

# Disrupting Harm

**Evidence from 13 countries on the context, threats, and children's perspectives of online child sexual exploitation and abuse.**

Detailed Analysis of the Frontline Providers Survey

South Africa

Last Updated 07/05/21

This report is a summary of preliminary data collected for this research project. The perspectives contained herein represent the individuals interviewed and surveyed. Support from the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children does not constitute endorsement.

***Introduction* ..... 3**

***Basic Description of Survey Sample* ..... 4**

***Perpetrator Demographic* ..... 6**

***Scenarios* ..... 8**

    Scenario 1 ..... 9

    Scenario 2 ..... 11

    Scenario 3 ..... 12

    Scenario 4 ..... 14

    Summary ..... 15

***Vulnerabilities* ..... 17**

***Reporting* ..... 23**

***Availability of Support* ..... 26**

***Investigations and Convictions* ..... 29**

***Law Enforcement and Government Support* ..... 29**

***Public Awareness* ..... 32**

## Introduction

The Disrupting Harm frontline workers survey aimed to explore the knowledge, attitudes and practices related to OCSEA that are presenting to those directly working to prevent and respond on the welfare frontline. Insights from frontline workers via this survey allowed us to more deeply explore findings from other research activities such as the national literature reviews and government interviews from the perspective of staff directly engaged in the response to this growing problem.

This report is the preliminary analysis conducted by ECPAT International. It is based on a convenience sample of 50 interviews were conducted with client-facing frontline child protection workers who were surveyed in each participating country. In order to participate in the survey respondents had to meet the following qualifying requirements:

- 1) Be an adult over 18 years of age;
- 2) Work the last 12 months (at least) in the field of social work, psychology or welfare;
- 3) Manage their own case load directly in the last 12 months;
- 4) Have caseloads that included children over the last 12 months.

The survey itself included a combination of 68 closed and open-ended questions. The data was collected via SurveyGizmo and administered by Disrupting Harm staff (either in person, or remotely via phone/Skype – due to COVID-19). Whilst the data collected is not statistically representative, it is still a vital snapshot in indicating scope, and broadening our perspectives on knowledge, attitudes and practices related to OCSEA.

**NOTE:**

*In South Africa, the data collection for the survey was conducted during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic from March 12<sup>th</sup> 2020 to July 10<sup>th</sup> 2020 where movement restrictions were in place.*

## Basic Description of Survey Sample

In South Africa, researchers interviewed 49 frontline social support workers. Of those 49 respondents - 45 (91.8%) identified as female and 4 (8.2%) identified as male.

Participants were asked to select a single category that best describes their organisation. In reality, these categories are sometimes not mutually exclusive, however the indications of a category that ‘best’ describes their organisation does help to depict the range of organisations that participants represent (Figure 1).

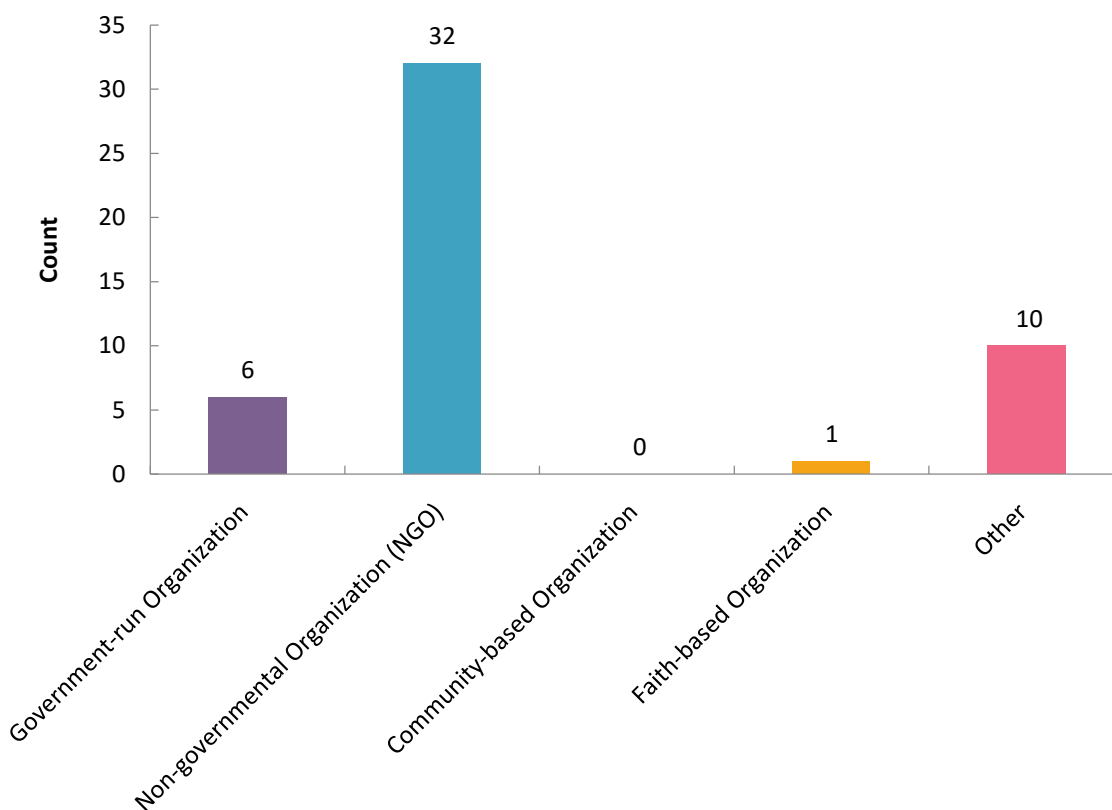


Figure 1. Types of participants’ organisations. N=49

32 participants (65%) reported working for non-governmental organisations, 6 identified their organisation as government-run (12%), 1 reported working for a faith-based organisation (2%) and 10 identified their organisations as ‘other’, all of which worked as private practitioners. The small representation from government-run organisations could be influenced by the fact that engaging with government departments requires a lot of bureaucracy. However, in South Africa, government departments engage NGOs to provide a range of social support services, so the sample can be considered a reasonable indication of the workforce.

The frontline workers were asked to detail what type of services they provided related to children. The results are illustrated in Figure 2 below.

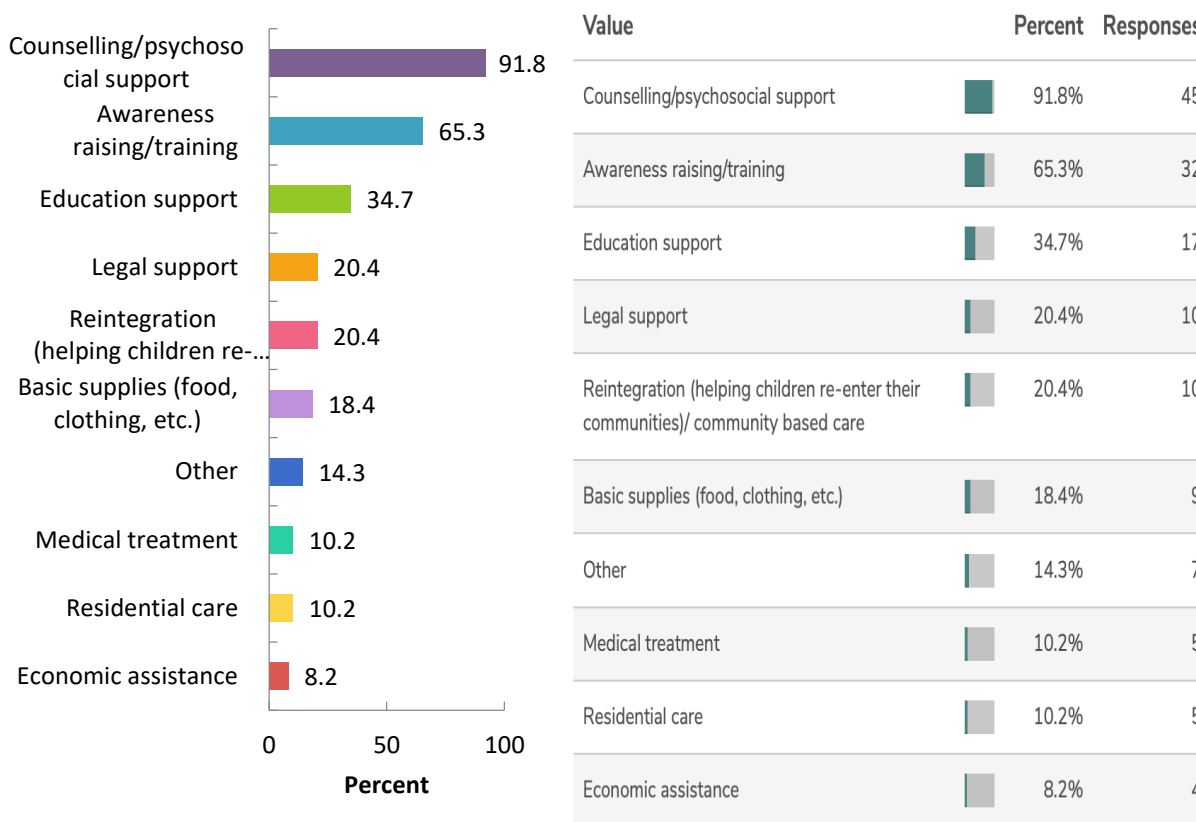


Figure 2. Types of services provided by participants' organisations. N=49

76% of participants worked in organisations providing more than one service to children (n=38). As Figure 2 indicates, the most frequently reported services were counselling/psychological support (n=45 - 91.8%), followed by awareness raising/training activities (n=32 – 65.3%). More than a third provided education support services (n=17 – 34.7%). 10 respondents indicated their organisation provided legal services (20.4%), 10 provided reintegration services (20.4%) and 9 provided basic supplies (18.4%). The least commonly provided services among participants were medical treatment (n=5 – 10.2%), residential care (n=5 – 10.2%) and economic assistance (n=4 – 8.2%).

Other services mentioned by the frontline workers included:

- Referrals for emergency removal if the child is in danger
- Assisting children studying towards a tertiary qualification
- Conducting assessments of children and mediation with parents/family

- Crisis intervention
- Child protection services and assessments
- Preparing forensic assessments and victim impact reports for the court
- Expert witnessing in court
- Reporting and referrals
- Running sex offender programmes
- Providing children in different courts with breakfast and lunch
- Assisting families with access to state grants
- Overseeing foster care placements

## Perpetrator Demographic

To expand on the current understanding of the context in which OCSEA happens in South Africa, the survey sought to explore the typical relationships that were observed by social support workers between offenders and child survivors when they reported having worked with OCSEA cases.

