4TH ANNUAL CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE REDUCTION RESEARCH NETWORK CONFERENCE

Centre for Combating Child Sex Trafficking and Online Sexual Exploitation, Toronto Metropolitan University

Toronto Canada

9-10 December 2026



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DAY 1 – December 9th 2026

8:30 **Registration and Light Refreshments**
9:00 - 9:10 **Welcome:** Dr. Kate Seigfried-Spellar; Dr. Jennifer Martin; Dr. Kiaras Gharabaghi

9:10 - 9:15 Dr. Roberta Iannacito-Provenzano, Provost and Vice-President Academic. Toronto Metropolitan University

9:15 – 9:45 **PLENARY SESSION –** Dr. Marc-Antoine Therrien, Manager, Law Enforcement Directorate, Public Safety Canada / Government of Canada

9:45 – 11:15 **SESSION I – AI & THE DARK WEB**
CHAIR: Dr. Roberta Sinclair

9:45 – 10:15 ***AI in Dark Web CSAM Communities: A Crime Script Analysis***
Marianne van der Werf (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, The Netherlands) Abstract

10:15 – 10:45 ***Understanding AI/LLM Misuse Discourse in Online CSEA Opennet and Darknet Forums***
Sonali Tyagi (Purdue University, USA) Abstract

10:45 – 11:15 ***Digital Offending Trajectories and Deterrence: Insights from a Survey of Individuals Accessing Child Sexual Abuse Material on the Dark Web***
Samantha Lundrigan (International Policing and Public Protection Research Institute, United Kingdom) Abstract

11:15 **Coffee break & Poster session**

11:30 – 1:00 **SESSION II – FACILITATING OFFENDING ONLINE**
CHAIR: Dr. Kiaras Gharabaghi

11:30 – 12:00 ***Uncovering and Overcoming Offender Tactics for Distributing Child Sexual Abuse Material on File-Hosting Services***
Kelly Barker (Canadian Centre for Child Protection, Canada) Abstract Publication

12:00 – 12:30 ***Cross-Platform Network Analysis of Overlap Between Clear Web and Dark Web CSAM Users***
Joel Scanlan (CSAM Deterrence Centre, Australia) Abstract

12:30 – 13:00 ***Chasing Clout: Examining Longitudinal Pathways of User Engagement with Com Channels on Telegram***
Arjan Blokland (Netherlands Institute for the Study of Crime and Law Enforcement & Leiden University, The Netherlands) Abstract

13:00 **Lunch**

14:00 – 15:45 **SESSION III – INVESTIGATIONS: BIOMETRICS & EXTREMISM**
CHAIR: Dr. Jennifer Martin

14:00 – 14:15 ***Magnet Forensics***
Brandon Epstein (Principal Digital Forensic Specialist)

14:15 – 14:45 ***Conditions, Not Ideas: Victim Targeting in the Com Network***
Marc-André Argentino (Public Safety Canada) Abstract

14:45 – 15:15 ***Quality-Driven Hand Biometric Recognition for Unconstrained CSEA Forensic Imagery***
Thomas Swearingen (Michigan State University, USA) Abstract

15:15 – 15:45 ***Converging Harms: Profiles and Pathways of Individuals Associated with Nihilistic Violent Extremist Networks and Implications for Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Prevention***
Elanie Rodermond (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, The Netherlands) Abstract

15:45 **Coffee break & Poster session**

16:00 – 17:30 **SESSION IV – INVESTIGATIONS: COSTS AND WELL-BEING**
CHAIR: Jennifer Stanton

16:00 – 16:30 ***Comprehending the economic and financial impacts of online child sexual exploitation and abuse: Insights from Australia***
Jonah Rimer (University of Queensland, Australia) Abstract Publication

16:30 – 17:00 ***Virtual Global Taskforce - Health & Wellness of Online Child Sexual Exploitation Employees***
Kathelin Ireton (Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Canada), Dr. Roberta Sinclair (Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Canada) Abstract

17:00 – 17:30 ***Making Online CSA Investigations More Effective and Child Centred: Learnings and Recommendations from the SALVUS Project***
Birte Lenaers (Crime & Society Research Group, Belgium), Ingrida Milkaite (Crime & Society Research Group, Belgium), Rosamunde Van Brakel (Crime & Society Research Group, Belgium) Abstract

19:00 Conference Dinner & Social (pre-registration required)

JOEY Eaton Centre
1 Dundas St W, Toronto, ON M5G 1Z3

DAY 2 – December 10th 2026

8:30 ***Light Refreshments***

9:00 – 9:10 ***Welcome Back:*** Dr. Kate Seigfried-Spellar; Dr. Jennifer Martin; Dr. Kiaras Gharabaghi

9:10 – 9:20 ***Family Services of Peel***
Sandra Rupnarian (Executive Director)

9:20 – 9:30 ***The Chelsea Hotel Toronto***
Jim Stewart (Director of People and Culture)

09:30 – 11:00 **SESSION V – TREATMENT AND REHABILITATION OF OFFENDERS**
CHAIR: Dr. Roberta Sinclair

9:30 – 10:00 ***Rethinking Child Exploitation Risk and Contact Offending***
Chad M. S. Steel (George Mason University, USA) Abstract

10:00 – 10:30 ***The Modus Operandi of the Child Sexual Offender: What Tactics do Offenders Use to Approach Children Online and In Person?***
Sarah Napier (Australian Institute of Criminology, Australia) Abstract

10:30 – 11:00 ***Early Cyber Grooming Detection***
Patrick Bours (Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Norway) Abstract

11:00 **Coffee break & Poster session**

11:15 – 12:15 **SESSION VI – ROLE OF CULTURAL NORMS IN EXPLOITATION**
CHAIR: Dr. Kiaras Gharabaghi

11:15 – 11:45 ***Weaponizing Spiritual Belief in the Digital Age: AI-Enabled Sextortion and the Exploitation Economy Targeting Africa's Children***
Emmanuel Adinkra (Ghana Internet Safety Foundation, Ghana) Abstract

11:45 – 12:15 ***Comprehensive Mapping of the Ecosystems for Addressing Tech-Facilitated CSEA in Kenya and Philippines***
Mark Kavenagh (Evident, Thailand) Abstract

12:15 - 13:15 ***Lunch***

13:15 – 13:30 ***MSAB***
Jaime Hauseman (Area Sales Manager)

13:30 – 15:00 **SESSION VII – PREVENTING VICTIMISATION AND SUPPORTING FAMILIES**
CHAIR: Dr. Jennifer Martin

13:30 – 14:00 ***Healing the He, She and They: Perspectives of Swedish Professionals on Supporting LGBTQIA+ Youth Victims of Online Child Sexual Abuse***
Anette Birgersson (Marie Cederschölds University, Sweden) Abstract Publication

14:00 – 14:30 ***When Online Exploitation Charges Disrupt the Family: Supporting Spouses and Children of the Accused***
Ena Lee (Victim Services Toronto, Canada) Abstract

