

Alarming escalation in child sexual abuse online revealed by Global Threat Assessment 2023

- *WeProtect Global Alliance's latest report shows 87% increase in reported child sexual abuse material*
- *Conversations with children on social gaming platforms can escalate into high-risk grooming situations within 19 seconds*
 - *AI is now being used to generate child sexual abuse material*

17 October 2023 - [WeProtect Global Alliance](#) has released its fourth Global Threat Assessment Report, which revealed there has been an 87% increase in reported child sexual abuse material cases since 2019, with over 32 million reports globally (NCMEC). The findings underscore the pressing need for a coordinated, multi-faceted response to protect the world's children from this escalating threat.

The report, which provides critical insights into the threats children face online in 2023, also found there has been a 360% increase in self-generated sexual imagery of 7-10-year-olds from 2020 to 2022 (Internet Watch Foundation). Shockingly, it was also revealed that conversations with children on social gaming platforms can escalate into high-risk grooming situations within 19 seconds, with an average grooming time of just 45 minutes. Social gaming environments that facilitate adult-child intermingling, exchanging virtual gifts and public ranking systems, significantly increase these risks.

The research found a significant rise in financial sexual extortion, with reports of the harm jumping from 139 in 2021 to over 10,000 reports in 2022. This involves perpetrators grooming and manipulating children into sharing sexual images and video of themselves and then extorting them for monetary gain. Many extorters pose as young girls online and predominantly approach boys aged between 15-17 years via social media. This phenomenon has resulted in a string of cases where children have tragically taken their own lives.

New technology is heightening the threats that children face online. Since early 2023, cases of perpetrators also using generative AI to create child sexual abuse material and exploit children have been increasing. Thorn found that while less than 1% of child sexual abuse material files shared in a sample of offender communities are currently photorealistic computer-generated imagery (CGI) of child sexual abuse, the volume has increased consistently since August 2022. Last month, Australia, in a global first, put in place measures that require big tech companies to take steps to ensure AI products cannot be used to generate deepfake images and video of child sexual abuse.

Iain Drennan, Executive Director of WeProtect Global Alliance says:

“Our latest report shows the scale of the threat children face online. Online-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse worldwide demands our attention and action right now. New technological capabilities further exacerbate existing risks. Children’s safety must be non-negotiable. To prevent more children from coming to harm, governments, online service providers, charities and companies must step up their efforts and work together to drive change and protect children.”

Turning the tide on current abuse trends will only be possible with increased prioritisation and commitment from all stakeholders involved in the response, empowered and enabled by maturing legislation. To fight back, all stakeholders, including governments, online service providers, civil society organisations, and responders, are urged to:

- **Invest in Public Health Approaches:** Prioritise prevention and invest in interventions targeting those who have or are at risk of perpetrating or experiencing abuse. If we only invest in responding to the problem after the abuse has happened, we are failing children.
- **Centre Children's Rights and Perspectives:** Design interventions that empower children, remove barriers to abuse identification, and enable them to hold online service providers accountable.
- **Implement Globally Aligned Legislation:** Prevent offenders from exploiting legal loopholes by enacting globally consistent internet regulations.
- **Adopt a Safety by Design Approach:** Implement innovative approaches to technology design that prioritise user safety from the outset, not as an afterthought.

Additional findings:

- **Chasm in Children's Perceptions:** A significant gap exists between children's perceptions of online risks and the actual manifestation of online abuse, with evidence showing that perpetrators are often known to the child and private platforms as where most sexual harm occurs. This highlights the need for improved age-appropriate online safety information and accessible reporting processes.
- **Pornography as a Precursor?** The report highlights emerging evidence of a correlation between the frequent viewing of pornography and accessing child sexual abuse material.
- **Minority groups targeted:** Vulnerable minority and marginalised groups, including those based on sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, or disability, are disproportionately exposed to online sexual harm.
- **Global instability increases abuse:** Poverty, inequality, and global crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, and climate change, all contribute to the rise in child sexual exploitation and abuse.

