NCVPP

National Centre for Violence Against Women & Girls and Public Protection

2024 National Analysis of Police-Recorded CSAE crimes report

December 2025

College of Policing

NPCC National Police Chiefs' Council

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Foreword

This year, as I take on the responsibilities of Acting Chief Constable, I remain honoured to serve as the NPCC lead for Child Protection and Abuse Investigation (CPAI). Our shared mission to prevent child sexual abuse and exploitation (CSAE) and protect children from harm is unwavering. At the heart of this work are the victims and survivors whose voices must continue to guide every action. Behind every offence is a child who has been harmed, and we never lose sight of that.

Alongside the 2024 National Analysis of Police-Recorded CSAE Crimes report which provides the national picture of all CSAE offences recorded by the 44 police forces in England and Wales is the Group-Based Offending Report, which draws on the Complex and Organised Child Abuse Database (COCAD) to examine the most serious, complex, and organised forms of multi-offender abuse. Although these reports stand separately, together they offer both the breadth and depth needed to understand the full landscape of CSAE and to strengthen the collective safeguarding response across policing and our wider partners.

In 2024, police forces recorded around 123,000 CSAE offences a 6% rise on the previous period. Increased reporting can represent greater confidence in policing, but it also reflects the persistent and significant harm children continue to face. Over a quarter of offences occurred within the family environment. This reinforces the need for high-quality data on ethnicity, context, and outcomes, so that safeguarding responses are informed, consistent, and evidence based. At least 42% of offences had an online element, highlighting the growing role of technology in enabling and escalating abuse.

Children may also sometimes engage in behaviours that place themselves or others at risk. Sometimes they are unaware of the risks these behaviours pose and may engage in actions that could be potentially harmful, requiring supportive intervention and careful specialist guidance. Around 40% of CSAE committed by children involved the creation or sharing of indecent images. These situations require responses that are child-centred, proportionate, and grounded in safeguarding ensuring that children receive support, guidance, and intervention rather than blame.

CSAE remains one of the most complex areas of public protection, demanding specialist knowledge, sustained focus, and close collaboration. Every day, I see the professionalism and dedication of officers, staff, and partners who work tirelessly to safeguard children and confront those who cause harm. Yet we know our system must continue to evolve. The establishment of the National Centre for Violence Against Women and Girls and Public Protection (NCVPP) represents an important step towards greater national consistency and capability, ensuring vulnerable children and adults receive the protection they need.

As we confront the realities of the harm children experience much of which remains hidden, we must not look away. Our duty extends to children living with risk today, to survivors who continue to feel the impact of abuse, and to those who may be vulnerable in the future. By listening to their voices, working together, and holding ourselves to the highest standards, we can build a system that responds effectively to harm and supports children at every step toward safety.

A/CC Rebecca Riggs; NPCC lead for Child Abuse Protection and Investigation

About the VKPP & our work in the NCVPP

DAC Helen Millichap KPM
NCVPP Director

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 improving partnership responses.

The VKPP joined the College of Policing in April 2024 and is now part of the recently formed National Centre for VAWG and Public Protection (NCVPP), funded by the Home Office.

The NCVPP is a partnership between the College of Policing and the NPCC. It brings together three national policing programmes: the VKPP, Operation Soteria and the VAWG Taskforce to provide harmonious support to forces to help them continue to tackle the threat of VAWG and Public Protection.

The NCVPP aims to:

- Improve police response, investigation and safeguarding for VAWG and PP offences.
- Standardise and elevate frontline practice across forces through evidence-based guidance, training and accreditation.
- Build, and integrate data, research and evaluation to drive continuous improvement.
- Strengthen multi agency coordination (health, LAs, CPS, probation, specialist sector).
- Restore public confidence through transparency, oversight and victim and survivor centred practice.
- Simplify a cluttered landscape and make it clear to officers and staff where their focus needs to be.

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 new National Vulnerability Strategy
- 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 deaths related to domestic abuse.

The analysis in this report has been delivered through a Home Office policing grant. The grant funds a regional network of CSAE analysts, who are coordinated centrally through the VKPP and work alongside A/CC Rebecca Riggs, the NPCC Child Protection and Abuse Investigation (CPAI) lead. The VKPP also operate 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 Vulnerability Knowledge and Practice Programme (VKPP)

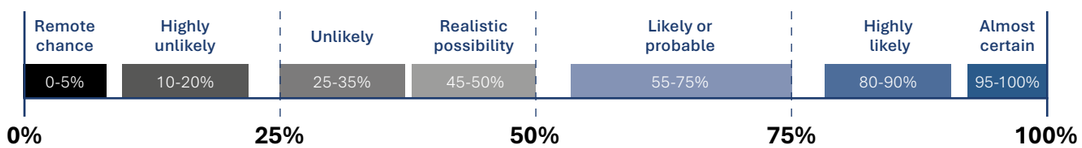
Introduction

This third annual assessment of police-recorded child sexual abuse and exploitation (CSAE) crimes builds on the comprehensive baselines reported in the National Analysis of Police-Recorded CSAE Crimes Report 2023 & National Analysis of Police-Recorded CSAE Crimes Report 2022. This continues to be the most detailed nationally available insight across the breadth of CSAE harms reported to policing. This report focuses on providing an update on the scale and nature of the CSAE threat, based on police recorded crimes in 2024, recognising that CSAE is still heavily underreported.

Since our last publication in March 2025, Baroness Casey published her audit of group based CSAE outlining systemic failures relating to the identification and response to group-based CSAE. This included concerns focusing on the recording and collection of data, specifically focusing on identifying the scale of group-based CSAE but more broadly the recording of data on protected characteristics such as ethnicity. The data collected for this report, precedes Baroness Casey's audit, however, concerns raised by Baroness Casey regarding the presentation of protected characteristic data have been taken on board and implemented within this report. This report takes a broader view of CSAE, than group-based and allows an understanding of the threat according to police recorded crimes across abuse in a family environment, child on child and online CSAE. Insight on group based contact CSAE is provided by the Hydrant Programme, in summary form in this report, more detailed insights on group based can be found within the Group - Based offending publication by the CSE taskforce.

Policing continues to implement processes which improve our understanding of the threat of CSAE to children. This includes improvements in data collection nationally, informed by better recording of data at a local, force level. In particular, the NCVPP are working closely with police forces to develop a mechanism to improve data quality for CSAE and VAWG crimes, focusing on improving the quality of protected characteristics data for victims and perpetrators.

It is not always possible to give a definitive picture of how a threat is developing, particularly given the known limitations on the reporting levels and quality of policing data. Assessments of threat are made based on analysis of multiple sources of information. Where assessments have been provided the 'probability yardstick' (as defined by the Professional Head of Intelligence Assessment) has been used to ensure consistency in how we convey the certainty associated with our assessments.



This report provides analysis based on police-recorded CSAE crimes from all 43 territorial police forces in England and Wales, as well as the British Transport Police. The analysis is based on CSAE reports that have met the threshold for a crime to be recorded by police between 1st January and 31st December 2024. This includes reports made to police of incidents which meet the legal threshold of a crime but may include instances of developmentally typical behaviour between children, which result in a non-criminal justice outcome.

It is recognised that this report will not capture the full scale of threat to children. This is because CSAE remains largely unreported and unidentified, with harms to children taking place across a range of settings. The Centre of Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse estimate at least one in 10 children in England and Wales are sexually abused before the age of 16 and the Crime Survey for England and Wales 2024 estimate 9.1% of people aged 18 years or over experienced sexual abuse before the age of 18.

However, this report aims to provide a comprehensive picture on police recorded CSAE, broken down across the following:

- Overview of scale and nature of CSAE
- Child on child
- CSAE in familial contexts
- CSAE in the online space
- Summary of group-based contact CSAE – based on CSE taskforce publication

This analysis complements the Group - Based offending publication by the CSE taskforce by providing a broader national context to the detailed examination of complex, organised CSAE cases each illuminating a different but critical part of the threat landscape. The national analysis sets out the full breadth of CSAE recorded by policing across England and Wales, evidencing the scale, patterns, and emerging risks across all contexts, while the group-based offending report offers a deeper examination of the most complex and organised multi-offender cases of contact CSAE recorded by policing. Crucially, the group-based findings reflect data from before the government-commissioned National Audit led by Baroness Casey and the significant reforms announced in early 2025, meaning they provide a vital baseline from which progress can be measured. Viewed together, these reports demonstrate both the volume of harm experienced by children and the unique challenges presented by organised networks that span familial, peer, institutional and other complex contexts. This combined perspective strengthens the shared understanding across policing, statutory agencies and partners, reinforces the need for a coordinated whole-system response, and ensures that the needs and voices of victims and survivors remain central to safeguarding and operational improvement efforts.