From the 40 respondents who had worked with OCSEA cases, men were much more commonly identified as perpetrators and only slightly more often as facilitators of OCSEA. Out of those who have managed OCSEA cases in the past 12 months, the most commonly referenced relationship between the victim and perpetrator was said to be that the perpetrator was a ‘parent/stepparent’, followed by ‘family friend’, community member over and under 18, ‘other relative over 18’ and ‘stranger (national)’. Only one participant selected ‘foreigner’, which goes against the commonly held assumption that it is mostly foreigners committing the abuse and supports what one NGO-worker mentioned: *“Most children are abused by people they know”* (RA3-SA-41-A).

Similarly, participants were asked about the most common relationships between facilitators and victims in the OCSEA cases they have managed. The term ‘facilitator’ had to be better explained to some of the participants by the administrator, despite the fact that they were provided with the definition in writing in the survey. Here, out of the 34 respondents noting they had seen cases that involved a facilitator, ‘parents/stepparents’ was also the most selected option, followed by family friend, other relative over 18, stranger, community member over and under 18, other relative under 18 and sibling under 18.

Below are a number of quotes from participants describing their insights into some of the child sexual exploitation and OCSEA cases they worked with:

### Boy/girl cases

*“A lot of caseload is related to females (more than males) reporting different types of abuse”* (RA3-SA-33-A);

*“Most of the cases that I come across involve female children”* (RA3-SA-41-A);

*“Girls are most likely to be abused”* (RA3-SA-41-A);

*“Girls experience more online sexual exploitation and abuse” (RA3-SA-33-A);*

*“I find that the girls in my houses are more careful than the boys I have in my caseload at this stage” (RA3-SA-12-A);*

*“The majority of clients that I see is between the age group of girls 6-10. The alleged perpetrator is mostly male and known to the victim and their family” (RA3-SA-49-A);*

*“We deal mostly with boys” (RA3-SA-26-A).*

### **Number of cases**

*“Caseload changes continuously in intervention stage” (RA3-SA-09-A).*

Some participants mentioned the influence of COVID-19 on caseload:

*“Spike as a result of COVID-19” (RA3-SA-36-A);*

*“Usually, my caseload is higher and I am able to meet with clients, however due to the lockdown there have been some challenges” (RA3-SA-29-A)*

The administrator noted that at the time of data collection, South Africa was in the midst of a hard lockdown, this differed to other Disrupting Harm countries where the pandemic was not as widespread and movement restrictions were not as strict.

### **Types of cases**

*“Most of above-mentioned cases involve children being exposed to pornographic materials on the phone, television or posing nude for photos. Alleged perpetrators and facilitators are mostly family or friends” (RA3-SA-41-A);*

*“The minor child was exploited by her biological mother. Children's court proceedings and investigation is still pending” (RA3-SA-09-A);*

*“There were no OCSEA cases that I managed. Most of my cases were based on physical/directed sexual abuse” (RA3-SA-14-A);*

One participant working in a government run organisation mentioned: *“These [OCSEA] cases are rather unusual in our caseload. the last case was in 2014” (RA3-SA-26-A);*

*“Often the victim does not know the perpetrator, true identity of the perpetrator is often hidden - parents are failing to monitor their children in social media” (RA3-SA-35-A).*

## Procedures

*“Most cases are referred to Family Violence, Child Protection and Sexual Offences Police” (RA3-SA-01-A).*

## Scenarios

Participants were presented with four scenarios depicting situations in which at least one offender victimised a child through different modes of online sexual abuse and exploitation. After being provided with definitions of ‘OCSEA’, a ‘perpetrator’ and a ‘facilitator’ earlier in the survey, the participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed that the child was a victim and that the offender had committed an OCSEA-related offence.<sup>1</sup> These questions were designed to elicit insights about how participants assessed different forms and situations of OCSEA. It should be noted that responses are likely based on a combination of the participant’s knowledge on the issue, including how these issues may (or may not) be defined in law in a country, as well as influenced by social norms and beliefs. Irrespective of the basis for responses, the results indicate areas that are well understood (sometimes almost unanimously) and others where training and consistent messaging is needed to ensure consistent responses.

A four-point Likert scale was used to assess agreement related to statements for each of the scenario questions. Where interesting indications in differences occurred, we note them, but otherwise combined ‘slightly agree’ and ‘strongly agree’ together and ‘slightly disagree’ and ‘strongly disagree’ together, resulting in binary agree/disagree categories for the analysis presented here.

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<sup>1</sup> Names for the scenarios were changed to common names in each country for the translations but have been edited in the analysis to be consistent across all the Disrupting Harm reports.



### Scenario 1

Palila pays a 16-year-old younger relative, Tamah, to undress while filming and later posts it online. Mamo, who does not know Palila, watches this interaction online from home 30 miles away.

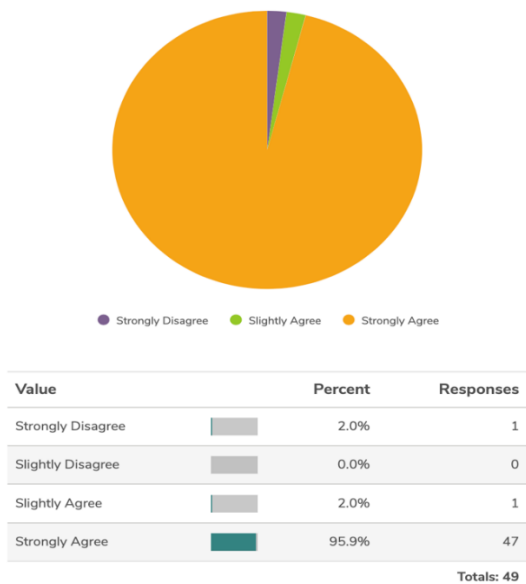


Figure 3. Do you think Tamah is a victim of an OCSEA-related crime?

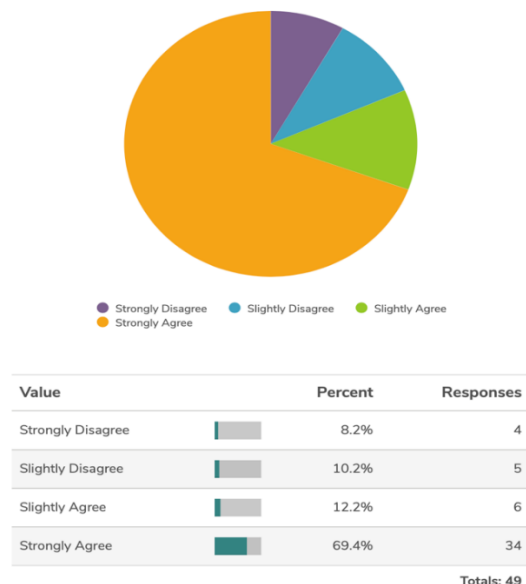


Figure 4. Do you think Mamo has committed an OCSEA-related crime?

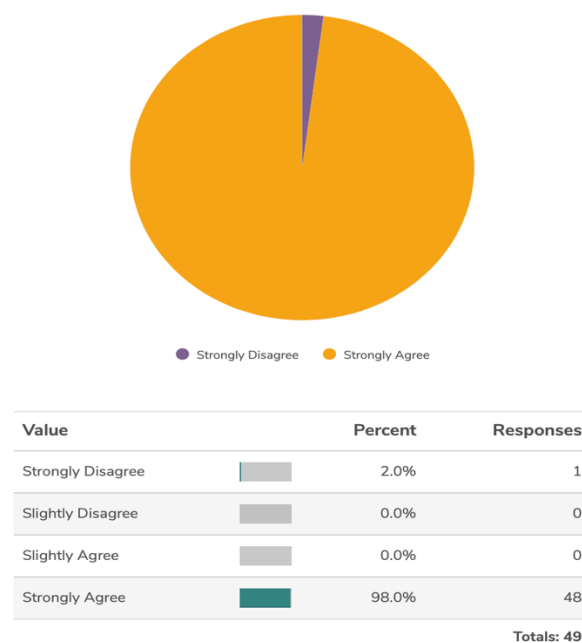


Figure 5. Do you think Palila has committed an OCSEA-related crime?

98% of the participants strongly agreed that Tamah was a victim of sexual exploitation and that the adult who paid and filmed her (Palila) had committed an OCSEA-related crime (n=48). One participant strongly disagreed (2%) (Figures 3 and 5). There was no indication for this case in qualitative responses as to why, and this could be a response error.

Of the three circumstances in this scenario, participants seemed to struggle the most to identify if the remote third party viewing the material had committed an OCSEA related crime – though this was still skewed towards agreement. Out of 49 respondents, 6 only slightly agreed that Mamo had committed an OCSEA-related crime and 9 disagreed (Figure 4).

One NGO-worker who slightly disagreed that Mamo has committed an OCSEA-related crime stated: *“Mamo has no idea that Tamah is a child and that Palila has done this to a child”* (RA3-SA-35-A), while another who strongly disagreed with the statement added: *“Viewing this film by Mamo is not necessarily a crime but it can be sensitive if Mamo is under age as well”* (RA3-SA-19-A).

Those who strongly agreed with all three statements commented:

*“By watching, there is strong possibility of Mamo passing it to the next person which can make the post viral”* (RA3-SA-36-A);

*“Mamo can see that the person on the video is a minor, therefore it makes him/her guilty of OCSEA related crime”* (RA3-SA-15-A);

*“Once you are found to have a video or a picture of a child naked on social media that is a crime”* (RA3-SA-41-A);

*“Taking nude pictures of people and posting it online is a criminal offence. Storing pornography on your phone is an offence”* (RA3-SA-49-A).

## Scenario 2

Kaimi is a 17-year-old student. Kaimi has struggled to make good grades this year and is worried that Uli, a teacher who is a close family friend, will tell Kaimi's dad. Kaimi offers to send Uli naked pictures if he promises not to talk to the family. Uli accepts.