Supporting quotes

Ernie Allen, Chair of the WeProtect Global Alliance:

“This compelling Global Threat Assessment is a call to action for policy makers everywhere. It is no longer enough to teach parents and children about the risks of today’s digital world.” said Ernie Allen, Chair of the WeProtect Global Alliance. “We must implement public health approaches such as including safety in the design of products, changing laws worldwide, and involving children themselves as we shape new solutions. This is a global problem and it requires a global solution.”

Intergovernmental Organisations

Najat Maalla M'jid, UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children:

“In order to make the online world safer, it’s critical to understand children’s perceptions of safety to tailor responses appropriately. The message from children is clear: we have a lot more to do to ensure the digital environment is a safe and protective space for and with them.”

Sheema Sen Gupta, UNICEF Director of Child Protection and WeProtect Global Alliance Board Member:

“The swift advancement of technology is straining child protection and justice systems, which in many countries are already stretched thin. We urgently need to focus on large-scale prevention – this requires governments to invest in evidence-based interventions to protect children from sexual violence and for companies to adopt child-rights-by-design principles when developing digital products and services to prevent potential harm. We also need strong legislation to protect children from all forms of online child sexual exploitation, future-proofed against rapidly evolving technologies.

Stephen Kavanagh, Executive Director of Police Services, INTERPOL, and WeProtect Global Alliance Board Member:

“The scale of child sexual exploitation and abuse online is a huge challenge for law enforcement globally. It is a challenge that continues to grow in volume and complexity.

“The same technology deployed to ensure our privacy online is also exploited by offenders to hide their identity and continue to exploit and abuse children. We must do more to ensure that children are able to use the internet safely and prevent areas of the internet from becoming a safe haven for offenders.

“This is why the work of the WeProtect Global Alliance is so important. This threat assessment highlights the importance of aligning internet regulation globally, of working in partnership to prevent the increase of child sexual exploitation and abuse material online and ensuring that we take a child-centered approach to fully understand the nature of the threat and gaps in our collective response.”

Etienne Krug, Director Social Determinants of Health - World Health Organisation:

“The Global Threat Assessment reveals, once again, that unwanted online sexual solicitation and cyberbullying remains a pervasive issue for children. 2/3 of cyberbullying victims also experience bullying away from screens, emphasizing the strong connection between violence online and offline. While acknowledging the benefits of internet access for children and young people, it is crucial to put an end to violence online.

“Digital service providers need to take action; in addition government and school officials, civil society organizations, faith based groups, parents and young people themselves also have a key role to play. It is essential to promote empathy, the nurturing of healthy relationship skills and policies that bolster the mental health of children in the digital realm and in the real world.”

Governments:

Commissioner Johannson, Home Affairs Commissioner, European Union:

“This threat assessment outlines the escalating rise of child sexual abuse online. The scale is increasing, with more than 32 million reports of child sexual abuse last year worldwide. The more vulnerable the child, the more exposed they are to sexual harm, abused children are getting younger and younger. I support the WeProtect Global Alliance call to action for prevention, safety by design and regulation – also in Europe. The European Union urgently needs to adopt my proposal to prevent and fight child sexual abuse.”

Julie Inman Grant, e-Safety Commissioner, Australian Government and WeProtect Global Alliance Board Member:

“Like our global partners, the volume of reported abusive content to eSafety continues to rise. In the 2022-23 financial year, child sexual exploitation reports more than doubled compared to 2021-22.

“The online abuse of children will only accelerate unless we learn from past mistakes and proactively 'bake in' protections by adopting a Safety by Design approach. Governments, regulators, the tech industry and civil society must continue to work together to adopt a child-centred, human rights approach to online safety. It's our collective responsibility to support children to reap all the incredible benefits of technology while protecting them from harm.”

