



Pelastakaa Lapset - Rädda Barnen
Save the Children

CHILD PROTECTION AND FINNISH HOTLINE ANNUAL REPORT 2020

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The Child Protection and Finnish Hotline began operations in 2002. We work to counter and prevent child sexual abuse, in particular in digital environments. Our aim is to promote the rapid removal of child sexual abuse material from the internet and to prevent children and young people from becoming victims of sexual abuse. The Child Protection and Finnish Hotline function is part of the Finnish Safer Internet Centre (FISIC), which seeks to ensure a better and safer digital environment for children. FISIC operations are carried out in collaboration with [the Finnish National Audiovisual Institute](#) and [The Mannerheim League for Child Welfare](#). Save the Children Finland is also the national representative of the [ECPAT network](#) in Finland and a member of the International Association of Internet Hotlines INHOPE.



Figure 1. The Child Protection and Finnish Hotline function has three main focus points.

HOTLINE WORK AND CLASSIFYING IMAGES

We run the [Nettivistijä service](#), which in 2020 received over 2,750 reports of illegal activity and material involving child sexual abuse online. We also analyse child sexual abuse material as part of [Project Arachnid](#), run by the [Canadian Centre for Child Protection](#).

Through our hotline work and image classification, we promote the rapid removal of illegal material from the internet. We offer a low-threshold reporting channel for adults and children, thereby aiding in the detection of sexual crimes against children. A large part of sexual offences against children do not come to the knowledge of authorities, and one reason for this is the high threshold for reporting suspected crimes or illegal material to the authorities. The Finnish Hotline is part of the international network of hotlines, [International Association of Internet Hotlines INHOPE](#). The hotline is run in close collaboration with the Finnish National Bureau of Investigation (NBI).

AWARENESS RAISING

We seek to prevent sexual offences against children and to promote early intervention in criminal activity through provision and dissemination of information and through offering training and education. In 2020, our communications, articles and materials were aimed at professionals, children and young people, as well as their guardians. We trained over 1,300 professionals at approximately 20 training events. We offered training on online child sexual abuse and prevention of child sexual abuse to professionals working in, for example, social work, healthcare, and prison and probation services. In autumn 2020, we launched the 'My Body Belongs to Me' ('Kehoni on minun' in Finnish) training tour for education sector students and social work students. The training tour continues in spring 2021.

Additionally, we were involved in the national-level project 'Identifying and preventing grooming through youth work', aimed at strengthening youth workers' expertise in preventing grooming of children for sexual purposes and sexual abuse of children and young people. The organisation [Koordinaatti](#) was responsible for the implementation of the project. Our experts provided training for youth work professionals as part of the project and wrote three chapters to a guidebook published by Koordinaatti: [Kysy, kohtaa ja kuuntele – Opas seksuaalisen houkutelun ja seksuaaliväkivallan ennaltaehkäisyyn nuorisotyössä.](#)

ADVOCACY

We promote children's right to be protected from sexual abuse by carrying out long-term advocacy. Our objective is to see key changes, in terms of protecting children, implemented in procedures and structures, both in Finland and abroad. We work in collaboration with authorities, decision-makers and professionals to achieve our objectives.

In 2020, we were involved in a number of networks (incl. [The Finnish Civil Society Platform Against Trafficking in Human Beings, IKY](#), and [SerieE](#)), workshops and working groups (incl. the working groups for the communications and implementation plan for '[Non-Violent Childhoods – Action Plan for the Prevention of Violence against Children 2020–2025](#)'), and issued, amongst others, the following statements regarding strategies and reforms:

- [Amendment to the to the Criminal Code in regard to sexual offences \(statement in Finnish\)](#)
- [Preparation of the National Plan of Action against Trafficking in Human Beings \(statement in Finnish\)](#)
- [New EU Strategy towards the Eradication of Trafficking in Human Beings](#)
- [Children's Rights in relation to the digital environment](#)

Furthermore, we also commented on a range of other strategies and reforms (such as Roadmap – EU strategy for a more effective fight against child sexual abuse) together with different organisations.

We also carried out advocacy work to promote the urgent approval of a European Commission [interim regulation proposal](#) by distributing information directly to decision-makers and participating in workshops [to formulate a common position](#). The aim of the regulation is to continue to permit the use of certain digital tools in the future for a restricted purpose: protecting children from sexual abuse.



