

Online child sexual exploitation and abuse in Canada: A statistical profile of police-reported incidents and court charges, 2014 to 2020

by Dyna Ibrahim

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Online child sexual exploitation and abuse in Canada: A statistical profile of police-reported incidents and court charges, 2014 to 2020: Highlights

- Between 2014 and 2020, police reported 10,739 incidents of online sexual offences against children (where the victim had been identified by police) and 29,028 incidents of online child pornography (where the victim had not been identified).
- The overall rate of police-reported incidents of online child sexual exploitation and abuse has been on an upward trend, increasing from 50 incidents per 100,000 population in 2014, when cybercrime data were first collected nationally, to 131 per 100,000 in 2020.
- Luring a child accounted for the large majority (77%) of online sexual offences against children. In addition, 11% were non-consensual distribution of intimate images, 8% were invitation to sexual touching and 5% were other online sexual offences against children. More than two-thirds (68%) of child pornography incidents involved making or distributing child pornography and about one-third (32%) were possessing or accessing child pornography.
- Seven in ten (73%) victims identified in online sexual offences against children were girls aged 12 to 17 and 13% were girls under age 12. Boys aged 12 to 17 accounted for 11% of victims and the remaining 3% were boys under age 12.
- About two out of three (65%) victims of online child sexual offences were victimized by a stranger (39%) or a casual acquaintance (25%), and nearly one in four (23%) were victimized by a friend (8%), a family member (7%) or an intimate partner (7%).
- More than one in four (27%) online sexual offences against children involved a secondary violation, usually child pornography (17% of all online sexual offences against children).
- More than four in ten (44%) police-reported incidents of online sexual offences against children were cleared (or solved). Charges were laid or recommended in 74% of all sexual offences against children where an accused had been identified in relation to the incident. In contrast, the large majority (85%) of child pornography incidents were not cleared. Among child pornography incidents where an accused had been identified, 64% were cleared by charge.
- The vast majority (91%) of people accused of online child sexual exploitation and abuse (including sexual violations against children and child pornography) were men and boys—and they were generally much older than victims. The median age of men and boys accused of online sexual offences against children was 24 years, and men and boys accused of child pornography had a median age of 29 years. Non-consensual distribution of intimate images online involved victims and accused persons with a median age of 15.
- The *Criminal Code* includes the use of telecommunications in its definition of luring a child, and agreement or arrangement (sexual offence against a child). In addition to these two types of offences, police-reported data show that child pornography and non-consensual distribution of intimate images (involving child victims) are often committed online. In total, between 2014/2015 and 2019/2020, criminal courts in Canada processed 27,522 charges related to these child sexual offences which were likely committed online. More than eight in ten (85%) were processed in adult courts.
- Charges related to child sexual offences likely committed online were more likely to result in a guilty decision than charges involving other (likely offline) sexual violations against children: More than one in three (36%) court charges of child sexual offences likely committed online resulted in the accused being found guilty, compared with 29% of offline charges. Charges related to non-consensual distribution of intimate images were most likely to result in a guilty decision (45%).
- About six in ten (61%) court cases involving at least one charge related to a child sexual offence likely committed online involved a guilty decision as the most serious decision rendered for any of those charges. This compared to 41% of cases with at least one charge of child sexual offences likely committed offline.
- Eight in ten (80%) adults convicted of a child sexual offence likely committed online were sentenced to custody, a proportion slightly lower than the proportion of adults sentenced to custody after a guilty finding for child sexual offences likely committed offline (83%).

Online child sexual exploitation and abuse in Canada: A statistical profile of police-reported incidents and court charges, 2014 to 2020

by Dyna Ibrahim, Canadian Centre for Justice and Community Safety Statistics

More than ever, technology, and the Internet in particular, has become an integral part of the daily lives of Canadians. In 2018, it was estimated that all but about 1% of Canadian households with children had access to the Internet (Frenette et al. 2020). Concerns over online safety and online victimization were exacerbated with many daily activities moving online in 2020 as Canadians grappled with the COVID-19 pandemic. As public health measures were put in place across Canada to combat the virus, many children relied on virtual learning and spent more time indoors and online (Moore et al. 2020). Undoubtedly, there are many advantages to using technology and, for children, being connected helps them learn, grow and fulfil their potential (UNICEF 2017). However, the use of technology and the Internet also comes with risks. Among the most serious risks of spending time online, especially for children, is the susceptibility to online sexual exploitation and abuse (ECPAT 2016; UNICEF 2017).

There is no one standard definition for online child sexual exploitation and abuse. It encompasses a wide range of behaviours and situations, from sexual solicitation of a child—with or without a response from the child—to sexual grooming (the trust-building period prior to abuse), to sexual interaction online (cybersex) or offline (meeting in person), to accessing, producing or sharing images related to the abuse of children and youth (De Santisteban and Gamez-Guadix 2018; Kloess et al. 2014). It can be committed by adults or youths, and it can involve strangers or family members and acquaintances (Mitchell et al. 2005). Generally, in the Canadian legal context, the crime of online child sexual exploitation and abuse includes: child sexual abuse material, self-generated materials and sexting¹ (often distributed without consent), sextortion,² grooming and luring, live child sexual abuse streaming and made-to-order content (Public Safety Canada 2022).

The short- and long-term effects of childhood sexual victimization are well documented (Beitchman et al. 1991; Browne and Finkelhor 1986; Hailes et al. 2019; Olafson 2011). More recently, research on the effects of online child sexual exploitation has found that victims of this crime often suffer a range of negative impacts including psychological difficulties, negative sexual development, and subsequent substance misuse and depressive symptomology (Carnes 2001; Hanson 2017; Ospina et al. 2010; Say et al. 2015; Whittle et al. 2013a). Additionally, victims of online child sexual exploitation continue to experience victimization through the actual or threatened re-distribution of their images, long after any contact abuse has ended (Canadian Centre for Child Protection 2017; Martin 2015).

Every child has a right to protection, as a fundamental human right. Children (under age 18) also have specific rights, recognized in the 1989 *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, given their vulnerability and dependence. In 1991, Canada ratified the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, pledging to protect children from all forms of exploitation and abuse, among other forms of harm and endangerment. The provision and protection of children's Convention rights is the primary responsibility of governments at all levels (UNICEF Canada 2022). Canada has also signed on to the *Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography* (United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner 2022). As the use of technology among Canadians has increased in recent years, so too have Canada's efforts to protect children from online predators. In 2004, the *National Strategy for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation on the Internet* was developed to combat this crime in Canada. Since then, the *National Strategy* has been renewed and expanded, and in 2019, a renewed commitment was made with the Government of Canada allocating funds to support efforts to raise awareness, reduce the stigma associated with reporting, increase Canada's ability to pursue and prosecute offenders and work together with the digital industry to find new ways to combat the sexual exploitation of children online. Most recently, budget 2021 proposed to provide \$20.7 million over five years, starting in 2021-22, for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to enhance its ability to pursue online child sexual exploitation investigations, identify victims and remove them from abusive situations, and bring offenders to justice—including those who offend abroad (Public Safety Canada 2022).

Currently, little is known about the prevalence and characteristics of online child sexual exploitation and abuse within the Canadian context. To provide some insight, this *Juristat* article presents an analysis of police-reported data from the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Survey where children and youth under the age of 18 were victims of *Criminal Code* sexual offences, and where information and communication technology was integral in the commission of the offence—better known as cybercrime. Moreover, data on court charges and cases involving sexual offences against children (which likely involved an online component) are presented using data from the Integrated Criminal Court Survey (ICCS), along with the outcomes of these cases.

Generally, only a fraction of sexual offences come to the attention of police and, subsequently, the courts (Burczycka and Conroy 2017). Further, when a sexual offence involves a child victim, the incident is even more likely to be underreported for a number of reasons. For example, some children—especially younger children—may be unable to report or seek help, may fear reporting, or may not know how to report or seek help (Finkelhor et al. 2001; Taylor and Gassner 2010). Additionally, as technology becomes more advanced, so too do the tactics used by offenders to lure and groom children for sexual exploitation and abuse, and with improved anonymity capabilities they can better hide their activities (WeProtect Global Alliance 2019). This creates challenges for law enforcement to keep up with investigating incidents related to this crime, to identify victims for protection and to bring offenders to justice. Nevertheless, the analyses presented in this article can provide a baseline of information on incidents of online child

sexual exploitation and abuse that did come to the attention of Canadian police and Canadian criminal courts to better inform programs and policies related to combatting this crime. In addition, to give a more complete picture of the occurrence of this crime in Canada, some publicly available data from Canada's national tipline for the reporting of child sexual exploitation online, Cybertip.ca, are presented in Text box 4.

This report was produced with the funding support of Public Safety Canada.

Text box 1

Measuring and defining online child sexual exploitation and abuse using police-reported data

Beginning in 2014,³ the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Survey has collected information related to online crime through the use of a cybercrime flag. An incident is flagged as a cybercrime when the crime targets information and communication technology (ICT), or when the crime used ICT to commit the offence.

ICT includes, but is not limited to, the Internet, computers, servers, digital technology, digital telecommunications devices, phones and networks. Crimes committed over text and through messages using social media platforms are also considered cybercrime activity.

Police services can report up to four violations for each incident reported in the UCR. The UCR classifies incidents according to the most serious violation occurring in the incident (generally the offence which carries the longest maximum sentence under the *Criminal Code*), with violations against the persons always classified as more serious than other violations. In order to maintain consistency in measuring the cyber aspect of crime, analysis of cybercrime data are based on the most serious violation in the incident which was most likely to have involved ICT, referred to as the cybercrime violation (see Text box 2).

Incidents involving child pornography where an actual child victim was not identified are reported to the UCR with the most serious violation being "child pornography." When an actual child victim is identified, the incident is reported to the UCR with the most serious violation as sexual assault, sexual exploitation, or other sexual violations against children, and child pornography may be reported as a secondary violation. Because of this difference, as well as to account for the complexities associated with investigating incidents of child pornography, analyses in this article are mainly presented in terms of two categories of offences: **online sexual offences against children**, which allows for the analysis of incident and victim characteristics, and **online child pornography**, which includes incidents where the victim was not identified. However, a summary of trends in both categories of offences are presented together at the outset.

Online sexual offences against children include:

- **Sexual violations against children**, which involve the following *Criminal Code* offences: sexual interference, invitation to sexual touching, sexual exploitation, parent or guardian procuring sexual activity, householder permitting prohibited sexual activity, luring a child, agreement or arrangement (sexual offences against a child) and bestiality (in presence of, or incites, a child),⁴ and
- **Other sexual offences**, which are *Criminal Code* sexual offences that are not specific to children but where a victim was identified as being younger than 18. These include: non-consensual distribution of intimate images, sexual assault (levels 1, 2 and 3), sexual exploitation of person with disability, bestiality (commits, compels another person), voyeurism, incest and other sexual crimes.

Online child pornography includes incidents excluded from the category of sexual offences against children, and includes offences under section 163.1 of the *Criminal Code* which makes it illegal to make, distribute, possess or access child pornography.

Keeping with the above noted definitions and structure of the UCR, the current article therefore defines **online child sexual exploitation and abuse** as police-reported cybercrime incidents involving *Criminal Code* child-specific sexual offences, including child pornography, and other *Criminal Code* sexual offences where a victim was identified as being a person younger than 18.

Given that there is no specific definition for the crime of online child sexual exploitation and abuse in the *Criminal Code*, details of how court charges were defined in this article are presented in the courts section below.

In this article, the terms "online," "cyber" and "technology-facilitated (or use)" are used interchangeably and, in the context of police-reported incidents, they all refer to situations where ICT was indicated. Further, "children and youth" refer to people aged 17 and younger.⁵

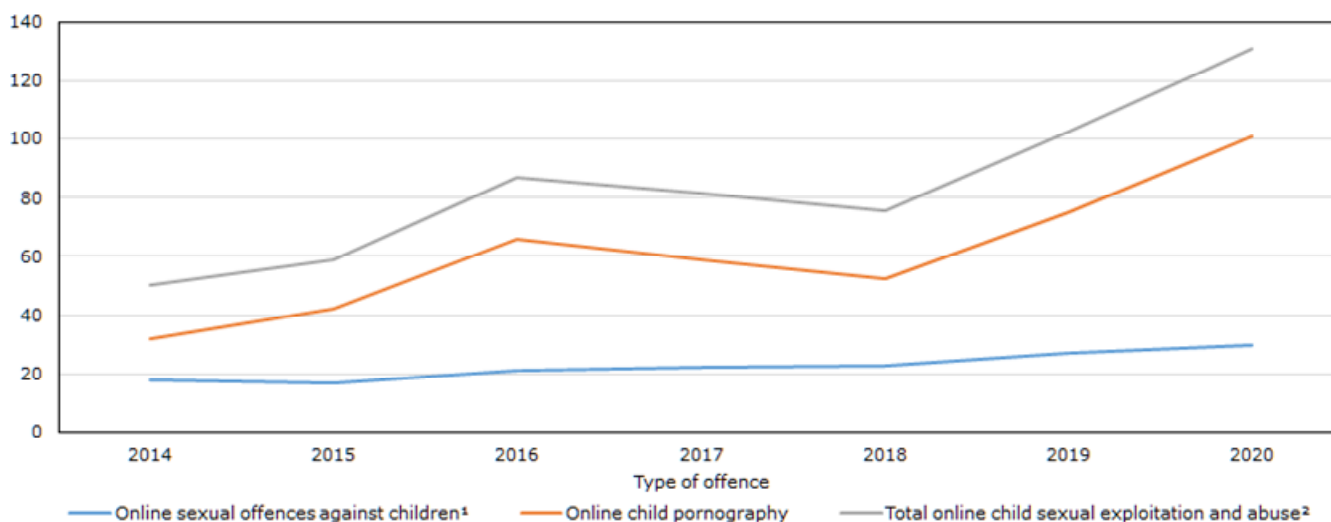
Online child sexual exploitation and abuse increases by more than one-quarter in first year of the COVID-19 pandemic

Since 2014, when nationally representative cybercrime data first became available, the number of incidents constituting police-reported online child sexual exploitation and abuse has generally been on an upward trend. By 2020, the number of incidents reported annually had significantly increased from 3,080 incidents in 2014 to 9,441. When the number of children in the Canadian population is taken into account, the overall rate of this crime nearly tripled during this time, from 50 incidents to 131 incidents per 100,000 Canadians below the age of 18 (Chart 1).

Chart 1

Police-reported incidents of online child sexual exploitation and abuse, by year, Canada, 2014 to 2020

rate per 100,000



1. Includes sexual violations against children and other sexual offences where a victim was identified as being a person younger than 18.
2. Defined as police-reported cybercrime incidents involving *Criminal Code* child-specific sexual offences, including child pornography, and other *Criminal Code* sexual offences where a victim was identified as being a person younger than 18.