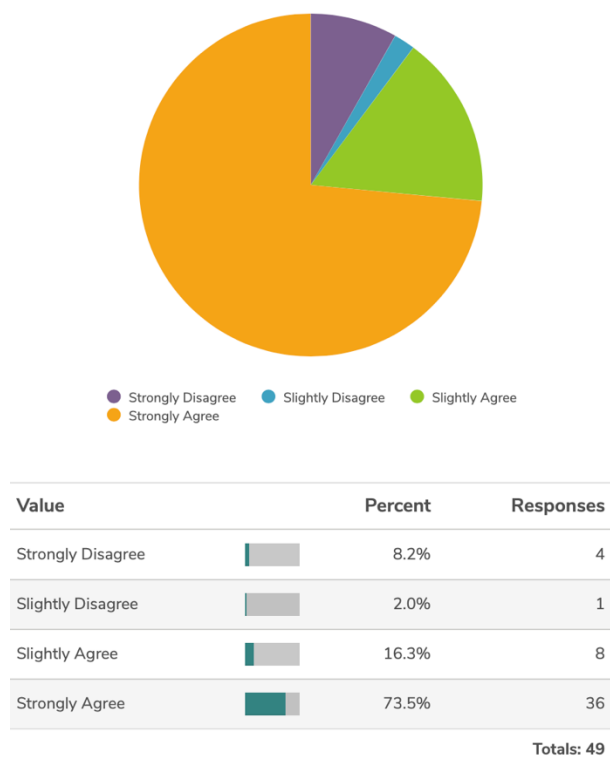


Figure 6. Do you think Kaimi is a victim of OCSEA?

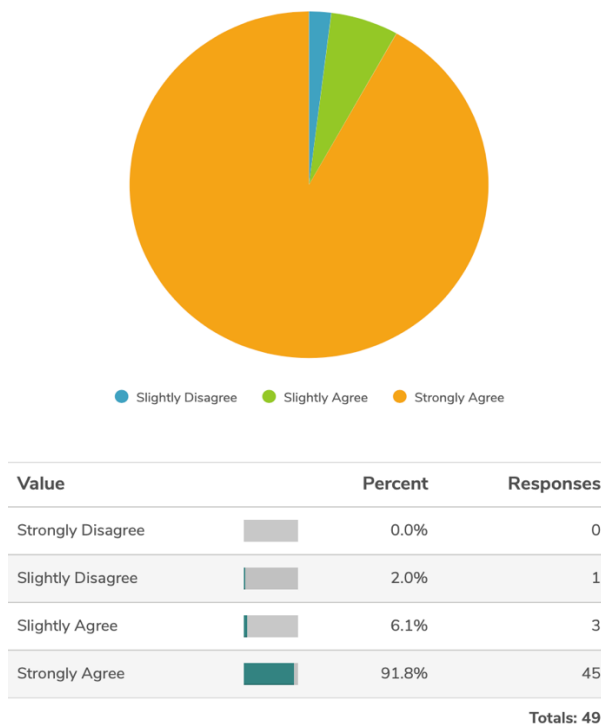


Figure 7. Do you think Uli has committed an OCSEA-related crime?

44 participants (90%) agreed that the student (Kaimi) is a victim of OCSEA (36 strongly and 8 slightly), and 5 participants (10%) disagreed (1 slightly and 4 strongly) – see Figure 6.

As Figure 7 indicates, nearly all respondents agreed that the teacher (Uli) in a position of power has committed an OCSEA-related crime, with 45 strongly agreeing (92%), 3 slightly agreeing (6%) and 1 participant slightly disagreeing (2%).

When given the opportunity to share additional comments on this scenario, one respondent who slightly agreed that Kaimi is a victim of OCSEA mentioned: *“Kaimi initiated to send the nude pictures, it does not completely rule out that she is a victim, but she also took part in the crime”* (RA3-SA-02-A). Another who strongly disagreed that Kaimi is a victim and strongly agreed Uli committed an OCSEA-related crime added: *“Distribution of pornographic material and accepting, viewing and storing it on your phone is a criminal offence according to the Sexual Offences Act”* (RA3-SA-49-A).

Others who agreed with both statements commented:

“Uli is an adult and should not take an advantage of Kaimi’s situation” (RA3-SA-19-A);

“Uli is guilty of this crime because he agreed to something that he knows is wrong as an adult” (RA3-SA-15-A);

“Social media can be used to blackmail” (RA3-SA-38-A).

### Scenario 3

Sam is a 10-year-old whose family struggles to make ends meet in their rural village. Sam’s uncle, Alex, has a good government job and has always given money to help the family out. Recently, Uncle Alex wrote a message to Sam on Facebook asking to have a secret meeting at his house. When Sam arrives, Uncle Alex asked Sam to sit on his lap and began touching his private parts.

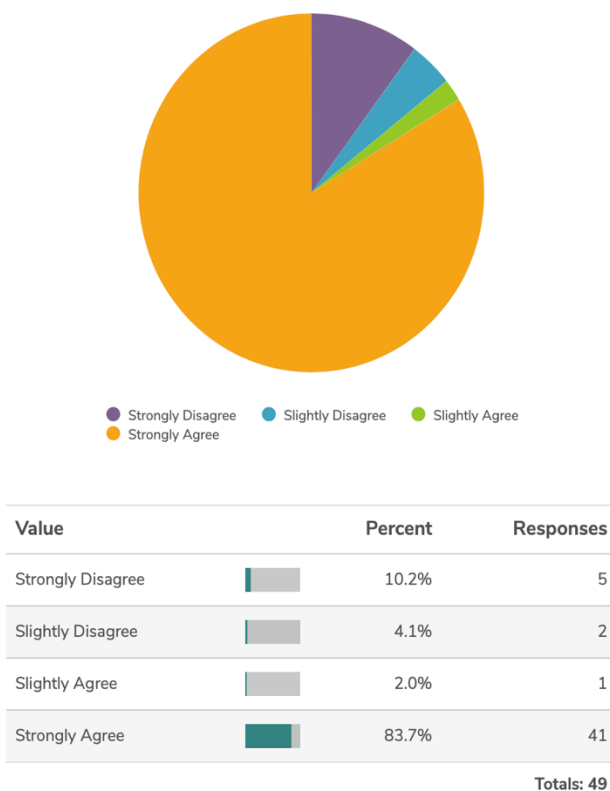


Figure 8. Do you think Sam is a victim of OCSEA?

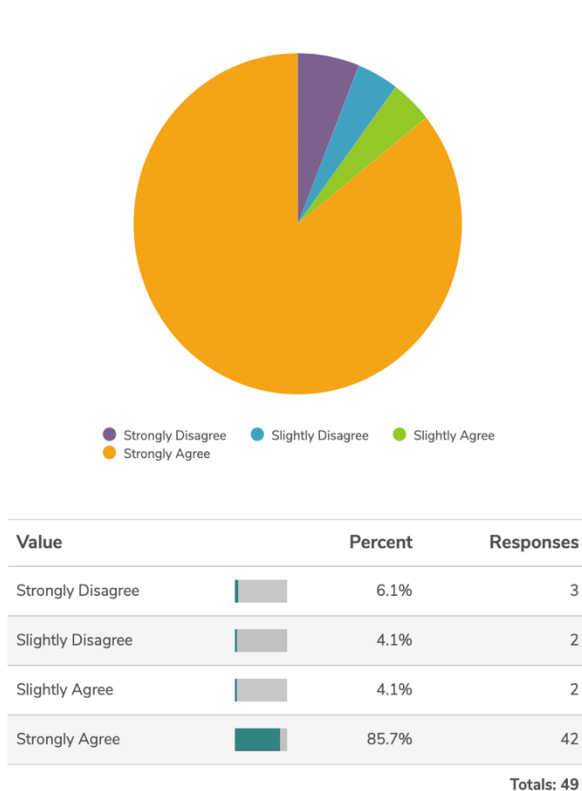


Figure 9. Do you think Alex has committed an OCSEA-related crime?

As Figure 8 shows, 86% of participants (n=42) agreed that the 10-year-old Sam is a victim of OCSEA (41 respondents strongly and 1 slightly) and 14% disagreed (5 respondents strongly and 2 slightly).

Nearly all respondents (n=44 - 90%) agreed that the adult Alex has committed an OCSEA-related crime (42 strongly and 4 slightly) and 8% disagreed (2 slightly and 3 strongly) – see Figure 9.

While none of the participants who disagreed with the statements provided additional comments, some of those who agreed mentioned:

*“Alex has taken advantage of the family background and grooming is involved as the act committed by uncle Alex could lead to something unlawful” (RA3-SA-36-A);*

*“A minor child had been lured to an alleged perpetrator’s house via social media, where he became a victim of a sexual crime. The child is not supposed to be active on Facebook due to his young age” (RA3-SA-49-A);*

*“The uncle used his financial power to manipulate the child into agreeing to be a victim of OCSEA” (RA3-SA-41-A);*

*“This is both an OCSEA and rape case. He did not only send a text manipulating the child to come over to his place but he also sexually abused the child” (RA3-SA-19-A).*

One respondent who slightly agreed with both statements commented: *“He [Alex] contacted him online but there was no online element when the sexual abuse happened” (RA3-SA-03-A)*, which appears to suggest that the perception of the crime seemed to relate to the offline physical abuse rather than the indication of online grooming (via messaging service).

### Scenario 4

Joe is 16, and his girlfriend Lucy is 15. They have been dating for a year and regularly have sex. Sometimes, when they can't be together, they send photos to each other of themselves naked. Joe's friend Matt knows about this and breaks into Joe's phone and forwards naked pictures of Lucy to a group of their friends.

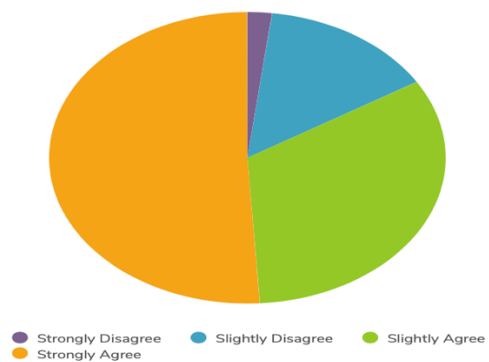
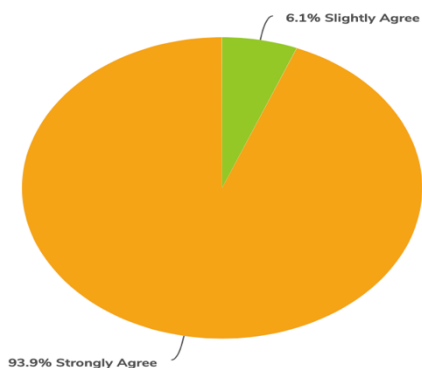


Figure 10. Do you think Lucy is a victim of an OCSEA related crime?

