



IMPACT OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE MATERIAL DISTRIBUTION ON SURVIVORS

The information set out in this document is largely based on information that the Canadian Centre for Child Protection Inc. has learned as a result of:

- directly working with survivors of child sexual abuse material and, in some instances, their parents
- conducting the Survivors' Survey¹ (see **Appendix B** for a link to the [Executive Summary](#)), and
- the knowledge gleaned through operating Cybertip.ca and Project Arachnid (described more fully in Appendix A).

Scope of the Problem

- Since it launched in 2017, the Canadian Centre's Project Arachnid has issued more than 6.2 million removal notices to industry (as of October, 2020).
- The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC's) CyberTipline, the largest hotline of its kind in the world, averages approximately one million reports of child sexual exploitation each month and has received, in total, more than 65 million reports (as of information posted on their website October 1, 2020).
- 87% of participants in the Canadian Centre's International Survivors' Survey (described below) noted they were 11 years old or younger when hands-on abuse began, and for 56% of the survivors, the abuse began before the age of four.
- For 36% of the survivors, the abuse continued into adulthood.
- Nearly 70% of respondents indicated they constantly worry about being recognized by someone who has seen images/videos of their abuse, and 30 respondents reported being identified by someone who has seen images/videos of their abuse.
- A 2018 joint report from INTERPOL and ECPAT International describes the challenges with quantifying the amount of child sexual abuse material available online and points to the fact that new content is created daily as one of the major hurdles.²
- To illustrate the ease with which images can spread online, a report published by Cybertip.ca in 2009 indicated that, "a review of the website and image host country(ies), based on a geographic IP lookup at the time of analysis, revealed that nearly 60 countries were hosting this type of content."³ This report also noted that "over a 48 hour period, Cybertip.ca observed one website cycle through 212 unique IP addresses, located in 16 different countries."⁴

¹ For more information, refer to "Survivors' Survey Data" section on page 3.

² INTERPOL and ECPAT International, *Towards a Global Indicator on Unidentified Victims in Child Sexual Exploitation Material*, 2018 at page 20. Available [online](#).

³ Canadian Centre for Child Protection Inc., "Child Sexual Abuse Image: An Analysis of Websites by Cybertip.ca" (November 29) at page 11. Available [online](#).

⁴ *Ibid* at page 63.



About the Canadian Centre for Child Protection Inc.

The Canadian Centre for Child Protection Inc. (“C3P”) is a national charity dedicated to the personal safety of all children. Our goal is to reduce the sexual abuse and exploitation of children, assist in the location of missing children, and prevent child victimization through a number of programs, services, and resources for Canadian families, educators, child-serving organizations, law enforcement, and other parties. C3P operates Cybertip.ca, Canada’s national tipline for the public reporting of online child sexual exploitation. The Cybertip.ca program is a key pillar of the Government of Canada’s *National Strategy for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation on the Internet*.

About Cybertip.ca

All reports made by the public or a service provider to Cybertip.ca that pertain to incidents that appear to be in contravention of the Canadian *Criminal Code* are sent to law enforcement for possible investigation. Any information regarding a child potentially in need of protection is forwarded to the appropriate child welfare agency. Specifically as it relates to reports of “child pornography”, Cybertip.ca analysts review the actual image, video, written content or audio to determine what action is required. This review involves accessing the reported material to determine whether it meets the Canadian *Criminal Code* definition of “child pornography”, or whether there is harm to a child that might not meet the *Criminal Code*, by assessing both the severity of the abuse depicted in the reported material and the approximate age of the child through sexual maturation characteristic analysis.

As of October 1, 2020, Cybertip.ca had processed over 341,000 reports from the public since its 2002 launch, with 95% of such reports pertaining to child sexual abuse material. **The total volume of reports processed by the tipline increases to 4.1 million when you include images detected and then processed via Project Arachnid (described below).** This exponential increase demonstrates the effectiveness of Project Arachnid in finding and initiating the removal of known illegal imagery versus relying on public reporting alone.

About Project Arachnid

To assist in tackling the public availability of child sexual abuse material that continues to proliferate online, C3P launched Project Arachnid in January 2017. Project Arachnid is a platform that crawls links on sites previously reported to Cybertip.ca that contained known child sexual abuse material and detects where these known images/videos are publicly available on the internet. If illegal content is detected, a notice is sent to the provider hosting the content to request its removal, thus helping to reduce the public availability of the content.

Project Arachnid processes thousands of images a second and is thus capable of detecting known child sexual abuse material at a pace that greatly exceeds that of traditional methods of identifying and addressing this harmful material. As of October 1, 2020, over 125 billion images have been processed through Project Arachnid, and over 6.2 million notices have been sent to online providers requesting the removal of child sexual abuse material from public view. Approximately 85% of the notices issued to



date relate to victims who are not known to have been identified by police. Many providers have been complying with the requests to remove content within 24 hours, and some are responding even quicker than that. More information is available online at www.projectarachnid.ca.

One of the most important outcomes of Project Arachnid is the psychological relief offered to survivors of child sexual abuse material who have had no control over the distribution and ongoing sharing of their recorded sexual abuse. Every time their image or video is viewed survivors are re-victimized. By curbing the public availability of this content, Project Arachnid helps break the cycle of abuse for survivors, and address the very real fear someone they know may come across an image of their abuse on the internet.