Note: An incident is considered to be an online incident if it was flagged as a cybercrime. An incident is flagged as a cybercrime when the crime targets information and communication technology (ICT), or when the crime used ICT to commit the offence. ICT includes, but is not limited to, the internet, computers, servers, digital technology, digital telecommunications devices, phones and networks. Crimes committed over text and through messages using social media platforms are also considered cybercrime activity. Rates are calculated on the basis of 100,000 population. Populations are based upon July 1 estimates from Statistics Canada, Centre for Demography. For the years 2014 and 2015, the municipal police services of Saint John, Québec and Calgary, and the Ontario Provincial Police were excluded. For the year 2016, the municipal police services of Saint John and Calgary, and the Ontario Provincial Police were excluded. For the year 2017, the municipal police service of Saint John and the Ontario Provincial Police were excluded. For the years 2018 to 2020, the municipal police service of Saint John was excluded.

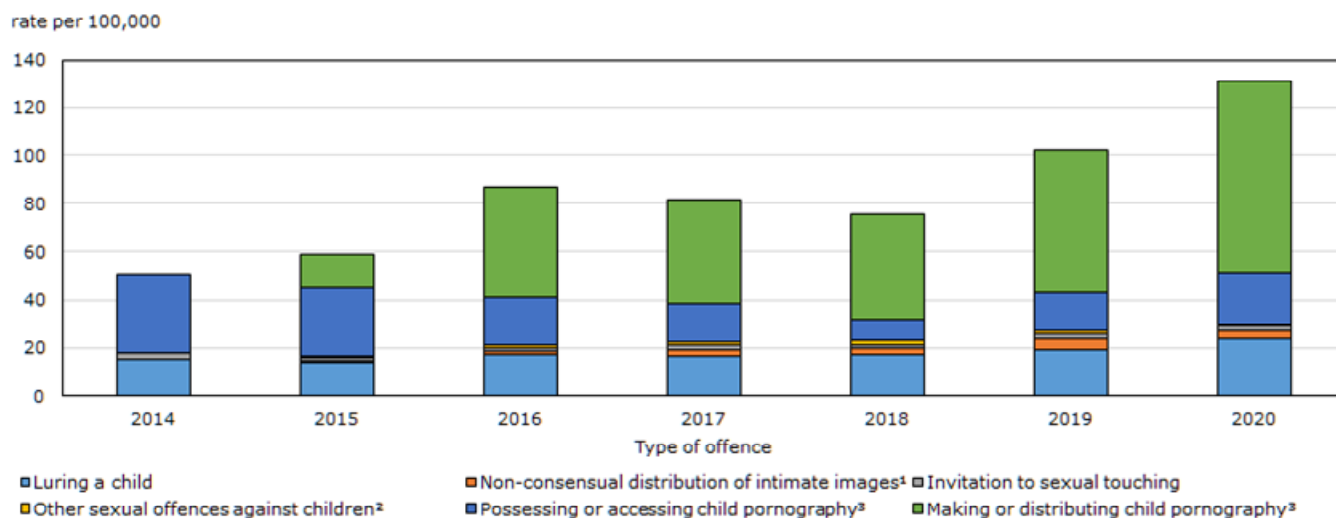
Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice and Community Safety Statistics, Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.

It is important to note that increases in the number of police-reported incidents may in part be attributable to an uptake in the use of the cybercrime flag since its inaugural year. But, there have been other indications of the occurrence of this crime being indeed on the rise in Canada including reports from Cybertip.ca, Canada's national tipline for reporting child sexual exploitation online (Public Safety Canada 2021). The increases in this crime are attributable to a number of factors including wider access to the Internet across the country, coupled with its increased use and the proliferation of cell phones and other smart devices among children. See Text Box 4 for more information from Cybertip.ca.

Between 2019 and 2020, the overall police-reported rate of crime—including sexual assaults—decreased after several years of increases (Moreau 2021). These decreases were expected as lockdown conditions brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic meant there were fewer opportunities for in-person crimes to take place as people spent more time at home and many businesses closed. However, in contrast, cybercrime in general was on the rise with 31% more police-reported cybercrime incidents in 2020 than in 2019. In 2020, the first year of the pandemic, the rate of police-reported online child pornography (101 per 100,000 population) was 35% higher than in 2019, while the rate of online sexual offences against children was 10% higher (30 versus 27 per 100,000).^{6,7}

There was a 28% overall increase in the rate of online child sexual exploitation and abuse between 2019 and 2020. This increase was in large part driven by increases in the rates of both possessing or accessing child pornography (33% increase between 2019 and 2020) and making or distributing child pornography (35% increase), as well as a 22% increase in the rate of child luring offences from the previous year (Chart 2). Child pornography incidents were the main drivers of change in the overall rate of online child sexual exploitation and abuse over the seven-year period.

Chart 2
Police-reported incidents of online child sexual exploitation and abuse, by type of offence and year, Canada, 2014 to 2020



0 true zero or a value rounded to zero

1. Non-consensual distribution of intimate images became an offence in 2015 under the *Protecting Canadians from Online Crime Act*.

2. The category "other sexual offences against children" is a catch all category that encompasses all sexual violations against children (excluding child pornography) which were facilitated by or involved the use of technology.

3. Prior to 2015, all child pornography offences were reported to the Uniform Crime Reporting Survey under one violation code. Beginning in 2015, a second code was introduced allowing for the reporting of incidents involving making or distributing child pornography separately from incidents involving the criminal offence of possessing or accessing child pornography.

Note: An incident is considered to be an online incident if it was flagged as a cybercrime. An incident is flagged as a cybercrime when the crime targets information and communication technology (ICT), or when the crime used ICT to commit the offence. ICT includes, but is not limited to, the internet, computers, servers, digital technology, digital telecommunications devices, phones and networks. Crimes committed over text and through messages using social media platforms are also considered cybercrime activity. Rates are calculated on the basis of 100,000 population. Populations are based upon July 1 estimates from Statistics Canada, Centre for Demography. For the years 2014 and 2015, the municipal police services of Saint John, Québec and Calgary, and the Ontario Provincial Police were excluded. For the year 2016, the municipal police services of Saint John and Calgary, and the Ontario Provincial Police were excluded. For the year 2017, the municipal police service of Saint John and the Ontario Provincial Police were excluded. For the years 2018 to 2020, the municipal police service of Saint John was excluded.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice and Community Safety Statistics, Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.

Characteristics of online sexual offences against children and youth

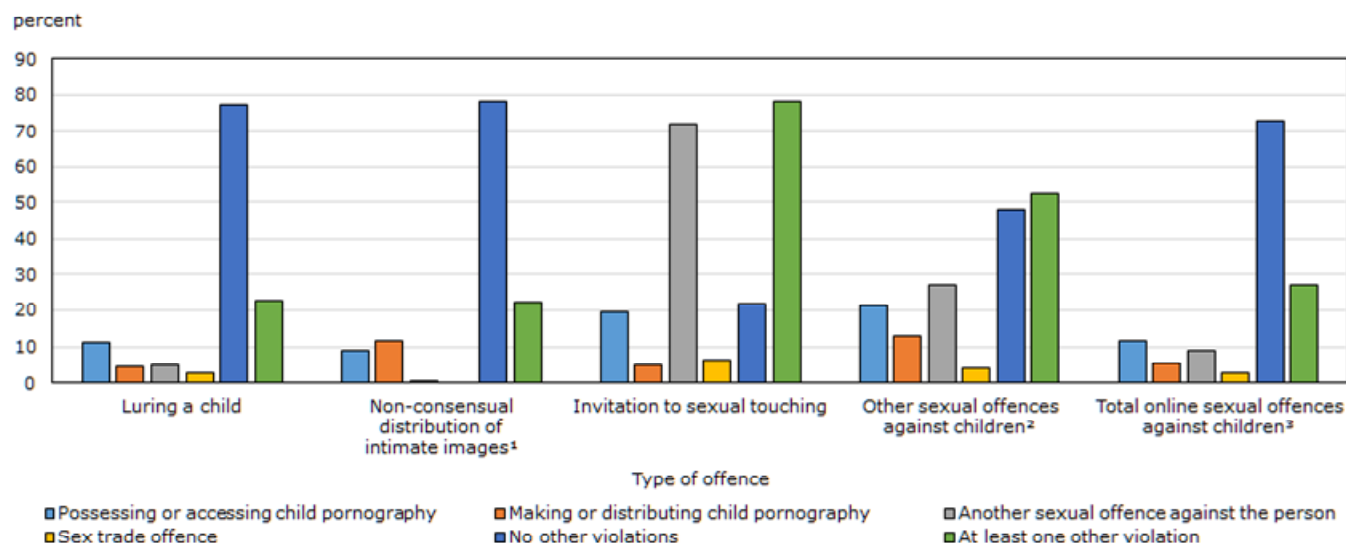
Police-reported data show that between 2014 and 2020 there were a total of 10,739 incidents of online sexual offences against children and youth, representing an average annual rate of 23 incidents per 100,000 Canadian children and youth.^{8,9}

The offence of luring a child made up the large majority (77%) of the incidents reported between 2014 and 2020 (Table 1). In 2015, the *Protecting Canadians from Online Crime Act* came into effect, making non-consensual distribution of intimate images an offence. From its introduction into the *Criminal Code* in 2015 and up to 2020, this offence accounted for 11% of the online sexual offences against children, followed by invitation to sexual touching (8%), and other online sexual offences against children made up the remaining 5% of the incidents.¹⁰

One in six online sexual offences include a secondary offence of child pornography

Police services are able to report up to four violations for each incident to the UCR. In nearly three-quarters (73%) of online sexual offences against children reported between 2014 and 2020, no secondary violations were reported.¹¹ More than one in four (27%) incidents included at least one other violation, and more than half (53%) of these involved child pornography. Said otherwise, about one in six (17%) incidents of online child sexual violations against children also involved child pornography offences (Chart 3). Possessing or accessing (12%) child pornography was more commonly reported as a secondary violation compared to making or distributing (6%).¹² About one in ten (9%) incidents also involved other sexual offences.

Chart 3
Police-reported incidents of online sexual offences against children, by type of secondary violation, Canada, 2014 to 2020



0 true zero or a value rounded to zero
 1. Non-consensual distribution of intimate images became an offence in 2015 under the *Protecting Canadians from Online Crime Act*.
 2. The category "other sexual offences against children" is a catch all category that encompasses all sexual violations against children (excluding child pornography) which were facilitated by or involved the use of technology.
 3. Includes sexual violations against children and other sexual offences where a victim was identified as being a person younger than 18.
Note: An incident is considered to be an online incident if it was flagged as a cybercrime. An incident is flagged as a cybercrime when the crime targets Information and Communication Technology (ICT), or when the crime used ICT to commit the offence. ICT includes, but is not limited to, the internet, computers, servers, digital technology, digital telecommunications devices, phones and networks. Crimes committed over text and through messages using social media platforms are also considered cybercrime activity. Excludes 6% of incidents where the cyber-related violation is not the most serious in the incident. Police services can report up to four violations per incident. Therefore totals may add up to more than 100%. For the years 2014 and 2015, the municipal police services of Saint John, Québec and Calgary, and the Ontario Provincial Police were excluded. For the year 2016, the municipal police services of Saint John and Calgary, and the Ontario Provincial Police were excluded. For the year 2017, the municipal police service of Saint John and the Ontario Provincial Police were excluded. For the years 2018 to 2020, the municipal police service of Saint John was excluded.
Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice and Community Safety Statistics, Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.

Police-reported incidents of online sexual offences against children rarely indicated the co-occurrence of offences related to the sex trade (3%). When a sex-trade-related offence was reported as a secondary violation, it was usually in conjunction with the offence of invitation to sexual touching (6%). Given that the UCR classifies incidents according to the most serious violation occurring in the incident, no human trafficking offences (whether *Criminal Code* offences or violations against the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* which makes trafficking of persons illegal) were reported as secondary violations in online child sexual offences. However, it is worth noting that examining data reported between 2018 and 2020 involving human trafficking as the most serious violation in the incident revealed a co-occurrence of human trafficking and child sexual offences, though there was no indication that these child-specific offences were facilitated online. More specifically, 11% of human trafficking incidents reported over these three years, where a secondary violation was reported, involved sexual offences against children or child pornography, but there was no indication that the child sexual violations were cybercrime.¹³ It has been reported that sexually exploiting children, particularly through grooming and luring them online, can sometimes lead child victims into the sex trade or human trafficking. For example, personal information, images and videos used or shared online can be accessed and used by traffickers to identify, communicate with and lure potential victims, or to blackmail or coerce them. However, these pathways cannot be measured through the UCR (Atwater Library and Computer Centre, 2017; Farley et al. 2013; Kotrla 2010; Trafficking in America Task Force 2021).

It is important to note that while police services are able to report up to four violations for each incident to the UCR, reporting of these secondary violations is not mandatory. Therefore information on related offences may be underestimated.

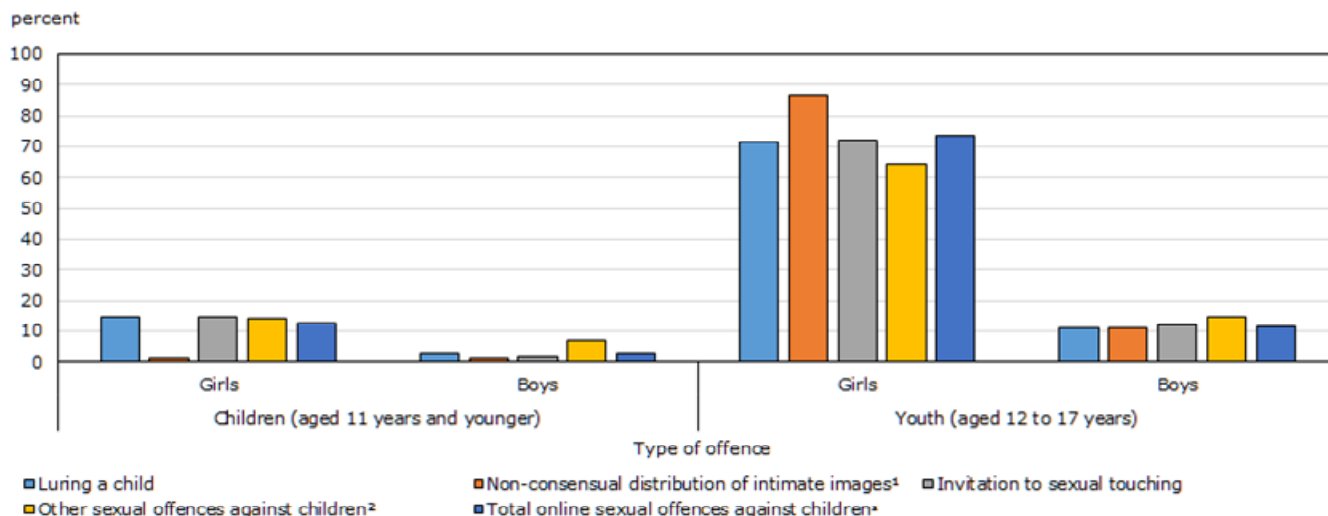
Youth aged 12 to 17 make up the majority of victims of online child sexual offences, and victims are usually girls

In total, 7,743 children were identified as victims of sexual violations facilitated through online means between 2014 and 2020 (Table 2).¹⁴ In addition, 1,243 children were also identified as victims in these incidents, but where the cybercrime violation was not the most serious violation against them.¹⁵

Youth between the ages of 12 and 17 made up the majority of victims of online child sexual offences. More specifically, more than seven in ten (73%) victims identified in online child sexual offences were older girls aged 12 to 17, and 13% of all victims were younger girls under 12 (Chart 4).¹⁶

Boys were generally less likely to be victims in police-reported incidents of online child sexual offences. It is important to note, however, that sexual offences involving men and boys as victims are often underreported (Sivagurunathan et al. 2019; Weiss 2009). Older boys aged 12 to 17 were more likely to be the victims identified in online child sexual offences than boys younger than this age range (11% and 3%, respectively).