Sun Xueling, Minister of State in the Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of Social and Family Development of Singapore:

“The international statistics in the 2023 Global Threat Assessment Report are alarming. We must remain vigilant against online threats to ensure that children can explore the digital world safely.

“Singapore has enacted the Online Criminal Harms Act, which empowers the Government to combat illegal online content such as sexual offences, and amended the Broadcasting Act to block egregious content such as content advocating suicide, self-harm or violence. However, government efforts alone are not enough. Online platforms have a key role. It is important that they establish robust mechanisms to protect children against harmful online content, such as to swiftly remove any child sexual exploitation and abuse material to prevent their further dissemination. Together, we can forge a safer digital environment for our children.”

Nicole M. Argentieri - Acting Assistant Attorney General, U.S. Justice Department's Criminal Division:

“The U.S. Department of Justice is dedicated to the WeProtect Global Alliance’s critical mission to unite the global community in combatting online child sexual exploitation,” said Acting Assistant Attorney General Nicole M. Argentieri of the U.S. Justice Department’s Criminal Division.

“The 2023 Global Threat Assessment is ambitious and comprehensive in its examination of the complex, evolving nature of online child exploitation and its global reach. The Department of Justice’s recently released National Strategy for Child Exploitation Prevention & Interdiction echoes the Global Threat Assessment’s message concerning the danger online child exploitation poses to society and the urgent need for us to stand together and take action to protect children from online threats.”

Minister of Security of Argentine Republic, Dr. Aníbal Fernández:

“Child sexual abuse online is growing globally. It is key to work on prevention strategies that include the active participation of children and adolescents, and harmonize regulations at a global level to address it effectively. It is imperative that all countries adhere to the Budapest Convention on Cybercrime to be able to investigate this crime transnationally.”

Lt. Colonel Dana Humaid Al Marzouqi, Director General of the International Affairs Office at the Ministry of Interior in the United Arab Emirates and WeProtect Global Alliance Board Member:

“The Global Threat Assessment’s conclusion paints a critical picture: child sexual abuse is on the rise, driven largely by proliferation of social media and technological advancements such as AI. In the UAE, we are very positive of the collective efforts that is happening in real-time, and we will always be advocates for change. We are determined to take action, to futureproofing our approach to children’s online safety by implementing the Model National Response on Child Safety, an initiative to build a robust protection system. We are eager to share our expertise with those committed to combatting child sexual abuse effectively.

In the meantime, law enforcement agencies continue to grapple with challenges in detecting and investigating child abuse cases. That is why we must collaborate closely with ICT sector companies to better understand the roadblocks and together identify pragmatic solutions. To achieve this, we need a platform that promotes alignment, knowledge sharing, and cooperation. Such a platform would empower us to adapt processes and inform policies, all in pursuit of our shared mission: safeguarding children.”

Tomoko Fujiwara , Director-General, Growth Bureau, Children and Families Agency Japan:

“The WeProtect Global Alliance report suggests that child sexual exploitation and abuse online is worsening worldwide. This reaffirms that the eradication of child sexual exploitation and abuse is a common international challenge. Child sexual exploitation and abuse is an extremely heinous act that has harmful effects on their physical and mental well-being and severely violates their human rights. It is unequivocally unacceptable. As the Japanese government, we are committed to addressing the eradication of child sexual exploitation and abuse through the ‘Basic Plan on Measures against Child Sexual Exploitation 2022’, centered around the Children and Families Agency, which was established in April 2023. Additionally, we are working to improve internet literacy and promote filtering to ensure that children can use the internet safely, based on the ‘Fifth Basic Plan on Measures for Providing Safe and Secure Internet Use for Young People’ (2021).”

Dong-Su Lee, Head of the Digital Sex Crime Content Review Bureau, Korea Communications Standards Commission, Republic of Korea:

“As technology advances and people gain broader access to the online space, the dissemination of child sexual abuse and exploitative material transcends national boundaries, presenting challenges to the regulatory efforts of individual countries. While expressing my support for the efforts of the WeProtect Global Alliance, which leads international cooperation to enhance online safety for our children, I anticipate that regulators responsible for online safety will come together and present a unified voice.