Figure 11. Do you think Joe is a victim of an OCSEA related crime?

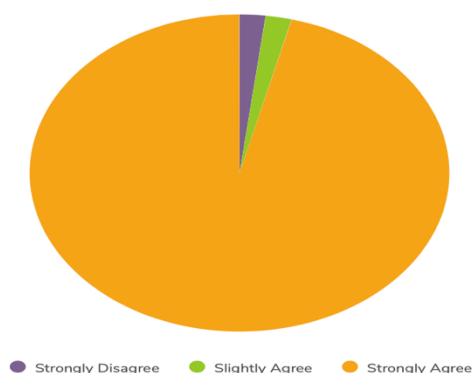
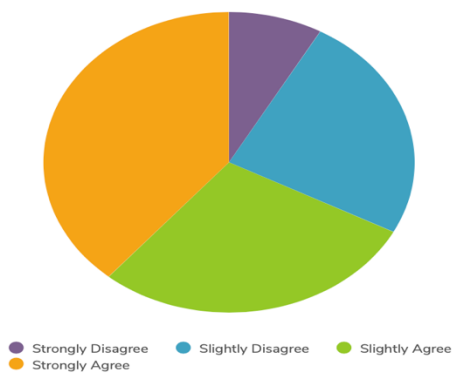


Figure 12. Do you think that Joe has committed an OCSEA related crime?

Figure 13. Do you think that Matt has committed an OCSEA related crime?

As Figure 10 indicates, 100% of respondents (n=49) agreed (46 strongly and 3 slightly) that Lucy is a victim of an OCSEA related crime.

84% of participants (n=41) agreed that Joe is a victim of OCSEA (25 strongly and 16 only slightly) and 16% disagreed (1 strongly, 7 slightly) – see Figure 11. At the same time, 68% of participants (n=33) also agreed that Joe has committed an OSCEA related crime. 24% of participants (n=12) slightly disagreed, and 8% strongly disagreed (n=4) – Figure 12.

As Figure 13 indicates, nearly all (98%) respondents indicated that Matt has committed an OCSEA-related crime (n=48). One participant strongly disagreed (2%).

When given the opportunity to share additional comments on this scenario, participants added:

*“Joe and his girlfriend have a consensual relationship but because they are minors, what they are doing is wrong. I am, however, not sure if that makes Joe guilty of an OCSEA crime. Matt is guilty of this crime because he distributed sexual material that involves minors” (RA3-SA-15-A);*

*“Joe did not give his consent that the photos will be distributed but he was not supposed to have any pornographic material on his phone. The girl is under the age of 16 and not allowed to give consent to sex” (RA3-SA-49-A);*

*“Joe might also be the victim of OCSEA since he sent his naked photos to Lucy's phone. What Matt did to his phone, someone else might do to Lucy's phone” (RA3-SA-14-A);*

*“Joe was not supposed to share with his friend that they normally share naked pictures with his girlfriend and Matt was not supposed to break into Joe's phone and share the pictures of his girlfriend to other people” (RA3-SA-41-A);*

*“Sometimes victims are being victimised willingly” (RA3-SA-38-A).*

## Summary

Participants overwhelmingly correctly identified the children as victims and the adults as offenders across the four scenarios. However, in two questions there were some divergencies.

The first question related to the scenario (Scenario 1) in which an adult paid his 16-year-old female relative to undress while he filmed it and later posted it online. In this scenario, an unrelated individual, Mamo, who did not know the child or the other adult, watched the interaction online from home 30 miles away. Nearly all of the participants agreed that the child was a victim of sexual exploitation and that the adult who paid and filmed her had committed an OCSEA-related crime. However, out of 49 participants, 9 (18%) disagreed (5 slightly and 4 strongly) that the unconnected adult viewing the abuse online had committed an OCSEA-related crime – Figure 4.

The second related to a scenario (Scenario 4) in which a 16-year-old male, Joe, and his 15-year-old girlfriend, Lucy, who have been together for a year and were having regular sex and sometimes were sending each other naked photos. In that scenario, Matt, Joe's friend, broke into Joe's phone and forwarded naked pictures of Lucy to a group of their friends. The vast majority of participants agreed that Lucy was a victim of OCSEA and that the boy breaking into the phone and sharing images had committed an OCSEA related crime. The majority also agreed that Joe was a victim of OCSEA, however out of the 83% of those who agreed, 33% agreed only slightly. At the same time, 68% of participants agreed that Joe has committed an OCSEA-related crime (Figure 12). While technically two children consensually photographing themselves naked is the crime of 'creating child sexual abuse material', there is an ongoing debate about this characterisation. For example, if the images had remained between the two consenting parties, harm may not have been experienced. In a 2020 study on self-generated sexual content, it was found that children thought sharing such images could even provide advantages in their relationships and/or increase their self-esteem.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, when the materials are forwarded without consent, they may end-up circulating the web and being acquired by offenders.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, the normalisation of children sharing sexual images, videos and sexualised online conversations may lead to victims underreporting because they may fail to perceive what is happening to them as abusive or exploitative.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> ECPAT Sweden. (2020, May). ["I början vart det lite läskigt men nu är det vardag" En rapport om yngre barn och egenproducerat material.](#) [Translated from Swedish].

<sup>3</sup> Bracket Foundation (2019). Artificial Intelligence: [Combating online sexual abuse of children.](#) 10.

<sup>4</sup> Palmer, T. (2015). [Digital Dangers: the impact of technology on the sexual abuse and exploitation of children.](#) Barnado's. 35.



## Vulnerabilities

Based on their knowledge and experience, participants indicated whether they believed a list of factors about the child and society increased children’s vulnerability to general sexual exploitation (i.e., all kinds) and more specifically to OCSEA.

- **Factors about the child identified as increasing vulnerability to general sexual abuse and exploitation**

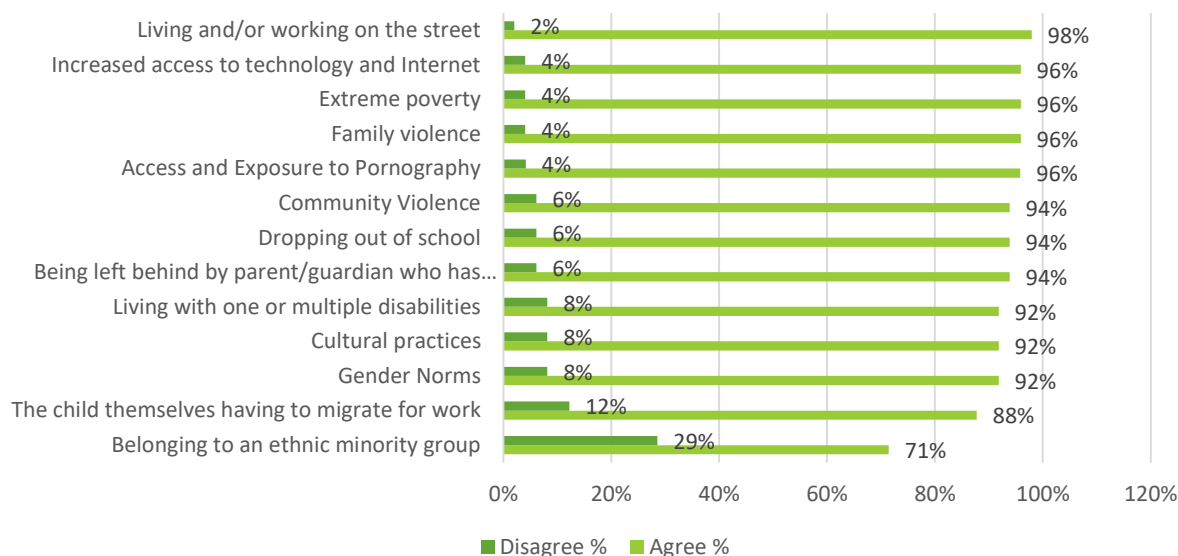


Figure 14. Participants’ perceptions of factors about the *child* impacting children’s vulnerability to general child sexual exploitation. N=49

As Figure 14 shows, there was broad consensus among the respondents regarding their ideas about which of the possible factors about the child can increase vulnerability to sexual abuse and exploitation in general in South Africa. The majority of factors were rated by 88%-98% of respondents as influencing children’s vulnerability to child sexual exploitation, with the biggest agreement (98%) around the ‘living and working on the street’ factor. The smallest agreement (however still high) was found around the ‘belonging to an ethnic minority group’ factor – while 71% agreed it had an influence on children’s vulnerability to child sexual exploitation, 29% disagreed.

Some of the factors additionally listed by participants that they believed strongly increased children’s vulnerability to sexual exploitation were:

- Child headed families/households
- Children taken advantage by their mothers' boyfriends
- Dating an older person

- Minimal parental supervision
- Overcrowded houses, informal settlements where a lot of people use the same communal outside toilet, leaving young children in the care of teenage boys
- Substance abuse such as drugs and alcohol abuse
- School learners having to walk via dangerous routes
- Peer pressure

● **Factors about the child identified as increasing vulnerability specifically to OCSEA**