Chart 4
Victims of police-reported online sexual offences against children, by type of offence and victim characteristics, Canada, 2014 to 2020



1. Non-consensual distribution of intimate images became an offence in 2015 under the *Protecting Canadians from Online Crime Act*.
 2. The category "other sexual offences against children" is a catch all category that encompasses all sexual violations against children (excluding child pornography) which were facilitated by or involved the use of technology.
 3. Includes sexual violations against children and other sexual offences where a victim was identified as being a person younger than 18.
Note: An incident is considered to be an online incident if it was flagged as a cybercrime. An incident is flagged as a cybercrime when the crime targets information and communication technology (ICT), or when the crime used ICT to commit the offence. ICT includes, but is not limited to, the internet, computers, servers, digital technology, digital telecommunications devices, phones and networks. Crimes committed over text and through messages using social media platforms are also considered cybercrime activity. Calculations are based on victim records, where the most serious violation against the victim was identified as the cyber violation. Victims where the gender or the age was unknown are excluded. Given that small counts of victims identified as "gender diverse" may exist, the UCR data available to the public has been recoded to assign these counts to either "female" or "male" in order to ensure the protection of confidentiality and privacy. Victims identified as gender diverse have been assigned to either female or male based on the regional distribution of victims' gender. Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding. For the years 2014 and 2015, the municipal police services of Saint John, Québec and Calgary, and the Ontario Provincial Police were excluded. For the year 2016, the municipal police services of Saint John and Calgary, and the Ontario Provincial Police were excluded. For the year 2017, the municipal police service of Saint John and the Ontario Provincial Police were excluded. For the years 2018 to 2020, the municipal police service of Saint John was excluded.
Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice and Community Safety Statistics, Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.

These findings are consistent with previously published results which found that the rate of police-reported violent crime is highest against girls aged 12 to 17, and that the rate of sexual offences in particular are higher among girls in this age group compared with their boy counterparts, and younger girls and boys (Conroy 2018; Cotter and Beaupré 2014).

Although they made up the large majority of victims in all offence categories, girls aged 12 to 17 were especially overrepresented as targets of non-consensual distribution of intimate images (86%). Meanwhile, about one in ten (11%) victims of this crime were boys in this age group.

Children younger than 12 were generally less likely to be the victims in police-reported incidents of online sexual exploitation and abuse. However, when a younger child victim was identified in these incidents, they were more often the victims of other violent sexual offences facilitated by technology. More specifically, one in seven (14%) victims of other online sexual offences were girls younger than 12, and 7% were boys younger than 12.

Overall, young children under the age of 8 were underrepresented in police-reported incidents of online sexual offences (1%). The lower proportion of very young children being reported as victims of online sexual offences may be attributable to a number of factors including: less access to online communication and reduced autonomy, and behavioural differences between younger and older children (Kuoppamäki et al. 2011; Ospina et al. 2010; Whittle et al. 2013b). Additionally, as reporting to police among younger children depends on the adults around them, it is likely that police-reported incidents involving very young children are an underestimation—related to cybercrime or otherwise. Results from the 2017 International Survivors Survey conducted by the Canadian Centre for Child Protection show that for over half (56%) of victims whose child sexual abuse had been recorded, the abuse began before age 5 (Canadian Centre for Child Protection 2017).

About two in three victims of online sexual offences are victimized by a stranger or casual acquaintance

Previously published police-reported data show that, in general, woman and girl victims of sexual offences are less commonly victimized by a stranger (Conroy 2018; Rotenberg 2017). Conversely, and likely due to the anonymity of crimes committed online, about two-thirds (65%) of victims of online child sexual offences were victimized by a stranger (39%) or a casual acquaintance (25%) and for nearly one in four victims (23%) the perpetrator was someone close to them, either a friend (8%), a family member (7%) or an intimate partner (7%).^{17 18} However, there were variations depending on the type of offence and age group of the victim (Table 3).

Children younger than 12, who represented 15% of all victims of online sexual offences against children, were more often victimized by a stranger (57% compared with 36% of youth victims). Children younger than 12 were more likely than youth aged 12 to 17 to be victims of online sexual offences involving a family member as the perpetrator (12% versus 6%). It has been found that when it comes to online child sexual exploitation and abuse, younger children are particularly vulnerable to abuse by an adult or older peers within the family or in a setting or relationship where there is a position of trust (UNICEF 2017). Younger children who were victims of luring were most often victimized by a stranger (63%).

Like younger children, youth aged 12 to 17 who were victims of luring a child were also most often victimized by a stranger, but fewer youth were victimized by a stranger compared with younger children (45% versus 63%). A casual acquaintance was accused of luring a child for one-quarter (25%) of youth victims. Similarly, invitation to sexual touching often involved a stranger (30%) or a casual acquaintance (31%) as the accused among youth victims. Among younger children who were victims of this crime, 38% were victimized by a stranger and 11% by a casual acquaintance. A notable 17% of victims younger than 12 were the victims of invitation to sexual touching by a family member, a proportion almost double that of youth victims of this crime (9%).

Almost half of youth victims of non-consensual distribution of intimate images victimized by intimate partner or friend

The offence of non-consensual distribution of intimate images is a crime that can involve people of any age as victims or offenders. However, research suggests that “sexting”—the act of consensually sharing sexually explicit messages, images or self-generated sexualised images of themselves—is quite common among youth (Chaudhary et al. 2017; Madigan et al. 2018; Soyeon et al. 2020). Given that the act of sexting is popular among youth, there may be an increased likelihood of youth sharing such images beyond the intended recipient.

Non-consensual distribution of intimate images, an offence predominantly involving youth aged 12 to 17, more commonly involved an accused person known to the victim. Almost half (48%) of all youth victims of this offence were victimized by an intimate partner (28%) or a friend (21%), and for more than one-third (36%) of youth victims, the accused was a casual acquaintance.¹⁹ A stranger was the accused for about one in ten (11%) victims.

The prevalence of this crime among youth, combined with the overrepresentation of youth as both perpetrators (as seen below) and victims of non-consensual distribution of intimate images, along with the finding that this type of offence typically involved victims and accused persons known to each other, is an indication that youth are particularly vulnerable to this type of crime.

Charges more likely when incidents involved multiple violations

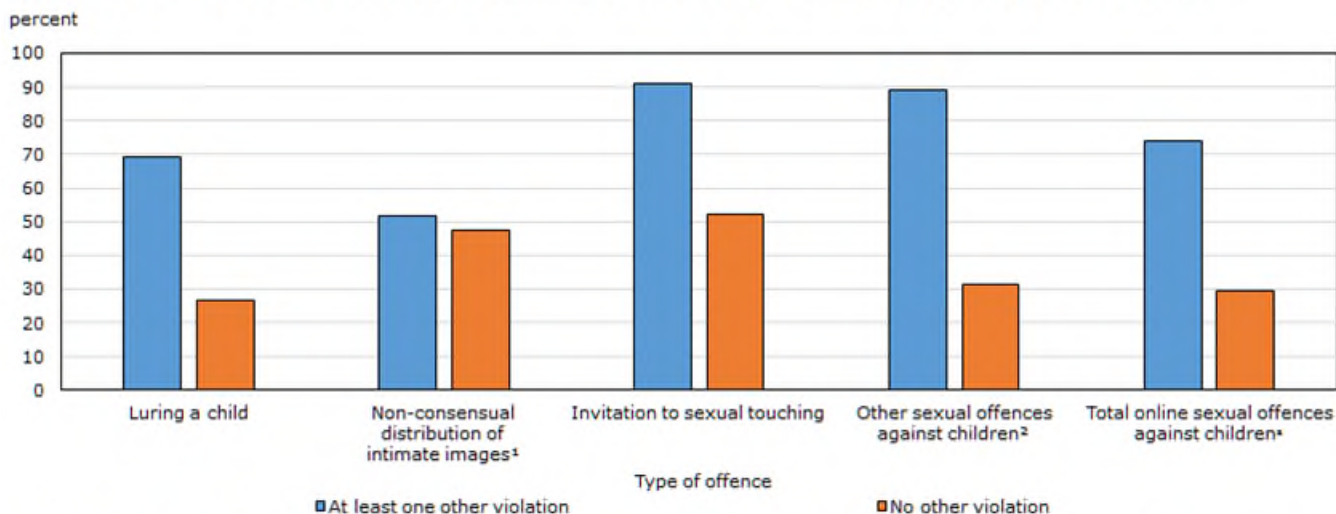
Crimes that are sexual in nature are less likely to be solved by police for various reasons, including investigative challenges as well as the characteristics of the incidents which come to the attention of police, such as delays in reporting and less available case information compared to physical assaults, for example (Rotenberg 2017). The occurrence of these crimes, or even some aspects of their facilitation online, can present further complications and challenges for investigators to identify and locate perpetrators.

More than half (56%) of online child sexual offences reported to police between 2014 and 2020 were not cleared, meaning police were not able to identify an accused person in relation to the incident, while the remaining 44% of the incidents were solved. The majority (74%) of incidents that were cleared were cleared by the laying or recommendation of a charge, and 26% were cleared otherwise.²⁰ Overall, charges were laid or recommended in less than one-third (32%) of all online child sexual offence incidents that came to the attention of police during this time.

Incidents involving at least one other violation were much more likely to be solved. Overall, more than seven in ten (74%) incidents of online sexual offences against children where there was a secondary violation were cleared (Chart 5). In comparison, three in ten (30%) incidents with no other violations were cleared. Further, incidents were much more likely to be cleared with a charge when they involved multiple violations. More specifically, among incidents that were cleared, charges were laid or recommended in the large majority (88%) of online child sexual offence incidents involving secondary violations (Table 4). This was much higher than the proportion of incidents resulting in charges being laid or recommended when there were no secondary violations in the incident (58%).

Chart 5

Percent of police-reported incidents of online sexual offences against children that were cleared, by type of offence and the presence or absence of secondary violations, Canada, 2014 to 2020



1. Non-consensual distribution of intimate images became an offence in 2015 under the *Protecting Canadians from Online Crime Act*.

2. The category "other sexual offences against children" is a catch all category that encompasses all sexual violations against children (excluding child pornography) which were facilitated by or involved the use of technology.

3. Includes sexual violations against children and other sexual offences where a victim was identified as being a person younger than 18.

Note: An incident is considered to be an online incident if it was flagged as a cybercrime. An incident is flagged as a cybercrime when the crime targets information and communication technology (ICT), or when the crime used ICT to commit the offence. ICT includes, but is not limited to, the internet, computers, servers, digital technology, digital telecommunications devices, phones and networks. Crimes committed over text and through messages using social media platforms are also considered cybercrime activity. An incident is considered to be cleared when a charge is laid or recommended against an accused, or when it is dealt with by other means. For the years 2014 and 2015, the municipal police services of Saint John, Québec and Calgary, and the Ontario Provincial Police were excluded. For the year 2016, the municipal police services of Saint John and Calgary, and the Ontario Provincial Police were excluded. For the year 2017, the municipal police service of Saint John and the Ontario Provincial Police were excluded. For the years 2018 to 2020, the municipal police service of Saint John was excluded.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice and Community Safety Statistics, Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.

Incidents involving invitation to sexual touching had the highest charge rate (96%). However, this was also the type of online sexual offence against children and youth most likely to involve multiple violations in the incident. Nevertheless, charges were more common in incidents involving this crime when there was a secondary violation compared to those without (97% versus 83%).

Non-consensual distribution of intimate images least likely to lead to charges

Just under half (48%) of police-reported non-consensual distribution of intimate images, a crime less likely to involve secondary violations, were cleared. Further, these incidents were least likely to result in charges—about three in ten (29%) incidents where an accused was identified were cleared by charge.

Notably, non-consensual distribution of intimate images was most likely to be cleared otherwise (71%, compared to 26% overall). Given that youth make up the majority of people accused in non-consensual distribution of intimate images of children (see below), this finding is in line with a previous study which found that youth were less likely to be charged in peer-to-peer sexual offences than when the incident involved a child victim and a youth accused (Allen 2016).²¹ The *Youth Criminal Justice Act* ensures that efforts are made to deal with youth accused of crime through means other than the laying of charges, such as giving them warnings or placing them in diversionary programs. The rate of youth who are formally charged has therefore been on a decline (Keighley 2017).

When the analysis of incident clearance rates is limited to incidents where victim data were provided, incidents that involved child victims were less likely to be cleared than incidents where the victims were youth (30% versus 49%).²² Although incidents involving child victims were also less likely to have a secondary violation than those involving youth victims (23% versus 31%), the finding was still true even after taking into account the existence of a secondary violation in the incident: 61% of incidents involving both child victims and secondary violations were cleared, compared with 72% of incidents involving youth victims and secondary violations. Similarly, 20% of incidents involving child victims without secondary violations were cleared compared to 39% of incidents involving youth victims where there were no secondary violations. This finding might speak to the challenges of investigating incidents involving younger children as they are less likely to be witnesses or provide detailed information about the incident.

Text box 2**Online child sexual offences involving a more serious violation, and other incidents involving making sexually explicit material available to children**

When an incident has been flagged as *Cybercrime*, any or all of the violations in the incident may have involved the use of technology. For analytical purposes, a specific violation within each cybercrime incident is identified as the cyber-related violation. This violation is the most serious in the incident which was most likely to have involved information and communication technology.

In the vast majority (98%) of incidents reported by police between 2014 and 2020 involving online child sexual crimes, the cybercrime violation was the most serious offence in the incident. For a minority of incidents (2% or 812 incidents), a different violation in the incident was identified as the most serious in the incident. These incidents most often involved luring a child (37% or 298 incidents), invitation to sexual touching (31% or 253 incidents) or child pornography (22% or 182 incidents) as the cybercrime violation.

In the large majority (75%) of these incidents where the cyber violation was identified as a secondary offence, sexual interference was the most serious violation reported and one in five (20 %) involved sexual assault (level 1). Charges were laid in nearly nine out of ten (88%) incidents involving online child sexual offences where there was a more serious violation in the incident—and this proportion jumps to 96% when looking at all incidents that were solved, and 4% were cleared otherwise.

Making sexually explicit material available to children

Section 171.1 of the *Criminal Code* makes transmitting, making available, distributing or selling sexually explicit material to a child for the purpose of facilitating the commission of an offence, in and of itself, a criminal offence. Understanding the characteristics of this crime in the context of online child sexual exploitation and abuse is critically important as it has been found to be a method that offenders employ to groom child victims for exploitation as well as during the abuse. For example, sexual material is often introduced by offenders soon after contacting children online or by showing child victims adult pornography during the commission of the abuse (Canadian Centre for Child Protection 2017; Winters et al. 2017).