Survivors' Survey data

It is recognized that, as with all communities, there will be individual victims of child sexual abuse material whose experiences and feelings differ from what is presented in this document. It is also recognized that individuals who participated in the Survivors' Survey are those individuals who were psychologically strong enough to complete such a survey, were able to articulate their experiences in writing in one of the available languages, and were individuals who had reached adulthood at the time of completing the survey. Nonetheless, the Survivors' Survey is one of the only studies to date that brings together the collective voices of a number of victims of child sexual abuse material. Further, it should be noted that the responses to the Survivors' Survey were strikingly consistent and revealed common experiences, despite the fact that survey respondents were located in several different countries, responded to questions in their own language and responded in their own words (i.e., not multiple choice), providing as much or as little detail as they chose to each question.

Appendices

The following supplemental information is attached to this statement:

- **Appendix A** – More information about C3P's initiatives to support survivors. This information is provided to assist readers in understanding more about how C3P intersects with the community of survivors of child sexual abuse material.
- **Appendix B** – A link to the Executive Summary of the Survivors' Survey. The Survivors' Survey is one of the main sources upon which this statement is based, and there is both an Executive Summary and a Full Report. Readers who wish to refer to either document are asked to visit <https://protectchildren.ca/en/resources-research/survivors-survey-results/>.



Impacts of CSAM on Victims and Survivors

The community represented by this statement

This statement is on behalf of identified and unidentified victims of child sexual abuse material (still referred to in many jurisdictions as “child pornography”). The purpose of the statement is to provide government officials, policy makers and legislators with information about the types of harm or loss generally suffered by members of the community, as a result of individuals who make, access, possess, make available and/or distribute such material.

This statement includes references as to how the online availability of the material and/or the distribution of the material impacts the community. The references are general and can apply to all forms of distribution (e.g., peer-to-peer networks, transmission through text or email, posting online, etc.).

More About the Community

Many victims of this type of exploitation have not yet been identified by law enforcement—in fact, as of January 2020, the vast majority of the content detected on publicly available websites through Project Arachnid relates to victims who are not known by C3P to have been identified by police.⁵ Material circulating online includes visual content depicting victims who have been identified by law enforcement, as well as visual content of victims who are unidentified.⁶

While it is hoped that any identified victims will no longer be experiencing sexual abuse, this is not something that is known to C3P. As to the unidentified victims, some may still be experiencing sexual abuse, and some may not. Some may still be children and some may now be adults. Some may be deceased.

⁵ See Canadian Centre for Child Protection Inc., <https://projectarachnid.ca/en/>. Additionally, in the U.S., the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) operates the CyberTipline as well as a child victim identification program. NCMEC's website states that their child identification program has reviewed over 267 million images/videos, and that law enforcement has identified over 15,800 child victims (see NCMEC, “By the Numbers”, online: <https://www.missingkids.org/theissues/csam>, accessed February 12, 2020). INTERPOL, a network of police forces from all over the world, operates a victim identification program, and it has a database of images/videos that have been seized by law enforcement from around the world. In a report published in 2018, INTERPOL indicated that “available evidence overwhelmingly points to the fact that many more unidentified victims of CSAM/CSEM exist than those who are identified, with yet more unidentified children coming to the attention of law enforcement on a daily basis” (see INTERPOL, *Technical Report: Towards a Global Indicator on Unidentified Victims in Child Sexual Exploitation Material*, 2018 at page 20. This report is available online at: <https://www.interpol.int/How-we-work/Databases/International-Child-Sexual-Exploitation-database>).

⁶ For greater certainty, the term “identified” refers to those who have been identified by law enforcement and who are presumed to no longer be experiencing sexual abuse. The term “unidentified” refers to those who are not known to have been identified by law enforcement.



1. Emotional Impact

i. Permanence and persistence of child sexual abuse material

The creation of child sexual abuse material has a lasting impact on the community of victims because the imagery is a permanent record of the abuse that has occurred, and therefore those awful moments can be (and often are) seen by others. Based on responses to the Survivors' Survey, many victims are aware that images of their abuse are being captured at the time the offending is occurring.⁷ Therefore, the emotional impacts outlined in this section may be felt from a very early stage.

Presently, images/videos, once created, are permanent in nature as they are typically stored electronically or converted to electronic format. There is currently no way for a victim whose child sexual abuse has been recorded to be certain that an image/video has been contained and permanently deleted/destroyed. Once the image or video is sent to even one person, there is often no way for anyone to conclusively identify who else might have seen or stored their own copy of it, where in the world those individuals may be located, or for a victim to be able to prevent it from being seen or stored by others. Thus, survivors within this community face potential new victimization every day.

As articulated by three respondents to the Survivors' Survey:⁸

*"Look at it like this. The hands-on was horrible. But at the very least it is over and done with. The constant sharing of the abuse will never end; therefore the reminder of its existence will never end. ... If you ask me, a crime that will never end is worse than one that is over; no matter how much more serious it may appear. That is something inescapable. That there will never be total absolution."*⁹

*"The bad thing with the images is that they will still be on the Internet and they are there for everyone to see who looks at stuff like this. I still believe these images can ruin my life. I will still feel ashamed of myself for a long time that so many people can look at them, even though the abuse is over. I can protect myself from being raped again, but there's nothing I can do against these photos and films being sold and stored."*¹⁰

⁷ Executive Summary, page 15, graph 9.