14:30 – 15:00 ***Hundreds of Child Sexual Abuse Images Identified in Dataset Used for Developing AI Moderation Tools: Implications and Prevention Strategies***
Katelin Neufeld (Canadian Centre for Child Protection; CCCP, Canada) Abstract

15:00 – 15:15 ***Break***

15:15 – 16:15 **SESSION VIII – ONLINE BEHAVIOURS OF AT-RISK POPULATIONS**
CHAIR: Jennifer Stanton

15:15 – 15:45 ***Youth Perspectives on Online Safety, Disclosure, and Help-Seeking***
Ruth Leemis (Thorn, USA) Abstract

15:45 – 16:15 ***Dity Online: Experiences, Knowledge and Behaviours of Ukrainian Children and Their Parents in Relation to the Risk of Online Sexual Abuse During the War in Ukraine***
Anna Markovska (Anglia Ruskin University, International Policing and Public Protection Research Institute, United Kingdom) Abstract

16:15 – 16:30 ***Badge of Hope/Magnet Forensics***
Jad Saliba (Founder)

16:30 – 17:00 **Closing remarks: CSARRN and Centre for Combating Child Sex Trafficking and Online Child Sexual Exploitation.**

Presentation Abstracts

AI in Dark Web CSAM Communities: A Crime Script Analysis – Marianne van der Werf (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, The Netherlands), Marleen Weulen Kranenbarg (Vrije Universiteit), Arjan Blokland (Netherlands Institute for the Study of Crime and Law Enforcement, Leiden University), Anne De Hingh (Vrije Universiteit), & Arno Lodder (Vrije Universiteit)

Background: The emergence of Artificial Intelligence has led to an increase in virtual Child Sexual Abuse Material, specifically known as AI-generated CSAM (AI CSAM). To better understand the potential threat of this phenomenon we need to understand how forum users within dark web CSAM communities started to discuss AI over the years.

Method: To do so, we examine a dataset of 36 forums from 2012 to 2025. Preliminary observations indicate the existence of multiple forums and subforums in which users actively discuss AI-generated content, engaging in conversations that address both the underlying models and the outputs they produce. In this study, we further conduct a qualitative analysis of posts within these forums.

Results: Initial exploration of these posts shows a high volume of activity concentrated in AI-focused subforums. From these analyses, it is clear that it has become easier for anyone with basic technical skills to gain access to this illegal material. Initial findings indicate that criminal behaviour is rationalized within these communities through the use of neutralization techniques.

Conclusion: During the presentation, we will present a comprehensive analyses of the narratives through which forum users interpret and frame the creation and use of AI-generated CSAM.
Return to Agenda

Understanding AI/LLM Misuse Discourse in Online CSEA Opennet and Darknet Forums – Sonali Tyagi (Purdue University, USA), Kathryn C. Seigfried-Spellar (Michigan State University), Marcus Rogers (Purdue University), Tatiana Ringenberg (Purdue University), & Chad M. S. Steel (George Mason University)

Background: Generative AI and large language models (LLMs) are rapidly reshaping the online environments where child sexual exploitation and abuse (CSEA) risks arise, yet empirical research on how these technologies are discussed across opennet and darknet communities remains limited. The goal is to help law enforcement and child-safety stakeholders understand how bad actors discuss, normalize, and operationalize AI/LLM in CSEA-related contexts across opennet and darknet.

Objective: This study examined text-based posts and comments from selected opennet and darknet forums. Opennet data was drawn from Reddit, with more than 50 subreddits identified using keywords such as "not safe for work"(NSFW) and "AI". From the darknet, three known CSEA darknet forums were included. The study relied solely on publicly available text; no users were contacted, and no images, videos, or other illegal media were collected.

Method: A researcher-developed coding framework was used to train and classify over 300K anonymized posts on: post intent (e.g., sharing experience), AI/LLM-related use case (e.g., AI-CSAM distribution), perceived technical skill level (e.g., low), illegal intent (e.g., explicit), CSEA content (e.g., bestiality), and AI/LLM tools (e.g., Grok).

Results: Preliminary results indicate that the design and culture of opennet and darknet forums foster markedly different conditions for participation. Opennet discussions tend to be cautious and speculative, often referring to the images as “anime art” or “child-like.” As expected, darknet forums support detailed, explicit exchanges by bad actors about illicit AI uses, including AICSAM, deepfakes, and operational security. Additionally, the study’s final results, limitations, and future implications will be discussed.
Return to Agenda

Digital Offending Trajectories and Deterrence: Insights from a Survey of Individuals Accessing Child Sexual Abuse Material on the Dark Web – Samantha Lundrigan (International Policing and Public Protection Research Institute, United Kingdom) & Lea Kamitz (Anglia Ruskin University)

Background: Digital technologies play a key role in shaping patterns of sexual violence against children, including the production, distribution, and consumption of child sexual abuse material (CSAM). Whilst technology has increased access to harmful content, it also presents opportunities for early intervention and prevention. However, limited empirical research has examined how individuals who access CSAM navigate different digital spaces over time or how technology-based deterrence strategies may influence behaviour.

Objective: This study examines online offending trajectories across different digital spaces, as well as perceptions of online warning messages among individuals who report accessing CSAM.

Method: An anonymous online survey was disseminated through dark web forums used to access and share CSAM and 4,162 individuals at least partially completed this survey. We collected detailed information on participants' demographics, online behaviours, movement across digital platforms as part of their offending journey, prior attempts to stop viewing CSAM, and attitudes towards different deterrence and support-oriented warning messages.

Results: The results describe how individuals move across online environments, often from more accessible surface web spaces to increasingly concealed and encrypted platforms. We also examined factors associated with attempts to desist from CSAM use and perceived effectiveness of different messages aimed at interrupting offending behaviour and increasing help-seeking. Findings indicate that many participants report ambivalence towards their behaviour, including frequently reported efforts to stop accessing CSAM, suggesting critical opportunities for intervention. Such intervention may be particularly effective in the form of messages that emphasise harm prevention and access to support which were consistently rated as more effective in deterring individuals from accessing CSAM than those relying solely on criminal threats.

Conclusion: This research contributes evidence from a population which is underrepresented in existing research due to the concealed digital spaces in which offending occurs. Unlike traditional forensic samples, many participants in this study are not criminal justice-involved and may therefore represent individuals who are more embedded in, and possibly more effective at avoiding detection within, the online CSAM ecosystem. The findings have direct implications for technology-enabled prevention strategies, demonstrating how warning messages and support-oriented interventions may disrupt offending behaviour, strengthening efforts to prevent sexual violence against children online.
Return to Agenda

Uncovering and Overcoming Offender Tactics for Distributing Child Sexual Abuse Material on File-Hosting Services – Kelly Barker (Canadian Centre for Child Protection; CCCP, Canada), Katelin Neufeld (CCCP). Jacques Marcoux (CCCP), & Oleksandr Podprugin (CCCP)

Background: File-hosting services play a major role in facilitating the online distribution of child sexual abuse material and child sexual exploitation material (CSAM/CSEM). For example, hundreds of file hosts across the globe have received millions of removal notices issued by the Canadian Centre for Child Protection since 2018. Yet, no known research has investigated how offenders exploit file hosts for CSAM/CSEM distribution, or the characteristics of the services they exploit.