Summary

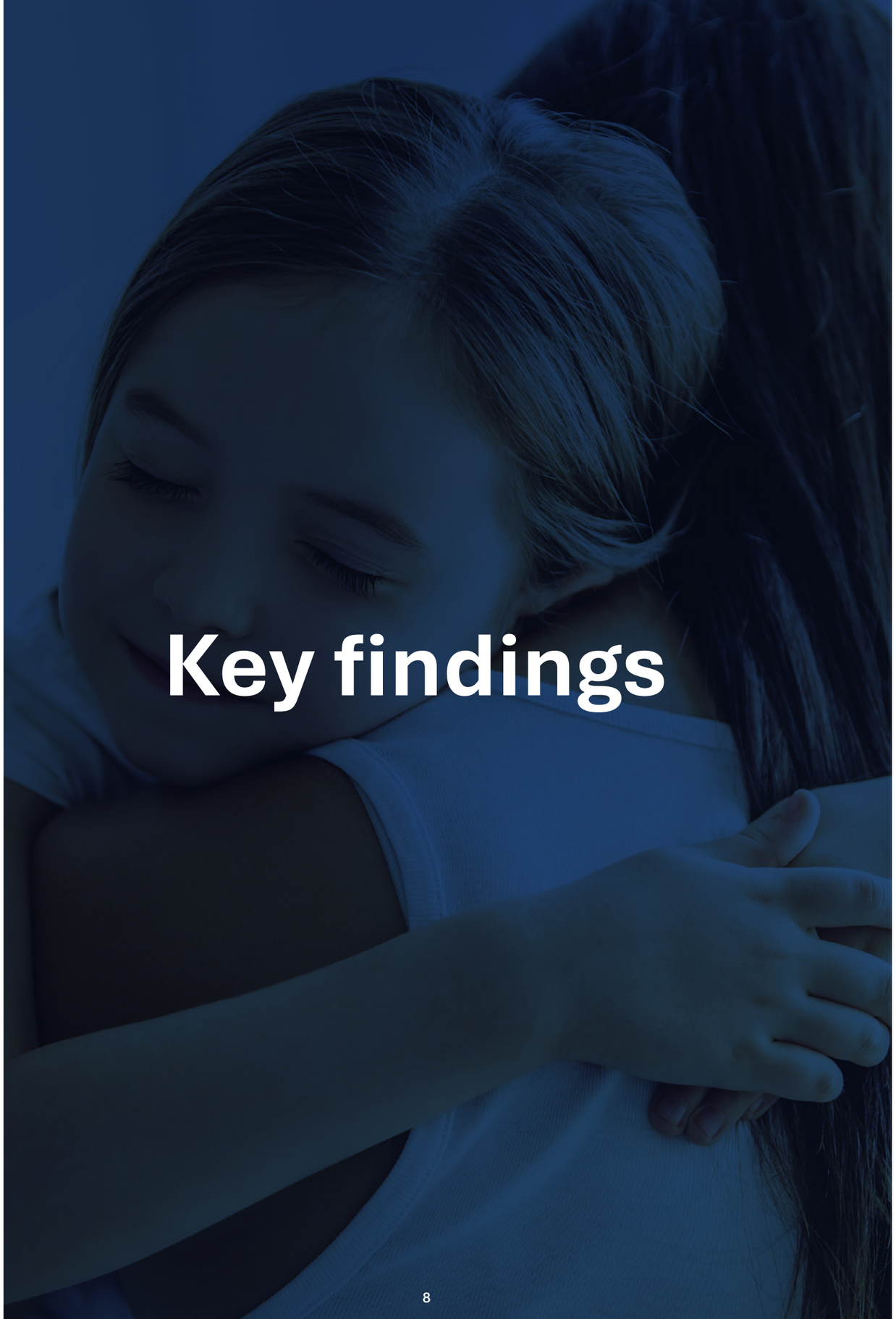
The scale of reported crime and associated known threat of CSAE toward children and young people continues to increase, with notable growth in non-contact offences, whilst the nature of offending remains broadly consistent. However, the data in this report still only represents a fraction of the sexual abuse experienced by children each year.

Our analysis shows an increase in the recording of online CSAE offences. Contact offences still account for almost around two-thirds of recorded CSAE offences, although there is a slight reduction in the proportion of these offences as the volume of reported non-contact offences is growing at a much greater rate than contact offences. It is likely that this increase in reporting will continue with greater awareness of online CSAE, increased identification of online harms and increased reporting from the industry and tech platforms. The continuous evolution of technology presents increased opportunities for online sexual offending and harm to children, including the extortion of children for sexual and financial gain.

Child on child continues to account for half of all CSAE offences where age is known. Self-generated indecent imagery (SGII) remains a driving factor for the volume of indecent imagery of children (IIOC) offences between children. It is recognised that these will represent a spectrum of harms ranging from developmentally typical behaviour between children to more harmful, aggravated offending.

The proportion of group-based contact CSAE remains consistent compared to that seen in 2023, with data indicating that abuse in a familial environment and between children drives over half of this form of offending.

There continues to be some gaps in our knowledge of the scale and threat of CSAE. This provides opportunities to work across the wider policing and statutory partner system and with charities to address these gaps which will in turn improve our collective response and protection of children. This report should be used to drive the conversation to improve the identification and of the range of harms inflicted on children.



Key findings

Key findings

Scale & Nature

- 122,768 CSAE offences were recorded in 2024, a 6% (n = 7,279) increase from 2023.
- Contact offences accounted for 65% (n = 79,222) of all offences.
- Non-contact offences are growing more quickly than contact CSAE. A 17% (n = 6,381) year-on-year increase of non-contact sexual offences led to a three-percentage point increase in the proportion of non-contact offences (35%, n = 43,546) compared to that seen in 2023.
- IIOC offences have become the most prevalent offence type accounting for 29% of all CSAE (n = 35,388).
- 44% (n = 47,913) of records had a perpetrator-victim relationship recorded, where a relationship was recorded, 83% of victims knew their abuser (n = 39,751), with contact offences more likely to involve a known perpetrator (87%, n = 33,993), compared to non-contact offences (65%, n = 5,758).

Victim & Perpetrator profile

- CSAE remains a heavily gendered crime. Sex was recorded for 74% (n = 83,163) of victim records and 63% (n = 81,846) of perpetrator records. Where the sex was recorded, 78% (n = 64,491) of CSAE victims were female, and 82% (n = 67,350) of perpetrators were male.
- Where sex was recorded, females continue to account for a higher proportion of perpetrators for non-contact offences than they do for contact offences, though this proportion has decreased to 29% (n = 8,674) from 33% in 2023.
- Age was recorded for 75% (n = 83,624) of victim records and 63% (n = 81,659) of perpetrator records. Where the age was recorded, the most common age group for victims (29%, n = 24,240) and perpetrators (20%, n = 15,641) continued to be 14 to 15 years old.
- The crimes of 'Abuse of Children through Sexual Exploitation', Abuse of a Position of Trust of a Sexual Nature' & 'Sexual Activity with a Person with a Mental Disorder' offences, although fewer in number, all had older profiles for both victims and perpetrators, indicating circumstances where adult perpetrators take advantage of an imbalance of power and opportunities to build a relationship with the child.
- Self-defined Ethnicity was recorded for 34% (n = 38,015) of victim records and 34% (n = 44,396) of perpetrators. There are multiple factors which impact recording of protected characteristic data such as ethnicity and therefore affect our ability to make a confident assessment of the communities most impacted by CSAE, alongside the backgrounds of perpetrators.

Child on child

- Age was recorded for 63% of perpetrators, where recorded, 50% (n = 40,824 of 81,659) of perpetrators were children aged 10-17 years old.
- The proportion of reported IIOC offences committed by children has decreased from 71% (n = 16,067) in 2023 to 64% (n = 16,330) in 2024, it is almost certain this is partly due to changes in how children involved in non-aggravated self-generated indecent imagery are recorded on police systems.

Familial CSAE

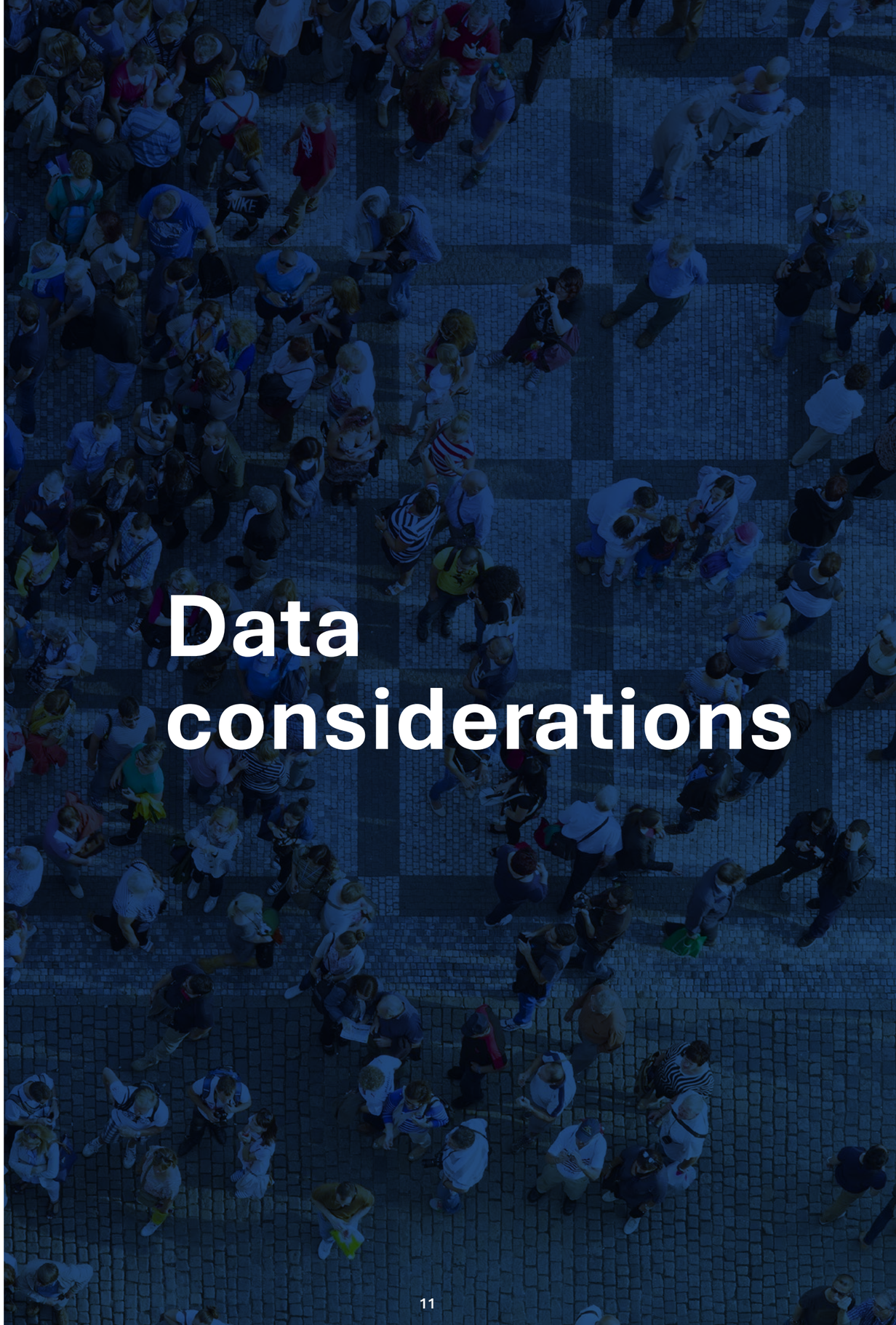
- Where a relationship was known, 26% (n = 12,435) of relationships are recorded as familial CSAE. Accounting for changes to relationships categories included within familial, the proportion of CSAE in the family remain broadly consistent with 2023. These changes are explained further within CSAE in the family.
- Within the family environment, parents are the most common perpetrators (36%, n=4,479) followed by siblings (23%, n=2,871).