“This, in turn, would allow the global community to embrace the global sense of social responsibility as outlined in the findings of the Global Threat Assessment report 2023, to protect our children within the online sphere. I believe that the KCSC’s extensive experience in online content regulation which began in 2008, can assist the Alliance in formulating improved online safety measures.

Together with the Alliance, KCSC will diligently strive to provide a safer online space for our children.”

Dr Albert Antwi-Bosaiko, Director-General of the Cyber Security Authority, Ministry of Communications and Digitalisation, Ghanaian Government:

“The growing use of new technologies including AI-based technologies by perpetrators of online child sexual abuse is concerning to the well-being of children in this digital age. WeProtect Global Alliance’s Threat Assessment has become an essential tool to assist governments in safeguarding children online. It provides the Cyber Security Authority with the right insights needed to stay ahead of the curve and to protect our children from the latest trends and threats in online child sexual abuse through the implementation of relevant measures and policy responses, working in collaboration with both our domestic and international partners.”

Henri Verdier, Digital Ambassador, French Government:

“We salute the work and expertise of WeProtect in protecting children online. The assessment of the threat is crystal clear, with a net increase in the amount of child sexual abuse content, and an unprecedented diversification of risks with new forms of abuse, including financial extortion through the use of generative AI. Faced with this situation, any response must be based on detailed, granular, documented and quantified knowledge of these developments. Thanks to WeProtect, this threat assessment has been carried out with the utmost precision. The 2023 sets out a clear path to ensure that youth can fully seize the new opportunities offered by the digital world while protecting them from the new threats that accompany it.”

Technology companies

Cormac Keenan, Head of Trust and Safety, TikTok:

"At TikTok, our goal is to make our platform inhospitable to any form of child sexual exploitation or abuse. Safety by design is a core part of how we approach harm prevention and we're pleased to see its importance highlighted by the Global Threat Assessment."

Antigone Davis, Global Head of Safety, Meta:

“We share WeProtect Global Alliance’s goal of building safe, positive online experiences for young people and we’re committed to our sustained work with experts and industry on these important issues. Any instance of child exploitation is horrific and we’ve spent over a decade investing in strict policies, technology and enforcement systems to protect children and obstruct predators. As a result, we find and report more CSAM to NCMEC than any other service today.

“We’ve developed more than 30 tools to support safe, positive online experiences for teens, for example, we automatically set teens’ accounts to private when they join Instagram, we use sophisticated technology to help prevent unwanted contact between teens and potentially suspicious adults on Instagram, we use age verification technology to help teens have age-appropriate experiences, and we have parental supervision tools that let parents see who their teen reports or blocks, and to set time limits. This work will never stop, and we’re grateful to experts, industry partners and parents for their continued collaboration.”

Courtney Gregoire, Chief Digital Safety Officer, Microsoft:

"Every child should be and feel safe when online. Today’s report exemplifies the need for continued collaborative efforts from governments, charities/NGOs, and companies, to end child sexual

exploitation and abuse globally. At Microsoft, protecting children online sits at the heart of our safety efforts. Technology must be part of the solution and not the problem.”

Jacqueline Beauchere - Global Head of Platform Safety at Snap Inc and WeProtect Global Alliance Board Member:

“Online child sexual exploitation and abuse continue to morph and evolve, with new threats and harms presenting regularly. Sextortion, and financial sextortion in particular, is on the rise, reflected in the WeProtect Global Alliance’s latest Global Threat Assessment and Snap’s own cross-platform research. It is critical that governments, global law enforcement, the technology industry and civil society work together to detect, disrupt, deter and take action against child sexual abuse in all its forms to help safeguard victims and bring offenders to justice.”