Objective: We addressed these knowledge gaps by answering two research questions: (1) What are the tactics offenders use to distribute CSAM/CSEM on file-hosting services, and (2) What are the characteristics of file-hosting services that offenders use to distribute CSAM/CSEM?

Method: We thematically analyzed offenders' posts on 15 Tor-based child sexual abuse forums (Study 1) and quantified the characteristics of 93 clear web file hosts known to have hosted CSAM/CSEM (Study 2).

Results: Offenders distributing CSAM/CSEM gravitate toward file-hosting services that retain files for long periods of time, accept archive files, allow uploads from the Tor network, and do not require that JavaScript be enabled. Results also demonstrate that offenders on Tor-based forums discuss and use tactics to ensure CSAM/CSEM remains available for download on file-hosting services for as long as possible. Such tactics include "link protection" methods that hide CSAM/CSEM from automated detection.

Conclusion: Our findings highlight platform design risk factors and point to data-driven and cost-effective measures that policy makers and online service providers can implement to reduce the availability of CSAM/CSEM and the revictimization of children and survivors.
Return to Agenda

Cross-Platform Network Analysis of Overlap Between Clear Web and Dark Web CSAM Users – Joel Scanlan (CSAM Deterrence Centre, Australia), Arjan Blokland (Leiden University), Arttu Paju (Tampere University), Waris Abdullah (Tampere University), J. Tuomas Harviainen (Tampere University), Constantinos Patsakis (University of Piraeus), & Juha Nurmi (Tampere University)

Background: Researchers ethically compiled a dataset comprising 1.6 million internet users from infostealer malware data leaks. This dataset includes login session details and website visit histories, capturing engagement with sites on both the clear web and dark web that distribute CSAM. This novel behavioural dataset enables observation of offending activities among otherwise naive participants.

Objective: This research applies Social Network Analysis (SNA) to map the interconnectedness among identified CSAM users within a global sample of 1.6 million internet users. The primary aim is to identify central nodes and connection points that link clear web platforms to anonymous dark web communities.

Methods: The study models a bipartite network of users and websites, projected into a one-mode network using Jaccard similarity to control for the influence of popular websites and differential user activity. We then apply backbone filtering to reduce noise from ties occurring by chance. Community detection algorithms identify clusters of individuals with shared interests, and we determine the characteristics of each cluster by comparing intra-cluster website preferences with those of the broader network.

Results: Preliminary findings highlight the importance of tracking behavioural migration. The identification of structural links between "child-interest" clear web forums and high-risk dark web forums reveals a behavioural continuum connecting open platforms to the increased anonymity of the Tor network.

Conclusion: Mapping these structural overlaps details the community connections within the offender continuum. Understanding the connectivity between offender platforms is essential for developing proactive deterrence campaigns that intervene before users become entrenched offenders.
Return to Agenda

Chasing Clout: Examining Longitudinal Pathways of User Engagement with Com Channels on Telegram – Arjan Blokland (Netherlands Institute for the Study of Crime and Law Enforcement, Leiden University, The Netherlands) & Alex Slotnick (Independent OSINT Researcher)

Background: Across the world young people are being arrested for committing random violent acts, pressuring others into self-harm and suicide, (s)extorting minors, generating child sexual exploitation and abuse material (CSEAM), and sharing footage of this online seemingly without any motive other than chasing clout gaining notoriety in an online subculture that propagates violence and misogyny. This online subculture has been labelled nihilistic violent extremism (NVE), and repeated interactions with NVE content are likely to have detrimental effects on youths' wellbeing and could put them at risk of becoming offenders, victims, or both, themselves in search of online recognition.

Objective: Despite increasing attention from law enforcement, policymakers, and the general public, little is known about the way interactions with the NVE subculture develop, and how its basic features, like frequency, diversity, and seriousness, are distributed among its members. While previous studies have identified distinct pathways of online user engagement in cybercrime, far-right extremism, and CSEAM - types of crime and deviance that converge in the NVE subculture -, to our knowledge, this is the first study to analyze the development of individual interactions within the online NVE milieu.

Method: To examine long-term patterns of user engagement, the current study uses longitudinal digital communications data consisting of over 2 million messages posted in over 796 Com network channels active on Telegram between January 2024 and March 2026. The study applies finite mixture modelling to discern latent clusters in the data.
Return to Agenda

Hundreds of Child Sexual Abuse Images Identified in Dataset Used for Developing AI Moderation Tools: Implications and Prevention Strategies – Katelin Neufeld (Canadian Centre for Child Protection; CCCP, Canada), Jacques Marcoux (CCCP), Lloyd Richardson (CCCP), Mark Johnston (CCCP), Oleksandr Podprugin (CCCP), & Camillia Layne (CCCP)

Background: Researchers working on nudity detection models use or create datasets of nude images. When these datasets are the product of broad web scraping efforts, they often contain images that were collected non-consensually, constituting image-based abuse (Cintaqia et al., 2025). Though prior work has focused on adult victim-survivors in nudity detection datasets, no known research has studied whether these may contain child sexual abuse and exploitation material (CSAM/CSEM).

Objective: We sought to quantify the presence of content that revictimizes CSAEM survivors in a popular nudity detection dataset, "NudeNet". This dataset contains 711,319 images that have been scraped from websites that host user-generated content.

Methods: Using image-matching technology, we analyzed NudeNet for two kinds of images: 1) Known or suspected CSAEM and 2) material of minors that may not reach the legal threshold for CSAEM but is nonetheless harmful or abusive. Specially trained human analysts reviewed matches to verify the images and categorize the depicted content.

Results: We found 678 CSAEM images and 16 harmful-abusive images in the NudeNet dataset. These included 123 images of identified or known victims of CSAEM, 68 images focused on the genital and/or anal area of pre-pubescent children, and 134 images focused on the genital and/or anal area of post-pubescent children.

Conclusion: These findings raise significant ethical concerns for the research of, investment in, and regulation of AI. We will discuss recommendations to mitigate inadvertent revictimization of CSAEM survivors in AI research and advance ethical practices.
Return to Agenda

Conditions, Not Ideas: Victim Targeting in the Com Network - Marc-André Argentino (Public Safety Canada)

Background: The Com Network is a transnational ecosystem of youth-dominated online groups, including 764 and its offshoots, whose members engage in sextortion, coerced self-harm, the production of child sexual abuse material, and remotely directed violence. These harms are not primarily a problem of extremist ideas but a problem of conditions. Young people are growing up with fewer social and ethical norms that hold, fewer physical places where they belong, and greater unwanted exposure to real violence. Into that gap step online networks that offer belonging, status, clear rules, and a community of peers. The same conditions that draw young people into these networks also leave them exposed to targeting.