⁸ The Executive Summary for the Survivors' Survey, published in 2017, is attached to this statement as Appendix C. See pages 4-6 of the Executive Summary for more details on how the survey was administered and how responses were analyzed. In this statement, information from the Executive Summary is cited as "Executive Summary" and information from the longer report (available online: https://protectchildren.ca/pdfs/C3P_SurvivorsSurveyFullReport2017.pdf) is cited as "Full Report".

⁹ Full Report, page 149.

¹⁰ Full Report, page 149.



“My child sexual abuse imagery is out there for anyone to see, I will forever be taken advantage of. It’s not something that will ever go away. Being the adult I am now, my photos are still out there, as long as the internet exists my photos will always be out there. Sites will be taken down but new ones are somehow being put back up. As far as I know there is just no way of permanently deleting those photos. There is no way I can finally be done with this abuse. I have to live my life guarded and can never fully trust anyone. My own father did this to me. A man placed in my life to protect me, not hurt me, abused me. And now thousands of other people continue to do the same.”¹¹

To further illustrate this point, the following is an excerpt from a victim impact statement filed with a court in a Canadian criminal proceeding involving “child pornography” charges:

Usually when someone is raped and abused, the abuse ends. But since [offender name] put those pictures on the internet, my abuse is still going on. Anyone can see them. People ask for them and are downloading them. Day after day. People want to see me abused.¹²

In yet another victim impact statement, filed in the U.S. in a criminal proceeding involving “child pornography”, the victim stated:

It is like I am just here for other people’s pleasure and am not a person myself with my own wants and needs. If you are looking at me, or any other child for that matter, then you are hurting every one that you look at. Anyone who looks at those horrible pictures of me or other children are abusing us.¹³

Awareness of imagery can delay a victim’s decision to disclose the abuse or even prevent them from disclosing altogether.¹⁴ Many respondents to the Survivors’ Survey indicated they were afraid that the imagery would somehow make them look responsible for the abuse. Some also indicated that the imagery was used to threaten or blackmail them.¹⁵ The following is one of the many responses speaking to the impact that knowing about the imagery can have on a child:

¹¹ Full Report, page 153.

¹² Excerpt from victim impact statement from a 13-year-old anonymous victim, filed by the Crown prosecutor in *R. v. Kwok*, 2007 CanLII 2942 (ONSC).

¹³ Excerpt from victim impact statement read in court during a sentencing hearing as reported in “Former Anchorage substitute teacher sentenced for child pornography”, KTVA CBC 11 News, October 9, 2015, accessed online February 8, 2019. (Case: *United States of America v. Daniel Alan Brown*, U.S. District Court, District of Alaska (Anchorage), 3:14-cr-00117-SLG).

¹⁴ Executive Summary, page 26, graphs 38 and 39.

¹⁵ Executive Summary, page 19, graph 20.



In my perceptions, the photographs were THE proof that I was 'weak', that I was a coward that didn't have the guts to act when a grown-up pulled down my trousers. I was afraid that if other adult were to know this about me, they would also start abusing me. I perceived the photos as betraying my deepest secret: my impotence as a child against violence and intimidation. And that I would let people do literally whatever they wanted to me if they applied enough intimidation and violence. During the abuse situations, there were plenty of moments at which I was quite literally paralyzed by fear.¹⁶

To summarize the themes about emotional harm or loss that respondents to the Survivors' Survey specifically attributed to the child sexual abuse imagery:

- many respondents indicated they struggle with the knowledge that the content is permanent (and for those who believed their images had been distributed, the knowledge that the distribution never ends)¹⁷
- a number of respondents reported additional shame due to the imagery and concern that the images would somehow make them look responsible, which impacted their decision about whether to disclose the abuse¹⁸
- some respondents said they felt powerless in relation to the imagery and cited feelings of being abused over and over again¹⁹
- some respondents mentioned ongoing sensitivity to picture taking, that is, not wanting their picture taken for any reason²⁰ while others indicated that they felt sickened by the knowledge that others are using the content for sexual purposes²¹
- one male respondent specifically expressed concern that others would assume “all male survivors will become abusers” or would want “to ‘congratulate’ [him] for having had sexual experiences at a young age”²²

Subsequent to the release of the Survivors' Survey, a group of academic researchers in the U.S. published a report on their study of the impacts that victims of child sexual abuse material experience over time.²³ The themes revealed in that report are strikingly similar to those present in the Survivors' Survey. For example, the report states: “every abuse eventually ends, yet with child sexual abuse

¹⁶ Full Report, page 124.

¹⁷ Executive Summary, page 29, graph 43.

¹⁸ Executive Summary, page 26, graph 39.

¹⁹ Executive Summary, page 29, graph 43.

²⁰ Full Report, page 156, figure 84.

²¹ Executive Summary, page 29, graph 43.