Online

- CSAE with an online footprint increased by 26% in 2024, and accounts for at least 42% (n = 51,672) of all offences, up from 35% (n = 40,875) in 2023, highlighting the growing role of digital environments in facilitating abuse.
- Snapchat (54%, n = 11,912), WhatsApp (8%, n = 1,870) and Instagram (8%, n = 1,705) were the top three platforms identified through crime summaries, 34% of victims associated with these platforms were aged aged12–13-year-old, (n = 2,464), 24% of perpetrators associated with these platforms were aged 14-15 (n = 2,000).
- There are challenges with accurately identifying the scale of recorded sexual or financially motivated extortion of children offences. Based on the estimated prevalence of sexual and financially motivated sexual extortion (FMSE) offences, a possible increase was identified in the last quarter of 2024, compared to the preceding quarter.

Group based

- Group-based contact offending accounts for 3.6% of all CSAE crimes recorded in 2024 (n = 4,450).
- Familial is the most common context for group-based contact CSA (32%, n = 1,419), there is a higher proportion of familial CSAE that is group-based compared to the broader CSAE dataset 26%).
- Child on child is the second most common form of group-based contact CSAE (24%, n = 1,088), this has increased by 7 percentage points compared to 2023.



Data considerations

Data considerations

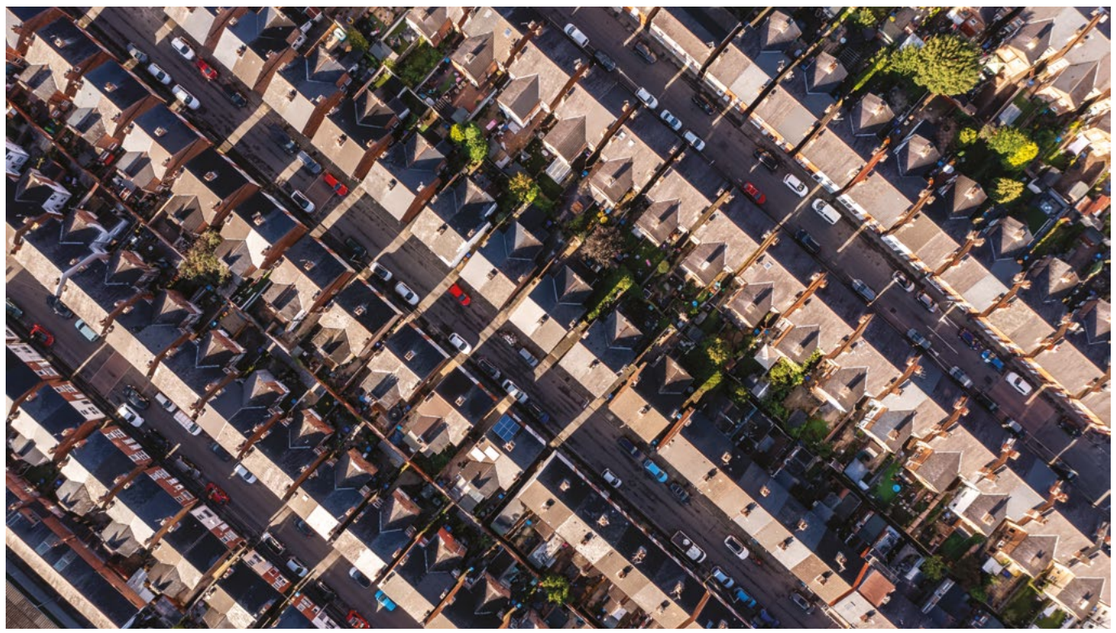
Data is submitted by each force on a quarterly basis and relates to information recorded within a crime at a moment in time. Due to the complex nature of CSAE, many offences were still under investigation at the time of collection and further detail may be disclosed or recorded which could affect the classification, crime details, personal details and/or outcome of an offence.

Police forces do not all use the same recording systems and/or categories. To enable analysis, data is cleansed and standardised, i.e. relationships or location types may be grouped. Lastly, police record the principal crime (the offence with the highest custodial sentence), this is particularly relevant as disclosures may include multiple forms of abuse.

Relationships

Recording rates for relationships and proportion of known perpetrators should be treated with caution as it is a realistic possibility that 'stranger' or unknown/not-recorded values could be interchangeable depending on force recording practices. Due to data quality, relationship data from 10,394 records were excluded from analysis on perpetrator-victim relationships.

From 2025, an agreed national definition of familial relationships was adopted by all partners that utilise the same police-recorded CSAE crime data including: CSE Taskforce, NCA and NCVPP. The definition adopted is the Children's Commissioners model; relationships within the definition of 'child sexual abuse in the family environment'. The most notable change from previous reporting is that a 'friend' is now considered outside of the family, comparisons have been provided based on categories that remained in scope of familial.



Data on sex, ethnicity and age

The overall totals of crimes will not align with the number of recorded victims and perpetrators as some offences involve multiple victims or perpetrators, whilst other offences are recorded against the crown (see below). Furthermore, there may be gaps in data across both victims and perpetrators due to a number of factors, including:

- Third party reporting; many CSAE offences are reported by professionals or family members, the details of the victim or perpetrator may not be known or provided by the reporting party.
- Reluctance to disclose details of the perpetrator by the victim due to fear of reprisals or other barriers to disclosure.
- Unknown, unidentified or unlocated perpetrator, particularly common with online offences.
- Biographical data not being disclosed or obtained, at the point a crime was recorded, particularly for self-defined ethnicity (SDE) which relies on the person (victim or perpetrator) disclosing their ethnicity. This may be for reasons including the person being too ill or deceased at the time of recording, SDE not being requested by the reporting officer or where the person refuses to disclose SDE.
- The data included in this analysis was captured within a three-month period of the crime being recorded. CSAE investigations are complex by their very nature and can take a long period of time to conclude. In 2015/16, the median length of a CSA investigation was approximately eight months. Additional details for a victim or perpetrator may be recorded after the capture of data, used in this analysis.

There are much lower completion rates for non-contact offences for victims; age, sex and self-defined ethnicity, as well as for perpetrator - victim relationships.

Crimes against the Crown

Almost 10% (n = 12,357) of offences in 2024 were recorded as crown offences, these are offences where the victim is recorded as the state rather than a specific identified victim.

The majority of non-contact offences relate to IIOC offences, and it is a realistic possibility that many of these offences may be crimes against the crown, though the victim has not explicitly recorded as 'crown'. This lower proportion of data recorded for non-contact offences negatively impacts on the completeness of victim and relationship data. Crown offences are excluded from analysis on victim demographics and perpetrator–victim relationships.

Supplementary insight

Key themes have also been extracted from reviewing available police force problem profiles (43), which are force level assessments into the nature of the CSAE threat. Police force problem profiles vary in contents and datasets included. As such the national dataset is used for reporting the national scale of CSAE, but insights from local assessments are used to add additional, contextual insight into the nature of the threat. Problem profiles on CSE were mandated by the HMICFRS in 2023.

This report also includes insight from the Group-based offending publication by the CSE taskforce.

Overview of CSAE

Overview of CSAE

Scale and nature of CSAE offences

A total of 122,768 CSAE offences were recorded in 2024, an increase from 2023 (6%). Of these:

- 65% (n = 79,222) related to contact offences, in 2023 this was 68% (n = 78,224)
- 35% (n = 43,546) were non-contact offences, in 2023 this was 32% (n = 37,265).

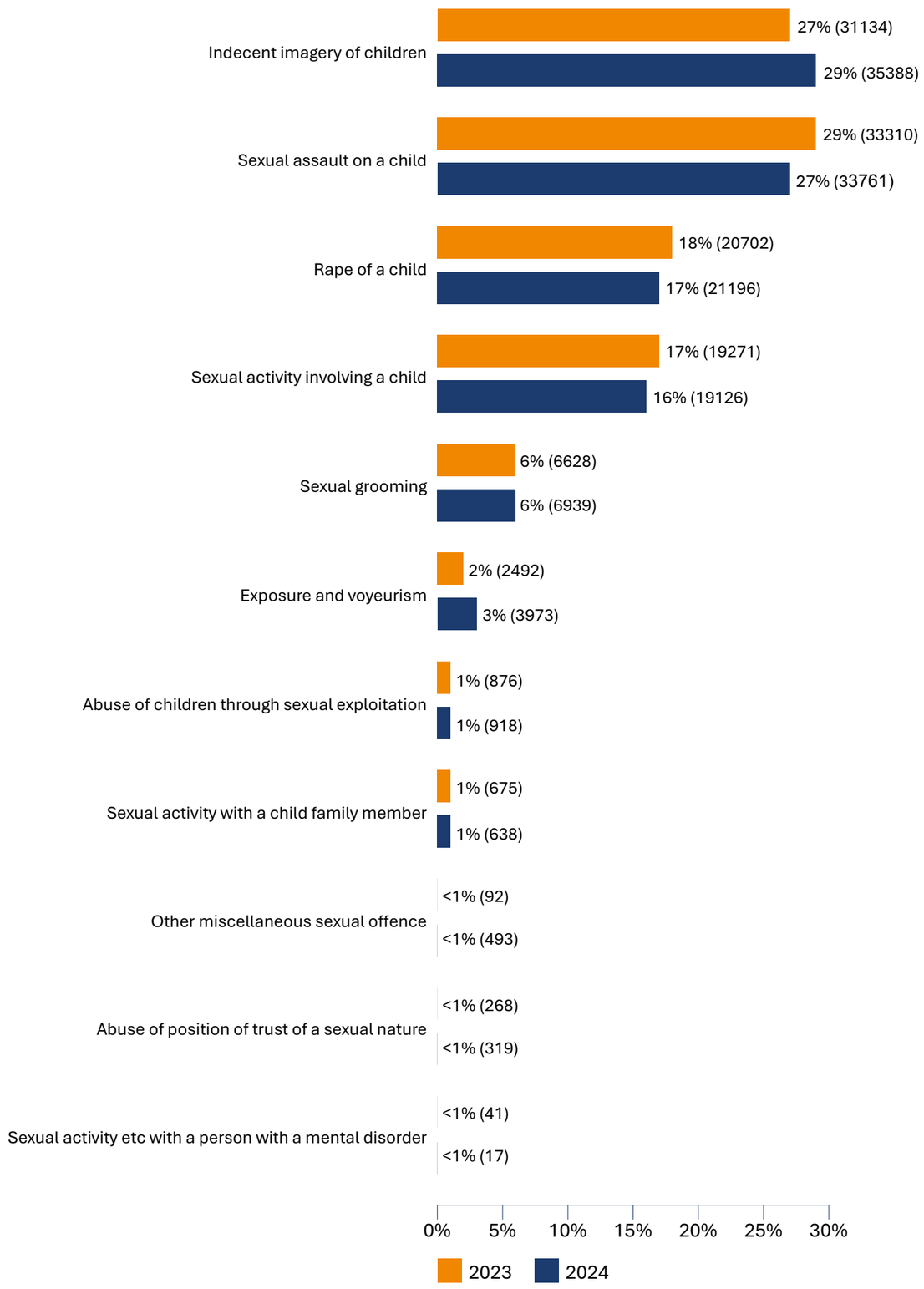
The proportion of non-contact offences increased by three percentage points in 2024, this equated to a 17% (n = 6,381) increase in non-contact offences since 2023. IIOC offences alone increased by 14% (n = 4,254) compared to last year. It is likely greater societal awareness; identification of online harms and increased industry reporting are contributing factors. Although, at present it is not known when or how many platforms will start reporting online CSAE following the introduction of the Online Safety Act, EU Digital Services Act and US REPORT ACT. Nonetheless, the evolution of technology combined with the access and time children spend online, facilitate the opportunity and risk of online sexual harms towards children.