Objective: The paper draws on an archive of more than 1,800 Telegram channels and group chats and on sustained digital ethnography. It maps where victims are sought, the vulnerabilities actors exploit, the scripts used to secure compromising material, and the escalation from private coercion to the public display of victims as status-conferring trophies.
Return to Agenda

Quality-Driven Hand Biometric Recognition for Unconstrained CSEA Forensic Imagery – Thomas Swearingen (Michigan State University; MSU, USA), Daniella J. Ferrante (MSU), Richard Guest (University of Kent), & Kathryn C. Seigfried-Spellar (MSU)

Background: Digital evidence, particularly from mobile phones, is involved in most criminal cases. In CSEA cases, offenders commonly send sexts or produce CSAM imagery, which depicts one or both hands. Research shows that knuckles and fingernail beds can function as distinct biometric identifiers. This presentation will discuss the research and development of the Suspect Hand Biometrics Tool: a digital forensics tool that automatically processes images and videos to extract knuckle and fingernail bed biometrics.
Method: To evaluate the tool, we collected a novel dataset of unconstrained imagery to better reflect operational law enforcement data. The dataset contains 796 hand images and 629 hand videos from 40 participants captured with 3 different cameras in varied lighting conditions, hand placements, and camera angles while manipulating various objects.

Results: An important part of the hand biometric pipeline is the feature extraction stage, which not only locates a trait (e.g., a knuckle or fingernail bed) in a captured image or video but also assesses the quality

of the detected samples (i.e., their suitability for biometric matching). We present results describing the key features that distinguish high- and low-quality hand biometric samples.

Conclusion: These findings aid law enforcement in two fundamental ways: (1) rapid sorting of seized media to only include suitable hand biometric samples, and (2) real-time feedback during custody-suite capture to guide operators toward forensically usable images. These enhancements improve hand biometric match performance in operationally realistic, unconstrained scenarios by excluding low-quality samples and providing meaningful feedback during exemplar image capture.
Return to Agenda

Converging Harms: Profiles and Pathways of Individuals Associated with Nihilistic Violent Extremist Networks and Implications for Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Prevention – Elanie Rodermond (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, The Netherlands), Bettina Rottweiler (University of Nebraska Omaha), & Arjan Blokland (Netherlands Institute for the Study of Crime and Law Enforcement, Leiden University)

Background: Law enforcement agencies increasingly warn about online nihilistic violent extremist (NVE) networks, including constellations such as 764. These groups glorify violence, coercion, humiliation, and abuse, often blurring boundaries between extremism, cybercrime, and child online maltreatment. Their use of minors as targets, recruits, or participants raises growing concern for child sexual exploitation and abuse (CSEA) prevention.

Method: This study examines the profiles and backgrounds of approximately 120 individuals publicly identified through open-source intelligence (OSINT) as associated with nihilistic violent extremism (NVE) networks and explores how these characteristics may inform the prevention of CSEA and related online harms. An exploratory mixed-source design is used in which publicly available case materials are systematically coded using variables derived from established violence risk assessment instruments, developmental criminology, and CSEA-related vulnerability frameworks. Variables include psychosocial adversity, mental health concerns, criminal history and online offending behaviour. The study provides the first structured empirical overview of individuals associated with NVE environments and their developmental and behavioural trajectories.

Results: Findings are expected to generate insight into recurring vulnerabilities, risk markers, and pathways into digitally mediated violent and exploitative behaviour, including potential overlap with CSEA-related harms.

Conclusion: Together, insights contribute to a more nuanced understanding of contemporary online threat environments in which violence, coercion, and exploitation may converge. The study aims to strengthen earlier identification of at-risk individuals, enhance safeguarding responses, and inform risk assessment approaches better suited to preventing contemporary forms of CSEA and online abuse.
Return to Agenda

Comprehending the Economic and Financial Impacts of Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse: Insights from Australia – Jonah Rimer (University of Queensland, Australia)

Background: While there has been growing knowledge about online child sexual exploitation and abuse (OCSEA) since the 1990s, research on the economic costs of OCSEA remains nearly non-existent.

Objective: This presentation stems from a multi-phase first-of-its-kind Australian study into the economic and financial impacts of OCSEA, conducted through a partnership between University of Queensland and ICMEC Australia. It centres on a completed first phase with the objectives to establish a knowledge base and conceptualise the multifaceted meaning of OCSEA costs.

Method: Methodology encompassed a comprehensive literature review; mapping and identification of cost categories, cost types, people likely to be affected, and professional sectors involved; an extensive search for relevant open-source data; and creation of preliminary hypothetical costing scenarios.

Results: The presentation will focus on four areas: 1) detailing the 73 different cost types, which fit into six thematic groups, along with the professional sectors involved and people/entities likely to pay; 2) reporting what data are available, and missing, and for which costs; 3) presenting scenarios to demonstrate ways literature and data could be employed to predict costs; and 4) providing an update on Phase Two, which began in April 2026 and seeks to fill gaps in data/analysis, along with outlining potential ways this research could be actioned toward meaningful change.

Conclusion: Comprehending economic costs is crucial for a holistic understanding: this illuminates how OCSEA affects a multitude of people, professions, communities, and society, while informing how to better prevent and respond to OCSEA, in what ways, and through which public, private, and industry sectors.
Return to Agenda

Virtual Global Taskforce - Health & Wellness of Online Child Sexual Exploitation Employees – Kristin Duval (Royal Canadian Mounted Police; RCMP, Canada), Cheryl Tremblay (RCMP), & Various Members of the RCMP's Strategic and Operational Service

Background: The RCMP's Sensitive and Specialized Investigative Services' (SSIS) Strategic and Operational Services (SOS) is leading Phase 3 of the Virtual Global Taskforce Health and Wellness international study.

Objective: Informed by the research findings and suggestions for subsequent research established in Phases 1 & 2, Phase 3 focused on assessing the implementation of recommended promising practices based on impact and applicability.

Method: For this, an online survey was sent to all current and past law enforcement employees working in online child sexual exploitation (OCSE) units around the world to gain a better understanding of stressors, mitigation strategies and areas in need of additional research. A second survey will be distributed to non-law enforcement personnel (e.g. Industry, child protection services, policy, OCSE tip lines) in mid-2026 to gain their valuable and unique perspective.

Conclusion: The results from this survey will be presented (stemming from quantitative and qualitative analysis), including an evaluation of recommended practices for OCSE units to support the health and wellness of their personnel. The presentation will focus on the most up to date trends and mitigation strategies to enhance the health and wellness for OCSE personnel, but takeaways will also be applicable to child protection personnel more broadly.
Return to Agenda

Making Online CSA Investigations More Effective and Child Centred: Learnings and Recommendations from the SALVUS Project – Birte Lenaers (Crime & Society Research Group; CRiS), Belgium), Ingrida Milkaite (CRiS, VUB), & Rosamunde Van Brakel (CRiS, VUB)

Background: Online child sexual abuse (CSA) investigations are becoming more data intensive, cross border and technology driven, creating tensions between investigative efficiency and the rights and wellbeing of child victims. This paper examines how online CSA investigations can be made more effective while reducing harm, by integrating fundamental rights, socio ethical, trauma-informed and best practice perspectives.