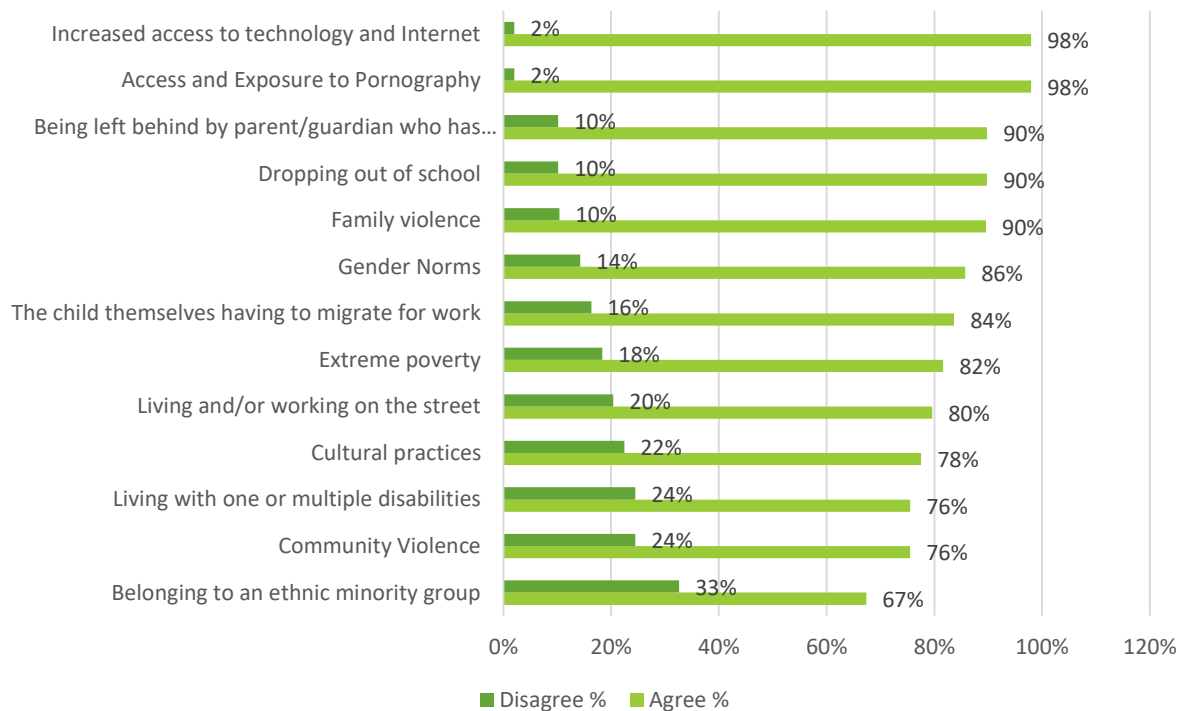


Figure 15. Participants' perceptions of factors about the *child* impacting children's vulnerability to OCSEA. N=49

When asked about factors about the child influencing vulnerability to OCSEA, respondents were in slightly less agreement. Here, the two factors rated by the majority as having an influence were increased access to technology and Internet (98%) and access and exposure to pornography (98%). 90% also agreed that being left behind by parent/guardian who migrated for work, dropping out of school and family violence had an impact on vulnerability to OCSEA. More than 80% agreed that gender norms (86%), the child having to migrate for work (84%), extreme poverty (80%) and living and/or working on the street (80% compared to 98% in case of child sexual exploitation) had influence. 76%-78% selected that cultural practices, living with one or multiple disabilities and community violence impact children's vulnerability to OCSEA. Smallest agreement, as in the case of child sexual exploitation, was found around the belonging to an ethnic minority group factor, with 67% agreeing.

When respondents were given the option to comment on other sources of vulnerability to OCSEA in their country which may not have been included in the survey options, they mentioned:

- Child-headed households
- Children owning phones/having access to the Internet
- Mother's boyfriend taking advantage of the child
- Unsupervised social media usage

When participants were asked about the **similarities and differences in children's vulnerability to OCSEA and sexual exploitation in general** they noted, among other things, that not all children are at risk of OCSEA due to lack of Internet access, that the protection from parents online is smaller as compared to protection from general child sexual exploitation and that children can be approached by perpetrators more easily online.

### Similarities

*"They both pose risk factors" (RA3-SA-36-A);*

*"It doesn't matter which race, class or gender you belong to; any child can be exposed or is subject to vulnerability and sexual exploitation" (RA3-SA-09-A);*

*"Most people in rural areas don't have access to the Internet so online pornography is limited but there is high sexual exploitation" (RA3-SA-15-A);*

*"Not all people have Internet access" (RA3-SA-21-A);*

*"Children are more vulnerable online because parents rarely know the technology children are using and children are easily accessed through various platforms. People impersonate children to attract communication" (RA3-SA-45-A);*

*"Children who grow up in impoverished circumstances/violent communities will have less access to Internet/computer and will not be so exposed to online abuse" (RA3-SA-08-A);*

*"Perpetrators are mostly known, live with them in the same house or community, school, church etc. and children are easily accessed. Not all the children coming from poorer communities have access to phones. Online abuse is more prevalent in certain ethnic groups in South Africa" (RA3-SA-49-A);*

*"For OCSEA to be applicable, the child must have access to technology" (RA3-SA-04-A);*

*"It involves access to smart technology. Not everyone can afford this" (RA3-SA-03-A);*

*"Because the children are innocent and get themselves tied up unknowingly to OCSEA" (RA3-SA-13-A);*

“Almost every child has a cell phone and access to Internet. Therefore, children’s vulnerability to OCSEA increases” (RA3-SA-22-A);

“Because the number of cases experienced by children differs according to the category of family background they come from” (RA3-SA-41-A);

“Children are generally a vulnerable group. The need to explore and experiment makes them more vulnerable to OCSEA but also sexual exploitation is also prevalent offline as much as it is online” (RA3-SA-25-A);

“If children have no access to online platforms that could expose them to the online sexual exploitation then this may lower their risk that general vulnerability” (RA3-SA-29-A);

“Most OCSEA cases are likely to lead to sexual exploitation generally, where children are coerced to meeting up with the perpetrators, thus increasing their vulnerability to general sexual exploitation” (RA3-SA-02-A).

- Factors about the society identified as increasing vulnerability to general sexual abuse (any types)

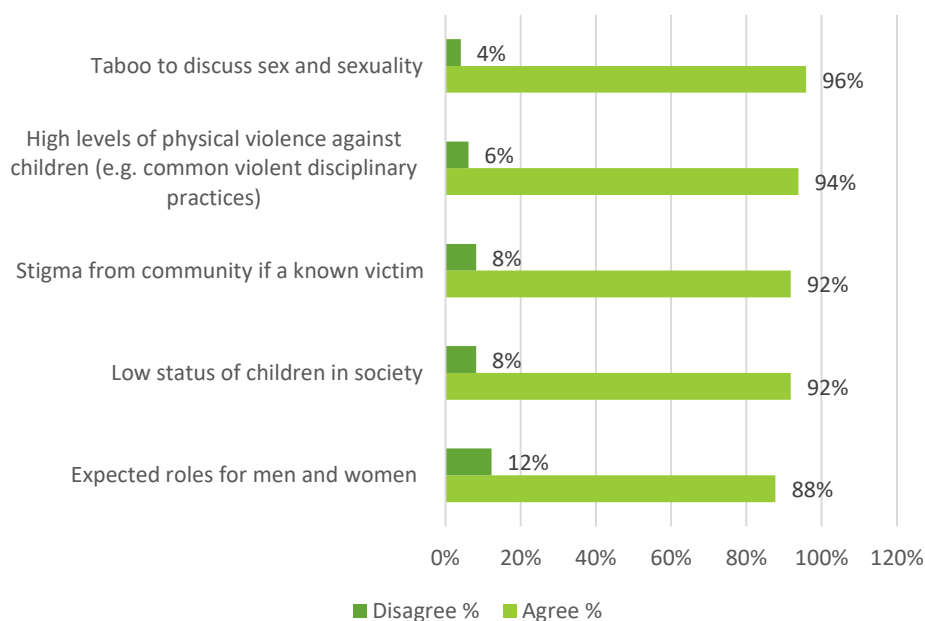


Figure 16. Participants’ perceptions of factors about the *society* impacting children’s vulnerability to general sexual exploitation and abuse. N=49

Broad consensus was found among the respondents regarding their ideas around which of the above factors about society can increase vulnerability to sexual abuse and exploitation in general. 96% agreed that taboos around discussing sex and sexuality and 94% that high levels of physical violence against children influence vulnerability to child sexual exploitation in South Africa. Nearly all respondents also

agreed that stigma from the community (92%), low status of children in the society (92%) and expected roles for men and women (88%) have an impact.

Additional factors about the society mentioned by participants that they believed increased children’s vulnerability to sexual exploitation included:

- Children growing up with their grandmothers who might be uneducated
- Expectations - children must be submissive towards adults
- Lack of knowledge about sexual exploitation of children
- Lack of parental supervision
- Not doing well at school as a girl child
- Single parent households
- Unemployment

● **Factors about the society identified as increasing vulnerability to OCSEA**

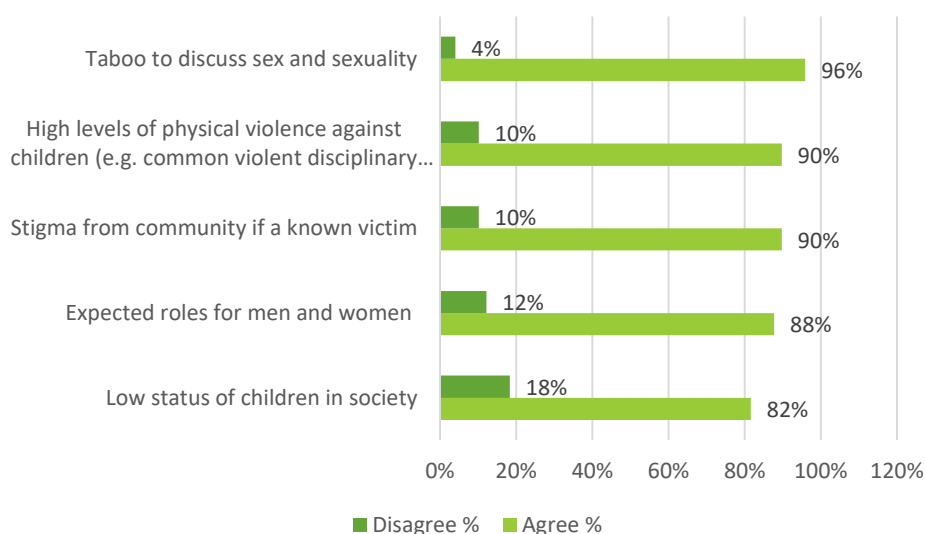


Figure 17. Participants’ perceptions of factors about the *society* impacting children’s vulnerability to OCSEA. N=49

Slightly lower agreement, however still very high, was observed when participants were asked to identify if the same factors are sources of increased vulnerability to online sexual abuse (Figure 17). As in the case of child sexual exploitation, the highest agreement was found around the ‘taboos around discussing sex and sexuality’ factor - 96% agreed that it increases vulnerability to OCSEA. 90% agreed that high levels of physical violence and stigma from the community have an influence. Expected roles for men and women were rated the same as in the case of child sexual exploitation (88% agreed), however, 82% of frontline workers agreed that ‘low status of children in society’ influences vulnerability to OCSEA, compared to 92% who agreed with this factor when asked about child sexual exploitation in general.