The overall distribution of offence types remains broadly consistent with previous reporting, however IIOC offences have become the most prevalent offence type accounting for 29% of all CSAE (n = 35,388).

Quick Stat

Non contact offences increased by 17% compared to that recorded in 2023.

Figure 1: 2023/2024 Comparison of CSAE offences by offence type



Reporting timelines, seasonality and relationship types

In line with findings reported in 2023:

- Seasonality continues to impact reporting with higher volumes of CSAE being recorded during school term time and volumes decreasing during school holidays.

Reporting of CSAE offences by third parties (parents, teachers and social workers) is a common theme in police force problem profiles. This reflects the seasonality and reduction in offences reported during school holidays and the important role education and safeguarding professionals have in the identification and reporting of harms to children.

- Almost 4 out of 5 (78%, n = 93,076) offences were categorised as recent (recorded within 12 months of the offences occurring).
- 84% (n = 22,086) of non-recent offences were contact offences that were reported on average 17 years after the offence was committed. This remains consistent to that reported against crimes recorded in 2023.

Factors which impact the time taken to report offences, particularly contact offences, include but are not limited to:

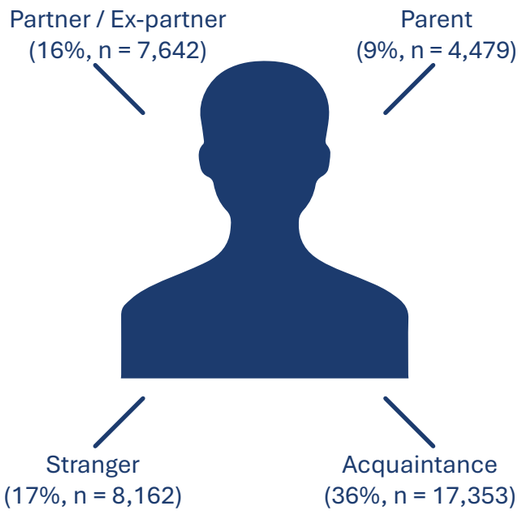
- Psychological trauma: Victims of CSAE can experience long-term emotional and psychological distress, resulting in suppression of abuse and fear of disclosure.
- Power dynamics: Many offences involve manipulation, coercion and grooming and a high proportion are perpetrated by a trusted individual(s). This highly likely results in victims fearing the consequences of disclosure or not initially recognising the abuse.
- Social and cultural barriers: Cultural taboos, fear of not being believed, trust and confidence in police and concerns about disrupting family or community relationships can be barriers to reporting.

44%, (n = 47,913) of records had a perpetrator-victim relationship recorded. A higher proportion of crime records had a relationship recorded for contact offences (51%, n = 39,072) than non-contact offences 29% (n = 8,841). It is likely that the anonymous nature of online offending contributes to the lower proportion of recorded relationships, which may also be exacerbated by the data captured in this report being reflective of a point in time, with the possibility that some reports may have a relationship recorded after the point of data capture.

Where recorded, in 83% (n = 39,751) of cases the victim knew their abuser, this increases to 87% (n = 33,993) for contact offences and was 65% (n = 5,758) for non-contact offences. As highlighted above, it is highly likely the proportion of known perpetrators for online offences is lower due to the anonymity associated with online offending.

Recording rates for relationships and proportion of known perpetrators should be treated with caution as it is a realistic possibility that 'stranger' or unknown/not-recorded values could be interchangeable depending on force recording practices.

The most common relationships recorded were:



Locations of CSAE offences

Location data on police recorded CSAE offences is inconsistently captured. Completeness of location data are low and not standardised, impacting the ability to provide an accurate assessment of locations for national analysis.

Local force problem profiles have allowed a deeper dive and more accurate understanding of the places in which CSAE takes place. In 2025, police forces have highlighted that easily accessible public spaces, such as shopping centres, parks or transport hubs often facilitate initial contact, though some of these offences often take place at a secondary location, particularly for contact offences.

Problem profiles have also identified cash-based business such as takeaways and vape shops as areas of concern for the exploitation of children, including CSAE. Concerns revolve around the grooming of children with gifts, alcohol, drugs and/or vapes at these locations. NCA led Operation Machinize was launched in 2025 in response to growing concerns that these types of premises are utilised for broader organised criminality and money laundering, law enforcement activity should improve the identification and prevention of vulnerabilities these locations offer for wider criminality and exploitation.

Where geographical analysis of offences was conducted by police forces, hotspots correspond with areas identified as high deprivation areas, this was applicable to both victims and perpetrators of CSAE offences. The cost-of-living crisis and housing were both cited as factors that increase the risk to those most vulnerable. Barnado's; Invisible Children link financial hardship with increased risk to both sexual and criminal child exploitation.

Poverty itself should not be seen as the sole driver of CSAE due to complex intersectionality with other factors. The Children's Society - effects of poverty on children highlight psychosocial challenges within the family, social environments and access to opportunities, it is almost certain that these contribute to increased vulnerability for children to be exploited and abused.

Victim and Perpetrator Profiles

Victim & Perpetrator profiles

Victim and perpetrator demographic profiles were broadly consistent with those reported in 2023.

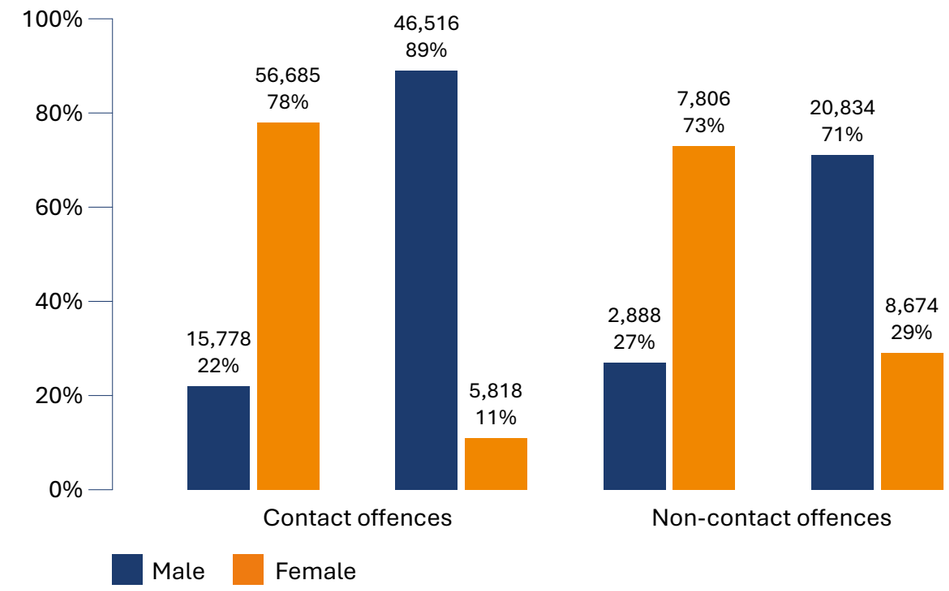
Sex

The victim's sex was recorded in 74% (n = 83,163) of records, however a much higher proportion of contact offences (92%, n = 72,467) had the victim's sex recorded than non-contact offences (33%, n = 10,694). Sex was unknown or not recorded in 26% (n = 28,468) of victim records.

The perpetrator's sex was recorded in 63% (n= 81,846) of records, with the same proportion of perpetrator sex recorded across both contact and non-contact offences. Sex was not recorded in 37% (n = 47,297) of perpetrator records.

- CSAE continues to be a gendered crime disproportionately impacting girls. Where sex was recorded, 78% (n= 64,491) of victims were female and 82% (n= 67,350) of perpetrators were male. When factoring in where sex was unknown or not recorded victims were still predominantly female and perpetrators male.
- There was a much higher proportion of female victims across most offence types, except 'Abuse of position of trust of a sexual nature'. Whilst these are small in number, males accounted for 43% (n = 133) of victims. The remaining 57% of victims within these types of offences were female.
- Non-contact offences had a higher proportion of male victims (27%, n = 2,888) compared to contact offences (22%, n = 15,778). The number of male victims of non-contact offences increased year-on-year increase by 5% (n = 149) from 2023. It is likely this increase is due to young males being specifically targeted by financially motivated sexual extortion (FMSE)For more detail see online section.
- Non-contact offences also had a higher proportion of female perpetrators (29%, n = 8,674) compared to contact offences (11%, n = 5,818). Female perpetrators of non-contact offences increased year-on-year by 7% (n = 605), though this was a proportionate decrease by four percentage points from 2023. It is likely this is result of the implementation of new policy, introduced in 2024, where a child involved in non-aggravated SGII offences is recorded as 'person involved', rather than a suspect.

Figure 2: Victim and perpetrator sex by contact and non-contact offences, where sex was recorded.



There were less than 10 cases of victims or perpetrators recorded as 'other sex'. It is highly likely there are significant barriers to reporting for children who identify as non-binary or transgender. Barriers include concerns around children being 'outed' if they disclose their abuse, as well as children coming to terms with their own sexuality, preventing them from speaking to someone about the abuse. Challenges with outdated crime recording systems also hamper the correct recording of children who identify as non-binary or transgender.

Age

Age was recorded in 75% (n = 83,624) of victim records, again there was a much higher proportion of records with age recorded for contact offences (92%, n = 72,886) than non-contact offences (33%, n = 10,738).

Age was recorded in 63% (n = 81,659) of perpetrator records, this was broadly consistent across contact and non-contact offences. Age was unknown or not recorded in 25% (n = 28,007) of victim records and 38% (n = 47,484) of perpetrator records.