Method: Our EU funded SALVUS project research combined desk research with qualitative work across Europe. We mapped current investigative practices, consulted approximately 40 practitioners (law enforcement, prosecutors, judges, forensic specialists and researchers) through interviews and focus groups, and conducted 22 follow up interviews with children's rights advocates, civil society, victim support and hotline/helpline practitioners, and information security experts. The findings are integrated in our reports on human rights and ethical issues in CSA investigations, and a best practice synthesis report, which both inform our paper.

Results: The findings reveal recurring tensions around digital evidence collection, long term retention and circulation of CSAM, where children may be re traumatised by repeated contact with authorities or by knowledge that the abuse material continues to circulate. Research highlighted both the potential and the risks of automated and AI supported tools, including for AI generated CSAM, undercover work and large scale triage. We also identified gaps in trauma informed interviewing, child friendly reporting pathways, platform cooperation, support for victims and families, as well as organisational safeguards and investigator training.

Conclusion: The paper proposes a set of victim centred, trauma-informed and harm sensitive best practice recommendations for online CSA investigations, covering evidence governance, safeguards for automated tools, undercover and cross border work, and multi actor cooperation. It argues that more effective CSA investigations require treating children as rights holders rather than only sources of evidence, aligning with CSARRN workshop's focus on innovative investigatory methods and support for victim survivors.
Return to Agenda

Rethinking Child Exploitation Risk and Contact Offending – Chad M. S. Steel (George Mason University, USA)

Background: Historically, research and legal structures for Child Sexual Exploitation Material (CSEM) offenses centered on the premise that content represented a direct contact offense, prioritizing physical abuse. Though the digital shift expanded victimization, the field continues to rely on this contact-centric paradigm for offender typologies, risk assessment, and law. The majority of new CSEM is now produced without a contact offense, primarily through self-generation and Artificial Intelligence (AI). Additionally, new, highly damaging modalities of online sexual exploitation are emerging, including sextortion, extreme collectivist live streaming, and virtual sexual encounters. These new paradigms may pose a greater psychological risk than direct contact offending, and AI CSEM requires us to rethink the impact of consent. These new behaviors do not map easily to the traditional online-only, mixed, or contact models.

Objective: The paper critically examines limitations of current risk models, noting their limitations in not incorporating self-generated/AI content or shifting usage modalities like livestreaming. Addressing the evolving CSEM problem requires a rethinking of existing approaches.

Method: In this research, a survey evaluating the public's perceptions of risk and victimization related to several vignettes including both classical and new offending modalities is being conducted and will be analyzed and presented to establish which new activities are perceived as the most harmful across multiple axes, such as consent, direct interaction, and offender age, rather than a single CSAM-to-contact offending spectrum.

Conclusion: New progression models that evaluate harm across multiple axes (e.g., consent, direct interaction, offender age) rather than a single contact-offending spectrum are proposed.
Return to Agenda

The Modus Operandi of the Child Sexual Offender: What Tactics do Offenders Use to Approach Children Online and In Person? – Sarah Napier (Australian Institute of Criminology, Australia), Laura McVey (Australian Institute of Criminology), & Aimee Wrightson-Hester (Australian Institute of Criminology)

Objective: This study examined threads on a darknet forum for online and contact child sexual abuse (CSA) offenders in the community to identify tactics or 'modi operandi' of CSA offenders.

Method: A qualitative thematic analysis was undertaken to identify key themes in the tactics CSA offenders use to offend against children.

Results: Forum users shared offending knowledge with one another, including giving each other tips for the best ways to approach and offend against children. CSA offenders discussed the 'best' jobs to gain employment in to enable them to work directly with children, how to converse with children in their neighbourhoods, how to develop relationships with children, and how to avoid detection when offending. The online environment was also discussed, including which platforms offenders believed were best for approaching children for CSA and exploitation, what content to discuss and language to use when chatting to children online, and how to avoid detection.

Conclusion: The study has important implications for law enforcement operations in understanding the tactics of CSA offenders in accessing children online and in person. The findings can also inform primary and secondary prevention initiatives, including educating children, parents/carers and educators about the tactics of CSA offenders and using this information to bolster protective behaviours that prevent the sexual abuse and exploitation of children.
Return to Agenda

Early Cyber Grooming Detection – Patrick Bours (Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Norway) & Trond Stien (Norwegian University of Science and Technology)

Background: Most research in the area of cyber grooming detection is done on full conversations. Good performance can be obtained when classifying an online conversation as either grooming or benign. It is however important to determine if an online conversation is benign of grooming as early as possible, so that it can be stopped before a child has been abused.

Objective: In our research we have trained machine learning models on full benign and grooming conversations. We now evaluate ongoing conversations by updating a risk value based on new messages in that conversation. Whenever a new message is sent in a conversation, then this message is scored with the trained machine learning models, and the score is used to update the risk of the conversation. An innocent message, with a low output score of the machine learning model would reduce the risk, while a grooming message would get a high score leading to an increase in the risk of the conversation. When a conversation obtains a score over a threshold a warning could be issued, to warn the child of potential danger it is in.

Results: We have tested our new method, both on using the machine learning model to score single new messages or by using a sliding window. Results show that detection would happen very early in longer grooming conversations, but that there is a need to balance accuracy and speed.
Return to Agenda

Healing the He, She and They: Perspectives of Swedish Professionals on Supporting LGBTQIA+ Youth Victims of Online Child Sexual Abuse – Anette Birgersson (Marie Cederschölds University, Sweden) & Linda S. Jonsson (Marie Cederschölds University)

Introduction: This study examines the insights, and experiences of Swedish professionals working with children and adolescents, focusing on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, and other diverse sexualities and gender identities (LGBTQAI+) individuals assigned male at birth who have experienced online child sexual abuse (OCSA). This group often encounters barriers in recognizing trauma and accessing appropriate care. The primary aim was to assess whether existing treatment interventions are adequate or if specialized approaches are needed to improve recovery outcomes.

Method: We used a qualitative inductive design. Eighteen Swedish professionals working within the Swedish health care system were recruited through professional networks and social media participated in semi-structured interviews

conducted. All had experience with child and adolescent OCSA victims. Transcripts were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis to identify patterns, tensions, and potential clinical refinements.

Results: Findings show overlapping vulnerabilities for LGBTQAI+ children and adolescents assigned male at birth, including minority stress, neuropsychiatric diagnosis, and trauma histories that intertwine with identity exploration. Clinicians report that youths often present with broader psychiatric concerns, yet distinguishing trauma- from minority-stress-related symptoms remains challenging. Treatment requires careful tailoring to disentangle trauma responses from gender-identity development and minority-stress processes while ensuring safety, validation, and affirming care. Current interventions may inadequately address these intersecting vulnerabilities, suggesting a need for adapted or specialized approaches to support recovery and reduce retraumatization.