Civil society

Michelle DeLaune, President and CEO of the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children:

"Ensuring children's safety is everyone's responsibility, and we all have a role to play in creating a safer world for them," said Michelle DeLaune, President and CEO of the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children. "When NCMEC launched the CyberTipline 25 years ago, we never could have imagined the current size and scope of online child sexual exploitation. As of today, we've received more than 140 million reports. These staggering numbers underscore the pressing need for a coordinated, multi-faceted response to safeguard the world's children from exploitation. Each of us plays a vital role in ensuring that every child has a safe childhood."

John Tanagho, Executive Director, IJM’s Centre to End Online Sexual Exploitation of Children, International Justice Commission:

“The 2023 Global Threat Assessment's revelation that child sexual abuse online is escalating reminds us that the time for change is now. Its finding that sexual imagery of 7-10 yr-old children is on the rise should outrage policymakers and corporate executives alike. The report underscores IJM's recent Scale of Harm finding that nearly half a million Filipino children were sexually abused to create images, videos, and livestreams for sale to offenders globally in 2022 alone.

“Children everywhere urgently need tech companies to deploy safety by design to augment justice system responses and prevent abuse at scale. Online safety regulation, especially in countries home to offenders fueling demand for abuse, is critical to create industry-wide action to protect children online. The Philippine Survivor Network and other survivors are advocating for online safety bills and their voices remain central in driving effective responses globally.”

Sir Peter Wanless, NSPCC Chief Executive:

“At the NSPCC we hear from children every day about how child sexual abuse is becoming almost normalised for them online and this report starkly shows the size of this global threat. With the eye-watering scale of online sexual abuse it is crucial we do not forget the impact it is having on children and commit to working together to prevent it.

“In the UK the upcoming Online Safety Act shows what can be achieved when there is a political will to protect children. However, online abuse is without borders and it is clear that we need globally aligned regulation with technology companies and Governments putting political, financial and technological resource into children’s safety online.”

Dr Manjeer Mukherjee, Sr Director, Arpan - Towards Freedom From Sexual Abuse:

“The Global Threat Assessment 2023 is out and has thrown some key insights for practitioners to ponder on and decrease the chasm between children’s perceptions of risk and how online harms manifest. Based on the Disrupting Harm study quoted in the report, in 60% of all cases of online abuse, the perpetrator was likely to be known to the child. This staggering fact dispels the myth that online sexual abuse is perpetrated primarily by strangers. This calls for the institutionalisation of comprehensive child-centred abuse prevention programmes which address both online and offline abuse by known people as often these operate in a continuum in both social spaces rather than in isolation.”

Karen Hollely, Co-Founder and Chief Operating Officer, The Child Witness Institute

“The WeProtect Global Threat Assessment Report provides ongoing insight into the global response to online child sexual exploitation and abuse. There is considerable work being done to address this issue, and it is because of these reports that programmatic efforts are being made in many countries and, importantly, by many children. Despite this work, however, we are all still racing against time to find the best possible ways to prevent children from being exploited, abused, misinformed and misguided online. One outcome of this work is the growing evidence that children who have strong relationships with their parents or other caregivers, where communication is open and welcomed, fare better than those children who don’t. None of us will ever have a full and complete understanding of the vast capabilities of the internet, but if we can sit down and talk about it with our children, we have a better chance of providing them and ourselves with the skills to navigate it safely and positively.”

Katsuhiko Takeda - Executive Director, ChildFund Japan:

“Unfortunately, the rapid technological advancement of this emerging threat is currently far outpacing our response capabilities. Furthermore, the closed communication channels between children and perpetrators delays our ability to respond effectively and provide assistance; waiting for a reactive response is simply too late to adequately protect our children. Therefore, it is imperative that all stakeholders, including children themselves, take proactive measures. Empowering children and allocating resources across all stakeholders is a global, regional, and national imperative.”