²² Response to Survivors' Survey question, “When you share your experience with someone, of if you were to share your experience with someone, how ‘don’t/wouldn’t’ you want them to respond?”.

²³ Ateret Gerwitz-Meydan, et. al., “The complex experience of child pornography survivors” (2018) 80 Child Abuse & Neglect 238-348.



material, when images circulate, it feels as if the abuse is constant and continuing”.²⁴ The report describes being a victim of child sexual abuse material as “encompass[ing] two stages of victimization” — the first is when the abuse occurs and the second is “the ongoing vulnerability of survivors and the unknown aspect regarding the circulation of the images”.²⁵

ii. Circumstances in which child sexual abuse material is produced

Possession of child sexual abuse material is possible only as a result of someone, somewhere, committing one or more abusive acts against real children. Some of the emotional harm to the child will have been suffered at the time the image/video was taken and may be apparent from the image/video. Subsequently, the emotional harm stems from the knowledge that such images and videos (depicting traumatic events of their lives) are possessed and viewed by others.

It must be recognized that the abuse suffered by a child who appears in a photo or video may not be confined to what was captured on film. Survivors who completed the Survivors’ Survey provided information about being threatened before, during and after the creation of the imagery, or being made to smile, pose or show enjoyment in the images. Respondents to the Survivors’ Survey were asked about whether their abuser gave them any directions during the production of the imagery, and “posing/performing” was the most common answer.²⁶

Moreover, based on the operation of Cybertip.ca as well as Project Arachnid, C3P is aware that a wide spectrum of imagery can exist for a single victim. The visual content that is publicly available (and thus had to have been shared by someone at some point)²⁷ includes the range of categories typically used by courts to classify the severity of the imagery in a collection. In other words, a single image looked at in isolation often does not reflect the full story of what the child in the given picture or video experienced surrounding its creation.²⁸

This is illustrated by the words of Judge M.B. Hicks who stated that:

²⁴ *Ibid* at 244.

²⁵ *Ibid* at 246.

²⁶ Executive Summary, page 21, graph 27 – more detail starting at page 51 of the Full Report.

²⁷ Cybertip.ca processes reports related to content made available on the public internet, and Project Arachnid detects only those known images/videos that are made available publicly. If an image/video is assessed as part of a Cybertip.ca report or is detected by Project Arachnid, that image/video must have been distributed in some way.

²⁸ Consider *R c Houle*, 2016 QCCQ 16383. In *Houle*, the offender had an extremely organized collection and because of this, the court was able to see how the images of each victim progressed from seemingly benign to clearly harmful. The photos in question were grouped into different series of the same girl, and each series followed a common sequence: the girl is dressed, the first few poses are “rather neutral”, then the poses and outfits become more sexualized as the camera becomes more focused on the girl’s genitals (para 27). Notably, the court concluded that all the images, including the “rather neutral” initial images, met the Canadian *Criminal Code* definition of “child pornography”.



Children are victimized in the most brutal and intrusive way at every stage of the child pornography continuum; from the grooming to the undressing, to the posturing, to the exposure, to the forceful intrusion into their most private places, to the physical force and restraint of the child, to threats and physical violence, and to the emotional struggle many of these children will endure over a lifetime.²⁹

Survivors expressed the following about having been made to pose for imagery:

The fact that I had posed for pictures at a very young age made me believe that I was responsible for it... without realizing that I was incapacitated by my age and was manipulated by an adult to perform these actions.³⁰

I felt like I was in trouble and I felt embarrassed and ashamed of the poses I was doing in the photos.³¹

My father was a photographer and I grew up with him taking photos of me...I never thought it was abnormal for him to do so, or for him to pose or direct me. He was so into photography and film that we had a darkroom in the basement...I always felt funny when we did stuff that was more sexual, but I never questioned it...it was my father, after all.³²

Consider also the following excerpt from a victim impact statement filed in a case where the imagery made of the victim was described by the court as “not the most egregious”:

The offence created such an impact on my life; I have so much anger and hostility and cry myself to sleep at night almost every day.

The year of the offence, I found myself wanting to end my life. I had become a “cutter [...]. Now I have a psychiatrist and I am taking pills for my nerves; and sleeping pills. I hate myself a lot and feel very guilty; I have no more self-esteem or even self-worth. My hygiene has played a terrible part since the offence; I always feel dirty and am disgusted with myself. I have major trust issues now. I feel like I am being judged when out in public. Every single day I struggle with my life and wonder if I am ever going to feel safe and secure “about me” again.³³

²⁹ *R v SDM*, 2015 BCPC 0112 at para 49

³⁰ Full Report, page 124.

³¹ Full Report, page 306. For context, this answer was given in response to the question of whether the victim had been shown images of their abuse during the legal process.

³² Full Report, page 48.

³³ *R v AM*, 2013 ONSC 6174 at para 25. The single “child pornography” image of this victim was a topless photograph of her, taken by her stepfather while she slept.



iii. Circumstances in which child sexual abuse material is distributed and acquired

While the internet did not create the problem of child sexual abuse material, it does provide individuals with the unparalleled opportunity to access, possess and trade child sexual abuse material, often anonymously. The victims depicted in the images and videos bear the brunt of this societal problem in their daily lives. Many survivors understand how prevalent child sexual abuse material offences are, and how easily their own images can be shared and then proliferate online.

