



Pelastakaa Lapset

CHILD PROTECTION AND FINNISH HOTLINE'S ANNUAL REPORT 2023



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Sexual violence against children in digital environments is one of the greatest challenges of our time.

[Every second](#), at least two images or videos of sexual violence against children are shared online. [One in three](#) reported cases of child sexual abuse involves a child under the age of 10. In Europe, [one in five](#) children are victims of sexual violence. According to [the School Health Promotion study](#) and the [Child Victim Survey](#), sexual violence against children is a growing phenomenon also in Finland.

Save the Children Finland's Child Protection and Finnish Hotline aims to prevent and combat sexual violence against children. The Finnish Hotline works to prevent violence, especially in digital environments, and the work is based on the right of the child to be protected from all forms of violence. For this reason, the Finnish Hotline's reporting form for young people was extended in 2023 to allow reporting of sexual violence that occurs offline. With this change, the Finnish Hotline hopes to better protect children from all forms of violence. Alongside the new form category, the other forms were also updated. The form for young people is available in Finnish and Swedish, but the new offline-category is only available in the Finnish form. The form in Swedish will be updated later.

Nettivihje nuorille

Haluan ilmoittaa (Pakollinen)

- Olen saanut seksuaalissävyytteisiä viestejä, linkkejä tai pyyntöjä somessa tai netissä minua selvästi vanhemmalta henkilöltä. Voit ilmoittaa tällä lomakkeella myös ystäväsi saamista viesteistä.
- Laitonta tai intiimiä kuvaani/videotani levitetään tai uhataan levittää somessa tai netissä. Voit ilmoittaa tällä lomakkeella myös ystäväsi puolesta.
- Olen kohdannut seksuaalista häirintää tai seksuaaliväkivaltaa. Häirintää tai väkivaltaa voi olla esimerkiksi ilman suostumustasi tapahtuva seksuaalissävyytteinen pyyntö tai kosketus tai koskettamiseen painostaminen tai pakottaminen. Voit ilmoittaa tällä lomakkeella myös ystäväsi kokemuksesta.

Pelkkä epäily materiaalin tai toiminnan laittomuudesta riittää sen ilmoittamiseksi.

Image: A third category was added to the Finnish online report form for young people to report sexual violence that has occurred offline.

The Finnish Hotline has been operating since 2002 and has been part of the Finnish Safer Internet Centre (FISIC) for 20 years. FISIC aims to provide a better and safer digital environment for children. FISIC works in partnership with the National Audiovisual Institute and the Mannerheim League for Child Welfare.

Save the Children Finland is also a member of the international INHOPE network and a representative of the international ECPAT network in Finland. ECPAT is an international network of organizations working to combat sexual violence against children.

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Here are some of the events and outputs of the Finnish Hotline in 2023:

- JANUARY** The Finnish Hotline participated in the EDUCA fair together with Save the Children Finland's digital wellbeing team and International Programs. At EDUCA, around 500 education professionals were met, and Development Managers Antti Järventaus and Tanja Simola addressed the audience on the topic "Teachers supporting children in digital environments".
- FEBRUARY** A parents' evening was organised during Media Literacy Week in cooperation with FISIC. It gathered over 200 guardians to listen about sexual violence against children in digital environments. In February, we also met with experts of Victim Support Finland in relation to the new report category which was still in its planning stage.
- MARCH** The Finnish Hotline worked hard to train teachers, school counsellors, psychiatrists, and psychologists, as well as other professionals. The second training day of the Selkeästi seksuaalisuudesta project and the project's final day was also in March.
- APRIL** Animated videos produced in cooperation with the Ministry of Justice were published on YouTube. The series consists of six informative videos aimed at young people aged 11–17 on sexual violence, its different forms and how to combat it.
- MAY** The Finnish Hotline's experts participated in the Nordic Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect in Iceland and the Media Education Forum in Finland.
- JUNE** The Finnish Hotline's Development Manager participated in a panel discussion on grooming organised by the Salvation Army at SuomiAreena, and The Finnish Hotline's advisor was featured in a campaign video by Save the Children Finland's corporate partner Telia.
- JULY** Oikeusministeriön hankkeen animaatiovideoita jaettiin nuorille TikTokissa, Instagramissa ja YouTubeissa.
- AUGUST** Animated videos from the Ministry of Justice project were shared with young people on TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube.
- SEPTEMBER** A revised self-care programme for sexual interest in children was published additionally in English on the Mentalhub.fi website. The Finnish Hotline was responsible for its implementation.
- OCTOBER** A new reporting category was introduced in the online report form for young people. It includes an addition, that allows a young person to report sexual violence that has occurred off-line. Relating to this, a new form of cooperation with national police departments was launched as well. At the same time, all report forms were renewed.
- NOVEMBER** The Finnish Hotline piloted a new training to support professionals in preventing sexual violence against children. MEPs were contacted by email on "Save the Children Finland's concerns about the EU regulation on combating sexual violence against children".
- DECEMBER** Advisors from the Finnish Hotline attended the INHOPE hotline meeting in the Netherlands.