Between 2014 and 2020, there were 602 police-reported technology-facilitated incidents of making sexually explicit material available to children. Similar to online child sexual exploitation and abuse, more incidents were reported with each passing year since cybercrime data became available, with 25 incidents reported in 2014 compared with 147 incidents in 2020.

Making sexually explicit material available to children was the most serious violation in almost all (96%) incidents where this cybercrime was indicated. Similar to incidents of online child sexual exploitation and abuse, the remaining 25 incidents involved sexual interference as the most serious violation in the incident.

A secondary violation was reported in over half (53%) of online incidents of making sexually explicit material available to children, with child luring being the most commonly reported secondary violation (39% of all cyber incidents of making sexually explicit material available to children where it was the most serious violation in the incident).²³ More than one in ten (13%) incidents involved possessing or accessing child pornography and 7% had making or distributing child pornography as a secondary violation.

Over half (53%) of online incidents of making sexually explicit material available to children were cleared—most (83% of all cleared incidents) by the laying or recommendation of a charge. Consistent with what was seen in police-reported online child sexual exploitation and abuse incidents more generally, the charge rate was driven by the presence of a secondary violation: when the incident involved a secondary violation, it was about three times more likely to be cleared by charge (95% compared with 33% when a secondary violation was not identified).

Characteristics of online child pornography

Until now, the analysis has presented police-reported online abuse data wherein a victim had been identified. The following section will examine incidents of child pornography, wherein a victim had not been identified and, thus, information about victimized children was not known to the police.

There is a significant number of child pornography images on the Internet, and the number of reports of such child sexual abuse material continues to increase (Canadian Centre for Child Protection 2022a). As such, counts of police-reported child pornography incidents included in this article likely represent cases that have been actioned or opened by police in a given year, and not necessarily all cases that have come to their attention over this period.²⁴

Of note, the *Criminal Code* does not limit the definition of child pornography to instances where telecommunications or online means are used. However, given the online focus of this article, and to allow for comparisons to be drawn between offence types, only child pornography incidents where information and communication technology (ICT) was indicated are included. However, it is likely that a large share of police-reported child pornography incidents over the seven years included in this article were in fact cyber-related (see Text box 3).

Text box 3 **Cybercrime as a percentage of all crime, 2018-2020**

Prior to 2018, all cybercrime data collected through the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Survey were kept in a separate database. However, in order to allow for a more comparative analysis between cybercrime data and non-cyber-related crime, beginning in 2018, cybercrime data were merged with all other UCR incident data. Due to this change and any differences in the data processing methodologies before and after the 2018 merge, analysis differentiating cybercrime from non-cybercrime incidents can only be conducted using data from 2018 onward.

Overall, 2% of all crimes reported to police between 2018 and 2020 were cybercrime. Two-thirds (68%) of cybercrime incidents did not involve violations against the person. In fact, more than half (54%) of cybercrime incidents are related to fraud.²⁵ Violations against the person (also known as violent crime, and excludes child pornography offences) accounted for about one-third (32%) of cybercrime incidents reported during this time—most commonly harassment (14%), uttering threats (8%) or extortion (4%).²⁶

Child pornography represented 11% of all cybercrime incidents: 9% were making or distributing, and the remaining 2% were related to possessing or accessing child pornography.

Online sexual offences against children accounted for 4% of all cybercrime.²⁷ In other words, over the three-year period, online child sexual offences accounted for about 0.1% of all police-reported incidents.

Notably, by their *Criminal Code* definitions, the two criminal offences of luring a child, and agreement or arrangement (sexual offence against a child) are characterized by the use of telecommunication in the committing of the offence and are thus assumed to have occurred online.

Further, nearly two-thirds (63%) of child pornography incidents reported between 2018 and 2020 were flagged as cybercrime. Lower proportions of incidents involving non-consensual distribution of intimate images (39%) and invitation to sexual touching offences (13%) were flagged as cybercrime.

For additional information on police-reported cybercrime, see Statistics Canada 2021.

Child pornography represents more than two-thirds of all police-reported online child sexual exploitation and abuse incidents

Between 2014 and 2020, Canadian police reported a total of 29,028 incidents of online child pornography.²⁸ This means, overall, in nearly three-quarters (73%) of all police-reported incidents of online child sexual exploitation and abuse, a victim was not identified.

This is not to imply that child pornography is a victimless crime. Rather, it simply means that the police were unable to identify the actual victims. Police can rely solely on the images they come across in which perpetrators can hide any identifying features of the victims, making it difficult for police or automated web crawlers (tools used to sift through the web detecting images) to make matches to victims. In police data, however as previously mentioned, child pornography was indicated as a secondary offence in 17% of online child sexual exploitation and abuse incidents where a victim had been identified. Additionally, victim accounts and testimony play an important role in the criminal justice process. For example, victims are often the main witnesses and assist in police investigations and the identification of perpetrators, and their assessment of the impact of the crime on their life carries weight on court decisions and outcomes for the accused (Cameron 2003; Department of Justice 2021; Haskell and Randall 2019). Further, children whose sexual abuse had been recorded (whether distributed or not) experience many negative outcomes including negative family life both as children and later on as adults, difficulties engaging in romantic or sexual relationships in adulthood, and negative economic outcomes in adulthood (Canadian Centre for Child Protection 2017).

While it cannot be measured through police-reported data, the nature of online sexual victimization is such that it perpetuates repeat victimization. Images of the same victim could be duplicated and shared many times, further victimizing the victim even after the contact aspect of the offence has ended.

Two-thirds of online child pornography incidents involve making or distributing

In the UCR, child pornography offences are grouped into two categories: child pornography (possessing or accessing) and child pornography (making or distributing).²⁹ About one in three (32%) online child pornography incidents involved possessing or accessing child pornography, while two-thirds (68%) involved making or distributing child pornography.

Virtually all (99%) online child pornography incidents did not have a different secondary violation identified in the incident. Any secondary violations identified were in relation to making or distributing offences which were identified as the most serious violation in an incident and where the secondary violation was possessing or accessing child pornography.

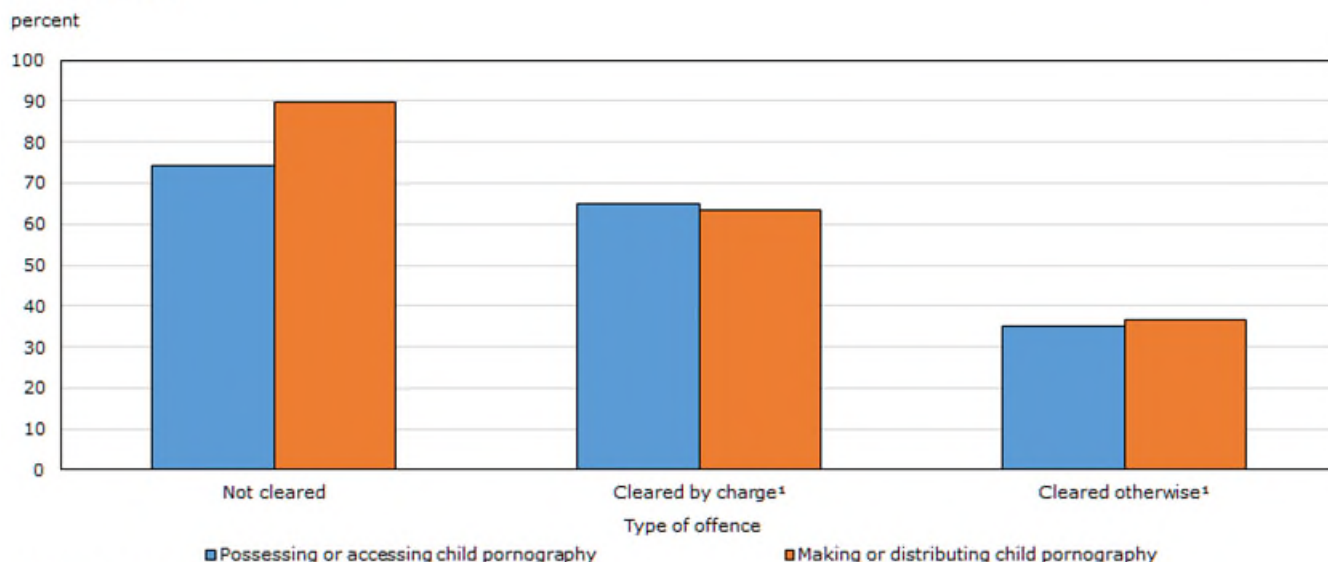
Charges less common in incidents of online child pornography

There are a number of known factors which could impact whether or not charges are laid, including victim and accused characteristics such as gender or age, the nature of the relationship between the victim and the accused, and level of harm or injuries to the victim (Baiden et al. 2017; Dawson and Hotton 2014). Additionally, as noted, online sexual offences against children were more likely to result in charges when they involved multiple violations. However, the complexities and challenges of investigating online offences, and in particular child pornography, make it difficult to identify victims and locate offenders, subsequently affecting the charge rates for this crime.

The large majority (85%) of police-reported online child pornography incidents were not cleared. This means that, in addition to these incidents not having any victim information, no accused persons were identified. This could be in part due to the fact that even when an incident is reported to police, often anonymously, it is still difficult to locate or pinpoint the exact location of the accused. This is especially true when the child pornography was discovered in, or accessed using, a public or communal space or Internet Protocol (IP) address, and with an accused who may have changed locations. For the remaining incidents, 10% were cleared by charge and 5% were cleared otherwise, proportions much lower than incidents where the child victim was identified (32% and 11%, respectively). In other words, 64% of child pornography incidents that were cleared involved the laying or recommendation of charges, compared with 74% of incidents where a victim was identified.

Incidents involving the making or distributing of child pornography were less likely to be cleared (90% were not cleared, by charge or otherwise) and were slightly less likely to have charges laid even when an accused is identified (63%; Chart 6). In comparison, 65% of possessing or accessing child pornography incidents that were solved were cleared by charge and 35% were cleared otherwise.

Chart 6
Clearance status of police-reported online child pornography incidents, by type of offence, Canada, 2014 to 2020



1. Calculations are based on cleared incidents.

Note: Child pornography incidents include offences under section 163.1 of the *Criminal Code* which make it illegal to make, distribute, possess or access child pornography. An incident is considered to be online if it was flagged as a cybercrime. An incident is flagged as a cybercrime when the crime targets information and communication technology (ICT), or when the crime used ICT to commit the offence. ICT includes, but is not limited to, the internet, computers, servers, digital technology, digital telecommunications devices, phones and networks. Crimes committed over text and through messages using social media platforms are also considered cybercrime activity. An incident is considered to be cleared when a charge is laid or recommended against an accused, or when it is dealt with by other means. For the years 2014 and 2015, the municipal police services of Saint John, Québec and Calgary, and the Ontario Provincial Police were excluded. For the year 2016, the municipal police services of Saint John and Calgary, and the Ontario Provincial Police were excluded. For the year 2017, the municipal police service of Saint John and the Ontario Provincial Police were excluded. For the years 2018 to 2020, the municipal police service of Saint John was excluded.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice and Community Safety Statistics, Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.

Text box 4
Cybertip.ca

The Canadian Centre for Child Protection (C3P) is a national charity dedicated to the personal safety of all children. The organization’s goal is to reduce the sexual abuse and exploitation of children through programs, services, and resources for Canadian families, educators, child-serving organizations, law enforcement, and other parties. C3P also operates Cybertip.ca® — Canada’s national tipline to report child sexual abuse and exploitation on the internet; and Project Arachnid® — a web platform designed to detect known images of child sexual abuse material (CSAM) on the clear and dark web and issue removal notices to industry. Cybertip.ca has been operational since September 26, 2002, and was adopted under the Government of Canada’s *National Strategy for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation on the Internet* in May 2004. In December 2011, C3P (through the Cybertip.ca program) was named within the regulations under *Canada’s Act respecting the mandatory reporting of Internet child pornography by persons who provide an Internet service* as the designated reporting entity under Section 2.

Reports to Cybertip.ca are submitted by the public relating to one of eight types of online crimes committed against children: CSAM; luring; non-consensual distribution of intimate images; making explicit material available for a child; agreement or arrangement with another person to commit a sexual offence against a child; commercial sexual exploitation of children; child trafficking and travelling to sexually exploit a child.

In 2020, there were 33,903 reports processed by Cybertip.ca.³⁰ The vast majority (94%) of these reports were child pornography incidents. Non-consensual distribution of intimate images (3%) and luring (2%) accounted for about 5% of the incidents.³¹

Just under half (49%) of these reports originated from an international jurisdiction.³² Among the remaining reports which originated in Canada, the most common reporting jurisdictions were Ontario (27% of all reports), Quebec (5%), British Columbia (4%) and Alberta (3%).

Among all reports received in 2020, 12% (or 4,135 reports) were forwarded to Canadian police or child welfare agencies. About seven in ten (71%) reports were forwarded to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police’s National Child Exploitation Crime Centre.³³

Corresponding to the origin of the reports received, the remaining reports were forwarded to local jurisdictions, most commonly Ontario (11%), Quebec (5%), Alberta (4%) and British Columbia (4%).

Cybertip.ca data indicate that online child sexual exploitation and abuse is on the rise. The national tipline processed more than 4 million reports between 2014 and 2020. In 2021, Cybertip.ca saw a 37% increase over the previous year in the overall online victimization of children, 83% increase in reports of online luring, 38% increase in reports of non-consensual distribution of intimate images, 74% increase in reports of sextortion on online platforms often used by youth, and an increase in youth's intimate images appearing on adult pornography sites and being shared on popular social media platforms (Canadian Centre for Child Protection 2022a).

Analysis presented in this text box are based on data published by Cybertip.ca (Canadian Centre for Child Protection 2022b).

For more information about Cybertip.ca visit: [About Cybertip.ca](#)

Characteristics of people accused of online child sexual exploitation and abuse offences

Fewer accused persons identified in child pornography incidents

Between 2014 and 2020, police services across Canada identified 9,766 individuals as accused in incidents involving online child sexual exploitation and abuse.³⁴

While online child pornography incidents made up a larger share of incidents reported, fewer people were identified as accused in relation to these incidents. Specifically, 49% of persons accused in relation to online child sexual exploitation and abuse were accused of child pornography. In contrast, there were proportionally more people accused in incidents of child luring (32%), non-consensual distribution of intimate images (8%) and invitation to sexual touching (7%). An additional 4% were accused in other online-related sexual offences against children.

The median age of victims of online child sexual offences reported between 2014 and 2020 was 14 years for girls and boys. In contrast, accused persons in these types of crimes were generally older. The median age of an accused person in an online sexual offence against a child (excluding child pornography) was 23 years, and this nine-year difference between the median accused and victim age is attributable to the number of adult men accused in these incidents. Specifically, while victims are usually young girls, the vast majority (93%) of accused persons in incidents where victims were identified were men with a median age of 24 years, compared with a median age of 15 years among accused women and girls (Table 5).

These findings are consistent with previous research on police-reported sexual assaults (not necessarily cyber-related), which found that a large majority of incidents involving child victims were perpetrated by people who were ten or more years older than their victims, many of whom met the age-based criteria of clinical pedophilia (Rotenberg 2017).