For example, respondents provided the following responses to the Survivors' Survey:

"My child sexual abuse imagery is out there for anyone to see, I will forever be taken advantage of. It's not something that will ever go away. Being the adult I am now, my photos are still out there, as long as the internet exists my photos will always be out there. Sites will be taken down but new ones are somehow being put back up. As far as I know there is just no way of permanently deleting those photos. There is no way I can finally be done with this abuse. I have to live my life guarded and can never fully trust anyone. My own father did this to me. A man placed in my life to protect me, not hurt me, abused me. And now thousands of other people continue to do the same."³⁴

"The images are indestructible and reach a huge lot of people and it is unstoppable. That's what makes it the worst thing for me. The idea that a complete and utter stranger has seen you and that I'm somebody's gratification right up to this very day."³⁵

"I'm filled with shame and disgust because I know that something like this happens again and again, and somebody enjoyed seeing this or is still doing it. I'm aware that it happens again and again but I don't want to think about it too much, that there are images of me. It's a huge business in the Darknet or elsewhere."³⁶

As seen above, victims are aware that there are online spaces in which the acquisition, viewing and/or dissemination of the images of their abuse may occur.

From the perspective of the community being represented, those who access, possess or share child sexual abuse material in any way compound the victimization that arose from the initial recording. The acts of accessing, possessing or sharing child sexual abuse material contributes to the ongoing harm, and each act of acquisition contributes to the normalization of child sexual abuse and engages a risk that the material will fuel cognitive distortions in the recipient.

³⁴ Executive Summary, page 8.

³⁵ Full Report, page 150.

³⁶ Full Report, page 151.



iv. Psychological struggles, conditions and needs

The preceding sections outlined some of the reasons why the ongoing possession and viewing of imagery has an additional emotional impact on victims of child sexual abuse material. This section focuses more specifically on the psychological difficulties conveyed by respondents to the Survivors' Survey.

The vast majority of respondents indicated they had received a psychiatric diagnosis linked to the imagery of their abuse.³⁷ Specific mental health conditions or struggles expressed by survivors included anxiety, depression, suicidal ideation, and self-harm.³⁸ Survivors also reported misuse of alcohol and drugs. Many mentioned post-traumatic stress disorder, dissociative disorders, and hospitalizations.³⁹ The following is a sampling of responses that address psychiatric diagnoses related to the respondents' experience as a victim of child sexual abuse material:

"PTSD, because it is an ongoing traumatic experience as the images continue to be spread, perpetrators are continually caught with the images..."⁴⁰

"(C)PTSD in combination with an atypical form of social phobia. The atypical label derives from (the old) fear of being recognized in the pictures."⁴¹

The next quote in response to a question about family support also speaks to struggles with severe psychological conditions:

"Except for my husband and child I've received virtually no support from other relatives, except for one cousin. My own family has totally dumped me and basically so has my husband's. They never visited me in psychiatric institutions or in hospitals, I've been institutionalized (often for longer periods) and I've been in emergency departments with serious symptoms, suicide attempt[s], never anybody that cared about me except my husband and child."⁴²

Psychological struggles were again apparent from answers to questions asking about work and school. For example:

³⁷ Full Report, page 226.

³⁸ Executive Summary, page 31, graph 55.

³⁹ Full Report, page 227.

⁴⁰ Full Report, page 228.

⁴¹ Full Report, page 228.

⁴² Full Report, page 188.



“I am on permanent disability because of the ongoing struggle with depression and PTSD. I cannot work a regular job and have difficulty with focus and concentration.”⁴³

“Yes, the PTSD symptoms associated with the images made going to class difficult, either because I would dissociate and miss my class, or because I had such an emotionally hard day with anxiety that I felt paralyzed and like things weren't safe outside my bedroom door so I stayed in my room all day. Sometimes I dissociated in class if something triggered me. I had to take two breaks from school, one for 1 year and one for 6 months. During these breaks I tried to recover from the stress of school plus PTSD and work on my coping skills.”⁴⁴

Almost all of the survivors who completed the survey indicated that they were either currently in therapy or had received therapy in the past.⁴⁵ A majority reported that they anticipate needing ongoing or future therapy.⁴⁶ All survey respondents are now adults, so the ongoing need for therapy speaks to the long-term impact of this type of crime upon victims. It is the view of C3P, based on the responses it received in relation to the Survivors' Survey and its ongoing work with victims of this type of crime, that part of the reason so many victims require therapy is to address the continuing victimization that results from knowing the images exist and are being viewed by subsequent offenders. For victims of this particular crime, their past is their present.

2. Physical Impact

The physical impacts experienced by the community of child sexual abuse materials victims can be gleaned in part from the severity of the abuse depicted in the materials possessed by a particular offender. When children are victimized, particularly those who are very young and physically small, it is reasonable to infer that there was pain and suffering to some degree at the time of recording. This inference is stronger if the abuse is penetrative in nature, as with intrusive acts such as anal intercourse. The physical pain and suffering can range from short term to lifelong, depending on the severity of the act and the particular victim's ability (or inability) to recover, physically, from such an act.