Conclusion: Swedish professionals perceive meaningful gaps in OCSA care for LGBTQAI+ youths assigned male at birth. Integrating trauma- and minority-stress-informed frameworks may enhance disclosure, clinician confidence, and engagement.
Return to Agenda

When Online Exploitation Charges Disrupt the Family: Supporting Spouses and Children of the Accused – Ena Lee (Victim Services Toronto, Canada) & Julie Moore (Victim Services Toronto)

Background: Spouses of those accused of child sexual abuse are often hidden or forgotten victims. Although they are not charged, they are directly impacted by the offence and experience shock, betrayal, fear, stigma, and isolation, often overnight. They have no formal system response and are not eligible for the Victim/Witness Assistance Program. As primary caregivers, they are frequently the only protective factor for their children.

Participants: Participants are the spouses of individuals charged with child abuse offences who received support through an embedded model integrated within the investigative process.

Results: This presentation explores how spouses are forced into high-stakes decisions, such as becoming a surety, often without understanding the legal implications. It examines how spouses navigate competing roles and loyalties, balancing loyalty to their partner, responsibility to their children, and fear of the legal system. It further identifies key crisis escalation points, like unprepared court appearances and child protection involvement.

Conclusion: Without support, spouses often rely on the accused as their primary source of information, which can reinforce manipulation or denial, increase confusion and mistrust, and delay protective actions. The embedded, trauma-informed model provides immediate, non-judgmental, and consistent support that no external referral can replicate in real time, reducing crisis escalation, improving informed decision-making, and strengthening child safety. Given the limited resources and research on this topic, this unique perspective fills a critical gap. When we embed support into the investigative process, we are not only supporting spouses, but we are also improving outcomes for children, for investigations, and for the system as a whole.
Return to Agenda

Youth Perspectives on Online Safety, Disclosure, and Help-Seeking – Ruth Leemis (Thorn, USA) & Amanda Goharian (Thorn)

Background: As technology evolves, timely research on young people's experiences with technology-facilitated child sexual abuse and help-seeking following harmful online experiences remains essential.

Objective: Thorn's Youth Perspectives on Online Safety is an annual survey designed to understand behaviors and attitudes about their experiences with self-generated child sexual abuse material, non-consensual intimate image abuse, and use of generative artificial intelligence (AI).

Methods: Web panel survey administered from November to December 2025 to 1,003 youth aged 9-17. Descriptive statistics are contextualized with data going back to 2019.

Results: Findings indicate that 1 in 2 minors reported a potentially harmful online experience and 1 in 4 reported an online sexual interaction. Blocking and reporting remain the most common platform-based responses to online sexual interactions among minors (87%). Offline support-seeking has increased since 2020 among teens who experienced something harmful online (+9%) or an online sexual interaction (+15%); minors aged 9-12 were less likely to seek offline support for potentially harmful online experiences (40%, -10%). One-third of youth (30%) reported turning to AI

when something confusing or distressing happens. Those with an online sexual interaction were especially likely to turn to AI for help: 15% sought advice from an AI chatbot after the experience, more than twice the rate of minors who were bullied or made uncomfortable online (7%).

Conclusion: Understanding how youth experience potential online harms, seek help from platforms and trusted humans, and use AI and other safety tools is critical for developing effective safeguards and improving support.
Return to Agenda

Dity Online: Experiences, Knowledge and Behaviours of Ukrainian Children and Their Parents in Relation to the Risk of Online Sexual Abuse During the War in Ukraine – Anna Markovska (Anglia Ruskin University, International Policing and Public Protection Research Institute; IPPPRI, United Kingdom), Oleksii Serdiuk (Kharkiv National University of Internal Affairs), Vitalii Panok (Psychological Services, Ukraine), Nadiia Lunchenko (Psychological Services, Ukraine), & Sam Lundrigan (Anglia Ruskin University, IPPPRI)

Objective: Children Online study examines online risks, including sexualised violence, among Ukrainian adolescents within the broader Ukrainian Longitudinal Study (ULS).

Method: Conducted in 2025 by an international research consortium, the study draws on a large-scale sample of 2,482 students aged 11 to 15 and 1,934 parents across three regions. Using validated international instruments (EU Kids Online, ORTS, SBQ, QOSSIA, CBQ), adapted for the Ukrainian context, the project enables robust cross-national comparison while embedding evidence-based screening into school practice.

Results: Findings reveal a significant gap in parental awareness: parents underestimate the prevalence and severity of online risks by three to five times. More critically, the study exposes a structural and ethical dilemma in responding to suspected cases of online sexual abuse. While longitudinal, non-anonymous data collection allows for controlled de-anonymisation and early identification of at-risk children, school staff lack clear procedural guidance to distinguish between normative online interactions and potentially criminal behaviour. This creates a high-stakes decision point: whether to report concerns to law enforcement, risking potential harm to the child and reputational consequences for institutions, or to withhold action despite legal obligations.

Conclusion: The study proposes a novel application of the SBIRT (Screening, Brief Intervention, Referral to Treatment) framework to online child protection. This approach integrates early risk detection, immediate psychosocial intervention, and, where necessary, referral to specialised services and law enforcement. By bridging the gap between data collection and actionable safeguarding, the Dity-Online methodology offers a scalable model for proactive, ethically grounded responses to online child sexual abuse.
Return to Agenda

Weaponizing Spiritual Belief in the Digital Age: AI-Enabled Sextortion and the Exploitation Economy Targeting Africa's Children – Emmanuel Adinkra (Ghana Internet Safety Foundation, Ghana) & Gabriel Ofori Appiah (Ghana Internet Safety Foundation)

Background: The rapid advancement of artificial intelligence (AI) is transforming the landscape of online child sexual exploitation and abuse (CSEA), enabling more scalable and sophisticated forms of harm. In Ghana, internet penetration reached approximately 69.8% in 2023 (DataReportal, 2024), increasing children's exposure to digital platforms. Concurrently, global reports indicate rising volumes of child sexual abuse material (CSAM), with growing links to African contexts (Internet Watch Foundation, 2024; INTERPOL, 2023).

Objective: This study examines how AI-enabled sextortion in Ghana, Nigeria, and Senegal intersects with cultural belief systems, framing this dynamic as the weaponization of spiritual belief to coerce and silence victims. The objective is to understand how belief-based manipulation shapes exploitation patterns and to identify gaps in response systems.

Participants: Participants include law enforcement personnel, trust and safety professionals, educators, and civil society actors engaged through semi-structured interviews, alongside documented case analyses and victim narratives. Using a qualitative design, the study applies thematic analysis to identify patterns in coercion tactics and response limitations.

Results: Results indicate that AI lowers barriers to perpetration, while belief-based coercion significantly increases victim compliance, underreporting, and trauma. Findings also reveal gaps in culturally contextualized interventions and institutional capacity.

