill C-15 has passed the first reading and is not yet enacted, however public support for these amendments has been very high and it is expected the Bill will be passed.

Canadian Radio and Television Commission

The Canadian Radio and Television Commission (CRTC) has, until recently, been in charge of regulating the broadcast of information within Canada. Discussions about the appropriateness of

the CRTC regulating the Internet, which is and isn't technically a broadcast medium, has revealed that this regulatory body is not prepared to make rulings regarding the Internet.

Law Enforcement

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) Missing Children Section, Canada Customs and Revenue Service, as well as investigators from municipal police forces across the country, work with the Interpol Specialist Group on Crimes Against Children. This group, with members from thirty countries, meets semi-annually to discuss investigations of child pornography, smuggling, and abduction.

The G-8 is an international group which represents eight world 'superpowers' and sponsors two groups: the G-8 Expert Group on Trans-national Organized Crime, and the G-8 Lyon Sub-Group on High Technology Crime. Members of the RCMP, the Solicitor General of Canada, the Canadian Department of Justice,

Canada Customs and Revenue, the Organized Crime Agency and the Vancouver City Police Department, all represent Canada at these meetings. The two G-8 groups examine how international law enforcement agencies work together regarding Internet investigations.

In British Columbia, the Organized Crime Agency (OCA) and the Vancouver City Police Department, have taken a lead role in developing expertise in the investigation of Internet luring and child pornography offences. Members of OCA liaise with Interpol and receiving and exchanging information from other federal bodies.

Canadian Studies and Policies

While the Internet is a relatively new medium, the Canadian government has been actively investigating this issue for some time. The most recent publication from Ottawa is *Illegal and Offensive Content on the Internet: The Canadian Strategy to Promote Safe, Wise, and Responsible Internet Use*. This report was created in consultation with representatives from Canada Customs and Revenue, Canada Heritage, the Criminal Intelligence Service of Canada, the Department of Justice, Health Canada, Human Resources Development Canada, Industry Canada, the National Crime Prevention Centre, the RCMP, and the Solicitor General of Canada.

Illegal and Offensive Content on the Internet outlines Canada's progress to date in encouraging a progressive development of Internet usage within schools and community settings. The report states that as of March 30, 1999 Canada became the first country in the world to connect 100% of its schools and public libraries to the Internet, compared to 0% in 1994. The report also makes a sharp differentiation between illegal and

offensive content. The report defines "offensive" content as that which is legal and may include sexually explicit material, graphic violence or pictures of corpses. It further stipulates that the control of illegal material is the realm of law enforcement, while control of offensive material is in the realm of public policy. It recommends that public policy embrace approaches such as "empowering users, educating consumers to make informed choices, and establishing responsible industry practices".

The Federal Government's approach to the issue is summarized in the report as intending to:

- Support initiatives that educate and empower users;
- Promote effective industry self-regulation;
- Strengthen the enforcement of laws in cyberspace;
- Implement hotlines and complaint reporting systems; and
- Foster consultation between private and public sectors, and their counterparts in other countries.

Internet Aware Organizations

Media Awareness Network (MNet)

MNet is a non-government, non-profit Canadian organization that supports media education in Canadian homes, schools, and communities. MNet's Web Awareness is an Internet education

program, endorsed and funded by many participants in the Internet industry. Environics Research Group conducted Media Awareness Network's survey called *Canada's Children In A Wired World: The Parents' View*, in March 2000.

They polled 1,080 randomly selected Canadian families who owned a home computer and had children between the ages of 6 and 16. This report illustrates some of the discrepancies between what

parents believe their children are doing online and what children actually report they are doing. Evidence within this report indicates that parents are not always aware of what children are doing.

“For example, focus groups carried out in August 2000 suggest that some children are carrying out activities on the Internet – sometimes of a risky nature – of which their parents are unaware.”

Some other bodies that attempt to educate and empower users of the Internet include:

SchoolNet National Advisory Board - The SchoolNet National Advisory Board has produced a brochure to assist educators who have Internet in their classrooms.

Community Learning Networks

Initiative of HRDC - This network supports community-controlled, Internet-based networks, which are aimed at furthering social and economic development.

Internet Safety Portal - Established by the Canadian Association of Internet Providers, the Internet Safety Portal service provides information on dealing with online hate propaganda, addressing consumer issues and bringing awareness of the use of the Internet to lure children to the public.

“MISSING” - This educational kit teaches children how to surf the Internet safely. The kit has been distributed to 10,000 schools and libraries throughout Canada and includes a computer game, a video, a web site address and guides for parents and teachers on keeping children safe online.

Safeco Insurance Companies - Safeco Insurance has produced a video titled “Caught in the Web” which teaches kid-safe guidelines such as being careful around strangers, never giving out personal information, never arranging fact-to-face meeting with anyone met online, and encouraging a child’s self-awareness of anything on the computer making them feel anxious or scared, and more. This is an excellent video for young children, teenagers and parents.

Canadian Association of Internet Providers

Internet Service Providers (ISPs) provide the interface between users and the Internet. Cooperation between ISPs and law enforcement become critical when attempting to track down predators.

The Canadian Association of Internet Providers (CAIP) represents 80% of Internet provision in Canada and has developed Voluntary Codes of Conduct for its’ members.

These Codes set out provisions for resolving complaints as well as stipulating expectations about how ISPs cooperate with law enforcement, both nationally and internationally.

will expand the scope of the Code and educate CAIP members about how to put self-regulatory measures into day-to-day practice.

CAIP and Industry Canada have undertaken a Fair Practices Initiative that

Industry Canada

Industry Canada has also released a study called, Content Filtering Technologies and Internet Service Providers: Enabling User Choice that looks at technologies that ISPs can put in place and users can access, such as child-friendly search engines and web sites, ISP-based filtering services, and Web content labeling systems.