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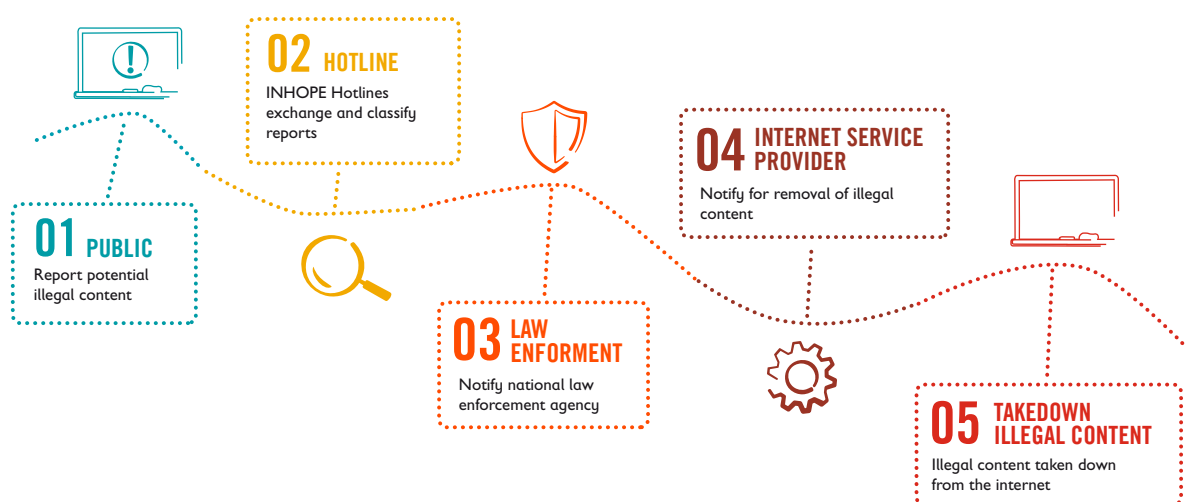
INFORMATION ABOUT THE NETTIVIHJE SERVICE

The Finnish Hotline, found at [Nettivihje.fi](https://nettivihje.fi), is a hotline through which anyone can submit a report if they suspect they have come across material or activities online related to the sexual abuse of children. Reports submitted to the hotline are processed in accordance with Finnish Law and the international [INHOPE network's Code of Practice](#). The objective of the INHOPE network is to speed up the removal of illegal material from the internet by enhancing the flow of information to authorities and service providers.

Reports can be submitted [to the hotline](#) regarding:

1. child sexual abuse material CSAM (can be reported anonymously)
2. grooming of children for sexual purposes online
3. a child's nude image or video that has been distributed online
4. Child trafficking for sexual purposes

In 2020, we reformed how we receive reports. We still accept reports of child sexual abuse material (CSAM) entirely anonymously, but for reports submitted through our other forms (2–4), we may now give to police the IP address of the person who submitted the report, if the police request this information under the Police Act Chapter 4(3)(2). This change promotes the solving of crimes reported to the Hotline and the identification of victims. You can find out more about how we process data in our [data protection policy \(in Finnish\)](#).



Kuva 2. Processing of reports containing child sexual abuse material.

We process reports within 48 hours of receiving them, where possible. All information pertaining to illegal material and activity is submitted to the Finnish authorities for assessment and possible further measures. Information (URL) of the material assessed as being illegal and infringing on children's rights that is hosted on servers abroad are passed on to the INHOPE network hotline in the country where the material is hosted. The hotline will assess the material in reference to the country's legislation and forward information to both the national authorities and the service provider so that the material can be removed from the internet as quickly as possible.

If illegal material is hosted in Finland, we also contact the service provider directly to encourage them to contact the NBI. Due to Finnish legislation, we cannot pass on the URL of the page that contains the material to the service provider or demand that the service provider remove the material. However, in many other countries, the INHOPE hotline can demand that the service provider remove material hosted in the country. In the reports we receive, a large proportion of the illegal material is hosted outside Finland, which means it is important to pass on the information within the INHOPE network of hotlines. Information is passed on using the [ICCAM system](#) managed by INHOPE. Through this system, the information is also made available to the International Criminal Police

Organization [Interpol](#). Material on pages that require registration or downloading is not checked, but instead the information provided in the report is passed on directly to the NBI.

Reports concerning suspicions of illegal activity directed at children, such as grooming of children for sexual purposes, are assessed and passed on to the NBI for further investigation and possible measures. We also offer the sender of the report advice and guidance, for example to services that can provide assistance. This kind of advice and guidance can be received by providing an email address on the form when submitting a report.

INFORMATION ABOUT CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE MATERIAL

Child sexual abuse material (CSAM) witnesses sexual offences against children of all ages and genders. The material may include, for example, photographs and videos in which the focus is on the child's genital area, or where there is sexual activity with or without an adult, penetration, or particular brutality. Production, possession and distribution of CSAM is illegal in Finland (The Criminal Code of Finland 39/1889, Chapter 17).