Men accused in incidents involving invitation to sexual touching or other online sexual offences against children were generally much older than victims, with a median age of 28 and 35 years, respectively. While, overall, women accused were generally younger than the men accused, women involved in invitation to sexual touching or other online sexual offences against children were generally older (median age of 29 and 23, respectively, compared to victims of these crimes who had a median age of 13 and 15, respectively). In sum, regardless of the gender of the accused, incidents involving the invitation to sexual touching or other sexual offences against children are not often perpetrated by childhood peers, but rather by adults who are considerably older than victims.

While women and girls generally represented a small proportion (7%) of all accused in police-reported online child sexual offences where a victim was identified, they were overrepresented (23%) as persons accused in the non-consensual distribution of intimate images. Among both men and boys accused, and women and girls accused, youth between 12 and 17 years of age were responsible for the majority of the non-consensual distribution of intimate images incidents (89% and 94%, respectively). In other words, non-consensual distribution of intimate images often involved peers, with victims and accused persons having the same median age of 15, each.

Compared to online sexual offences against children, more women and girls accused in child pornography incidents, most often youth

Similar to online sexual offences against children, men and boys made up the large majority (89%) of persons accused in online child pornography incidents. However, there were more women and girls accused in child pornography incidents than online child sexual offences against children. Specifically, over one in ten people accused of possessing or accessing child

pornography (11%) or making or distributing child pornography (12%) were women and girls, compared with 7% of persons accused in online child sexual offences against children (where a victim was identified).

The profile of women and girls accused in child pornography incidents mirrored that of women and girls accused in non-consensual distribution of intimate images. For example, the vast majority of women and girls accused in child pornography offences, whether possessing or accessing (82%) or making or distributing (72%), were aged 12 to 17. However, unlike men and boys accused in incidents of non-consensual distribution of intimate images who were also usually youth, child pornography offences less often involved boys aged 12 to 17 as the accused—the youth accused in these incidents represented about one-quarter (26%) of all men and boys accused.³⁵ Instead, more than half of men and boys accused of possessing or accessing child pornography (53%) or making or distributing child pornography (56%) were aged 25 to 64. Overall, men accused of online child pornography incidents had a median age of 29.

Women more often accused with others, men generally acted alone

Persons accused in online child sexual exploitation and abuse between 2014 and 2020 were identified in connection with 8,768 incidents. Less than one in ten (7%) of these incidents where an accused had been identified involved multiple accused—that is, more than one person was involved as a suspect in the crime. About one out of six (16%) people accused were involved in an incident alongside at least one other accused person.

Accused women and girls were much more likely to be involved in online child sexual exploitation and abuse incidents where there were multiple accused, while men and boys generally were the only accused in these incidents. Specifically, more than half (56%) of women and girls accused were involved in multi-accused incidents compared to 13% of accused men and boys. This difference was observed across all offence categories included in online child sexual exploitation and abuse. However, the gap was smaller for people accused of non-consensual distribution of intimate images, with 64% of women and girls, and 47% of men and boys accused in these incidents being involved in multi-accused incidents.

Text box 5

Where are online child sexual exploitation and abuse incidents reported? A focus on geography from 2018-2020

Unlike crimes that take place offline, which can generally be pinpointed to a particular physical location or vicinity, the borderless and spatially non-restrictive nature of online activities means that a victim of cybercrime might reside in one area, but the perpetrator can be anywhere. For example, according to a 2017 global report (UNICEF 2017), the vast majority of the world's child sexual abuse websites are hosted in five countries, among which Canada is one.³⁶ Therefore, understanding where victims are likely to be targeted and the physical location of where accused persons are identified, provide two different and important points of focus for people and organizations working to combat this crime in Canada and elsewhere. Therefore, this text box focuses on geography, presenting police-reported data related to where incidents involving identified victims and accused occur.

In Canada, local police services may deal with initial complaints or reports of online child sexual exploitation and abuse. However, the National Child Exploitation Coordination Centre (NCECC) is the Canadian body responsible for conducting investigations related to this crime, and is the point of contact for international agencies reporting child sexual exploitation materials which were uploaded in Canada. The NCECC is an extension of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and provides services and support to Canadian and international police (Royal Canadian Mounted Police 2019).

Any geographical comparisons related to crime using police-reported data may be impacted by jurisdictional priorities, regional programs and policies, and reporting practices. Online child sexual exploitation and abuse incidents are likely among those more susceptible to these biases. For example, the presence or absence of designated Internet Child Exploitation Units or experts in investigating these types of crimes within a particular police service could impact the ability to identify victims or locate offenders. Additionally, as noted previously, reporting of child sexual abuse images by Internet Service Providers is mandatory in Canada. Therefore, locations where internet service providers reside or where technology hubs exist in Canada may influence the number of reports of online child pornography to particular police services. Further, reporting practices, for example whether the number of open or active investigations or total number of incidents are being reported, particularly for child pornography incidents—may impact the number of incidents reported to the Uniform Crime Reporting Survey (UCR).

Due to data coverage limitations affecting data collected prior to 2018, analysis based on geography are limited to data collected from 2018 to 2020 only (see Data sources).

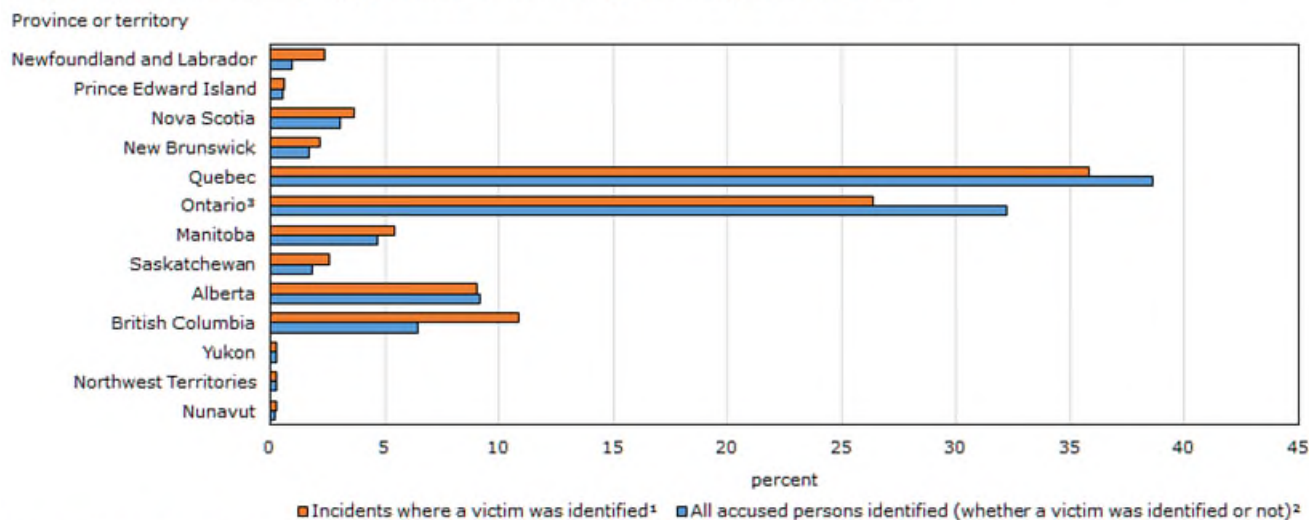
More accused persons identified in the territories and Quebec relative to population

From 2018 to 2020, there were 5,761 police-reported incidents of online child sexual offences where a victim was identified, and approximately 4,800 people were identified as accused. These numbers represented an average annual rate of 27 incidents per 100,000 children and youth in Canada, and about 5 people accused for every 100,000 population aged 12 and over (Table 6).³⁷

The largest proportion of persons accused of online child sexual exploitation and abuse (regardless of whether a victim was identified) was in Quebec (39%) followed by Ontario (32%) (Text box 5 Chart 1).³⁸ When population size is taken into account, Quebec had a rate of 8 people accused per 100,000 population, the highest among the provinces, followed by Manitoba (7 per 100,000). While, combined, the territories represented less than 1% of all accused persons identified in police-reported online child sexual exploitation and abuse over the three years, the rates of accused in the territories were higher than the national average. The average annual rates of accused in the Yukon (12 per 100,000), Nunavut (12) and the Northwest Territories (11) were higher than the Canadian average (5).

Incident rates where a victim was identified were highest in the Yukon (57 incidents per 100,000 children and youth) and the Northwest Territories (53 per 100,000). Among the provinces, Newfoundland and Labrador reported the highest incident rate where a victim was identified (52 per 100,000 population).

Text box 5 Chart 1
Incidents involving identified victims, and accused persons in police-reported online child sexual exploitation and abuse, by province or territory, Canada, 2018 to 2020



1. Includes sexual violations against children and other sexual offences where a victim was identified as being a person younger than 18.
 2. Calculations are based on accused persons identified in connection with an incident where an online child sexual exploitation and abuse offence (including child pornography) was identified as the cyber violation. Children under 12 years of age cannot be prosecuted for criminal activities and, as such, are excluded. Also excludes accused persons where the gender was unknown.
 3. Excludes a small number of incidents (representing 0.7%) reported by the National Child Exploitation Coordination Centre, but which were included in the total for calculating the proportions.
Note: An incident is considered to be an online incident if it was flagged as a cybercrime. An incident is flagged as a cybercrime when the crime targets information and communication technology (ICT), or when the crime used ICT to commit the offence. ICT includes, but is not limited to, the internet, computers, servers, digital technology, digital telecommunications devices, phones and networks. Crimes committed over text and through messages using social media platforms are also considered cybercrime activity. Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding. The municipal police service of Saint John was excluded.
Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice and Community Safety Statistics, Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.

Child luring victims more commonly reported in Quebec, British Columbia and Manitoba

Across all provinces and territories, child luring offences accounted for the majority of the online sexual violations where a child was identified. However during the three years between 2018 and 2020, in some parts of Canada such as in Quebec (84%), Manitoba (82%) and British Columbia (82%), this crime accounted for larger proportions of the incidents reported. It is important to note that these are the regions where victims reported to police, though where the accused resided was usually unknown.

Overall, when it comes to incidents where a victim had not been identified (child pornography), British Columbia accounted for nearly half (49%) of the incidents reported over the three years, and the vast majority (93%) of all child sexual exploitation and abuse incidents reported by the province over this time. That is to say that police services in British

Columbia were made aware of the existence of online child sexual exploitation which could have originated in any part of the world. Quebec (17%), Ontario (12%) and Alberta (7%) followed British Columbia in the proportion of child pornography incidents in Canada. However, as mentioned previously, police-reported child pornography incidents where a victim or accused had not been identified are particularly susceptible to reporting biases. Therefore, geographical analysis of these incidents do not necessarily reflect where these crimes are originating or where victims are, but may indicate differences in how police services are reporting these incidents to the UCR.

Additionally, it is important to reiterate that geographical differences seen may reflect the presence or absence of special programs or policies targeted at addressing this issue at the provincial or territorial level. For example, in Quebec, the Sûreté du Québec has had a provincial strategy since 2012. As part of the strategy, there are coordinated specialized units across the province dedicated to detecting and investigating cybercrime (for more information about the work of these specialized units see The Sûreté du Québec 2022). In British Columbia, some work was initiated by the British Columbia Behavioural Sciences Group – Integrated Child Exploitation Unit (BSG) using software developed by the Child Rescue Coalition to identify computers located in the province that were used to access or share child pornography on the Internet, from which they could open an investigation (for more information on the software see Child Rescue Coalition 2020). Such initiatives and policies may impact the number of these incidents reported in the regions implementing them.

Court charges and outcomes of child sexual offences likely committed or facilitated online

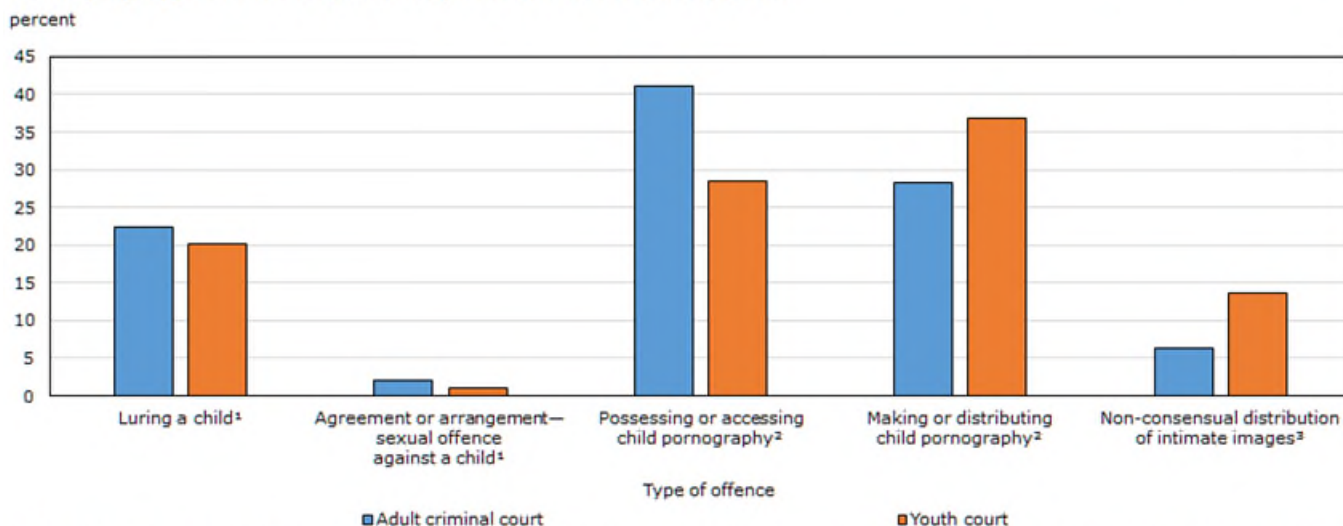
The Integrated Criminal Court Survey (ICCS) collects statistical information on adult criminal and youth court cases involving *Criminal Code* and other federal statute offences.

Sections 172.1(1) (2) and 172.2(2) of the *Criminal Code* explicitly mention the use of telecommunications in its definitions of two offences relating to the sexual victimization of children: luring a child, and agreement or arrangement (sexual offence against a child). An analysis of court charges involving these offences are presented in this section, along with charges of other *Criminal Code* violations that have a higher chance of being committed or facilitated online, namely, child pornography and the non-consensual distribution of intimate images (based on what is shown in police-reported data; see Text box 3).³⁹ In this section, combined, these offences are also referred to as online child sexual offences.

From April 2014 to March 2020, criminal courts in Canada processed 27,522 charges related to child sexual offences which were likely committed or facilitated online.⁴⁰ These charges were processed as part of 9,138 completed cases which comprised 58,984 total charges.⁴¹ Based on the number of total charges and cases completed over these six years, adult cases averaged 6.8 charges per case, and youth cases had an average of 4.7 charges per case. More specifically, adult cases averaged 3.1 charges related to online child sexual offences compared with 2.6 such charges per case in youth courts.