- Where age was recorded, the most common age group for victims (29%, n=24,238) and perpetrators (20%, n = 15,641) continued to be 14-15 year-olds.
- Children aged between 12-15 years accounted for a higher proportion of victims in non-contact offences (65%, n = 7,034), compared to contact offences (49%, n = 36,045).
- A number of offence types had older profiles for both victims and perpetrators:
  - Victims of 'Abuse of Children through Sexual Exploitation' were most commonly 16-17 years old (42%, n = 238) and perpetrators were most commonly 18-29 years old (29%, n = 184).
  - The offence, 'Abuse of a Position of Trust of a Sexual Nature' victims were most commonly 16-17 years old (37%, n = 113) and perpetrators were most commonly 18-29 years old (37%, n = 94). This is likely to be due to perpetrators being in a position of trust being adults.
  - Sexual Activity with a Person with a Mental Disorder' victims were most commonly 16-17 years old (67%, n = 12) and perpetrators were most commonly 30-39 years old (31%, n = 4).

Although lower in number, it is highly likely that there are opportunities for perpetrators to exploit older children when there is increased independence from parents or caregivers and an imbalance of power between children and older perpetrators, or they are led to believe they are in a consensual relationship.

Self-defined Ethnicity

Self-defined Ethnicity was recorded in 34% (n = 38,015) and not recorded in 66% of victim (n = 73,616) records, though a higher proportion was recorded for contact offences (42%, n = 33,418) than non-contact offences (14%, n = 4,597).

Self-defined ethnicity was also recorded in 34% (n = 44,396) of perpetrator records, this was consistent across both contact and non-contact offences. This was broadly similar across contact and non-contact offences with 34% of perpetrators of contact offences having SDE recorded (n = 16,203) and 35% of contact offences (n = 28,193).

Self-defined Ethnicity was unknown or not recorded for a victim in 66% (n = 73,616) of victim records and in 66% (n = 84,747) of perpetrator records.

As outlined in the data considerations section, there are several factors which impact on the quality of data relating to ethnicity for both victims and perpetrators. Earlier in 2025, the serving Home Secretary, Yvette Cooper announced that policing would be required to mandate ethnicity and nationality data for CSAE. In time, this will have some impact in improving data quality where a perpetrator has been identified.

Data for self-defined ethnicity for both victims and perpetrators is presented in Tables 1 & 2 and has been developed to incorporate the findings from Dame Louise Casey's national audit of group-based CSAE. This includes presenting data on the proportions of all offences including where this data is not known or unrecorded.

Table 1: Self-defined ethnicity of victims

Self-defined Ethnicity (SDE)	% of population, Census 2021	Number of victims Number of victims	% of victims (all CSAE offences)	% of victims (SDE recorded)
A1 Indian	3.1%	178	0.2%	0.5%
A2 Pakistani	2.7%	452	0.4%	1.2%
A3 Bangladeshi	1.1%	121	0.1%	0.3%
A9 Any other Asian background	1.6%	427	0.4%	1.1%
B1 Caribbean	1.0%	245	0.2%	0.6%
B2 African	2.5%	381	0.3%	1.0%
B9 Any other Black background	0.5%	384	0.3%	1.0%
M1 White and Black Caribbean	0.9%	286	0.3%	0.8%
M2 White and Black African	0.4%	133	0.1%	0.3%
M3 White and Asian	0.8%	208	0.2%	0.5%
M9 Any other mixed	0.8%	451	0.4%	1.2%
O1 Chinese	0.7%	43	0.0%	0.1%
O2 Arab	0.6%	57	0.1%	0.1%
O9 Any other	1.6%	468	0.4%	1.2%
W1 British	74.4%	33,054	29.6%	86.9%
W2 Irish	0.9%	110	0.1%	0.3%
W3 Gypsy or Irish Traveller	0.1%	28	0.0%	0.1%
W9 Any other white background (incl: White Roma)	6.4%	989	0.9%	2.6%
Self-defined Ethnicity unknown or not recorded	Not applicable	73,616	65.9%	Not applicable

Table 2: Self-defined ethnicity of perpetrators

Self-defined Ethnicity (SDE)	% of population, Census 2021	Number of perpetrators	% of perpetrators (all CSAE offences)	% of perpetrators (SDE recorded)
A1 Indian	3.1%	449	0.3%	1.0%
A2 Pakistani	2.7%	969	0.8%	2.2%
A3 Bangladeshi	1.1%	229	0.2%	0.5%
A9 Any other Asian background	1.6%	693	0.5%	1.6%
B1 Caribbean	1.0%	359	0.3%	0.8%
B2 African	2.5%	642	0.5%	1.4%
B9 Any other Black background	0.5%	477	0.4%	1.1%
M1 White and Black Caribbean	0.9%	292	0.2%	0.7%
M2 White and Black African	0.4%	110	0.1%	0.3%
M3 White and Asian	0.8%	140	0.1%	0.3%
M9 Any other mixed	0.8%	417	0.3%	0.9%
O1 Chinese	0.7%	65	0.1%	0.1%
O2 Arab	0.6%	124	0.1%	0.3%
O9 Any other	1.6%	461	0.4%	1.0%
W1 British	74.4%	37,017	28.7%	83.4%
W2 Irish	0.9%	170	0.1%	0.4%
W3 Gypsy or Irish Traveller	0.1%	30	0.0%	0.1%
W9 Any other white background (incl: White Roma)	6.4%	1,752	1.4%	3.9%
Self-defined Ethnicity unknown or not recorded	Not applicable	84,747	65.6%	Not applicable

- Where self-defined ethnicity was recorded for victims, 90% were recorded as White or White British (n = 34,181), an increase of three percentage points from 2023. This was a year-on-year increase of 5% (n = 1,633).
- There were decreases in the proportions and volumes of victims from all other broader ethnic groups, identifying as 'Asian or Asian British' (n = 268), 'Black or Black British' (n = 318), Mixed (n = 133) and 'Chinese or Other ethnic group' (n = 457).
- Where self-defined ethnicity was recorded for perpetrators, 88% were recorded as White or White British (n = 38,969), this was consistent with 2023.
- Consistent with findings from 2023, there was an under-representation of victims from minoritised ethnic communities in comparison to the 2021 Census.

The Lucy Faithfull Foundation highlight that barriers for victims from minoritised communities include, fear of authorities such as policing and children's services, stigma of abuse which may bring shame on the child and the family, an understanding of legislation in the UK and concerns around repercussions from their community. It is likely that insufficient progress is being made to build trust and overcome barriers minoritised groups face to disclosure and support after experiencing CSAE offences, with the full extent of CSAE remaining unidentified within minoritised communities.

Child on child

Overview

CSAE offences committed by children aged 10-17 years of age continue to account for half of all recorded offences, where age is recorded. Within this data there are a range of offences, from sexual behaviours that may be considered developmentally typical to serious contact offences. For behaviours that are assessed as non-aggravated, or experimental, processes are in place for policing to ensure that non-criminal outcomes are recorded, such as diversionary or educational interventions. Policing continues to ensure that behaviours assessed as non-aggravated and in line with developmentally experimental behaviours result in non-criminal outcomes. In time, it is likely we will see a more accurate number of young people committing CSAE within police recorded crime.

- Where perpetrator age was recorded, 50% (n = 40,824 of 81,659) of perpetrators were children aged 10-17 years old, accounting for 57% (n = 17,315) of all non-contact perpetrators and 46% (n = 23,509) of all contact perpetrators. Including offences where perpetrator age was unknown or not recorded, children aged 10-17 years accounted for 32% of all suspects.
- 58% (n = 23,509) of offences committed by 10–17 year-olds were contact offences, 42% (n = 17,315) were non-contact offences.
- Indecent Images of Children (IIOC) offences remained the highest reported offence (40%, n = 16,330), followed by Sexual assault on a child (24%, n = 9,765) and Rape of a child (17%, n = 7,006).
- Offending is within similar age groups with 67% (n = 16,888) of perpetrators' age within one year of the victim's age.
- There is a gendered nature to different offence types; 86% (n =19,502) of perpetrators of contact offences were male and 14% (n = 3,173) female, whereas for non-contact offences 43% (n = 6,931) offences had a female recorded perpetrator. It is highly likely that the higher proportion of female children recorded as perpetrators is driven by self-generated indecent imagery (SGII). This is supported by deep dive analysis on SGII within our 2023 report.
- Within child on child, where relationship was recorded, the majority of perpetrators were known to the victim (93%, n = 17,736). The most common relationship type was "acquaintance", accounting for 47% (n = 8,869), followed by partner/ex-partner accounting for 26% (n = 5,007).

School environments and child on child offending were a common theme across police force assessments. Dynamics including social networking, pressure to engage in sexual activity and 'clustering' of offences, where a group of connected children account for a high volume of similar offences, likely lead to victims experiencing multiple and repeat victimisation among peers.

Quick Stat

IIOC continues to account for the highest proportion of offences between children, this is likely driven by self-generated indecent imagery.

IIOC offences committed by children

IIOC offences committed by 10-17 year-olds increased from 16,067 offences in 2023 to 16,330 offences in 2024, albeit the proportion of all IIOC offences which were committed by children decreased from 71% to 64%.

The lower proportion is almost certain due to the following combined factors:

- Implementation of guidance for policing that non-aggravated SGII offences now record children as "involved party" rather than "suspect" to prevent criminalising children. As a result, the proportion of IIOC offences where a perpetrator's age was recorded had decreased from 70% in 2023 (n=22,739 of 32,619) to 67% in 2024 (n=25,555 of 38,154).
- A higher quantity of IIOC crimes were committed by offenders of other ages; there has been a 48% increase since 2023 in the number of perpetrators aged 18 years+ committing IIOC offences, (n = 5,871 in 2023 to n = 8,712 in 2024).

It is highly likely that SGII continues to drive IIOC offences between young people, as highlighted in our 2023 report.

Teenage relationship abuse

The VAWG Strategic Threat Assessment (STRA) and the CSAE police recorded crimes report 2023 both identified a cross-cutting theme of an emerging cohort of perpetrators aged under 18 years for CSAE and some wider violence against women and girls (VAWG) offending.

To provide greater understanding of the nature of teenage relationship abuse, the NCVPP are conducting analysis on this area, which will be published in the forthcoming 2026 VAWG and Public Protection STRA.

CSAE in the family

CSAE in the family

This report has adopted the CSE taskforce agreed definition of Familial CSAE from the Children's Commissioners model; relationships within the definition of 'child sexual abuse in the family environment'.

Direct comparison with previous years should be treated with caution; the most notable change from previous reporting is that a 'friend' is now considered outside of the family.

Overview

Of the 44% of offences where a relationship was recorded, (n = 47,913), 26% (n = 12,435) were recorded as familial CSAE.