Laís Cardoso Peretto, Diretora Executiva, Childhood Brasil

“The absence of on-line protective regulation and digital education increases vulnerability in the digital spaces where children and adolescents interact”, said Laís Peretto, Executive Director at Childhood Brasil. “Children and adolescents are increasingly connected to the internet at a young age, comprising one-third of internet users. In Brazil, 92% of those aged 9 to 17 use the internet, but this access often lacks quality. Socioeconomic vulnerabilities, along with a lack of digital protection skills, also amplify risks, especially online sexual exploitation, and abuse. Addressing these challenges requires the establishment of a strong and effective network”.

Maria Oliveira, Co-Founder and COO, GamerSafer:

“The Global Threat assessment provides critical insights into the gaming landscape, shedding light on gaming-related risks and illustrating how offenders swiftly target young players. Online games have become an integral part of young people's lives and the assessment brings unprecedented data about gaming as a medium to find potential victims and highlights how fast offenders move

from first contact to the point of high-risk grooming. The prevention-oriented solutions support games and other key players to be more pro-active in their interventions to keep children safer.”

Susie Hargreaves OBE, CEO - Internet Watch Foundation:

“This exhaustive report gives valuable insight into the multiple and unrelenting dangers that children face online. These dangers are in no small part aided by technological innovation, such as AI-generated imagery of child sexual abuse.

“Right now, IWF analysts are seeing astonishingly realistic AI-images on the internet that depict children being sexually abused. This is why it is so urgent that governments around the world make tech companies accountable for ensuring their platforms are safe for all users, and ensuring that there is a built-in, safety by design approach to new technological developments.

“There needs to be a joined-up global response to internet regulation that would allow for the uniform application of protection safeguards by tech platforms. The world’s children cannot afford any further delay.”

Juliet Ohahuru-Obiora, Program Coordinator, ACSAI Nigeria:

“Reports on child sexual abuse material are increasing exponentially, we must ensure inclusivity to safeguard every child, irrespective of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or disability. Tech platforms must be held accountable in ensuring "safety by design" that is inclusive for children to combat the emerging trends of online child sexual exploitation and abuse. Children must be actively involved in interventions designed for their well-being, thus helping them to identify and address gaps to ensure greater impact.

“Harmonizing global legislation strengthens cross-border prosecution of online child sexual exploitation and abuse, leaving no safe haven for perpetrators.”

Vidya Reddy, Executive Director, Tulir Centre for the Prevention and Healing of Child Sexual Abuse:

“There has been a noticeable increase in the reporting of child sexual abuse cases in India, reflecting a growing societal awareness and the willingness to confront a long-concealed issue. This positive trend underscores the collective efforts to break the silence surrounding this pervasive problem, which affects various demographics and disproportionately impacts certain groups. However, the complexities surrounding this issue go beyond culture and extend to infrastructure gaps, such as lengthy delays in cyber forensic processing, contributing to underreporting.

“In this ever-evolving technological landscape, it is imperative to recognize that technology can be a powerful catalyst for change. Contemporary legislation, along with the task of raising awareness and ensuring effective implementation, supported by the necessary tools and structures to guarantee compliance, are vital. We hope that the Government of India will acknowledge the transnational nature of online child sexual abuse and adopt a collaborative approach to address it. The commitment of stakeholders, including Civil Society, Government, Law Enforcement, Judiciary, and Schools, is essential for creating a safer future for India's children.”

Survivors

Gabriella Kärnekull Wolfe, WeProtect Global Alliance Board Member and Sweden's Ombudsman against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of children:

"Child safety should never be an afterthought; it should be woven into the very fabric of our communities, laws and technologies. We have the tools to detect and even prevent online child sexual abuse. Do we want to seize that opportunity, or do we want to stand before future victims and survivors and acknowledge that we could have prevented their abuse - but chose not to? Along with millions of other survivors I spend every day of my life living the consequences of a society not acting in time. Our experiences make it abundantly clear: we need to take the chance to turn the tide."