As seen with police-reported data, in both adult criminal and youth courts, child pornography which includes making or distributing, and possessing or accessing child pornography made up the largest proportion of online child sexual offence charges that were processed over the 6 years (69% of the adult charges and 65% of the youth charges). Overall, over eight out of every ten (85%) charges related to online child sexual offences were processed in adult courts. Charges of possessing or accessing child pornography were the most common type of charge related to child sexual offences likely committed online in adult courts (41% versus 29% in youth courts), while the most common type of charge processed in youth courts was related to the making or distribution of child pornography (37% versus 28%) (Chart 7).⁴² Consistent with incidents reported to police, youth courts also processed proportionally more charges related to the non-consensual distribution of intimate images than adult courts (14% compared to 6% of adult charges).

Chart 7
Charges processed in adult criminal and youth courts related to offences likely committed or facilitated online, by type of offence, Canada, 2014/2015 to 2019/2020



1. An offence specific to child victims and defined in the *Criminal Code* by the use of telecommunications, and is therefore assumed to have occurred online.
 2. An offence specific to child victims but not defined in the *Criminal Code* by the use of telecommunications, however, police data indicates are likely committed online.
 3. Non-consensual distribution of intimate images became an offence in 2015 under the *Protecting Canadians from Online Crime Act*. This is an offence not specific to child victims only and is not defined in the *Criminal Code* by the use of telecommunication. However, police data indicate this offence most often involved youth, and a large proportion (39% of police-reported incidents between 2018 and 2020) are likely committed online.
Note: This chart presents data for offences relating to the online sexual victimization of children according to their *Criminal Code* definition, and offences involving other *Criminal Code* violations that have a higher likelihood of being committed or facilitated online, based on what is shown in police-reported data.
Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice and Community Safety Statistics, Integrated Criminal Court Survey.

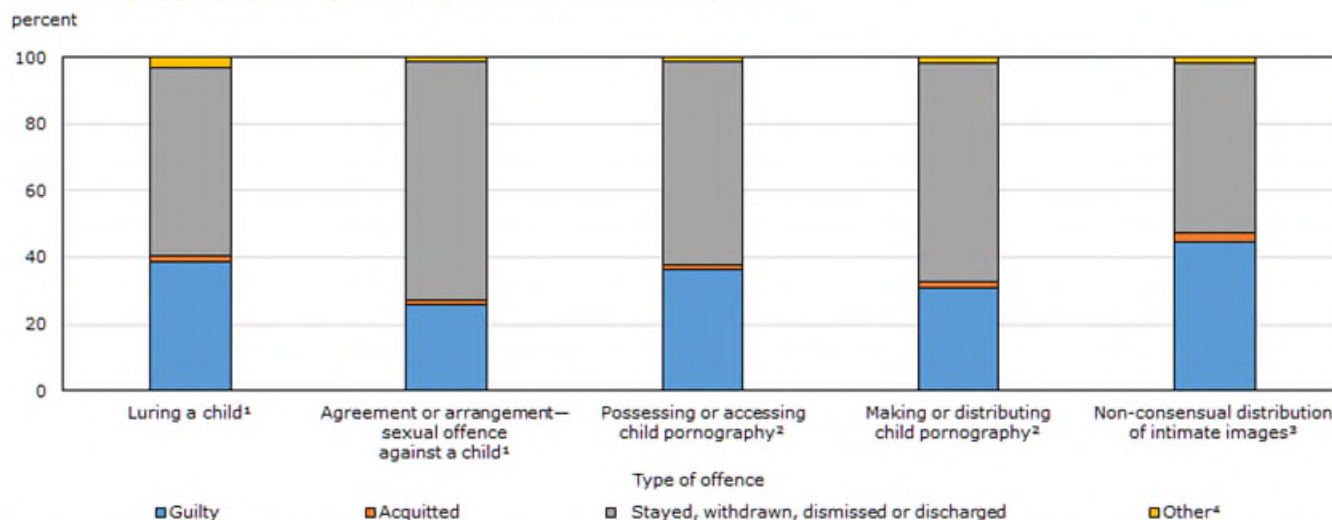
Between April 2014 and March 2020, less than four in ten (36%) charges laid for child sexual offences likely committed online resulted in a guilty finding. About six in ten (61%) of these charges were stayed, withdrawn, dismissed or discharged. Further, 2% of child sexual offence charges likely committed online were acquitted.⁴³ Charges related to child sexual offences likely committed online were more likely to result in a guilty decision than charges involving other sexual violations against children—which were likely committed offline: 29% of these charges resulted in a guilty finding, 62% were stayed, withdrawn, dismissed or discharged, and the accused was acquitted for 7% of the charges.⁴⁴

Proving sexual crimes in court is a challenge that has been well documented (Dodge 2018; Randall 2010; Sheehy 1999). However, the higher prevalence of charges related to sexual offences committed online resulting in a guilty decision may indicate that, when brought to court, these crimes are easier to prove than other types of sexual crimes. The presence of physical evidence, or traceable online prints or records may contribute to the court outcomes observed.

Charges of non-consensual distribution of intimate images most likely to result in a finding of guilt

Perpetrators were most commonly found guilty of charges related to non-consensual distribution of intimate images (45%), followed by child luring charges (38%) (Chart 8). Agreement or arrangement (sexual offence against a child) charges were least likely among these offence types to result in a finding of guilt (26%)—the majority of these charges were stayed, withdrawn, dismissed or discharged (72%).

Chart 8
Adult criminal and youth court decisions for charges related to offences likely committed or facilitated online, by type of offence, Canada, 2014/2015 to 2019/2020



1. An offence specific to child victims and defined in the *Criminal Code* by the use of telecommunications, and is therefore assumed to have occurred online.

2. An offence specific to child victims but not defined in the *Criminal Code* by the use of telecommunications, however, police data indicates are likely committed online.

3. Non-consensual distribution of intimate images became an offence in 2015 under the *Protecting Canadians from Online Crime Act*. This is an offence not specific to child victims only and is not defined in the *Criminal Code* by the use of telecommunication. However, police data indicates this offence most often involved youth, and a large proportion (39% of police-reported incidents between 2018 and 2020) are likely committed online.

4. Other decisions include final decisions of found not criminally responsible and waived out of province or territory. This category also includes any order where a guilty decision was not recorded, the court's acceptance of a special plea, cases which raise Charter arguments and cases where the accused was found unfit to stand trial.

Note: This chart presents data for offences relating to the online sexual victimization of children according to their *Criminal Code* definition, and offences involving other *Criminal Code* violations that have a higher likelihood of being committed or facilitated online, based on what is shown in police-reported data.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice and Community Safety Statistics, Integrated Criminal Court Survey.

Guilty finding related to online child sexual offence charges more common in youth courts

Online child sexual offence charges processed in youth courts were more likely to result in a guilty decision than the same type of charges processed in adult courts. Overall, 45% of charges processed in youth courts related to child sexual offences likely committed online resulted in a guilty finding for the charge, compared with about one-third (34%) of charges processed in adult courts (Table 7). This difference was largely driven by a greater number of charges related to child luring, and agreement or arrangement (sexual offences against a child) resulting in a finding of guilt in youth courts than adult courts. More than half (56%) of child luring charges and nearly as many (45%) agreement or arrangement charges processed in youth courts resulted in a guilty decision, compared with 36% and 24% in adult courts, respectively. In adult courts, these charges were more likely to have been stayed, withdrawn, dismissed or discharged.

These findings were also reflected when considering decisions rendered for child-specific sexual offence charges that were likely committed offline. Just under four in ten (39%) child sexual offence charges for crimes likely committed offline that were processed in youth courts between April 2014 and March 2020 resulted in a guilty finding, and 52% were stayed, withdrawn, dismissed or discharged. In comparison, 26% of those processed in adult courts resulted in a guilty finding, and 65% were stayed, withdrawn, dismissed or discharged.

These findings may be partly attributable to cases processed in adult courts being more likely to include more charges as part of a case, giving prosecutors more opportunities to prove guilt or the accused accepting a guilty plea related to other charges within the case, and charges related to online child sexual offences getting dropped (Sheehy 2012; Spohn 2001). A case can have more than one charge, which may include multiple charges for the same offence or other related charges. Further, these charges are not mutually exclusive and, as such, a case can also involve multiple types of child sexual offence charges.

While a finding of guilt for charges related to online child sexual offences were more common in youth courts, among online child sexual offence charges processed in adult courts, the proportion of charges resulting in a finding of guilty varied by type of offence. For example, a guilty finding for charges related to non-consensual distribution of intimate images was most common among younger adults aged 18 to 24, and appeared to decrease with age. Conversely, a guilty decision related to possessing or accessing child pornography charges appeared to increase with age, with people aged 55 and over being most likely to be found guilty.

Higher proportion of cases involving child sexual offences likely committed online result in guilty decision compared to cases with other sexual offences

In more than six in ten (61%) completed cases with at least one charge related to online child sexual offences, the most serious decision for any of these offences was guilty.⁴⁵ In comparison, 41% of cases with at least one charge of child sexual offences likely committed offline resulted in a finding of guilt for any of those charges. Cases involving offline child sexual offence charges were more likely to result in other types of decisions as the most serious decisions for those charges including stayed, withdrawn, dismissed or discharges (49% versus 35% of online cases), acquitted (8% versus 3%) or other decisions (2% versus 1%).

Slightly fewer women are found guilty of online child sexual offence charges

The large majority (95%) of charges processed in both adult and youth courts related to child sexual offences likely committed online involved a man as the perpetrator, whereas 5% involved women as perpetrators.^{46 47} Men were slightly more likely than women to be convicted of a charge specific to a child sexual offence likely committed online, with 36% of charges involving men receiving a guilty decision, compared with 34% of charges involving women (Table 7). Men were more likely to be convicted of making or distributing child pornography charges (31%), possessing or accessing child pornography charges (36%) and charges related to non-consensual distribution of intimate images (45%), compared with 29%, 24% and 39%, respectively, among charges involving women. In contrast, women were significantly more likely to be found guilty of child luring (54% of charges involving women), and agreement or arrangement—sexual offence against a child (34%), compared to men (37% and 25%, respectively).

Most adults sentenced to custody, probation most common in youth courts

In adult courts, eight out of every ten guilty cases involving child sexual offences likely committed online led to a custodial sentence (80%) (Table 7).⁴⁸ In youth courts, however, 1 in 25 (4%) youth found guilty of an offence likely committed online were sentenced to custody or supervision. Convicted youth were more likely to be sentenced to probation (61%).⁴⁹

Sentencing outcomes for adults and youth convicted of child sexual offences likely committed online followed similar trends of cases involving child sexual offences likely committed offline. However, the proportion of adults sentenced to custody for child sexual offences likely committed online was slightly lower compared to those likely committed offline (80% versus 83%), and slightly more probationary sentences were seen in these cases compared to child sexual offence cases likely committed offline (8% compared to 4%, respectively). Similarly, in youth courts, the proportion of youth sentenced to custody was lower than for cases involving child sexual offences likely committed offline (4% versus 8%), while the same proportion of cases receiving probation were seen in online and offline cases (61% each).

Summary

Online child sexual exploitation and abuse is a criminal offence in Canada which encompasses a wide range of behaviours including those related to child sexual abuse material, self-generated materials and sexting, sextortion, grooming and luring, live child sexual abuse streaming and made-to-order content.

Since 2014, when nationally representative cybercrime data first became available, the number of incidents constituting police-reported online child sexual exploitation and abuse has generally been on an upward trend. By 2020, the overall rate of this crime had reached 131 incidents per 100,000 Canadian children and youth, from 50 per 100,000 in 2014. Although the increase over this time may be partly attributable to an uptake in the use of the cybercrime flag which was newly introduced to all police services in Canada in 2014, these increases support reports from external data sources, specifically data from Cybertip.ca, Canada's national tipline for the reporting of child exploitation on the Internet.

In total, between 2014 and 2020, police reported 10,739 incidents of online sexual offences against children, where a victim had been identified, and 29,028 incidents of online child pornography—which are incidents where the actual victim had not been identified by the police. Child luring offences accounted for the large majority (77%) of the incidents where a victim was identified, while non-consensual distribution of intimate images (11%), invitation to sexual touching (8%) and other online sexual offences against children (5%) made up smaller proportions of the incidents. As for child pornography incidents, two-thirds (68%) of incidents involved making or distributing child pornography, and the remaining one-third (32%) were incidents involving possessing or accessing child pornography.

The nature of crimes that take place online, beyond the sexual contact and recording or streaming of child sexual abuse, is such that victims and offenders are usually not together, in the same location. This creates a challenge for police investigations of online child sexual exploitation and abuse incidents, regardless of whether a victim is identified. More than half (56%) of police-reported online child sexual offences where a victim was identified were not cleared, meaning police

were not able to identify an accused person in relation to the incident, and the proportion is even higher (85%) when a victim is not identified (i.e., child pornography). In general, charges were more likely to be laid when the online child sexual offence involved multiple violations.

Between 2014/2015 to 2019/2020, criminal courts across Canada processed 27,522 charges related to child sexual offences which were likely committed or facilitated online. The majority (85%) of these charges were processed in adult courts. For about six in ten (61%) cases involving at least one charge of online child sexual offence, the most serious decision rendered for any of those charges was guilty. In comparison, the most serious decision in 41% of cases involving at least one charge of offline child sexual offences resulted in a guilty finding as the most serious for any of those charges. Similar to findings related to child sexual offences likely committed offline, convictions related to offences likely committed online most often resulted in custody for adults and probation for youth.

Limitations and considerations

There are many limitations to collecting and reporting data on online child sexual exploitation. The current article presents an overview of the data that have come to the attention of, and subsequently been reported by, police services. While the article aims to provide insight on the extent of this issue in Canada using official crime data, it is important to emphasize a number of limitations and considerations which underscore the underreporting that exists within the data. Below are some of the most notable limitations, among others, in no particular order:

- There has been an increase in reporting of online child pornography since the implementation of the *National Strategy for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation on the Internet* and Cybertip.ca. Increased caseload may challenge the capacity of law enforcement agencies; the resulting increased caseload may mean that police services are triaging cases and concentrating on combined files for the most serious cases, which may have an impact on the characteristics and outcomes of cases over time (Reith 2017).
- The nature of cybercrime is such that victims and accused can be located anywhere. Victims can be targeted in Canada though the perpetrator may be located outside of Canada and, conversely, Canadian offenders might target victims abroad. Therefore, investigations related to this crime cross jurisdictional, national and international boundaries.
- Only a fraction of sexual assault incidents come to the attention of police; even fewer do when the victim is a child. (Burczycka and Conroy 2017; Finkelhor et al. 2001; Taylor and Gassner 2010).
- Technological advancements, increased anonymity capabilities and the proliferation of smart devices with live streaming capabilities mean reduced footprint on devices, creating additional challenges for law enforcement (WeProtect Global Alliance 2019). When live streaming instances are uncovered, data collected through the Uniform Crime Reporting Survey cannot be broken down further to distinguish between accessing and possessing child pornography. Therefore, it is not possible to examine incidents involving live streaming or other distinctions between these two offence categories.

Future research

The current analysis presented an overview of police-reported data involving online child sexual offences, and a snapshot of court case outcomes involving some of these violations. Repeating this type of analysis can give further insight on how this crime may be shifting or changing over time, as technology advances.