When applying the new CSAE in the family relationship brackets to the 2023 data to draw a comparison, familial CSAE accounted for 25% (n = 11,656) of all CSAE offences. Therefore, the proportion of police-recorded CSAE which occurs in the family remains broadly consistent from 2023 to 2024.

From a review of problem profiles, police forces have identified that delayed disclosures of abuse are more common within familial abuse. It is almost certain that the proportion of familial child sexual abuse is not fully represented in policing data, with the 2019 CSEW report identifying that only 1 in 8 victims of abuse in a family environment report to authorities. Research by the NSPCC, found that the younger a child was when abuse started, the longer it took to disclose abuse. This delay in disclosure includes victims not wanting to get their abuser in trouble, feeling responsible for the abuse and in not recognising the abuse as abuse. Survivors of familial CSA may not disclose abuse in a way that is conventional, but the abuse may manifest through their behaviours, placing particular importance on those statutory partners who have a daily interaction with children. The trends in reporting across the year also emphasise the important role of professionals in education contexts play in identifying abuse and safeguarding children.

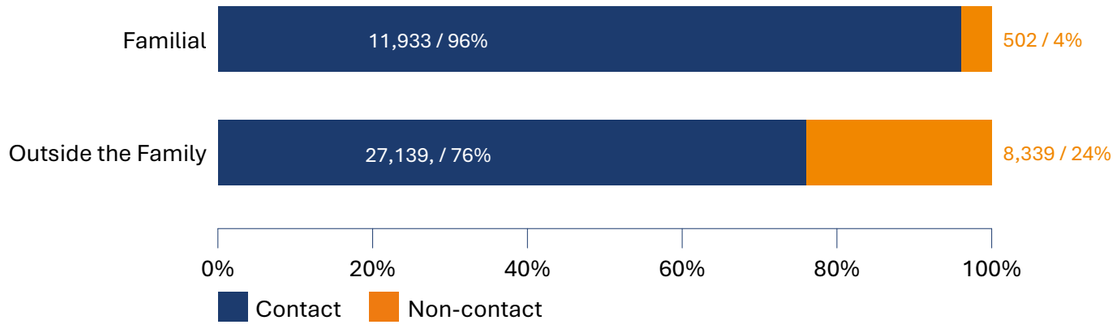
Offence types

The three most common offences within the family continue to be:

- Sexual Assault on a child (53%, n = 6,568)
- Rape of a Child (25%, n = 3,116)
- Sexual activity Involving a Child (12%, n = 1,520)

Familial offences are predominantly contact offences, with a higher proportion of contact offences than those committed by perpetrators with a victim outside of the family.

Figure 3: Proportion of contact and non-contact offences within and outside the family.



Familial Relationships

Within the family environment, parents are the most common perpetrators (36%, n=4,479) followed by siblings (23%, n=2,871) then 'Family – Other' (22%, n = 2,693).

The proportion of perpetrators who are parents and siblings was higher in 2024 than seen in 2023, which is primarily the result of the changes in categorisation of relationship types.

Victim and Perpetrators of CSAE in the family

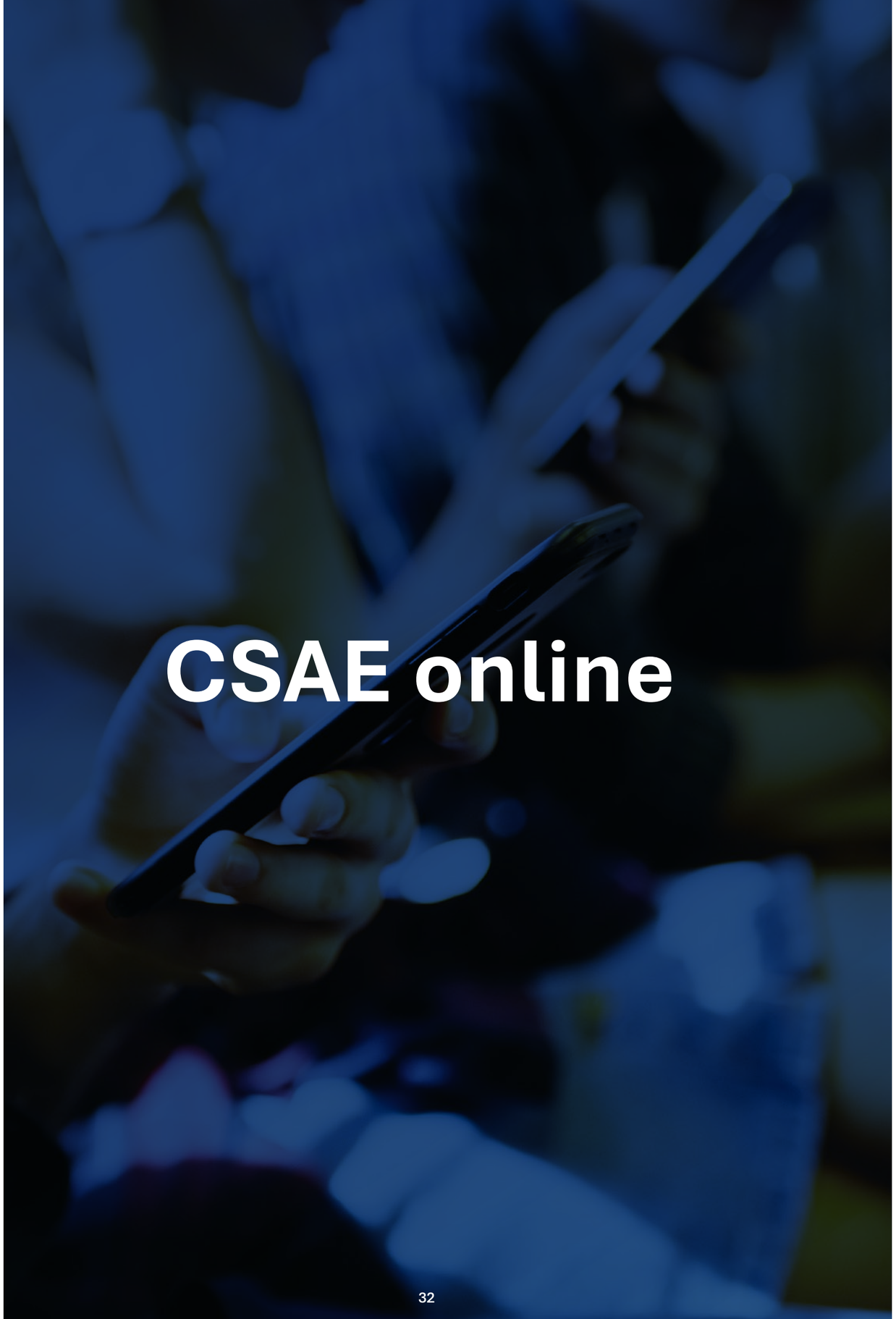
Consistent with last year and broader CSAE offending, where sex and relationship are recorded, most victims of CSAE in the family are female 76% (n = 10,871).

In line with 2023 reporting, where age is recorded, victims are generally younger with 44% (n = 6,163) of victims being under 10 years old, compared to 18% (n = 15,261) across all CSAE offences. This proportion of victims under 10 years of age is consistent across the three most common perpetrator relationships within familial abuse.

Abuse in the family likely occurs at a younger age due to younger children being more dependent on trusted adults and family members around them and are less likely to be able to recognise or report abusive behaviour.

A higher proportion of perpetrators are male 88% (n = 12,894) for CSAE in the family than across all CSAE, in line with 2023.

The age of perpetrators was generally higher; however, this is dependent on the nature of the relationships, with parents predominantly aged 18-49 years of age, (78%, n = 3,819) whereas siblings are aged under 18 years (62%, n = 2,303).



CSAE online

CSAE online

Analysis on scale and nature of CSAE online includes all non-contact offences combined with contact offences flagged by police records as having an online element. Analysis on online and social media platforms has been conducted by key word searches across all CSAE offence summaries recorded in 2024.

Scale & Nature

In 2024, there was a 26% increase of recorded CSAE with an online footprint. Online CSAE accounts for at least 42% (n = 51,672) of all recorded CSAE, up from 35% in 2023 (n = 40,875). It is likely that this increase in reporting will continue with greater awareness of online CSAE, increased identification of online harms and increased reporting from the industry and tech platforms.

It is highly likely that the actual proportion of contact offences with an online element is much higher than currently reported due to inconsistencies in the application of online flags, and recording of online identifiers.

This assessment is re-enforced by the disparity in the proportion of offences reported as online CSAE within local police force CSAE problem profiles, with some forces reporting up to 60% of their offences having an online footprint. Methodologies for the identification of online CSAE vary across policing, whether through utilising offences with the recorded online flag, or by keyword searching crime reports.

Of online CSAE offences;

- IIOC offences continue to account for over two thirds: 68% (n = 35,388).
- 13% (n = 6,708) were sexual activity involving a child offences.
- 13% (n = 6,588) were sexual grooming offences.

'Sexual activity involving a child' offences are categorised as a contact offence, however included within this category are offences for requesting indecent imagery. Police recording guidance is that this offence would be recorded for aggravated SGII offences where the child has been groomed, coerced or deceived by a peer or adult to produce and share sexual material of themselves. 35% (n = 6,708) of all 'sexual activity involving a child' offences were flagged as having an online element.

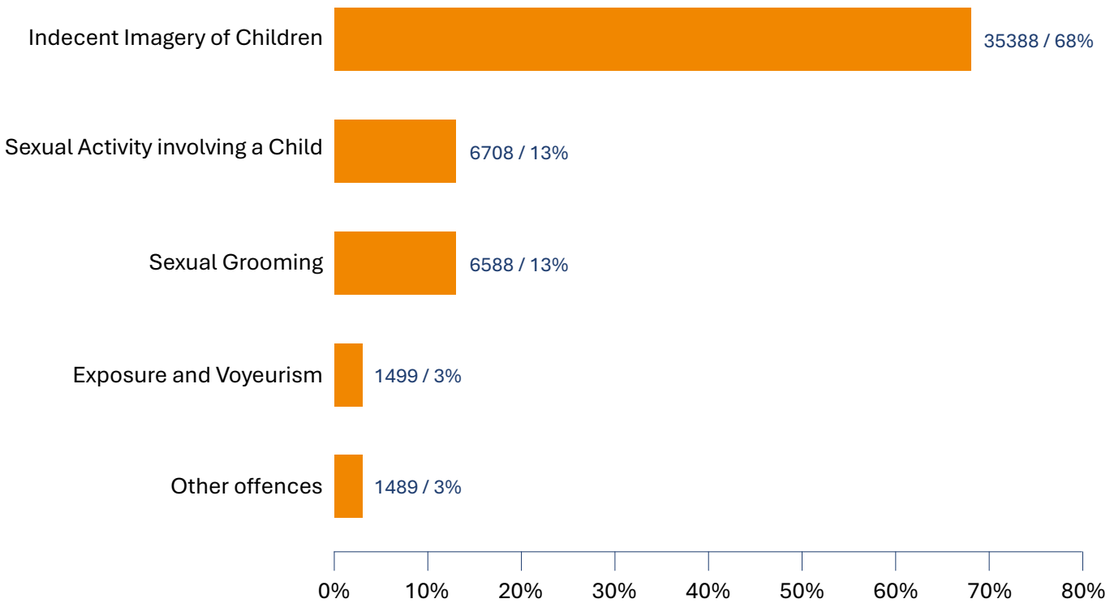
Similarly, sub-categories of sexual grooming offences which resulted in physical meeting with the child are categorised as contact offences, accounting for 8% (n = 545) of sexual grooming offences. The vast majority of sexual grooming offences (92%, n = 6,394) are non-contact and relate to the sexual communication with a child.