Respondents to the Survivors' Survey were not specifically asked about the physical impacts of the abuse they suffered. However, some respondents mentioned ongoing physical harm in response to the question of whether they had received a diagnosis related to the imagery. Those ongoing physical harms included scarred tissue, fibromyalgia, incontinence, and hemorrhoids.⁴⁷ Some respondents indicated that they experience reduced sex drives or an inability to engage in sexual activity, experiences that may

⁴³ Full Report, page 221.

⁴⁴ Full Report, page 217.

⁴⁵ Executive Summary, page 33, graph 56.

⁴⁶ Executive Summary, page 34, graph 61.

⁴⁷ Full Report at page 227.



be tied to difficulties around emotional intimacy, but frequently also manifest as physical impacts. In the words of one respondent:

"I cannot perform sexually a lot of the time. My mood is terrible whenever reminded of [or] I think about any of this."⁴⁸

The "Fears for Security" section of this community impact statement is also relevant to how victims may be physically impacted by the ongoing possession and viewing of the images of their abuse. As will be detailed, many victims experience a state of heightened vigilance as a result of knowing that images of them are out there being viewed by strangers. It is reasonable to infer that impact of living with this level of fear, which can be constant for some, may extend to the victim's physical health.

3. Economic Impact

In light of the impacts described above, it is not surprising that many victims whose child sexual abuse was recorded are at risk of, and often do suffer, some form of economic loss.⁴⁹

Respondents to the Survivors' Survey were asked about the impact of their experience on their education and employment. A majority said their academic success was negatively impacted by their experience of being victimized,⁵⁰ and many others said their employment was negatively impacted as a result.⁵¹ Negative impacts reported by respondents to the Survivors' Survey included:

- inability to complete school or attain level of schooling desired,⁵²
- inability to work,⁵³
- difficulty concentrating during academic pursuits,⁵⁴

⁴⁸ Response to Survivors' Survey question, "How are your feelings about sexuality affected by the existence or distribution of the child sexual abuse imagery?"

⁴⁹ One concrete example of this is a recent Provincial Court of Manitoba case awarding \$5,000 to a victim whose images the offender possessed, and whose Victim Impact Statement was tendered in the proceeding. See *R. v. Suomu* (11 January 2018), Winnipeg (MB PC). The court was provided with information about the victim's economic losses and determined there were "medical and psychological expenses directly related to her ongoing well-being [that] are pecuniary damages that are readily ascertainable" (page 11 of the transcript). There are also examples of "child pornography" cases involving restitution orders in Ontario. For example, recently, an offender voluntarily paid \$2,000 in restitution to the same victim as in the Manitoba case (see *R v Ritchie* (2 May 2018), Belleville 0411-998-16-A12927 (Ont CJ)). Also, two offenders were ordered to pay restitution to the Canadian Centre for Child Protection Inc. on behalf of victims (see *R v White* (11 July 2016), Belleville 1311-998-16-151010 (Ont CJ) and *R v Gorr* (11 July 2016), Belleville (Ont CJ)).

⁵⁰ Executive Summary, page 31, graph 53.

⁵¹ Executive Summary, page 31, graph 54.

⁵² Executive Summary, page 31, graph 53.

⁵³ Executive Summary, page 31, graph 54.

⁵⁴ Executive Summary, page 31, graph 53.



- illnesses and other absences from school,⁵⁵
- difficulty maintaining a job/frequent absences,⁵⁶
- social anxiety while at work,⁵⁷ and
- fear of being recognized, which prevented them from going to work.⁵⁸

In general, the above difficulties were linked back, at least in part, to the emotional and psychological impacts resulting from the existence of, and sharing of, images and videos of their abuse. It can be inferred that such difficulties would result in some form of economic loss, such as reduced earning potential or reduced/lost income.

Therapy costs are also a consideration. As mentioned under “Emotional Impact”, most respondents to the Survivors’ Survey indicated they have sought therapy, and a significant percentage indicated they anticipated needing future therapy. The costs of therapy represent economic harm to victims and their families to the extent that they are required to pay out-of-pocket for services. C3P also heard from mothers during the meeting held in March 2019 with mothers of survivors of child sexual abuse material that the costs of therapy start from childhood and go on into adulthood. To extent that therapy costs are covered by government funding and/or private insurance, this could also be considered a form of economic loss for the broader community within which each survivor lives.

4. Fears for Security

As a result of operating Cybertip.ca for the last 17 years, C3P is a direct witness to the ways in which child sexual abuse material is made available on the internet, and the ways in which technology is misused to facilitate offences against children.⁵⁹ From what we have observed, victims of child sexual abuse material face very real fears for their security. For example, since 2008, Cybertip.ca has been tracking whether a child’s face is visible in the images and videos that it analyzes. According to the most recent Cybertip.ca image analysis report, released in January 2016, faces were visible for a significant proportion of the children in the analyzed content.⁶⁰ If the child’s face is visible in an image, then it follows that the child can possibly be identified by others. As a judge of Supreme Court of Newfoundland and Labrador recognized:

⁵⁵ Executive Summary, page 31, graph 53.

⁵⁶ Executive Summary, page 31, graph 54.

⁵⁷ Executive Summary, page 31, graph 54.