Additionally, an analysis using data linking police and court data, can provide a clearer examination of the pathways of these crimes in the justice system. Linked data can also be leveraged to examine repeat contact with police to shed light on the online and offline aspect of child sexual victimization. Such analysis could be an important next step in answering research questions related to how offenders may be advancing in their criminality, and the potential impact of decisions made in the justice system on outcomes.

Finally, continued incorporation of data from external sources such as Cybertip.ca and other sources including international data, would allow for a deeper dive into the other aspects of this crime that do not come to the attention of police. As reported, the majority of incidents reported by police involve unidentified victims and offenders. These data sources may shed further light on the nature of these crimes, and where victims and accused persons may be located.

Data sources

Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting Survey

The Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) Survey collects detailed information on criminal incidents that have come to the attention of, and have been substantiated by, police services in Canada. Information includes characteristics of victims, accused persons and incidents. In 2020, data from police services covered 99% of the population of Canada. The count for a particular year represents incidents reported during that year, regardless of when the incident actually occurred.

For the years 2014 and 2015, the municipal police services of Saint John, Québec and Calgary, and the Ontario Provincial Police were excluded. For the year 2016, the municipal police services of Saint John and Calgary, and the Ontario Provincial Police were excluded. For the year 2017, the municipal police service of Saint John and the Ontario Provincial Police were excluded. For the years 2018 to 2020, the municipal police service of Saint John was excluded.

Integrated Criminal Court Survey

The Integrated Criminal Court Survey (ICCS) collects statistical information on adult and youth court cases involving *Criminal Code* and other federal statute offences.

All adult courts have reported to the adult component of the survey since the 2006/2007 fiscal year. Information from superior courts in Ontario, Manitoba and Saskatchewan as well as municipal courts in Quebec was not available for extraction from their electronic reporting systems and was therefore not reported to the survey. Superior court information for Prince Edward Island was unavailable until 2018/2019.

A completed charge refers to a formal accusation against an accused person or company involving a federal statute offence that was processed by the courts and received a final decision. A case is defined as one or more charges against an accused person or company that were processed by the courts at the same time and received a final decision. A case combines all charges against the same person having one or more key overlapping dates (date of offence, date of initiation, date of first appearance, date of decision, or date of sentencing) into a single case.

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Notes

1. Sexting refers to the process by which someone intentionally shares sexually explicit messages, images or self-generated sexualised images of themselves (ECPAT 2016).
2. Defined as use of coercion and threats to extort child sexual exploitation images or videos from youth (either by other youth or adult offenders).
3. The cybercrime flag was introduced prior to 2014 as a pilot project involving select police services. The flag was rolled out to most police services beginning in 2014.
4. In this article, sexual violations against children excludes the offence of making sexually explicit material available to children. However, a separate examination of this offence is included in Text box 2.

5. In the *Criminal Code*, some sexual violations against children are specific to certain age groups. For example, the offence of sexual interference applies to children younger than 16, and the offence of sexual exploitation applies to victims aged 16 and 17.
6. Data presented in this article are based on incidents that were flagged as cybercrime, and incident rates are based on the number of children and youth in the Canadian population. Therefore, results presented may differ from other published reports, including Moreau 2021.
7. Throughout this article, calculations are based on unrounded figures and totals may not add up due to rounding.
8. This number represents the count of all cyber-related incidents involving child-specific sexual offences and all other incidents involving cyber-related sexual offences where a victim was identified as someone younger than 18.
9. This rate is the average of the annual rates from 2014 to 2020. Rates are calculated on the basis of 100,000 population. Populations are based upon July 1st estimates from Statistics Canada, Centre for Demography.
10. The category “other sexual offences against children” is a catch-all category that encompasses all sexual violations against children (excluding child pornography) which were facilitated by or involved the use of technology.
11. Information on secondary violations excludes 6% of online sexual offences against children where the cyber-related violation was not the most serious in the incident. In those instances, the violation identified as the cyber-related violation was the secondary violation, and a different violation type was identified as the most serious in the incident (see Text box 2).
12. An incident can involve more than one secondary violation. Therefore, sum of parts may not add up to the total, and proportions do not add up to 100%.
13. Analysis is limited to the years 2018 to 2020 because prior to 2018, all cybercrime data collected through the Uniform Crime Reporting Survey were kept in a separate database.
14. In the Uniform Crime Reporting Survey, the reporting of victim information is not mandatory for some sexual offences. Therefore, the number of victims represents an underestimation, and is lower than the count of incidents reported.
15. A police-reported incident may involve multiple victims or multiple violations. In the current article, analysis of victim characteristics are based on victims where an online child sexual offence was the most serious violation against them.
16. In this article, age- and gender-based analyses are based on victim records, and exclude situations where the victim's age or gender was unknown. Given that small counts of victims identified as “gender diverse” may exist, the Uniform Crime Reporting data available to the public has been recoded to assign these counts to either “female” or “male” in order to ensure the protection of confidentiality and privacy. In this article, victims and accused persons identified as gender diverse have been assigned to either female or male based on the regional distribution of victims' gender.
17. The accused-to-victim relationship was not known for 8% of victims overall. See footnote 7.
18. See footnote 7.
19. See footnote 7.
20. Cleared otherwise could include, for example, the victim requested that no further action be taken, the incident had been cleared by another agency, the accused person was already sentenced or charged in another incident, or charges were not laid or recommended as a matter of departmental discretion or a policy beyond the control of the department.
21. Please see section below, under the heading “Characteristics of people accused of online child sexual exploitation and abuse offences”, for more information.
22. Based on incidents where a victim was identified, and where the cyber-related violation was the most serious violation against the victim.
23. Based on online incidents of making sexually explicit material available to children where it was the most serious violation in the incident.
24. The use of the term “child pornography” within the current article is to cite and reference the *Criminal Code* definition under section 163.1, which makes it illegal to make, distribute, possess or access child pornography.
25. In this article, “fraud” also includes identify fraud and identity theft.
26. The term “harassment” includes criminal harassment and indecent or harassing communications.
27. Includes cyber-related sexual violations against children and cybercrime incidents involving other sexual offences where a victim was identified as being younger than 18.
28. In virtually all (99%) online child pornography incidents, the child pornography offence was identified as the most serious violation in the incident. For the remaining 182 incidents, a more serious violation was identified (see Text box 2). Analysis of online child pornography incidents includes all of the incidents where child pornography was identified as the cybercrime violation.

29. Prior to 2015, all child pornography offences were reported to the Uniform Crime Reporting Survey under one violation code. Beginning in 2015, a second code was introduced allowing for the reporting of incidents involving making or distributing child pornography separately from incidents involving the criminal offence of possessing or accessing child pornography. Analysis of child pornography incidents in this article will refer to these two offence categories, collectively. However, it is not possible to further break down these offences into individual *Criminal Code* sections.

30. Excludes all Project Arachnid reports processed by Cybertip.ca

31. See footnote 7.

32. International jurisdiction includes but is not limited to reports from individuals outside of Canada concerned about the sexual exploitation of a child as well as reports of websites hosted in Canada from non-Canadian cybertip organizations.

33. Reports are sent to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police's National Child Exploitation Crime Centre (NCECC) when triage shows victim or person of interest resides outside of Canada.

34. Excludes persons younger than 12 who cannot be held criminally responsible. Also excludes 34 accused records where the gender of the accused was unknown or cannot be determined, or where the accused was a registered company.

35. In comparison, 89% of all men and boys accused of non-consensual distribution of intimate images were youth.

36. The four other countries reported were the Netherlands, the United States, France and the Russian Federation.

37. These rates are the averages of the annual rates from 2018 to 2020. Rates are calculated on the basis of 100,000 population. Populations are based upon July 1st estimates from Statistics Canada, Centre for Demography.

38. Calculations for Ontario exclude a small number of incidents (representing 0.7% of incidents) reported by the National Child Exploitation Coordination Centre, but which were included in the total for calculating the proportions.

39. Although the offence of non-consensual distribution of intimate images is not specific to child victims only, police data indicates this offence most often involved youth, and as such, are included in these analyses.

40. The Integrated Criminal Court Survey collects data on a fiscal year basis.

41. A completed case is one or more charges against an accused person or company, which were processed by the courts at the same time, and received a final decision. A case is not deemed complete until all charges in that case are disposed of (i.e., have received a final decision).

42. In order to maintain consistency with police-reported data, *Criminal Code* subsections related to possessing or accessing child pornography are grouped together (includes 163.1, 163.1(1), 163.1(4), 163.1(4.1), and 163.1(4.2)), and making or distributing child pornography are grouped together (includes 163.1(2) and 163.1(3)).

43. Calculations include other decisions including final decisions of found not criminally responsible and waived out of province or territory, and any order where a guilty decision was not recorded, the court's acceptance of a special plea, cases which raise Charter arguments and cases where the accused was found unfit to stand trial.

44. For the comparison to other child sexual offences that were likely committed offline, all sexual violations against children were grouped together excluding those likely committed online (luring a child, agreement or arrangement (sexual offence against a child), child pornography and non-consensual distribution of intimate images). For a list of the offences included in sexual violations against children, see Text box 1.

45. Guilty findings include a finding of guilt imposed by the court, as well as guilty pleas, and cases where an absolute or conditional discharge has been imposed.

46. Based on charges where the sex of the perpetrator was known.

47. On the Integrated Criminal Court Survey (ICCS), the sex of the accused is captured as male or female or unknown. The ICCS does not explicitly distinguish between sex and gender. Each province and territory is asked to indicate whether the accused person is male or female, as defined by each of their respective information systems (with the exception of Quebec, where sex is determined on the basis of the accused person's name, producing a relatively higher rate of sex unknown).

48. To allow for the analysis of sentencing information, data presented is limited to cases where the most serious sentence was related to a guilty finding for a child sexual offence likely committed online. Therefore, the analyses are based on 6,821 cases, or 75% of all cases.

49. The *Youth Criminal Justice Act* (YCJA) aims to divert youth offenders involved in less serious types of crime with extrajudicial measures such as warnings or cautions. For those youth who do make it into the court system, the YCJA offers sentencing options not available to adults, such as deferred custody and supervision orders, intensive support and supervision, and orders to attend a non-residential program (Taylor-Butts and Bressan 2009) and stipulates that all alternatives to custody that are reasonable in the circumstances must be considered prior to committing a young person to custody (*Youth Criminal Justice Act* 2002).

Detailed data tables

Table 1
Police-reported online sexual offences against children, by type of offence and year, Canada, 2014 to 2020

Year	Luring a child		Non-consensual distribution of intimate images ¹		Invitation to sexual touching		Other sexual offences against children ²		Total online sexual offences against children ³	
	number	percent	number	percent	number	percent	number	percent	number	percent
2014	932	84	..	..	160	14	22	2	1,114	10
2015	851	82	32	3	109	11	43	4	1,035	10
2016	1,081	81	115	9	77	6	61	5	1,334	12
2017	1,087	73	210	14	101	7	97	6	1,495	14
2018	1,226	75	203	12	104	6	108	7	1,641	15
2019	1,394	71	317	16	121	6	121	6	1,953	18
2020	1,704	79	251	12	133	6	79	4	2,167	20
Total	8,275	77	1,128	11	805	8	531	5	10,739	100

.. not available for a specific reference period

1. Non-consensual distribution of intimate images became an offence in 2015 under the *Protecting Canadians from Online Crime Act*.

2. The category "other sexual offences against children" is a catch all category that encompasses all sexual violations against children (excluding child pornography) which were facilitated by or involved the use of technology.

3. Includes sexual violations against children and other sexual offences where a victim was identified as being a person younger than 18.

Note: An incident is considered to be an online incident if it was flagged as a cybercrime. An incident is flagged as a cybercrime when the crime targets information and communication technology (ICT), or when the crime used ICT to commit the offence. ICT includes, but is not limited to, the internet, computers, servers, digital technology, digital telecommunications devices, phones and networks. Crimes committed over text and through messages using social media platforms are also considered cybercrime activity. Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding. For the years 2014 and 2015, the municipal police services of Saint John, Québec and Calgary, and the Ontario Provincial Police were excluded. For the year 2016, the municipal police services of Saint John and Calgary, and the Ontario Provincial Police were excluded. For the year 2017, the municipal police service of Saint John and the Ontario Provincial Police were excluded. For the years 2018 to 2020, the municipal police service of Saint John was excluded.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice and Community Safety Statistics, Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.

Table 2
Victims of police-reported online sexual offences against children, by type of offence and victim characteristics, Canada, 2014 to 2020

Victim characteristics	Luring a child		Non-consensual distribution of intimate images ¹		Invitation to sexual touching		Other sexual offences against children ²		Total online sexual offences against children ³	
	number	percent	number	percent	number	percent	number	percent	number	percent
Children (aged 11 years and younger)	998	17	27	2	66	16	91	21	1,182	15
Girls	844	15	16	1	59	15	62	14	981	13
Boys	154	3	11	1	7	2	29	7	201	3
Youth (aged 12 to 17 years)	4,730	83	1,148	98	339	84	344	79	6,561	85
Girls	4,091	71	1,016	86	291	72	280	64	5,678	73
Boys	639	11	132	11	48	12	64	15	883	11
Total	5,728	100	1,175	100	405	100	435	100	7,743	100

1. Non-consensual distribution of intimate images became an offence in 2015 under the *Protecting Canadians from Online Crime Act*.

2. The category "other sexual offences against children" is a catch all category that encompasses all sexual violations against children (excluding child pornography) which were facilitated by or involved the use of technology.

3. Includes sexual violations against children and other sexual offences where a victim was identified as being a person younger than 18.

Note: An incident is considered to be an online incident if it was flagged as a cybercrime. An incident is flagged as a cybercrime when the crime targets information and communication technology (ICT), or when the crime used ICT to commit the offence. ICT includes, but is not limited to, the internet, computers, servers, digital technology, digital telecommunications devices, phones and networks. Crimes committed over text and through messages using social media platforms are also considered cybercrime activity. Calculations are based on victim records, where the most serious violation against the victim was identified as the cyber violation. Victims where the gender or the age was unknown are excluded. Given that small counts of victims identified as "gender diverse" may exist, the UCR data available to the public has been recoded to assign these counts to either "female" or "male" in order to ensure the protection of confidentiality and privacy. Victims identified as gender diverse have been assigned to either female or male based on the regional distribution of victims' gender. Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding. For the years 2014 and 2015, the municipal police services of Saint John, Québec and Calgary, and the Ontario Provincial Police were excluded. For the year 2016, the municipal police services of Saint John and Calgary, and the Ontario Provincial Police were excluded. For the year 2017, the municipal police service of Saint John and the Ontario Provincial Police were excluded. For the years 2018 to 2020, the municipal police service of Saint John was excluded.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice and Community Safety Statistics, Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.