Overall, 10% (n = 8,126) of contact offences were flagged as having an online footprint.

Quick Stat

Online CSAE accounts for at least 42% of CSAE and is the largest growing area of threat within CSAE.

Figure 4: Breakdown of CSAE online by the type of offence



Group-based online offending

Only 4% (n = 2,151) of online offences were group-based, defined as having 2 or more perpetrators. This includes contact offences which had an online flag recorded (n = 211) and these offences may also be included within the group-based contact report. 80% (n = 1,725) of group-based online offences related to IIOC offending, likely ranging from peer-on-peer intimate image sharing to organised distribution of child sexual abuse material. However, it is recognised that there are intelligence gaps around the perpetrators of group-based non-contact offending, likely driven by the anonymous nature of these offences.

Platforms

The expanding digital landscape continues to enable CSAE online offending. In 2024, 62 different platforms were identified, in total 22,150 instances of platforms were identified from across 20,153 offence summaries. Recording and identification of platforms will vary depending on how the report is made to police, with reports direct from industry more likely to explicitly mention application or platforms by name then third-party reporting.

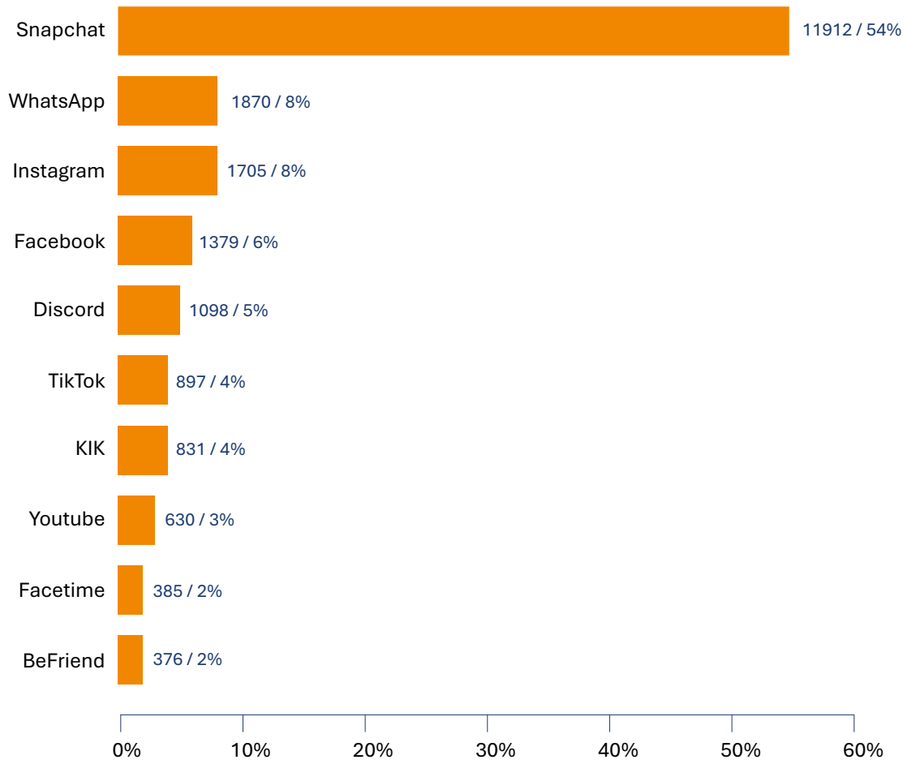
The top three platforms were:

- Snapchat (54% n = 11,912)
- WhatsApp (8% n = 1,870)
- Instagram (8% n = 1,705)

Snapchat remains the most common platform recorded linked to police-recorded CSAE offences. The prevalence of Snapchat in our data is unsurprising, given that Ofcom's Children and Parents: Media Use and Attitudes found that the platform was most favoured by children to communicate with friends. It is likely that Snapchat is particularly attractive for sharing material due to features allowing images to be shared temporarily before disappearing. There are opportunities for platforms to implement technology such as that used by online banking apps which prevents screenshots being taken whilst in the app, this would support with the prevention of sharing of CSA material on these platforms.

The prevalence of WhatsApp appearing in police recorded CSAE has increased since 2023, overtaking Facebook and Instagram. It is likely that WhatsApp is used for direct messaging due to privacy with end-to-end encryption features, this includes being used as a secondary platform following initial contact or engagement on other platforms. Facebook has dropped out of the top three platforms; it is likely this is a result of Facebook having a more older demographic of users compared to other platforms.

Figure 5: Top 10 platforms identified in CSAE offences



Sexual extortion of children

Sexually motivated extortion or financially motivated sexual extortion (FMSE), commonly known as 'sextortion', is a continued emerging threat, with the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) reporting increases of 72% in the first half of 2025 (up to 153 cases from 89), compared to the same period in 2024. The National Crime Agency (NCA) assesses that this form of CSA is being exacerbated by the accessibility of technology, including chatbots which allow perpetrators to access victims at scale.

There is no specific offence code for the recording of extortion offences within England and Wales, however, blackmail offences for under 18s have been collected since July 2024 to improve our understanding of the threat. Key word searches have provided an estimated range for the volume of blackmail offences which relate to sexual extortion and specifically FMSE, highlighting an increase in estimated offences across the second half of 2024.

It is highly likely that the prevalence of sexual extortion is much greater as these conservative estimates do not capture sexual extortion offences which may be recorded under other offences than blackmail. Furthermore, shame of sharing indecent images deters many victims from reporting.

Unlike most CSAE offences, sextortion disproportionately targets young males with IWF reporting boys account for 97% of known cases, typically aged between 13 and 17 years.

Identifying and investigating sextortion remains complex for law enforcement; the NCA highlight that offenders are usually organised criminal gangs, often based overseas, operating anonymously through online platforms using false profiles.

Table 3: Blackmail, estimate sexual extortion and FMSE offences July – Dec 2024.

	Blackmail offences	Estimated sexual extortion offences	Estimated FMSE offences
Q3 2024 (July - Sep)	1,080	846 - 911	592 – 650
Q4 2024 (Oct – Dec)	1,217	959 – 1,031	673 - 740

Summary of group-based contact CSAE

Group-based contact CSAE

The following is a summary of findings by the CSE taskforce focusing on group-based contact CSAE. Full findings of this analysis can be found within the Group - Based offending publication by the CSE taskforce.

Scale & Nature

Group-based contact offences accounted for 3.6% (n = 4,450) of CSAE crimes overall and 5.6% of all contact CSAE. These are both consistent to that recorded in 2023 (proportion of all CSAE in 2023, 3.7%, n = 4,228, proportion of all contact CSAE in 2023 5.4%, n = 4,228).

Of group-based contact offences:

- More than double the proportion of offences of Rape offences feature in group-based contact offences 42% (n = 1,870) compared to that seen in CSAE more broadly in 2024 (17%).
- Sexual Assault accounted for 29% (n = 1,276), comparable to the proportion in all CSAE crimes (27%).
- Sexual Activity with a child accounted for 25% (n = 1,120), this was also higher than that seen in all CSAE crimes (16%).

Police-recorded CSAE, identified as group – based contact offences in 2024, was further assessed and categorised as follows:

- A third took place in a familial context (32%, n = 1,419), in 2023 this was 26% (n = 1,125)
- Child on Child offending accounted for just under a quarter of group-based contact offences, (24%, n = 1,088), an increase from 17% (n = 704) in 2023.
- 17% related to Child Sexual Exploitation (n = 761), the same as that seen in in 2023.
- Institutional (9%, n = 415), the same as that seen in 2023.
- Ritualised (0.2%, n = 7), in 2023 there were no identified recorded ritualistic crimes. This area of child abuse remains an intelligence gap for policing.
- Other (11%, n = 502), in 2023 this was 22% (n = 932). The 'other' category can include crimes where the suspect is a stranger or an acquaintance to the victim, but where no direct link can be made to the familial, child on child, CSE, institutional or ritualised categories.
- Unknown (6%, n = 258), in 2023 this was 9% (n = 384). Unknown is where an offence has been identified as group-based, but the information is not sufficient to assess the category.

Quick Stat

Contact group based CSAE accounted for 3.5% of all CSAE, consistent to that recorded in 2023.

Victims

The victim profile of group-based contact offending broadly reflects the victim profile seen across broader CSAE crimes. Where records of personal characteristics were available, the majority were female (75%, n = 2,949) and White or White British (88%, n = 1,761). At the time of the offence, 27% (n = 1,063) of victims were aged under 10 years, while 53% (n = 2,102) were aged between 10 and 15 years.

Perpetrators

Similarly, the perpetrator profile was broadly reflective of the wider CSAE profile. Where records of personal characteristics were available, the majority were male (75%, n = 3,859). In terms of age, 43% (n = 2,133) of perpetrators were recorded as aged 10 to 15 years, this is an increase from 39% in 2023).

The self-defined ethnicity of perpetrators of group-based contact offending was recorded in 37% of cases (n = 2,563), this is an improvement from 34% in 2023. This proportion is still too low to make an inference on the self-defined ethnicity profile of perpetrators. However, where self-defined ethnicity was recorded, perpetrators were mostly White or White British (83%, n = 2,139).

Forward look

Online regulations

Regulations, including the Online Safety Act have been introduced to try and prevent the harmful content children are exposed to. Passed into law in October 2023, the Online Safety Act's provisions have been phased coming into effect.

Changes have begun to be seen on how children experience the online world, however, risks of children being exposed to harmful sexual content remain. How regulations are enforced and crucially how they adapt to evolving technology are pivotal in reducing these risks.

