

Child sexual abuse and exploitation is any act of inappropriately exposing or subjecting a child (under the age of 18) to sexual activity, contact or behaviour by an individual for the purposes of gratification (sexual or otherwise).

Child sexual abuse can include non-contact and contact activities and can involve a range of behaviours including but not limited to:

- Sexual acts, penetrative or non-penetrative, with a child or young person under the age of consent (18)
- Asking or forcing a child to strip or masturbate
- Inappropriate touching of a child, whether clothed or unclothed
- Engaging in any kind of sexual activity in front of a child, including watching pornography
- Taking, downloading, viewing or distributing sexual images of children
- Possessing images of child sexual abuse
- Encouraging a child to perform sexual acts in front of a webcam or any recording device
- Grooming a child (or their parent or carer). Grooming refers to the way offenders form relationships and build trust with children, parents, carers, teachers and other children in order to get close to a child and create the opportunity for sexual abuse.

Child sexual abuse is a global problem that knows no physical, financial, socioeconomic, geographic, cultural or gender boundaries.

All forms of child sexual abuse are a profound violation of the human rights of the child and a crime under law. The impacts of this crime are far-reaching for children, families and communities.

Children who have been sexually abused can suffer a range of psychological and behavioural problems, ranging from mild to severe, both in the short and long term.

Effects of the abuse can vary; however, children who are believed when they first disclose and are given the right type of therapeutic support, are less likely to endure long term negative impacts.

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE: TOPLINE STATISTICS

- More than 1 in 4 Australians (28.5%) have experienced child sexual abuse.¹
- More than 1 in 3 Australian girls and almost 1 in 5 boys experience child sexual abuse.¹
- Among Australian children who have been sexually abused, for more than 78%, it happened more than once.¹
- In up to 90% of (in-person) child sexual abuse cases, the offender is known to the child and/or family.²
- In more than half of cases (approximately 52%), the onset of child sexual abuse is from 0 to 8 years.³
- 1 in 8 children has sent a photo or video of themselves to someone they first met online.⁴
- Approximately 1 in 3 cases of child sexual abuse are instigated by other young people.⁵



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& YOUNG PEOPLE FROM
SEXUAL ABUSE**

1) Haslam D, Mathews B, Pacella R, Scott JG, Finkelhor D, Higgins DJ, Meinck F, Erskine HE, Thomas HJ, Lawrence D, Malacova E. (2023). The prevalence and impact of child maltreatment in Australia: Findings from the Australian Child Maltreatment Study: Brief Report. Australian Child Maltreatment Study, Queensland University of Technology. 2) Australian Bureau of Statistics 2017; Quadara, Nagy, Higgins & Siegel, 2015. 3) McElvaney et al., 2020. 4) Office of the eSafety Commissioner, 2022. 5) Der Bedrosian, 2018; McKibbon, 2017; Finkelhor, Omrod & Chaffin, 2009.