⁵⁸ Executive Summary, page 31, graph 54.

⁵⁹ Cybertip.ca’s approach to processing reports of possible “child pornography” is detailed in Appendix A, but briefly, part of the tipline’s work involves looking at the images/videos posted online as well as the overall context surrounding the reported image/video.

⁶⁰ Canadian Centre for Child Protection Inc., “Child Sexual Abuse Images on the Internet: A Cybertip.ca Analysis” (2016) at page 18. Available online: https://www.cybertip.ca/pdfs/CTIP_CSAResearchReport_2016_en.pdf.



As victims of child pornography grow up and deal with the trauma of the crime that was committed against them, it is understandable that they might worry about who has seen the images and whether someone will recognize them.⁶¹

From our interactions with survivors, we at C3P are aware that victims can remain recognizable from their images into adulthood.

As one survivor who reported that she was abused from childhood and throughout adolescence stated:

“Pictures/videos are supposed to capture the memories you want to relive again and again. As I look back at some of the photos from my childhood my only memory now is what I had to do to make that moment special, what other videos/photos were taken. If I must summarize it, it’s as if I never have real ‘freedom’, never uninhibited, never without fear. The result is that I never sleep well, that everything is complicated and that I can get stirred up by the stupidest things. If I’m somewhere and somebody looks at me, I’m always afraid that it’s because people know it, or recognize me.”⁶²

Such fears are not without foundation—the truth is that there are online spaces dedicated to discussing and sharing child sexual abuse material and information about the victims of this exploitation. Cybertip.ca analysts have seen numerous posts in discussion threads where individuals comment on a survivor’s current whereabouts or post other identifying information such as the school/university a survivor is attending, the name of a sports team a survivor is on, or images involving a survivor’s friends/acquaintances. Furthermore, some the reports to Cybertip.ca pertain to instances where the child’s name was posted along with the abusive imagery, and there are numerous examples in Canadian reported case law where this has occurred.⁶³ Once a child’s real name is linked to the imagery, it can be readily inferred that there would be added security risks for that child.

By way of example, Cybertip.ca has received reports about a site on the dark web that was providing users with the ability to search for information about victims of child sexual abuse material. Results could include images of the victim’s abuse, details about the abuse, current and prior legal names of the victim and/or their family members, information about where the victim lives, and family photographs. There was also a dark web forum that was publicly available for approximately ten months and that contained a thread intended for individuals to post information on the whereabouts of victims of child sexual abuse material. The information posted to the thread included photos of victims as well as references to aspects of their personal lives as adults. While certainly not all individuals who possess or distribute this material are engaged in such activity, when any individual shares child sexual abuse

⁶¹ *R v IP*, 2020 NLSC 2 at para 53.

⁶² Survivors’ Survey, Executive Summary, page 43.

⁶³ For example, see *R. v. D.S.*, 2019 MBPC 9 at para 5.



material, it increases the risk that the image or video so shared may be seen by someone who is motivated to seek out identifying information about the victim. Child sexual abuse material is usually shared in anonymous circles or via private messages, and there is no way to predict what recipients may do with the images/videos or other information that can be found online. This relative anonymity makes it very difficult for survivors to protect themselves and contributes to the fear that anyone, anywhere could one day recognize them and worse yet, attempt to harm them.

Fear of recognition was a common theme mentioned by survivors in responses to the Survivors' Survey. The following list describes some of the ways this fear was expressed:

- In response to the question of how the imagery differs from the hands-on abuse, many respondents expressed a fear of being recognized or going out in public.
- In direct response to the question of how the imagery impacts day-to-day life, several respondents indicated they did not feel safe or were hyper-vigilant. Many other respondents expressed this sentiment in response to other questions in the survey.
- In response to the question "Do you worry about being recognized by someone who has seen images of the abuse?", a significant proportion of respondents answered "yes".⁶⁴ This rate was considerably higher for respondents who were under 40 at the time they completed survey. This is significant when one considers that the internet only became commonly used by the public in the 1990s, and thus this would be the generation of victims whose images are more likely than others to have been distributed online or at risk of such distribution.
- Specific worries associated with recognition were related to feeling suspicious of others, being hyper-vigilant/anxious, limiting their social interactions or the amount of time they spend away from their homes, feeling shame and worrying about being stalked or harmed.

The fear of being recognized does not appear to be an unfounded fear, given the forums and discussion threads written above. Moreover, a number of respondents to the Survivors' Survey reported being identified by a person who had viewed their imagery. Some experienced further trauma as a result, such as being specifically targeted, propositioned or abused again.

Other responses to the Survivors' Survey speaking to security fears include:

"I perceive the world as terribly unsafe. Very, very unsafe. I often feel like a hunted animal. It's very clear that this is due to the existence of photo imagery, because that is specifically what also makes the outside world very dangerous. In the past if someone said they knew me from somewhere, then I would completely lose it inside. I find it difficult to be somewhere where there's lots of people. I believe everybody thinks I'm dirty. I find men very scary and want nothing to do with anything relating to sexuality - it is taboo."⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Executive Summary, page 29, graph 44.

⁶⁵ Executive Summary, page 28.