Conclusion: The study concludes that effective responses must integrate technological, cultural, and psychosocial dimensions. A context-sensitive framework is proposed, focusing on prevention, protection, and recovery to inform policy, platform governance, and practice addressing AI-enabled exploitation in African contexts.
Return to Agenda

Comprehensive Mapping of the Ecosystems for Addressing Tech-Facilitated CSEA in Kenya and Philippines – Mark Kavenagh (Evident, Thailand), Sikharin Singsakhorn (Evident), & Manveen Kohli (Safe Online)

Background: Safe Online is the only global investment vehicle dedicated to keeping children safe in the digital world. As part of its evidence generation work, Evident was commissioned by Safe Online to analyse how national ecosystems respond to tech-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse (CSEA) in Kenya and the Philippines.

Objective: The case studies examine how system-level change occurs and what enables or constrains it across national ecosystems addressing tech-facilitated CSEA in Kenya and the Philippines.

Method: The analytical approach integrates the WeProtect Global Alliance Model National Response with Bronfenbrenner's socio-ecological systems model to examine how change occurs across multiple levels of national ecosystems. Data collection included a structured desk review and key informant interviews (Kenya n=19, Philippines n=15) with stakeholders from government, civil society and industry. Outcome harvesting was used as the primary analytical method to identify, verify and assess system-level changes and their contributing factors. Planned validation through in-country stakeholder roundtables and survivor-informed consultations will further refine and substantiate the findings.

Results: Preliminary findings suggest that system change is driven not by isolated interventions, but by the interaction of evidence generation, multi-stakeholder coordination and catalytic investment. In both contexts, progress has been enabled by the institutionalisation of coordination mechanisms and policy frameworks, while persistent challenges remain in subnational implementation, data system integration and sustainable domestic financing.

Conclusion: The case-studies contributes a systems-oriented framework and practical insights for donors and policymakers to catalyse scalable, sustainable responses to tech-facilitated CSEA.
Return to Agenda

Poster Abstracts

Assessing Parental Addiction and Child Sexual Violence in Child Welfare: A Critical Literature Review and Practice Framework – Jamilya Nurkanova (Centre for Criminology and Sociolegal Studies, Canada)

Background: Child welfare systems frequently encounter families affected by parental substance use; however, the specific relationship between parental addiction and child sexual abuse (CSA) remains insufficiently theorized and operationalized in risk assessment practices. Existing frameworks tend to prioritize neglect and physical abuse, contributing to the under-identification of CSA within substance-affected households.

Objective: This review aims to synthesize interdisciplinary literature on parental addiction and CSA and to evaluate how child protection services conceptualize, assess, and respond to these intersecting risks. It further seeks to develop an integrated analytical framework to inform practice.

Participants: The review draws on studies examining families involved with child welfare systems, including parents with substance use disorders and children identified as at risk of or affected by maltreatment.

Methods: A narrative literature review was conducted across social work, criminology, and public health scholarship. The analysis integrates insights from Routine Activity Theory, trauma theory, and political economy to examine risk at situational, relational, and structural levels.

Results: Findings indicate that parental addiction reshapes household environments by weakening guardianship, increasing children's exposure to potentially abusive individuals, and generating trauma-related vulnerabilities that inhibit disclosure. Child protection assessments often fail to disaggregate CSA risk or account for perpetrator dynamics beyond primary caregivers. Structural factors - such as poverty, housing instability, and fragmented service delivery further constrain effective identification and intervention.

Conclusion: Current child welfare approaches insufficiently capture the complexity of CSA risk in substance-affected families. Integrating multi-level, trauma-informed, and structurally aware assessment frameworks can enhance early identification, improve safeguarding strategies, and support more effective prevention within child protection systems.

Artificial intelligence in the development of a serious game for youth in adverse contexts: EmoBattle - Michael Cao (McMaster University) & Hannah Wayne-Phillips (McMaster University)

Background: The United Nations Secretary-General's 2026 report identifies millions of grave child rights violations across 23 conflicts in 2025, elevating risk for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms. There is a need for low-barrier intervention. Gaming research shows success in targeting emotion regulation, indicating that artificial intelligence (AI) serious games may be one solution for trauma-informed resilient coping.

Objective: The research question was: Can AI support the development of a trauma-informed card game to support youth wellbeing? In collaboration with the Institut für notfallmedizinische Bildung gGmbH (INOB), we embarked on an AI-facilitated serious game to target PTSD risk. Our goals are to describe: (1) the development pipeline; (2) the resultant game “EmoBattle”; and (3) consultation feedback from prototype player testing.

Methods: The semi-automated AI workflow for serious games developed by the German startup Bosodo (in a research partnership with Ansbach University of Applied Sciences) serves as the technical and structural foundation for the development of a new game. Iterative research collaboration within a structured large language synthesis model identified relevant inputs to create an argumentative battle card system, pitting trauma symptom “monster” cards against evidence-based resilient coping “knowledge” cards. EmoBattle developed across three iterations, with developmental, pediatric, clinical and educational research team expertise. A research team facilitator created prototype play opportunities, individually and in small groups, both in analog and on-line formats. Adults (N=32) from health sciences, parenting, and Ukrainian advocacy perspectives played and provided informal feedback to facilitators.

Results: This AI framework successfully generated a trauma symptom - resilient coping game with characters, descriptions, player rules, and visual guidance icons for Monster-Knowledge card matching. Prototype play testing suggested that the argumentation mechanic reliably generated discussion of coping strategies. Testers characterised the game as a psychoeducation and knowledge-translation tool that promotes reflection and conversation. Improvements were predominantly in the play guidance domain, particularly for therapeutic use.

Conclusion: EmoBattle is a viable prototype for further development to address youth wellbeing.

Implications: Combining automated computational logic with human expert oversight yields potential for engaging, low-barrier trauma-informed intervention. Analog and on-line versions provide flexibility across conflict zones and traumatic environments.

Parent-Informed Recommendations for Designing Prevention Resources on Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse – Neelam Punjani (University of Albert, Canada), Amber Hussain (University of Alberta), Jennifer Martin (Toronto Metropolitan University), Lisa Milne (University of Regina), Oluwabukola Salami (University of Calgary), Shannon Scott (University of Alberta), & Lisa Hartling (University of Alberta)

Background: Online child sexual exploitation and abuse (OCSEA) is a rapidly evolving form of victimization, yet existing parent-facing resources remain fragmented, reactive, and poorly aligned with family needs. This study aimed to generate actionable, parent-informed recommendations to guide the design of effective OCSEA prevention resources.

Method: 33 Parents of children aged 5-12 years participated in focus groups exploring experiences, challenges, and needs related to supporting children's online safety. Data were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis.

Results: Parents consistently emphasized that effective resources must move beyond awareness to support real-world prevention. Four interrelated domains of recommendations were identified. First, content should be practical, developmentally staged, and prevention-oriented, equipping parents with concrete communication strategies, early warning signs of exploitation, and guidance on safer digital practices. Second, format should be engaging and multimodal, incorporating interactive elements such as scenarios, simulations, and co-use activities to facilitate parent/child dialogue. Third, accessibility requires centralized, easy-to-navigate, and credible resources to reduce fragmentation and increase uptake. Fourth, contextual relevance demands culturally responsive design and integration of relational and community-based supports, including peer learning and shared parent experiences.