When respondents were given the option to comment on other sources of vulnerability to OCSEA in their country, which may not have been included in the survey options, they mentioned similar factors than in case of general child sexual exploitation:

- Children growing up with their grandmothers who might be uneducated
- Parent's divorce
- Lack of knowledge about sexual exploitation
- Parents not monitoring children on social media
- Single parent households
- Teachers taking advantage of children who are doing well

When participants were asked specifically **why societal factors increase vulnerability to OCSEA differently to sexual exploitation generally**, they further discussed sex being taboo which leads to children seeking answers online, that children from wealthier families can become more subject to OCSEA because of easier Internet access and that children who don't feel accepted at home/in the community seek that acceptance online. Some of the responses included:

*"More access to children via various platforms. Children are lured into exploitative situations by "peers" and when seeking answers to questions that the trusted adults in their lives don't give or understand" (RA3-SA-45-A);*

*"Socioeconomic levels and poverty play a role. It would be more the people with money who have access to phones, laptops, WIFI, etc. who would engage in such behaviour" (RA3-SA-49-A);*

*"Because it is mostly seen as a taboo to even talk about the different factors that leads to sexual exploitation in our communities, therefore people still lack knowledge about it" (RA3-SA-41-A);*

*"Children may feel accepted and loved via the use of OCSEA if they do not get the attention required. Children are uneducated about OCSEA" (RA3-SA-20-A);*

*"If children have no access to online platforms it may lower their risk to online sexual exploitation" (RA3-SA-29-A);*

*"In society, children are made more aware of sex and sexuality, resulting in them wanting to explore" (RA3-SA-09-A);*

*"In these cases, certain societal norms may nudge children towards online activity in their efforts to read up about things they disagree with or in an effort to find belonging to an online community" (RA3-SA-42-A);*

*"It is easy to pretend online" (RA3-SA-03-A);*

“The anonymity of online activities makes it “easier” to hide” (RA3-SA-08-A);

“The social media groups provide a platform for children to feel accepted who do not feel important, accepted and loved at home” (RA3-SA-22-A).

## Reporting

In order to explore what influences decisions about reporting cases of child sexual exploitation and abuse, participants were asked to indicate whether they believed particular social and cultural factors influenced reporting both on general child sexual exploitation (all kinds) and specifically related to OCSEA in South Africa.

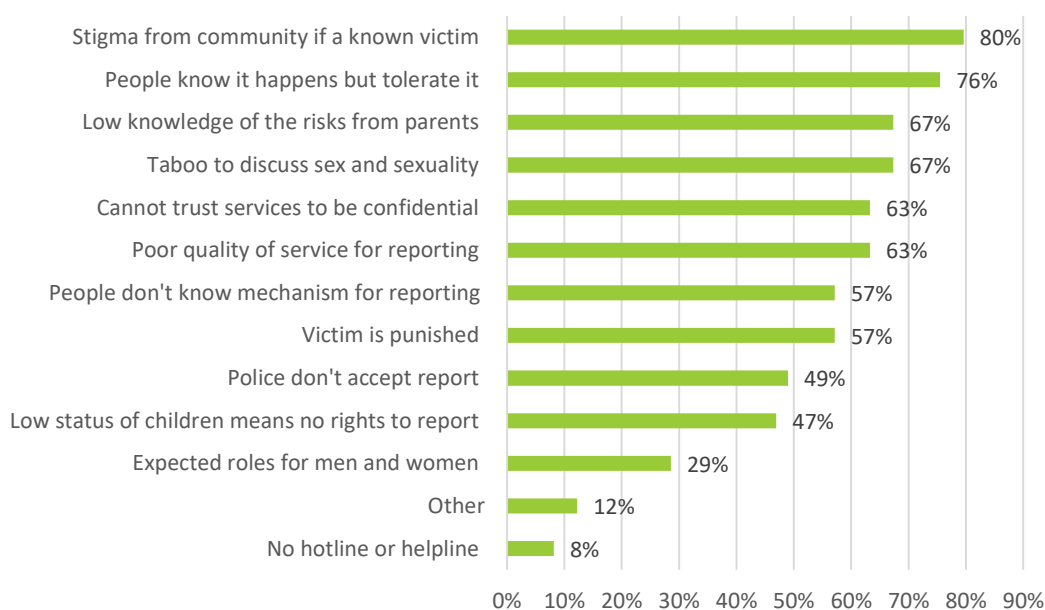


Figure 18. Social and cultural influences on reporting *child sexual exploitation in general* N=49

Figure 18 shows that stigma from the community (80%) and people knowing it happens but tolerating it (76%) were perceived by frontline workers as the main factors influencing reporting child sexual exploitation. Over 60% selected low knowledge of the risks from parents (67%), taboos around discussing sex and sexuality (67%), not trusting services to be confidential (63%) and poor quality of services for reporting (63%) as having an influence on reporting abuse. Slightly more than half of respondents thought that people don't know the mechanisms for reporting (57%) - “*People mostly in rural areas do not know how to access services and which doors to knock on. Children continue to suffer at the hands of their parents*” (RA3-SA-33-A) - and punishing the victim (57%) influence reporting in South Africa. 49% reported that reporting could be impacted by police not accepting reports and 47% by the fact that ‘low status of children means no right to report’. Factors rated by respondents as having the smallest influence from the listed factors were expected roles for men and women (29%) and no hotline/helpline (12%).



Outside of what was reported above, other factors mentioned by participants that influence reporting child sexual exploitation in general included:

- Bribing and manipulation
- Fear that the perpetrators will retaliate
- Lack of trust, fear – *“Lack of someone they initially trust to disclose to. Fear not to be believed. Alleged perpetrator is the breadwinner therefore reporting could lead to lack of income”* (RA3-SA-34-A)
- Insensitivity of the police – *“Police being insensitive when someone reports sexual abuse”* (RA3-SA-28-A)
- Perception of the issue as a private matter: *“Poverty and sexual abuse cases are not reported but dealt with in a traditional manner. Sexual abuse cases are not reported as perpetrator is the breadwinner”* (RA3-SA-33-A)

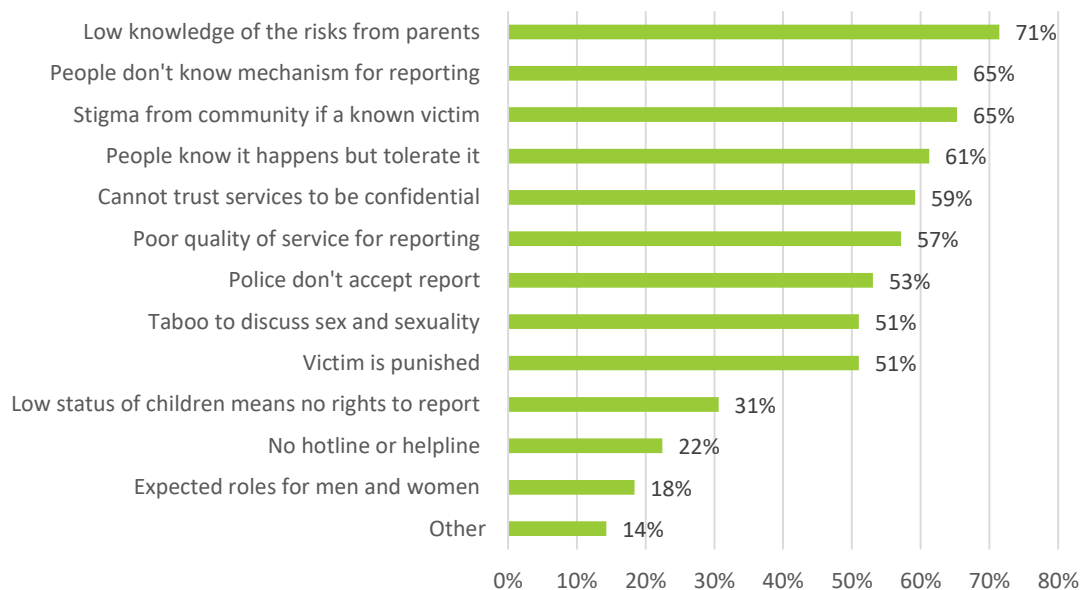


Figure 19. Social and cultural influences on reporting OCSEA N=49

In the case of OCSEA, factors selected as having the biggest influence on reporting were: low knowledge of the risks from parents (71%, slightly higher than in child sexual exploitation – 67%) – *“People don't understand OCSEA”* (RA3-SA-48-A) - people not knowing the mechanism for reporting (65%, comparing to 57% for child sexual exploitation) and stigma from the community (65% comparing to 80% for child sexual exploitation) – Figure 19. ‘People knowing that it happens but tolerating it’ was the next most commonly selected factor – 61% selected it (in the case of child sexual exploitation it was 76%) – *“It is not taken as serious crime in the society”* (RA3-SA-19-A). Between 50% and 60% reported that not trusting the services to be confidential (59%), poor quality of services for reporting (57%), police not accepting reports (53%), taboos around discussing sex and sexuality (51%) and punishing the victim (51%) influence reporting OCSEA in South Africa. A third of respondents also thought that the ‘low status of children means



no rights to report' (31%) factor has an impact on reporting. Approximately a quarter of frontline workers surveyed indicated there is no hotline or helpline for reporting OCSEA (22%) and that expected roles for men and women (18%) may influence reporting.

Other factors mentioned by participants that influence reporting OCSEA included:

- Children not being aware that the sexual act is a crime
- Children being afraid of being punished by parents
- Perpetrators blackmailing the victims/ receiving threats
- Poor services and being blamed: *"People are scared to even report because there is poor service after having reported and you end up getting blamed for the crime done to you"* (RA3-SA-41-A)
- One respondent working in a government-run organisation added: *"[People] Report to Facebook first"* (RA3-SA-49-A)

Another participant from a government organisation (however with no experience managing OCSEA-cases) summarised: *"OCSEA cases are still unreported. It's still a touchy subject in schools as many teachers and parents are not aware of the seriousness of the matter and the available resources they can access for help"* (RA3-SA-25-A).

## Availability of Support

Respondents were asked to evaluate the overall **availability and quality** of medical, psychological, legal and reintegration services for child victims of OCSEA in South Africa.