Other factors include:

- the extent to which the tech industry takes responsibility for, and removes harmful content, rather than adopting minimum standards to comply with regulations.
- whether adaptation in online behaviours will increase the challenge for law enforcement to both identify harmful material and to reduce their ability to safeguard children at risk. This includes the use of virtual private networks (VPNs) which can be used by children to bypass age verification requirements to access pornographic material.

Crime & Policing Bill

The Crime and Policing Bill was introduced into House of Commons in February 2025 and sets out provisions for mandatory reporting of CSAE. How this duty is implemented once passed through parliament could have an impact of the scale of offences reported to police.

This Bill also seeks to introduce a new offence which will criminalise Artficial Intelligence (AI) models used to create CSA material. In addition, the Bill will update existing legislation which criminalises 'paedophile manuals' to include AI generated CSA material.

Children's Wellbeing & Schools Bill

Key proposals in the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill present opportunities for multi-agency safeguarding of children.

- A new information-sharing duty that provides a clear legal basis to share information for the purposes of safeguarding and promotion of children's welfare.
- Piloting the use of a consistent identifier using the NHS number as a unique identifier across children's services
- Mandated Multi Agency Child Protection Teams to support the local authority in the discharge of its child protection duties. Staffed with social workers, police officers, healthcare professionals and persons with education experience.

Working Together

The 2026 update of Working Together 2023 will focus on a system that safeguards all children including:

- Learning from serious child safeguarding incidents
- Strengthening anti-discriminatory practice
- Responses to child sexual abuse and domestic abuse
- Safeguarding looked-after children
- Reflect key learning from a reforming system in statutory guidance, in line with the Families First Partnership Programme

Keeping Children Safe in Education amended 2025

The guidance sets out what schools and colleges in England must do to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people under the age of 18. The guidance covers a wide range of safeguarding issues, including:

- Safer recruitment practices
- Online safety, including new considerations for misinformation and disinformation
- Domestic abuse, with an added emphasis on recognizing indirect exposure
- Gangs and youth violence
- Child sexual exploitation
- Criminal exploitation
- Drugs and alcohol
- Self-harm

The amended 2025 guidance adds disinformation, misinformation and conspiracy theories to the list of content risks under online safety.

Artificial Intelligence

The rapid evolution of technology has led to AI generated images and videos becoming so realistic they can be difficult to tell apart from real media. The IWF report that AI generated CSA imagery increased by 400% in the first six months of 2025, as well as a surge in AI generated CSA videos which have been found to be indistinguishable from real footage. Such footage can be found on publicly available areas of the internet.

Although AI presents an opportunity for perpetrators of CSA to generate realistic CSA material, there are also opportunities to harness it to support the detection of online CSA. This includes the use of AI to trawl the internet to identify new CSA material, to natural language processing to trawl chatrooms for predatory behaviour, as well as supporting the prioritisation of CSA material to expedite the safeguarding of children.

Economic challenges

The increasing impact of cost-of-living crisis and number of children living in poverty increases the risks of vulnerable children being exploited. Those who exploit children are likely to continue to take advantage of this increased vulnerability.

Operation Beaconport and National Inquiry into Group-Based Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

Following the publication of Baroness Casey's national audit on group based child sexual exploitation and abuse, the UK government announced an 'independent commission on grooming gangs' with statutory Inquiry powers. The inquiry will have the powers to direct targeted local investigations into group based CSE and review the response to group based CSE. To address other elements of recommendation 2 from the Casey audit, the NCA are leading on the review of all group based CSAE investigations which resulted in no further action against suspects, between January 2010 and March 2025. This will be supported by the CSE Taskforce and Tackling Organised Exploitation programme. This review, under Operation Beaconport will support to develop a National Operating Model (NOM with the aim of improving the identification of and investigations of group-based CSAE.

Conclusion

It is recognised that the police recorded data on CSAE provides insight on a small proportion of the extent of sexual abuse experienced by children and is not representative of the full scale of harm experienced by children each year across England and Wales. This annual report by the NCVPP continues to be the most detailed nationally available insight across the breadth of CSA harms reported to policing.

The findings presented in this report highlight that the scale of police-recorded CSAE continues to increase, whilst the threat of CSAE toward children and young people becomes more complex. Increases in the volumes of online CSAE offences and continued evolution of technology, including AI generated child sexual abuse material (CSAM), present ever increasing risks of online sexual harm to children.

Whilst the Online Safety Act has started to implement provisions to reduce the ease of exposure to children, harmful content remains accessible. Often, the onus is placed on users of these platforms, and parents or carers to keep children safe online and ensure that appropriate safeguarding settings are implemented on devices. More must be done by social media platforms and the tech industry to moderate and remove harmful content which can be accessed or shared by children. This includes the continued threat of the sexually and financially motivated extortion of children which we have seen increase in the latter half of 2024, as well as the emerging threat of Com networks who groom, blackmail and coerce children into sharing indecent imagery online, as well as further harmful forms of abuse and exploitation.

Consistent with analysis published in 2024 and earlier in 2025, half of offences involved a child as a perpetrator of CSAE, where age is known. This echoes findings from the VAWG STRA which found an emerging cohort of younger perpetrators across broader VAWG offending. Although the data within this report will likely include behaviours which meet the threshold for a crime being recorded, it is recognised that these will represent a spectrum of harms ranging from developmentally typical behaviour between children to more harmful, aggravated offending. Much of this takes place within peer groups and in the context of relationships. There is a clear role for continued development of preventative interventions for young people displaying harmful sexual behaviours.

Although group-based contact CSAE continues to be the focus of discussion in the media and public, analysis shows that where it is identified in police-recorded crime data, it accounts for 3.6% of all CSAE crimes. It is important to not lose sight of under-reporting and under-identification of all forms of CSAE.

Policing recognises gaps remain in our knowledge of the scale and threat of CSAE, impacted by various factors, including reluctance to disclose abuse by victims, the reliance on people who know abuse is taking place to share of information, as well the way policing records and collects data on CSAE. Further work is required to improve the recording of protected characteristics of victims and perpetrators which will allow policing and partner to understand where to focus efforts on building trust and confidence in communities to encourage reporting. This is particularly true across minoritised ethnic communities where levels of disclosure to police remain low. Improved sharing of information across partners at a local and national level will strengthen our understanding and identification of CSAE, particularly those forms of CSAE where we know identification and reporting remains historically low. This includes CSAE in a familial environment.

The findings of this report should be used across statutory agencies, government, partners and charities to understand where further work needs to take place to strengthen existing prevention and intervention activities and develop a whole systems approach to tackling CSAE.

Appendix A: Definitions

Child	An individual who is under the age of 18. Police crime records are included where victims are recorded as aged 18+ but the offence was non-recent and is recorded as an offence against a child.
CSAE offences	Includes all child sexual abuse and exploitation offences within our dataset.
Non-Contact CSAE	Includes Indecent Imagery of Children offences and sub-offences under Sexual Grooming, Exposure & Voyeurism, Abuse of Children through Sexual Exploitation and Other miscellaneous sexual offence categories. The full list of offense are provided in offences within our dataset.
Contact CSAE	Includes offences under categories of: Rape of a child, Sexual assault on a Child, Sexual Activity involving a Child, Sexual Activity involving a Child, Sexual activity with a Child Family Member, Abuse of a Position of Trust of a Sexual Nature and Sexual Activity with a Person with a Mental Disorder as well as offences from sub-categories of Exposure & Voyeurism, Abuse of Children through Sexual Exploitation, Sexual Grooming and Other Miscellaneous sexual offence. The full list of offense are provided in offences within our dataset.
Online	Non-contact offences (as above) and inclusion of contact offences 'flagged' by police forces as having an online element.
Non-recent	Offences in which a child was abused more than 12 months prior to the offence being reported.
Recent	Offences in which a child was abused in the most recent 12 months preceding the offence being reported.
Victim	An individual who has been recorded as a victim on the crime record
Perpetrator	An individual who has been recorded as a suspect on a crime record, including those who are now deceased
Indecent Images of Children (IIOC)	Sub-code offences of Obscene Publications (HO codes 086/02, 086/10 & 086/15) which relate to, Taking, making, sharing and possessing of indecent images and pseudo photographs of children.
Self -generated indecent images (SGII)	Self-generated Indecent Imagery (SGII) refers to sexually explicit imagery (including nudes and semi-nudes) that a person takes of themselves.
Aggravated SGII	A child is groomed, coerced, deceived or extorted by another child or adult to produce and share sexual material of themselves.

Non-aggravated SGII	A child produces sexual material of themselves and willingly shares it with another child in an exchange where there is no evidence of an imbalance of power.
Within the family environment	We broadly adopt The Office of the Children's Commissioner for Englands approach, in Protecting-children-from-harm-full-report. We include immediate family members; parents, siblings, step-parents, foster or adopted family, carers, and grandparents, but also relationship types which may have access to the home environment; neighbours, babysitters, friends, and family friends.
Child on child	These are incidents that reach the legal threshold to be recorded as crimes and have a perpetrator recorded between the age of 10-17 years old. We do not include under 10s within this category as they are below the age of criminal responsibility. We recognise within this data there is a range of offences, from sexual behaviours deemed developmentally typical to serious contact offences including sexual assault and rape.
Group-based CSAE (based on the IICSA definition of an organised network)	Group Based/ Network Is defined as two or more individuals (whether identified or not) who are known to (or associated with) one another and are known to be involved in or to facilitate the sexual abuse and exploitation of children and young people. Being involved in the sexual exploitation of children and young people includes introducing them to other individuals for the purpose of exploitation, trafficking a child for the purpose of sexual exploitation, taking payment for sexual activities with a child or young person or allowing their property to be used for sexual activities with a child or young person.
Crown offences	These are offences which have been recorded as there is evidence of a crime that may not be directed toward a specific intended victim. CSAE offences against the state pre-dominantly relate to IIOC offences where the victim may not be aware of the existence of the indecent image or the victim may not be identified.
Teenage relationship abuse	For the purposes of this report, teenage relationship abuse relates to the physical, sexual or emotional abuse between children under the age of 18 who are in a romantic relationship with each other.

NCVPP

National Centre for Violence Against Women & Girls and Public Protection

About the National Centre for Violence Against Women and Girls and Public Protection

We're a collaboration between the College of Policing and the National Police Chiefs' Council.

We work across law enforcement, the third sector and government to professionalise public protection and strive for a whole systems approach to prevent harm, give confidence to victims, survivors and witnesses to come forward and bring more offenders to justice.

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