Intentional recording and distribution of the images of sexual abuse often play a central role in sexual offences against children. Sexual offences against children, and recording of such crimes, are often committed by people close to the children, in a home or home-like environment. The crime may also have been carried out completely online. Typical examples of CSAM:

- The material containing child sexual abuse was recorded by one or more persons. The sexual offence in the material was not carried out online, but the recording is distributed online.
- The material containing child sexual abuse was recorded by one or more persons. The sexual crime depicted in the material was committed online (e.g. by webcam) and the recording is distributed online.
- Photographs or videos recorded by the child or young person themselves, which the recipient unlawfully distributed to third parties or online.

People who use CSAM to satisfy their own sexual needs do not always realise or admit the link between the use of the material and an actual sexual offence. Demand for illegal material increases the need to produce it – either for themselves or for consumers, as dictated by perceived need. In practice, this means new sexual offences being committed against children. Children and young people may also be coerced or blackmailed into taking images or videos of themselves. Distribution of the material can also be a criminal enterprise or part of organised crime, potentially involving human trafficking of children.

CSAM is often known in Finland and internationally by the distorted term 'child pornography'. In the Criminal Code of Finland, the archaic and obscure term 'an image that offends sexual morality' is used to refer to CSAM. These terms are misleading and belittling, as CSAM witnesses serious sexual offences against children. Authorities, the media, and the public should use terminology that respects the rights of the child and that does not minimise the crime against the child.

Every time a child sexual abuse image or video is shared or viewed, the child is re-victimized. Sexual abuse and dissemination of CSAM can subject a child to serious consequences at the time of the crime, later during their childhood, and throughout the rest of their life, unless the experience is appropriately processed.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE REPORTS THE FINNISH HOTLINE RECEIVED IN 2020

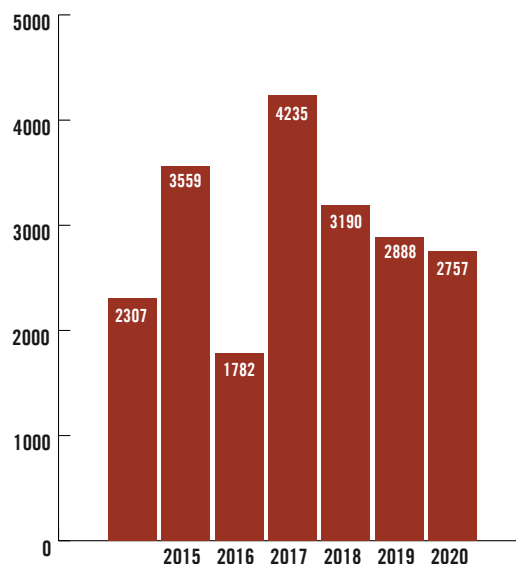
In 2020, the Finnish Hotline received a total of 2 757 reports. One report refers to one web address (URL) or one description of illegal activity (such as grooming for sexual purposes). Each URL can contain a single image or video, or as many as hundreds of images or videos. In 2020, we inserted a total of 18,508 images/videos into the ICCAM system used by the INHOPE network of hotlines. As part of Project Arachnid we analysed a total of 29,346 images in 2020. The number of images analysed in Project Arachnid will probably grow in coming years, as part of 2020 was dedicated to training new analysts.

The number of reports varies to some degree from year to year. Over the last three years, the number of reports has remained fairly steady. The number of reports grew significantly in March–May 2020. For example, during the week before Easter, 193 reports were processed, compared to the typical average of 50–60 reports a week. The significant growth in the number of reports may be due to the potential effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in increasing sexual offences against children and distribution of illegal material. However, no definitive information about the momentary increase in the number of reports is available. In June 2020, the number of reports levelled off, and in the autumn we received even fewer reports than normal.

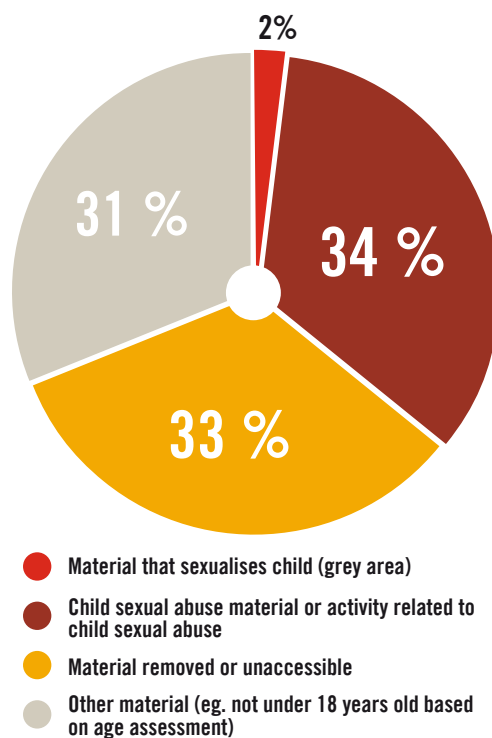
Of the reports received in 2020, 34% contained material assessed as illegal child sexual abuse material, or illegal activity such as grooming of children for sexual purposes. A further two per cent of the reports contained so called grey area images, some of which are illegal in Finland. A total of 33% of the reports contained information about websites where the material had been, for example, removed, was accessible only by downloading, or was password protected. A third of the reports received in 2020 were classified as other material. Some of this was material where it was impossible to reliably estimate the age of those in the material, therefore the material could not be classified as illegal.