Table 3
Victims of police-reported online sexual offences against children, by type of offence and accused to victim relationship, Canada, 2014 to 2020

	Luring a child	Non-consensual distribution of intimate images ¹	Invitation to sexual touching	Other sexual offences against children ²	Total online sexual offences against children ³
Accused to victim relationship	percent				
Children (aged 11 years and younger)	17	2	16	21	15
Family	10	15	17	30	12
Parent ⁴	3	4	5	14	4
Sibling ⁵	3	7	3	8	3
Other family ⁶	4	4	9	8	5
Non-family	79	78	70	54	77
Dating or other intimate partner ⁷	...	...	...	...	...
Friend	3	15	6	1	3
Casual acquaintance ⁸	12	41	11	19	13
Authority figure ⁹	2	7	15	16	4
Stranger	63	15	38	18	57
Other ¹⁰	0	0	0	0	0
Unknown	11	7	14	16	11
Youth (aged 12 to 17 years)	83	98	84	79	85
Family	7	2	9	15	6
Parent ⁴	2	0	1	7	2
Sibling ⁵	1	0	1	2	1
Other family ⁶	4	2	6	5	4
Non-family	84	95	85	81	86
Dating or other intimate partner ⁷	4	28	5	8	8
Friend	7	21	6	10	9
Casual acquaintance ⁸	25	36	31	28	27
Authority figure ⁹	3	0	13	19	4
Stranger	45	11	30	13	36
Other ¹⁰	1	0	1	3	1
Unknown	9	3	6	4	8

... not applicable

0 true zero or a value rounded to zero

1. Non-consensual distribution of intimate images became an offence in 2015 under the *Protecting Canadians from Online Crime Act*.

2. The category "other sexual offences against children" is a catch all category that encompasses all sexual violations against children (excluding child pornography) which were facilitated by or involved the use of technology.

3. Includes sexual violations against children and other sexual offences where a victim was identified as being a person younger than 18.

4. Includes biological, step, adoptive and foster parents.

5. Includes biological, step, half, adopted and foster brothers and sisters.

6. Includes all other family members related by blood, marriage (including common-law) or adoption. Examples include grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins and in-laws

7. Includes current and former boyfriends and girlfriends (intimate relationships) and other intimate partners (sexual relationships or a mutual sexual attraction).

8. Includes neighbours.

9. Includes persons in a position of trust or authority. Includes authority figures and reverse authority figures (e.g., student-to-teacher and patient-to-doctor).

10. Includes business relationships and criminal relationships (relationships based on illegal activities).

Note: An incident is considered to be an online incident if it was flagged as a cybercrime. An incident is flagged as a cybercrime when the crime targets information and communication technology (ICT), or when the crime used ICT to commit the offence. ICT includes, but is not limited to, the internet, computers, servers, digital technology, digital telecommunications devices, phones and networks. Crimes committed over text and through messages using social media platforms are also considered cybercrime activity. Calculations are based on victim records, where the most serious violation against the victim was identified as the cyber violation. Victims of dating or other intimate partner violence under the age of 12 years are included in the category "unknown." Excludes victims where the gender or the age was unknown. Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding. For the years 2014 and 2015, the municipal police services of Saint John, Québec and Calgary, and the Ontario Provincial Police were excluded. For the year 2016, the municipal police services of Saint John and Calgary, and the Ontario Provincial Police were excluded. For the year 2017, the municipal police service of Saint John and the Ontario Provincial Police were excluded. For the years 2018 to 2020, the municipal police service of Saint John was excluded.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice and Community Safety Statistics, Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.

Table 4
Clearance status of police-reported online sexual offences against children, by type of offence, Canada, 2014 to 2020

Clearance status	Luring a child	Non-consensual distribution of intimate images ¹	Invitation to sexual touching	Other sexual offences against children ²	Total online sexual offences against children ³
	percent				
Total	100	100	100	100	100
Not cleared	62	52	15	35	56
Cleared	38	48	85	65	44
Cleared by charge	76	29	96	86	74
Cleared otherwise	24	71	4	14	26
Incidents with multiple violations	26	23	85	57	31
Not cleared	31	48	9	11	26
Cleared	69	52	91	89	74
Cleared by charge	88	47	97	90	88
Cleared otherwise	12	53	3	10	12
Incidents with one violation	74	77	15	43	69
Not cleared	73	53	48	69	70
Cleared	27	47	52	31	30
Cleared by charge	65	23	83	70	58
Cleared otherwise	35	77	17	30	42

1. Non-consensual distribution of intimate images became an offence in 2015 under the *Protecting Canadians from Online Crime Act*.

2. The category "other sexual offences against children" is a catch all category that encompasses all sexual violations against children (excluding child pornography) which were facilitated by or involved the use of technology.

3. Includes sexual violations against children and other sexual offences where a victim was identified as being a person younger than 18.

Note: An incident is considered to be an online incident if it was flagged as a cybercrime. An incident is flagged as a cybercrime when the crime targets information and communication technology (ICT), or when the crime used ICT to commit the offence. ICT includes, but is not limited to, the internet, computers, servers, digital technology, digital telecommunications devices, phones and networks. Crimes committed over text and through messages using social media platforms are also considered cybercrime activity. An incident is considered to be cleared when a charge is laid or recommended against an accused, or when it is dealt with by other means. For the years 2014 and 2015, the municipal police services of Saint John, Québec and Calgary, and the Ontario Provincial Police were excluded. For the year 2016, the municipal police services of Saint John and Calgary, and the Ontario Provincial Police were excluded. For the year 2017, the municipal police service of Saint John and the Ontario Provincial Police were excluded. For the years 2018 to 2020, the municipal police service of Saint John was excluded.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice and Community Safety Statistics, Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.

Table 5
Characteristics of persons accused in police-reported online child sexual exploitation and abuse incidents, by type of offence and accused characteristics, Canada, 2014 to 2020

Accused characteristics	Online sexual offences against children				Online child pornography				
	Luring a child	Non-consensual distribution of intimate images ¹	Invitation to sexual touching	Other sexual offences against children ²	Total online sexual offences against children ³	Child pornography—possessing or accessing ⁴	Child pornography—making or distributing ⁴	Total online child pornography ⁴	Total online child sexual exploitation and abuse ⁵
	percent								
Women and girls accused	4	23	3	10	7	11	12	11	9
12 to 17 years	61	94	14	42	73	82	72	77	76
18 to 24 years	15	4	27	11	10	4	8	6	8
25 to 44 years	20	2	59	34	15	12	15	13	14
45 to 64 years	2	0	0	13	2	1	4	3	2
65 to 110 years	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Unknown	2	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	1
Median age⁶	15	14	29	23	15	14	15	14	14
Men and boys accused	96	77	97	90	93	89	88	89	91
12 to 17 years	21	89	10	18	28	26	26	26	27
18 to 24 years	27	10	30	11	24	15	15	15	20
25 to 44 years	39	0	47	43	36	34	35	35	35
45 to 64 years	11	0	12	26	11	19	20	20	15
65 to 110 years	1	0	1	2	1	5	4	5	3
Unknown	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Median age⁶	25	15	28	35	24	29	29	29	26

0 true zero or a value rounded to zero

1. Non-consensual distribution of intimate images became an offence in 2015 under the *Protecting Canadians from Online Crime Act*.

2. The category “other sexual offences against children” is a catch all category that encompasses all sexual violations against children (excluding child pornography) which were facilitated by or involved the use of technology.

3. Includes sexual violations against children and other sexual offences where a victim was identified as being a person younger than 18.

4. Includes offences under section 163.1 of the *Criminal Code* which makes it illegal to make, distribute, possess or access child pornography.

5. Defined as police-reported cybercrime incidents involving *Criminal Code* child-specific sexual offences, including child pornography, and other *Criminal Code* sexual offences where a victim was identified as being a person younger than 18..

6. Excludes accused persons whose age was unknown.

Note: An incident is considered to be an online incident if it was flagged as a cybercrime. An incident is flagged as a cybercrime when the crime targets Information and Communication Technology (ICT), or when the crime used ICT to commit the offence. ICT includes, but is not limited to, the internet, computers, servers, digital technology, digital telecommunications devices, phones and networks. Crimes committed over text and through messages using social media platforms are also considered cybercrime activity. Calculations are based on accused persons identified in connection with an incident where an online child sexual exploitation and abuse offence was identified as the cyber violation. Children under 12 years of age cannot be prosecuted for criminal activities and, as such, are excluded. Also excludes accused persons where the gender was unknown. Given that small counts of accused persons identified as “gender diverse” may exist, the UCR data available to the public has been recoded to assign these counts to either “female” or “male” in order to ensure the protection of confidentiality and privacy. Accused persons identified as gender diverse have been assigned to either female or male based on the regional distribution of the person's gender. Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding. For the years 2014 and 2015, the municipal police services of Saint John, Québec and Calgary, and the Ontario Provincial Police were excluded. For the year 2016, the municipal police services of Saint John and Calgary, and the Ontario Provincial Police were excluded. For the year 2017, the municipal police service of Saint John and the Ontario Provincial Police were excluded. For the years 2018 to 2020, the municipal police service of Saint John was excluded.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice and Community Safety Statistics, Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.

Table 6
Incidents of online sexual offences against children and accused persons in police-reported online child sexual exploitation and abuse, by province or territory, Canada, 2018 to 2020

Province or territory	Incidents of online sexual offences against children ¹		Accused persons identified ²	
	number	average annual rate ^{4, 5}	number	average annual rate ^{4, 6}
Newfoundland and Labrador	136	52	47	3
Prince Edward Island	35	39	25	6
Nova Scotia	213	43	148	6
New Brunswick	126	34	83	4
Quebec	2,063	44	1,868	8
Ontario ³	1,519	18	1,560	4
Manitoba	313	34	226	7
Saskatchewan	148	18	88	3
Alberta	521	18	444	4
British Columbia	625	24	311	2
Yukon	14	57	13	12
Northwest Territories	17	53	12	11
Nunavut	15	35	10	12
Canada	5,761	27	4,836	5

1. Includes sexual violations against children and other sexual offences where a victim was identified as being a person younger than 18.

2. Calculations are based on accused persons identified in connection with an incident where an online child sexual exploitation and abuse offence (including child pornography) was identified as the cyber violation. Children under 12 years of age cannot be prosecuted for criminal activities and, as such, are excluded. Also excludes accused persons where the gender was unknown.

3. Excludes a small number of incidents (representing 0.7%) reported by the National Child Exploitation Coordination Centre, but which were included in the total for calculating the proportions.

4. This rate is the average of the annual rates from 2018 to 2020.

5. Rates are calculated on the basis of 100,000 population of children and youth under age 18. Populations are based upon July 1 estimates from Statistics Canada, Centre for Demography.

6. Rates are calculated on the basis of 100,000 population aged 12 and over. Populations are based upon July 1 estimates from Statistics Canada, Centre for Demography.

Note: An incident is considered to be an online incident if it was flagged as a cybercrime. An incident is flagged as a cybercrime when the crime targets information and communication technology (ICT), or when the crime used ICT to commit the offence. ICT includes, but is not limited to, the internet, computers, servers, digital technology, digital telecommunications devices, phones and networks. Crimes committed over text and through messages using social media platforms are also considered cybercrime activity. Sum of the parts do not add up to the total due to the inclusion of 16 incidents which were reported by the National Child Exploitation Coordination Centre. The municipal police service of Saint John was excluded.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice and Community Safety Statistics, Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.

Table 7
Charges processed in adult criminal and youth courts related to offences likely committed or facilitated online, by type of offence, and characteristics or outcomes, Canada, 2014/2015 to 2019/2020

	Luring a child ¹	Agreement or arrangement—sexual offence against a child ¹	Child pornography—possessing or accessing ²	Child pornography—making or distributing ²	Non-consensual distribution of intimate images ³	Total
Characteristics and outcomes						
			percent			
Charges related to online child sexual offences						
Youth court	20	1	29	37	14	100
Adult court	22	2	41	28	6	100
Charge-related decision—youth court						
Guilty	56	45	44	39	47	45
Acquitted	2	0	1	1	2	1
Stayed, withdrawn, dismissed or discharged	38	53	51	55	49	50
Other ⁴	4	3	4	4	2	4
Charge-related decision—adult criminal court						
Guilty	36	24	35	29	44	34
Acquitted	2	1	1	2	3	2
Stayed, withdrawn, dismissed or discharged	60	73	62	68	52	63
Other ⁴	3	1	1	1	1	1
Age group of adults found guilty of charges						
18 to 24 years	35	21	29	22	49	30
25 to 34 years	38	21	35	31	45	35
35 to 44 years	38	32	36	28	40	34
45 to 54 years	32	10	37	32	34	34
55 years and older	28	33	42	29	36	36
Sex of persons found guilty of charges						
Female	54	34	24	29	39	34
Male	37	25	36	31	45	36
Most serious sentence—youth court⁵						
Custody and supervision	6	0	2	6	2	4
Probation	64	77	61	67	55	61
Deferred custody and supervision	3	0	4	5	2	3
Community service	2	0	4	4	10	5
Other sentence ⁶	13	15	16	12	27	18
Not available (guilty but no sentencing detail)	11	8	13	7	4	9

See notes at the end of the table.

Table 7 — end

Charges processed in adult criminal and youth courts related to offences likely committed or facilitated online, by type of offence, and characteristics or outcomes, Canada, 2014/2015 to 2019/2020

Characteristics and outcomes	Luring a child ¹	Agreement or arrangement—sexual offence against a child ¹	Child pornography—possessing or accessing ²	Child pornography—making or distributing ²	Non-consensual distribution of intimate images ³	Total
	percent					
Most serious sentence—adult criminal court⁵						
Custody	86	91	87	89	36	80
Probation	3	1	2	4	43	8
Conditional sentence	2	0	1	0	11	3
Other sentence ⁷	1	0	1	1	5	1
Not available (guilty but no sentencing detail)	8	8	9	6	4	8

0 true zero or a value rounded to zero

1. An offence specific to child victims and defined in the *Criminal Code* by the use of telecommunications, and is therefore assumed to have occurred online.

2. An offence specific to child victims but not defined in the *Criminal Code* by the use of telecommunications, however, police data indicates are likely committed online.

3. Non-consensual distribution of intimate images became an offence in 2015 under the *Protecting Canadians from Online Crime Act*. This is an offence not specific to child victims only and is not defined in the *Criminal Code* by the use of telecommunication. However, police data indicates this offence most often involved youth, and a large proportion (39% of police-reported incidents between 2018 and 2020) are likely committed online.

4. Other decisions include final decisions of found not criminally responsible and waived out of province or territory. This category also includes any order where a guilty decision was not recorded, the court's acceptance of a special plea, cases which raise Charter arguments and cases where the accused was found unfit to stand trial.

5. Information based on cases where the most serious sentence was related to a guilty finding for a child sexual offence likely committed online.

6. Includes conditional sentence, intensive support and supervision, order to attend a non-residential program (attendance order), reprimand, and other sentencing decisions (including compensation, pay purchaser, compensation in kind, restitution, prohibition, seizure, forfeiture, conditional discharge, absolute discharge, essays, apologies and other counselling programs).

7. Includes fines and other sentencing decisions (including restitution, absolute and conditional discharge, suspended sentence, community service order and prohibition orders, among others).

Note: This table presents data for offences relating to the online sexual victimization of children according to their *Criminal Code* definition, and offences involving other *Criminal Code* violations that have a higher likelihood of being committed or facilitated online, based on what is shown in police-reported data. Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice and Community Safety Statistics, Integrated Criminal Court Survey.