Conclusion: These findings position parents as critical agents in early prevention and highlight the need for family-centered, co-designed interventions that are practical, engaging, and contextually responsive. Embedding these recommendations into resource development has the potential to strengthen early prevention efforts, reduce vulnerability to exploitation, and improve real-world uptake of OCSEA prevention strategies.

Promising Practices: A Developmental Evaluation of BridgeNorth's SAVVY Program Addressing Youth Vulnerability to Sex Trafficking/Sexual Exploitation – Rosanra (Rosie) Yoon (University of Toronto, Canada), April Furlong (Furlong Consulting), Kaitlyn Ranasinghe (BridgeNorth), & Anushiya Kuhanathan (University of Toronto)

Background: Sex trafficking/exploitation is an under-recognized and growing issue in Canada, particularly for young girls who comprise the majority of victims. Systems in which young girls interact, do not recognize the early signs of vulnerability to sexual exploitation until long after entrenchment in the sex industry.

Method: In response, Bridge North, a survivor-founded anti-trafficking organization, collaborated with survivors of sexual exploitation to develop and conduct a developmental evaluation of the SAVVY Program, a promising practice aimed at addressing gaps across sectors to identify and address early signs of vulnerability to sex trafficking/exploitation. The developmental program evaluation assessed the SAVVY Program's implementation and outcomes and enabled real-time learning and adaptations. Data sources included service records, participant demographics, pre- and post-group questionnaires, satisfaction surveys, focus group feedback, and project documentation.

Participants: Following targeted engagement and capacity-building with community partners, the pilot generated 68 program referrals. These referrals translated into strong program engagement and outcomes with 87% engaging in preventive/supportive programming, 82% completing SAVVY groups, and all identified victims of sex trafficking/exploitation engaged in intensive services.

Results: Youth demonstrated high program satisfaction, increased self-awareness of risk factors for sexual exploitation/trafficking, and behavioural shifts that reduced vulnerability. Key enablers of success were flexibility in the delivery model, accommodations to reduce attendance barriers, integration of lived experience in program development and implementation and a youth-centered approach.

Conclusion: The SAVVY Program is a flexible, trauma-informed model that demonstrates positive impacts on participants and has enhanced the ability of schools and families to more effectively intervene early in the prevention of victimization.

nCourage: Supporting Youth At-Risk & Entrenched in Sex Trafficking – Samantha MacNeill (Peel Region; Chantel's Place, Canada), Kay Hillyer (Peel Region), & Sylvia Kolitsopolous (Peel Children's Aid Society)

Background: Peel Region is the first Municipality in Canada to have an anti-human sex trafficking strategy, inclusive of dedicated services. As the most common age of entry into sex trafficking is 12 years old, sex trafficking is often a matter of child protection. Peel Region, in partnership with Peel Children's Aid Society and other community partners to focus on prevention and early intervention to protect children and youth from becoming sex trafficked through a unique wraparound service model called nCourage.

Objective: This poster provides an overview of promising practices related to the protection of children and youth, highlighting the impact of nCourage and the broader Peel Anti-Human Sex Trafficking (AHST) Strategy.

Methods: A jurisdictional scan, literature review and community mobilization tactics were used to co-develop the Peel AHST Strategy. The Strategy is unique as it is the only municipal strategy with dedicated services attached to it. It includes three pillars – prevention, intervention and exits/housing to address:Peel-specific structural vulnerabilities to reduce risk by increasing awareness of exploitation pathways and connecting individuals and families to dedicated sex trafficking community supports early, before a crisis,strengthening protective factors for Youth and Newcomer Communities through building skills related to healthy relationships and consent, recognizing grooming and coercion, online safety, and help-seeking behaviors, reducing susceptibility to exploitation, and shifting community norms and reducing social silence through prevention education challenging the normalization of sexual exploitation and raising awareness of domestic trafficking. Community education encourages collective responsibility, early disclosure, and peer intervention.

Developed as an intentional organic model, nCourage, which falls under the Intervention Pillar of the Strategy, is an integrated sex trafficking services hub providing low-barrier, trauma and violence informed, and anti-oppressive services to survivors and individuals at-risk of sex trafficking aged 12+. Core services include centralized coordination, client navigation/outreach, case management, trauma counselling, and healthcare. The collaborative hub is comprised of five community partners with specialized skillsets that support the needs of the target populations. Additionally, nCourage works alongside 40+ cross-sectoral partner members of the Peel Human Trafficking Service Providers Committee and is informed on an ongoing basis by the Peel AHST Survivor-Led Advisory Committee, to ensure services are responding to current trends, meet the needs of clients and remain accessible to those most vulnerable.

Conclusion: nCourage is a unique model and promising practice that is supporting children and youth through prevention and early intervention of sex trafficking. Anchored in the Peel AHST Strategy, guided by the Peel AHST Survivor-Led Advisory Committee, and supported by the Peel Human Trafficking Service Providers Committee, Peel has been a leader in forging a new path forward to protect, support and uplift vulnerable children, youth and families. The Strategy was developed and implemented through an intentional, well-planned, collaborative approach that enhanced accountability across service providers in Peel and is grounded in a commitment to respond to emerging trends and needs while maintaining strong partnerships to keep the survivor at the centre of the work.

Understanding and Reducing Online Demand for Sexual Exploitation: What Canadian Courts Cases, Police, Survivors, and Digital Platforms Reveal – John Winterdyk (Mount Royal University, Canada) & Hennes Doltze (Ma Mawi Centre)

Method: Between 2024 and early 2026, we conducted a multimethod study examining how online platforms facilitate sexual exploitation (SE) and identifying opportunities to reduce online demand. The project included surveys of Crown prosecutors and law enforcement personnel involved in online SE cases, interviews with victims of online exploitation, and an in-depth review of more than 90 legal cases in which digital technology was used to recruit and exploit youth, mostly young girls. We also analyzed Leolist postings across five major Canadian cities and examined a large dataset from the Toronto Escort Review Board.

Results: As an exploratory study, the analysis is largely descriptive, yet it provides detailed insight into the online behaviours of prospective buyers and their interactions within "like-minded" communities. The findings also shed light on strategies used to recruit young victims, while feedback from those with lived experience strengthened our understanding of how and why youth are targeted. Survey responses from law enforcement and Crown prosecutors offered several nuanced perspectives on the challenges of handling online SE cases involving children and youth.

Conclusion: Our court case analysis (2016-2025), the first comprehensive review of its kind in Canada, highlights key factors shaping child and youth SE cases, including the range of charges laid against traffickers. The Leolist and TERB analyses further demonstrate how buyers use digital technologies to exploit young persons. Taken together, the findings point to several strategies to reduce online targeting and SE, along with actionable recommendations to strengthen investigations, support successful prosecutions, and indirectly reduce demand.