Internet to not be conducive to traditional forms of content controls like other broadcast media. The global nature of the Internet make it hard to control the content on it expensive, ineffective, easily circumvented and detrimental to the performance of the network. The study concludes that self-regulation by the industry represents the most feasible approach to dealing with inappropriate Internet content.

Another Industry Canada report found the

The Canadian Library Association

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issues related to the provision of Internet services in public libraries.”

The Canadian Library Association (CLA) has historically been very concerned with protecting the free flow of information, and with libraries offering points of entry onto the Internet, some concerns have arisen.

Net Safe/Net Smart - Managing and Communicating about the Internet in the Library is a publication by the CLA that examines ethical and legal issues surrounding the use of the Internet. This publication furthers the aim of the CLA to “play a public leadership role, within the Associations’ agreed principles on the

Net Safe/Net Smart - Managing and Communicating about the Internet in the Library is a publication by the CLA that examines ethical and legal issues surrounding the use of the Internet.

These principles include the blanket acceptance of the following documents as part of their codes of conduct; the Criminal Code of Canada, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), and the UN Conventions on the Rights of the Child.

The issue of Internet access in libraries is complex. Opportunities for individuals to

misuse this public service are many and varied and there are instances of library computers being used for criminal activities such as harassment and luring.

Concerns about children's access to pornographic material in library settings as well as how to protect librarians from being exposed to offensive material (and therefore being sexually harassed in their workplace), are far from resolved.



Research

Various scholarly and research perspectives concerning child victimization in cyberspace have been published. Significant studies such as "Online Victimization: A Report on the Nation's Youth," reveals alarming statistics about the prevalence of sexual solicitation and harassment of children online. The contributions from the International Association of Prosecutors and the insights from the IPSO-Read Report on Internet Usage, emphasize the necessity for global cooperation and consistent legal standards to effectively combat online child exploitation.

Online Victimization: A Report on the Nation's Youth

This report, published by the American-based organization, Crimes Against Children Research Centre, surveyed 1,501 youth between the ages of 10-17. Youth were interviewed by phone with the permission of their parents and the study provided the results regarding the online victimization of children.

When asked about their experiences with Internet sexual solicitation, harassment and exposure to unwanted sexual material, the youth provided the following responses:

- One in five received a sexual solicitation or approach over the Internet in the last year.
- One in thirty-three received aggressive sexual solicitation; a solicitor who asked to meet them somewhere, called them on the telephone, or sent them regular mail, money or gifts.
- One in four had unwanted exposure to pictures of naked people having sex.
- One in seventeen was threatened or harassed.

The survey suggests that youth encounter a substantial number of offensive

episodes, some of which are distressing and most of which are unreported.

International Association of Prosecutors

The International Association of Prosecutors published a report summarizing 14 recommendations on how best to support law enforcement efforts to curb child sexual exploitation on the Internet. The primary concern expressed by the report was the need for international cooperation between law enforcement agencies.

Recommendations presented include: the need for consistent definitions of 'pornography'; the need for ISP's to cooperate and proactively support the prosecution of individuals who break the law and; the need for cooperation

between ISP's, law enforcement bodies and international groups.

There exist very few prosecutors trained or designated specifically to address the issue of online victimization of children. Individual prosecutors are reluctant to take on cases due to the necessity of viewing large volumes of child pornography during the course of preparing a prosecution case. The effects of viewing this kind of material are often vicariously traumatic and have long lasting impacts on individual prosecutors' emotional lives.

IPSO-Read Report on Internet Usage

Released in March of 2000, the IPSO-Read Report on Internet Usage is a comprehensive report based on a total of 28,374 interviews in 30 countries. It is the most exhaustive database ever collected on the use and emergence of the Internet internationally.

Of particular importance with regard to the sexual exploitation of children is the finding that of Canadian children who regularly use the Internet, 23% have had face-to-face meetings with people they met online.

The Copine Project -The Nature and Dimensions of Child Pornography on the Internet

The Copine Project report is a review of the nature and dimensions of child pornography on the Internet. This report looks at relevant features of the Internet and includes a brief consideration of child

pornography and adult sexual interest in children. It is a helpful document when attempting to understand the nature and context in which child pornography has developed.



Conclusion

Communities must actively translate international and national child protection laws into local actions that make a real difference. By embedding children's rights into daily practices and internet use policies, we can ensure safer digital spaces for our youngest users. Let's embrace this opportunity to unite community efforts, safeguard children effectively, and shape a responsible online future.

This paper is an attempt to provide information for the process of policy development at a community level on child pornography. International and national legislation will remain far-off ideals unless communities specifically examine and utilize the content of these documents and implement them at a grass-roots level. The aims of protecting children and providing for their healthy development must be translated to relevant and usable principles that can inform people about how to cope and respond on a daily basis. It is hoped that the information in this report will assist community level professionals to make positive, well-informed choices about how the Internet will be used in places that children frequent.

Any process of development is best initiated on a solid foundation of current and relevant information. The Internet is a new medium that is here to stay. Only by consciously examining the medium, the risks, and by considering the suggestions on how to minimize these risks, can communities make the most of the amazing leap in communication the Internet promises.

Many of the documents summarized here are of a global nature because the Internet is a medium without geographical borders. If the global nature of the Internet discourages community-level participation then many of the voices that should be informing legislators and diplomats will be lost. Community involvement and a children's rights perspective are both needed to ensure children's safety and to create Internet policy that is usable.

I encourage all to embrace this challenge. It is a process that will set the direction for Internet use for decades to come.





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SafeOnline offers educational workshops, webinars and presentations to children, youth, schools, law enforcement and social service organizations. For more details, or contract information see the website linked to the logo above.



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