“The imagery abuse impacts me differently than the hands-on abuse because now THOUSANDS of people are taking advantage of me... The abuse will NEVER end for me. I am never safe. I don't get to live a normal life where I can take pictures at the beach and feel comfortable. I feel like I am constantly naked, like, I will never have a clear mind because I know somewhere someone is looking at my photos right now. It could be someone from another country or maybe even someone I work with. I am terrified for my life. I constantly have thoughts of someone finding out who I am and trying to hurt me.”⁶⁶

“I live in constant fear that someone will recognize me and I will be abused over and over again.”⁶⁷

“The fact that imagery was made makes it even dirtier, rottener and scarier. It's a feeling like a ticking bomb. You never know when something like that can turn up, by whom or how you'll get confronted with it. Maybe it will never happen but you're always waiting in apprehension.”⁶⁸

“I avoid doing some things, ... anything that would put my name or image out in a public way. I don't want to draw attention to myself so I avoid things I would otherwise want to do. I also have found that I cannot have social media under my real name or post pictures of myself online.”⁶⁹

5. Conclusion

The purpose of this statement is to demonstrate that victims of child sexual abuse material suffer emotional, physical and economic harm, as well as fears for their security, as a result of their imagery being possessed and distributed by others. The following quote from a survivor demonstrates the importance of hearing from victims:

“It [the imagery] is something, which because of its intangible nature (i.e. in the case of webcam streaming like for me) as well as the lack of recognition of adults who have experienced this as children and youth, that makes me feel unrecognized as a ‘proper’ victim or without decent means to seek out justice. In my case regarding child sexual abuse imagery, I had countless men who abused me and they were largely hard to identify or used pseudonyms and were in other jurisdictions (like the US and UK). There is no way to remove or take back what was created from my abuse during those years and in many ways, I feel so empty, as if my house has been looted and there is no way for me to get justice or have my thieves return what they stole. I also think that much of my trauma I have experienced after the abuse itself has taken place-it is the harmful after effects which also can be so devastating.”⁷⁰

⁶⁶ Full Report, page 153.

⁶⁷ Full Report, page 167.

⁶⁸ Full Report, page 168.

⁶⁹ Full Report, page 170.

⁷⁰ Full Report, page 155.



Appendix A – C3P Initiatives to Assist Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse Material and their Families

Survivors' Survey

In January 2016, after having operated Cybertip.ca for 14 years, C3P launched an international survey for adult survivors whose child sexual abuse was recorded and in many cases distributed online. A significant number of the survey questions were directly related to the survivors' experiences as a result of having their sexual abuse recorded. Between January 2016 and July 27, 2017, 150 survivors contributed valuable details about their experiences and ongoing impacts. The results of the survey were released in September 2017. An Executive Summary outlining the main findings and the Full Report, which contains the text of actual victim responses (edited to remove identifying details), are available online at: <https://protectchildren.ca/en/resources-research/survivors-survey-results/>.

Phoenix 11

One of the themes that emerged from the Survivors' Survey was the desire of survivors to connect with others who have gone through many of the same experiences they have. To facilitate this connection, C3P, NCMEC⁷¹ and professionals whose work supports victims of this type of abuse (lawyers, counsellors and a medical professional), organized two gatherings for survivors of child sexual abuse material. The group emerged from this meeting as the "Phoenix 11", and the group wrote and recorded a "Community Impact Statement" of its own to file in court proceedings. At this juncture, C3P is the representative in Canada for the Phoenix 11 and continues to work with the Phoenix 11 to support their advocacy efforts. More information is available online at: <https://protectchildren.ca/en/programs-and-initiatives/phoenix11/>.

2019 Gathering of Mothers of Survivors

In March 2019, C3P brought together six mothers whose children are survivors of child sexual abuse that was recorded and distributed. The mothers shared information about how they have been impacted, and what the ongoing existence of the imagery has meant for the family's emotional wellbeing, financial position, and sense of security. Four of the mothers recorded victim impacts statements for use in sentencings where a defendant is determined to have accessed, possessed or distributed images of the mother's child.

2020 Gathering of Male Survivors

On February 5-7, 2020, C3P brought together six men from Canada and the U.S. whose child sexual abuse was recorded for the first-ever male survivors retreat. This was done in response to learning from

⁷¹ The National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) operates a tipline in the United States to process reports pertaining to substantially similar issues as Cybertip.ca.



and connecting with female survivors of child sexual abuse material (the Phoenix 11) and noticing key differences between the impacts on female and male survivors of child sexual abuse material through the data collected from the Survivors' Survey and from victim impact statements. As with the Phoenix 11, the men were joined by staff from C3P and NCMEC and other professionals whose work supports victims of this type of abuse. The key goals of the male survivor retreat were to provide the survivors with an opportunity to meet one another and share their experiences in a safe and supportive environment, as well as for those present to learn about the unique challenges male survivors face.

Appendix B – See Survivors' Survey: Executive Summary

The Executive Summary is available from this link:

https://protectchildren.ca/pdfs/C3P_SurvivorsSurveyExecutiveSummary2017_en.pdf

The Full Report is available from this link:

https://www.protectchildren.ca/pdfs/C3P_SurvivorsSurveyFullReport2017.pdf