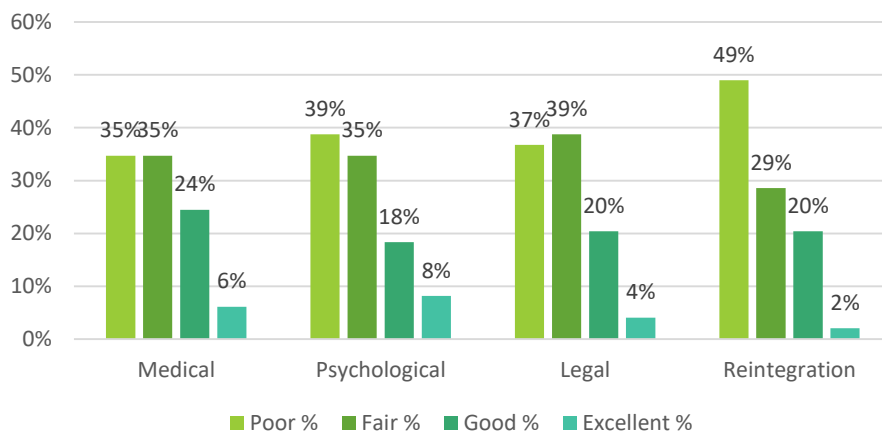


Figure 20. Perception of Availability of Services N=49

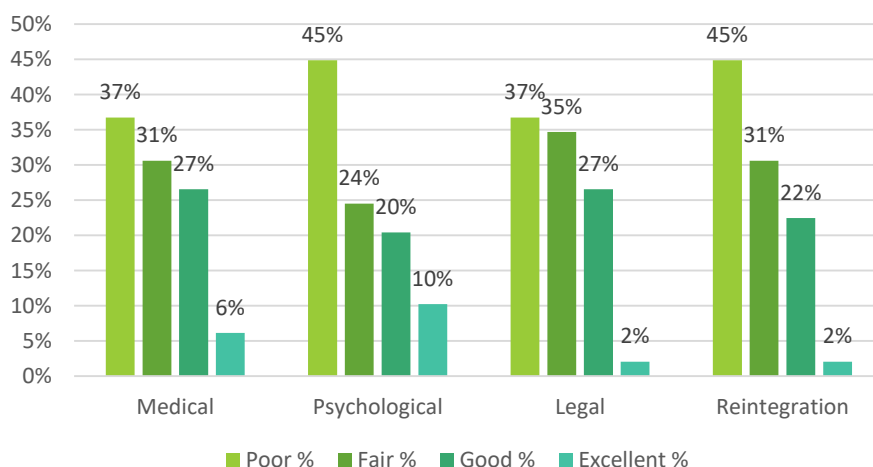


Figure 21. Perception of Quality of Services N=49

Figures 20 and 21 show that all services received mostly either poor or fair ratings both in terms of their availability and quality. Reintegration services scored the lowest – 78% of frontline workers rated their availability as poor (49%) or fair (29%) and 76% their quality as poor (45%) or fair (31%). The availability of medical, psychological and legal services received very similar ratings – around 70% of respondents rated them as poor or fair (spread fairly equally), around 20% as good and less than 10% as excellent. In terms of quality, psychological services received lower ratings than medical and legal services, with 45% perceiving them as poor, 24% as fair, 20% as good and 10% as excellent. This is particularly interesting

given that 92% of participants worked in organisations providing counselling services. The quality of medical and legal was rated by 37% as poor, 31% (medical)/35% (legal) as fair, 27% as good and 6%(medical)/2%(legal) as excellent.

When respondents were given the option to explain their appraisals of the quality and availability of services above, two frontline workers noted the following:

*“As much as victims can get the psychological help they need and all the counselling, if the perpetrators are still roaming around the streets then we have failed the victims” (RA3-SA-41-A);*

*“No funding for these children and private services are expensive” (RA3-SA-20-A).*

To better understand what affects the availability of support services for children, respondents were asked to indicate to what extent particular factors they believed had an influence on the availability of services for children.

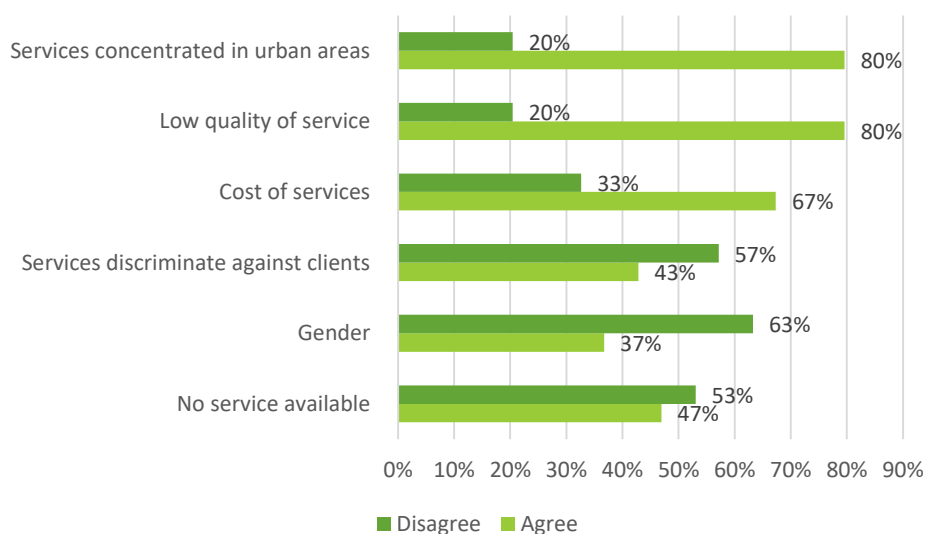


Figure 22. Factors affecting the availability of support services for child victims of *child sexual exploitation* N=49

Figure 22 above indicates that factors perceived as having the biggest influence on the availability of support services for children recovering from child sexual exploitation in South Africa was the location – services were concentrated in urban areas (80% agreed) and low quality of services (80% agreed). That was followed by cost of services (67% agreed). 63% of frontline workers disagreed that gender has an impact on availability of services and 57% that services discriminate against the clients. The biggest discrepancy was found in the availability of services – while 53% disagreed that there are no services available, 47% agreed.

Participants mentioned additional factors such as:

- Not understanding the impact of the services
- Fear of secondary victimisation
- Difficulty in the transport to and from the service organisations

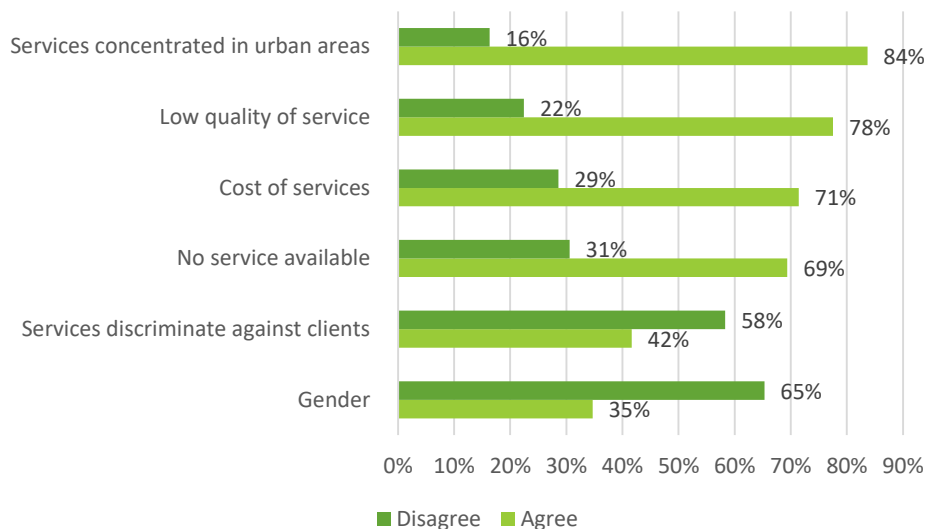


Figure 23. Factors affecting the availability of support services for child victims of OCSEA N=49\*

\*Note: The 'services discriminate against the clients' score is based on 48 responses

When participants were asked to indicate to what extent those same factors affect the availability of support services for child victims of OCSEA, the results were similar, with one slight difference (Figure 23). While the same three factors were selected as having the biggest influence: services concentrated in urban areas (84%), low quality of services (78%) and cost of services (71%) – *“Sometimes parents are not available to carry on with the healing and recovering process. There are few organisations that are free of charge, and they are also struggling. Government is not funding enough organisations to assist”* (RA3-SA-28-A) - 69% of frontline workers agreed that no services are available for child victims of OCSEA (compared to 47% agreeing when asked about child sexual exploitation). One government worker mentioned: *“There are not a lot of organisations that specialise in rendering support with regards to OCSEA”* (RA3-SA-49-A). Similarly, as in the case of child sexual exploitation, 58% disagreed that the fact that services discriminate against the clients affects the availability of those services and 65% disagreed gender has an impact.

Additionally, participants mentioned factors related to waiting time/distance/no resources:

*“Waiting the whole day at clinics, travelling long distances, police have no cars available”* (RA3-SA-24-A);

*“Limited accessibility on ways of reporting and most people in remote rural areas lacking knowledge and not being exposed to information to even know when the abuse is happening”* (RA3-SA-02-A).

## Investigations and Convictions

Participants were asked to estimate the amount of OCSEA cases they managed in the last 12 months and determine approximately how many of those resulted in investigations and convictions. It should be noted that those indications were merely estimates, not reliable counts of official cases.

27 participants indicated that in the last 12 months, at least one case of OCSEA they managed directly resulted in a complaint filed to the local police/judicial authorities (total 388 cases estimated).

25 participants indicated that in the last 12 months, at least one of the cases they managed resulted in an investigation (total 186 estimated cases).

12 participants indicated in the last 12 months, that at least one of the cases they managed resulted in a conviction (total 53 estimated cases).

The numbers of reported cases represent only a fraction of the number of OCSEA incidents that we expect are occurring, the majority of which continue to never come to the attention of social workers or law enforcement.

## Law Enforcement and Government Support

In order to understand frontline service workers perceptions of responses by local law enforcement on the issue of OCSEA, respondents were asked to answer, “Based on your work, which best describes local law enforcement’s: 1) awareness of OCSEA crimes; and 2) response to OCSEA crimes. Their responses to this question are depicted in Figure 24.