In our statement on the amendment to the to the Criminal Code in regard to sexual offences, we emphasise that the law does not currently sufficiently protect children, once they have entered adolescence, when it comes to CSAM. The danger is that some images or videos that are actually CSAM will not be identified as such.

Number of reports received during years 2014 - 2020



Reports received by the Finnish Hotline in 2020 (N=2757)



In the reports received in 2020 that were CSAM, over half of the victims (68%) were assessed as being under the age of 14. In six per cent of the reports, the sexual abuse was targeted at very young children, under the age of three years. Due to challenges with estimating the age of those in the material, the number of children aged 14–17 years could in reality be greater than the figure given in this report (32%).

In 2020, there were more girls than boys amongst the victims in the CSAM reported. Just under 70% of the material concerned sexual abuse of girls, whilst in 62% of the material the victims were only girls. However, a significant percentage of the material involved boys, as 38% of the material included sexual abuse of boys. A third of the material involved sexual abuse exclusively of boys.

COMPARISON TO PREVIOUS YEARS

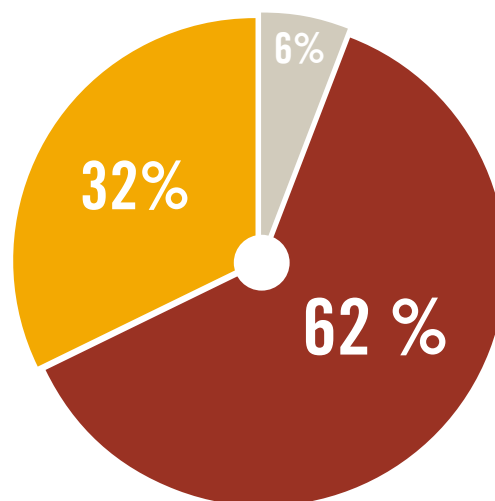
There is some variation in the content of the reports from year to year. The proportion of the reports received in 2020 where the material had either been removed or was not accessible, grew significantly compared to the previous year. In 2019, these reports accounted for 14% of all reports, whereas in 2020 this figure had grown to 31%. However, the number of reports classified as other material (such as image or video material where the person in the material could not be clearly estimated to be under 18 years old) fell significantly. In 2019, 'other material' accounted for 53% of reports, whereas in 2020 this figure had fallen to 31%.

When reviewing a longer timeframe (2015–2019), the number of reports containing grey area material has decreased since 2017. Otherwise, the content of the reports received in 2020 and the age distribution of the victims has remained similar to the averages of the reports received in 2015–2019.

The statistics for 2019 are available [here](#).

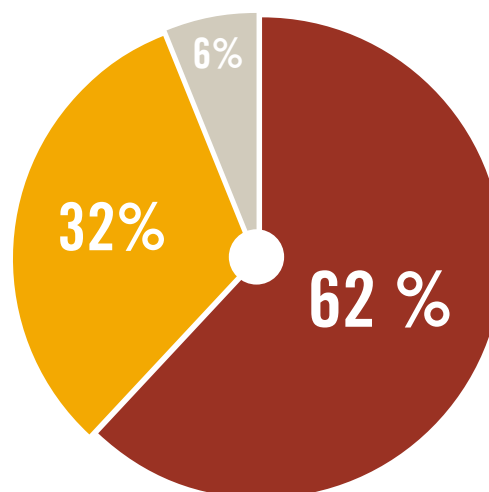
[Training requests \(form in Finnish\)](#)

Child sexual abuse material categorised by age (N=876, n=769)



● 0-2-year-olds ● 3-13-year-olds ● 14-17-year-olds

Child sexual abuse material categorised by gender (N=876, n=751)



● Girls ● Boys ● Both



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Save the Children Finland is a politically and religiously independent non-governmental organization founded in 1922, which fights for children's rights in order to immediately and permanently improve children's lives in Finland and all over the world.

savethechildren.fi