Daniela Ligero, Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer of Together for Girls:

"Trauma from sexual violence in childhood lasts a lifetime. I know this because my sexual abuse began at the age of six and still, today, I feel its impact. Yet my abuse was not circulated on the internet, and I do not live in constant fear that strangers I walk past on the street have witnessed it.

"The same cannot be said for survivors of online sexual abuse. The rising volume and worsening nature of child sexual abuse material reports is sickening. Governments, online service providers, civil society organisations and all allies must urgently step up to turn the tide on this abhorrent trend and ensure the safety of our children online."

Rosalia Rivera, Founder of CONSENTparenting:

"As a survivor and a mother of children who are entering the age where they will begin engaging with the internet, the escalation of child sexual exploitation and abuse online fills me with dread. Digital technologies have the potential to unlock opportunities for young people all around the world, but they need to be safe. Parents, alone, can't keep kids safe online. Leaders must urgently prioritise online safety – for children today and for generations to come. We cannot accept anything less."

ElsaMarie D'Silva, Founder of Red Dot Foundation:

"Year on year, we are witnessing a steep rise in child sexual abuse online. Our online spaces have become flooded with child sexual abuse material and, not only are the numbers rising, the methods of abuse and exploitation are becoming increasingly abhorrent. As a survivor of sexual violence in childhood, I am demanding that those with the power to curb this trend act now to ensure children are safe and free online."

Kanga Rasi, Brave Movement's Africa Campaign Manager:

"We are living in a world where every child, including survivors like myself, who has internet access faces the threat of sexual violence, exploitation, and abuse. While technology has the potential to bring about positive change, we must not tolerate the presence of sexual predators on digital platforms, endangering our children and survivors subjecting them to lifelong trauma. Child sexual violence online is an urgent global crisis that transcends boundaries and necessitates a united global response."

Prof S Caroline Taylor, leading expert and consultant in the field of child and adult sexual violence:

“Images and videos of children being raped, sexually assaulted and tortured have been allowed to flood the internet. The vast majority of these images involve prepubescent children and a staggering 40% of images and videos involve infants, toddlers and babies. Accountability by internet providers on detection of this heinous criminal material is critical and I am calling on governments everywhere to enact legislation that imposes a legal mandate on internet providers to use their own technology to detect, report and remove these images.”

Rhiannon-Faye McDonald, Head of Advocacy, Marie Collins Foundation

“A child’s right to not be abused must be at the core of everything we do. This includes preventing their revictimization via images of their abuse being viewed and shared. As somebody with lived experience of technology-assisted child sexual abuse, I find it devastating that those who wish to sexually abuse children are being given the tools to do this undetected thanks to the increasing rollout of end-to-end encryption. The UK Online Safety Bill is a step in the right direction but it will only have meaningful impact if everybody follows suit – this is a global issue which knows no borders. Uniting together to protect children has never been more important.”

To download the full report, please visit here: weprotect.org/global-threat-assessment-23/

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Notes to Editors

WeProtect Global Alliance

WeProtect Global Alliance generates political commitment and practical approaches to make the digital world safe and positive for children, preventing sexual abuse and long-term harm.

The Alliance’s reach is unprecedented: 102 countries are members along with 66 private sector companies, 92 civil society organisations and 9 intergovernmental organisations. Together, they break down complex problems and develop policies and solutions to protect children from sexual abuse online.

More information on the Alliance and its members can be found at www.weprotect.org.

Global Threat Assessment 2023

WeProtect Global Alliance produces a Global Threat Assessment report every two years to assess and track the changing scale and nature of child sexual exploitation and abuse online, in order to inform and direct the global response. The 2023 edition is the fourth report in the series.

It aims to encourage evidence-based action by recognising the progress achieved to date, recommending solutions and measures based on the evidence presented, and highlighting opportunities to prevent abuse before it happens.