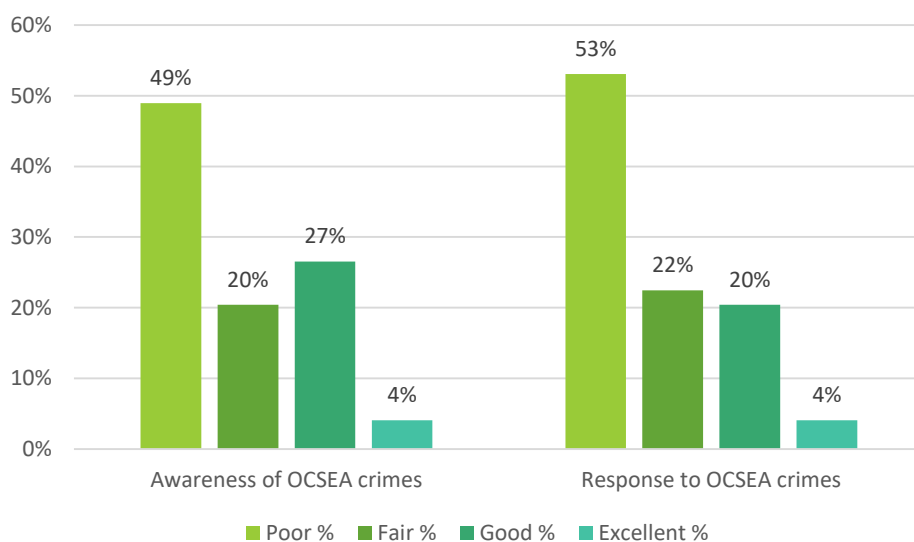


Figure 24. Participants’ perceptions of local law enforcement awareness and response to OCSEA N=49

Both law enforcement’s awareness and response to OCSEA crimes in South Africa were rated by around half of the survey respondents as poor (n=24 - 49% and n=26 -53%, accordingly). 20% rated the awareness as fair (n=10), 27% as good (n=13) and 4% as excellent (n=2). Similarly, 22% rated the response as fair (n=11), 20% as good (n=10) and 4% as excellent (n=2).

Frontline workers mentioned that the police do not have a specialised unit to handle OCSEA crimes: *“the South African Police Service does have a specialised unit that works on the technology part of pornography cases, such as scrutinising laptops and phones and procuring the pornographic material from it”* (RA3-SA-49-A), which might be influenced by the fact that OCSEA is not yet treated by law enforcement as a serious threat, which in turn might be a consequence of a lack of awareness raising activities: *“The police still do not take OCSEA as a serious crime and there is a lack of political will to raise awareness and put more funding towards addressing the issue”* (RA3-SA-25-A). One NGO worker also mentioned the need for support from government organisations: *“The NGOs they are really trying in making people knowledgeable about sexual exploitation in our communities but they need support from the government institutions”* (RA3-SA-41-A).

To better understand the ratings above, participants were asked about their perceptions of the quality of efforts to address OCSEA (Figure 25).

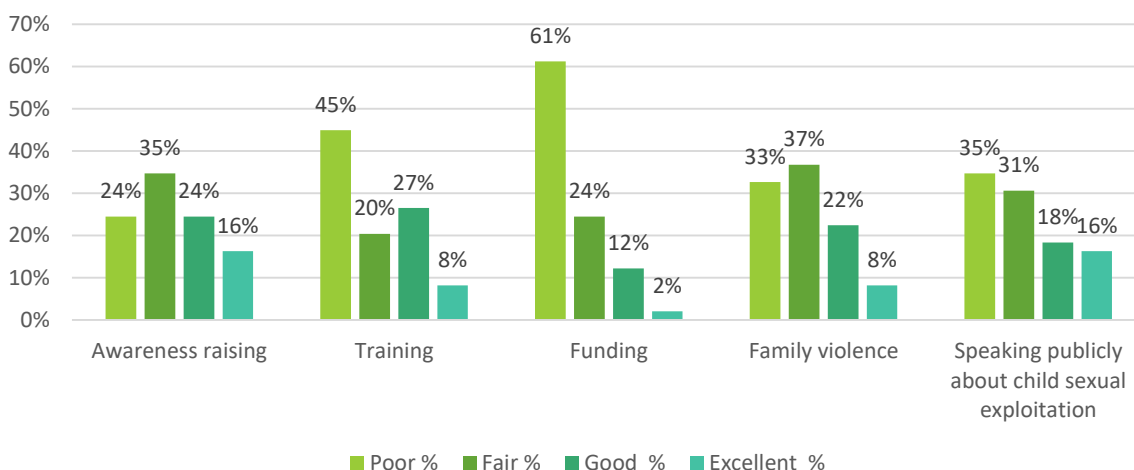


Figure 25. Participants’ perceptions of quality of government efforts to address OCSEA, N=49

Government funding to address OCSEA received the lowest ratings with 61% rating it as poor, 24% as fair, 12% good and 2% as excellent. That was followed by training, which was evaluated by 45% of frontline workers as poor, 20% fair, 27% good and 8% as excellent. The ratings of awareness raising activities conducted by the government were fairly evenly spread with 59% rating them as poor (24%) or fair (35%) and 41% as good (24%) or excellent (16%). Addressing family violence was given poor (33%) or fair (37%) ratings by 70% of respondents and good (22%) or excellent (2%) ratings by 30%.

Next, frontline workers surveyed were asked to assess the collaboration on OCSEA between non-government sectors such as NGOs, tourism companies, Internet companies etc. The results are illustrated in Figure 26.

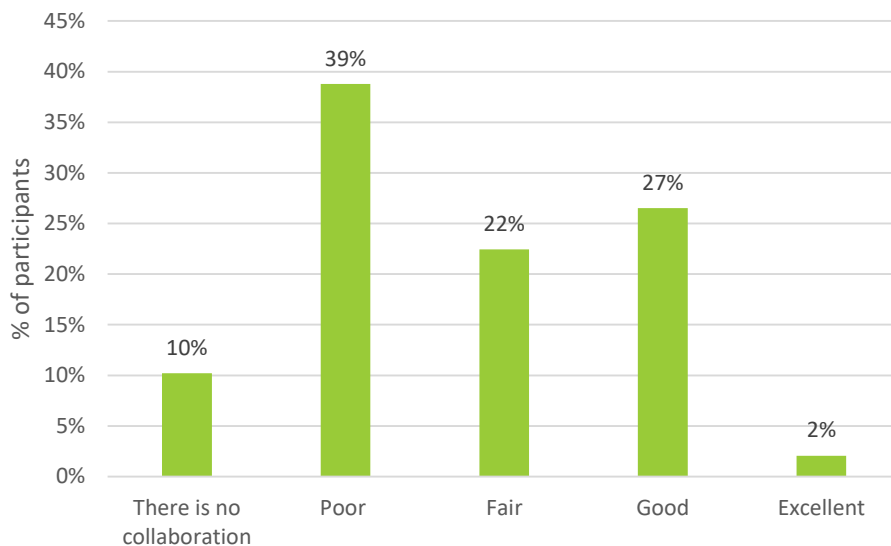


Figure 26. Participants perceptions of collaboration on OCSEA between non-government N=49

While 29% of respondents (n=14) rated the collaboration between providers as good (n=13 – 27%), the majority perceived it as poor (n=19 - 39%), fair (n=11 - 22%) or non-existent (n=5 - 10%).

## Public Awareness

Lastly, the survey attempted to ascertain the levels of public awareness around the issues of OCSEA in South Africa. In order to do so, frontline workers were asked to subjectively appraise young people’s awareness, parent’s awareness and the general public’s awareness of OCSEA – their responses are illustrated in Figure 27.

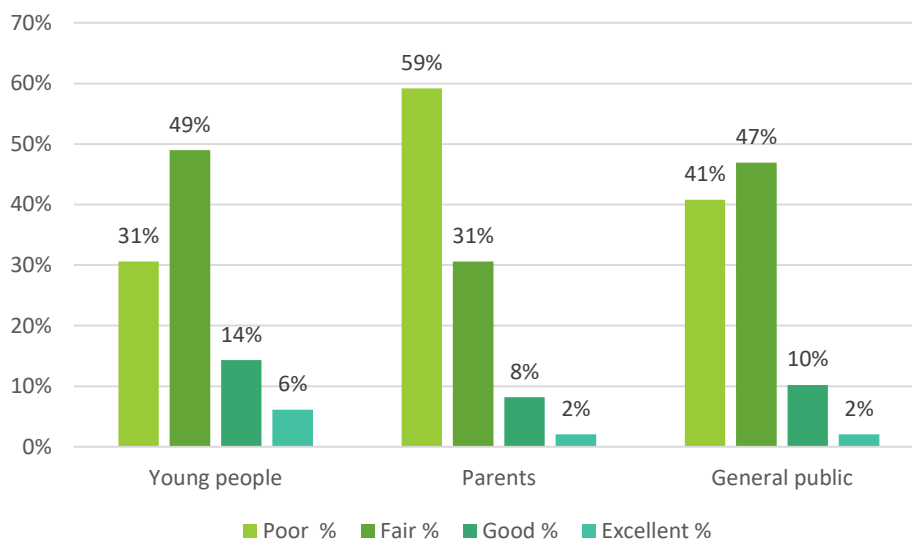


Figure 27. Awareness of OCSEA N=49

The majority of participants described young people’s, parent’s and the general public’s awareness of OCSEA as poor or fair, with parents having the poorest knowledge on the issue. Most rated their awareness as poor (59%) or fair (31%), only 8% as good and 2% as excellent. The general public’s awareness of OCSEA was perceived as poor by 41%, fair by 47%, good by 10% and excellent by 2%. Young people’s awareness was rated most favourably out of the three groups, however still very poorly. 31% perceived their awareness of OCSEA as poor, half as fair (49%), and only 14% as good and 6% as excellent. Those ratings, taken together with the ratings of law enforcement awareness, suggest a strong need for awareness raising activities in South Africa. As participants mentioned throughout the survey, OCSEA crimes are often not perceived as serious threats, both in communities and by authorities:

*“Awareness should be prioritised” (RA3-SA-38-A);*

*“More Awareness programmes can be conducted. There is room for improvement” (RA3-SA-49-A);*

*“People are so ignorant even to things that are a danger to children's life” (RA3-SA-41-A);*

*“The country is trying to give awareness of OCSEA; However, I feel like more needs to be done” (RA3-SA-14-A).*