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Projects

FINNISH SAFER INTERNET CENTRE - FISIC

The FISIC project aims to promote media literacy and inclusion among children and young people and to increase their well-being and safety online. FISIC is a collaboration between three organisations: [the National Audiovisual Institute](#) (KAVI) coordinates the project, the [Mannerheim League for Child Welfare](#) runs the helpline and Save the Children Finland runs the hotline. In addition, all organisations are working to raise awareness about safe use of the internet.

PROJECT ARACHNID

Project Arachnid is an artificial intelligence tool to remove child sexual abuse material from the internet. It is run by the [Canadian Centre for Child Protection](#) (C3P), which also trains all analysts using the system. Some of the Finnish Hotline's analysts offer their expertise in analysing material for Project Arachnid. In 2023, Finnish Hotline analysed 444,447 images in Project Arachnid. Of these, 293 078 images were assessed as illegal and 38 668 as potentially illegal.

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE PREVENTION AND EDUCATION, CSAPE 2022–2024 PROJECT

CSAPE is a two-year cooperation project between five European countries, funded by the EU Internal Security Fund. Save the Children Finland coordinates the project, and the other participating countries are Iceland ([Bar-naheill - Save the Children Island](#)), Albania ([Save the Children Albania](#)), Bosnia-Herzegovina ([Save the Children International](#), with [Save the Children North Western Balkan](#) as implementing country office), and Greece (KMOP, Social Action and Innovation Centre). The project will produce evidence-based sexual education materials for professionals working with children, in particular to support the sexual education of young children (5–11 years). It will also produce information and a training package for professionals on young people who have sexual interest in children. During 2023, 11 national workshops involving young people and one international workshop were organised. Changes were made to the sexual education material based on suggestions received from young people during the workshops.

FUNDING FROM THE MINISTRY OF JUSTICE FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A PROGRAM TO COMBAT VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

The project produced six animated videos together with young people and a production company. The videos deal with different forms of sexual violence against children, how to report it, and how to get help. The aim is to raise awareness among young people aged 11–17 about sexual harassment and sexual violence online and in social media. Raising awareness will help young people to protect themselves and their boundaries and to report their experiences of violence to an adult. The animations were released in April 2023. From late April to the end of July, the videos were promoted on popular social media channels to raise awareness of this important information among young people. The campaign garnered a total of 4.6 million impressions. The project ended at the end of July 2023, but the use of videos to reach young people and the adults who work with them will continue.

SELKEÄSTI SEKSUAALISUUDESTA

Selkeästi seksuaalisuudesta ("Clearly About Sexuality") was a project funded by the Finnish National Agency for Education to develop the skills of teaching and guidance staff to strengthen safety-conscious thinking and safety education, particularly in relation to sexuality and the needs of special groups. The project was coordinated by the Live Foundation and implemented in cooperation with Save the Children Finland, Autism Foundation Finland, Metropolia University of Applied Sciences, and Terapiaperhonen. The project has now ended.

FINNISH HOTLINE NETTIVIHJE

Nettivilhje operates a hotline that allows anyone to report suspected child sexual abuse activity or material online, offline or in both environments.

A large proportion of sexual offences against children do not come to the attention of the authorities, for example because the threshold for reporting to the authorities can be high in cases of suspected illegal material or suspected offences against children. The aim of the hotline is to provide a low threshold reporting channel to ensure that as many cases as possible come to the attention of the authorities (including the police and child welfare services) and to increase the effectiveness of the removal of child sexual abuse material from the internet. Finnish Hotline works closely with the National Bureau of Investigation and local police forces to protect children.

” A low threshold reporting channel is needed. You don’t need to know if the material is illegal or if a crime has been committed to report it to the Finnish Hotline. A suspicion is enough.

Mikko Ahtila, advisor, Finnish Hotline

The hotline has several different forms in three languages. The youth form is available on the website in Finnish and Swedish. It allows young people to report a sexual offence against themselves or a friend by selecting one of three categories. (See screenshot of the youth form on page 2 of the report.)

The general form web pages in Finnish, Swedish and English contain two different forms: one for reporting child sexual abuse material and one for reporting sexual violence against a child in a digital environment.

” Child sexual abuse material can be reported to The Finnish Hotline in a completely anonymous way.”

Emma Pösö, advisor, Finnish Hotline

Reports submitted to the Finnish Hotline will be treated in accordance with Finnish law and the common principles of the international INHOPE network. The INHOPE network aims to speed up the removal of illegal material from the web by facilitating the flow of information to authorities and service providers. Finnish Hotline uses the ICCAM system, which is used by the INHOPE hotline network, to analyse illegal material.

You can report to the Finnish Hotline:

1. Child sexual abuse material (also anonymously).
2. Solicitation of a child for sexual purposes online (grooming).
3. A nude photo or a video of a child that has gone viral on the Internet.
4. Human trafficking of a child for the purpose of sexual exploitation
5. Sexual harassment of a child online.
6. Sexual harassment or sexual violence against a child off-line.

You can also report on behalf of another person.

1. Anyone

Anyone can report suspected illegal activity.

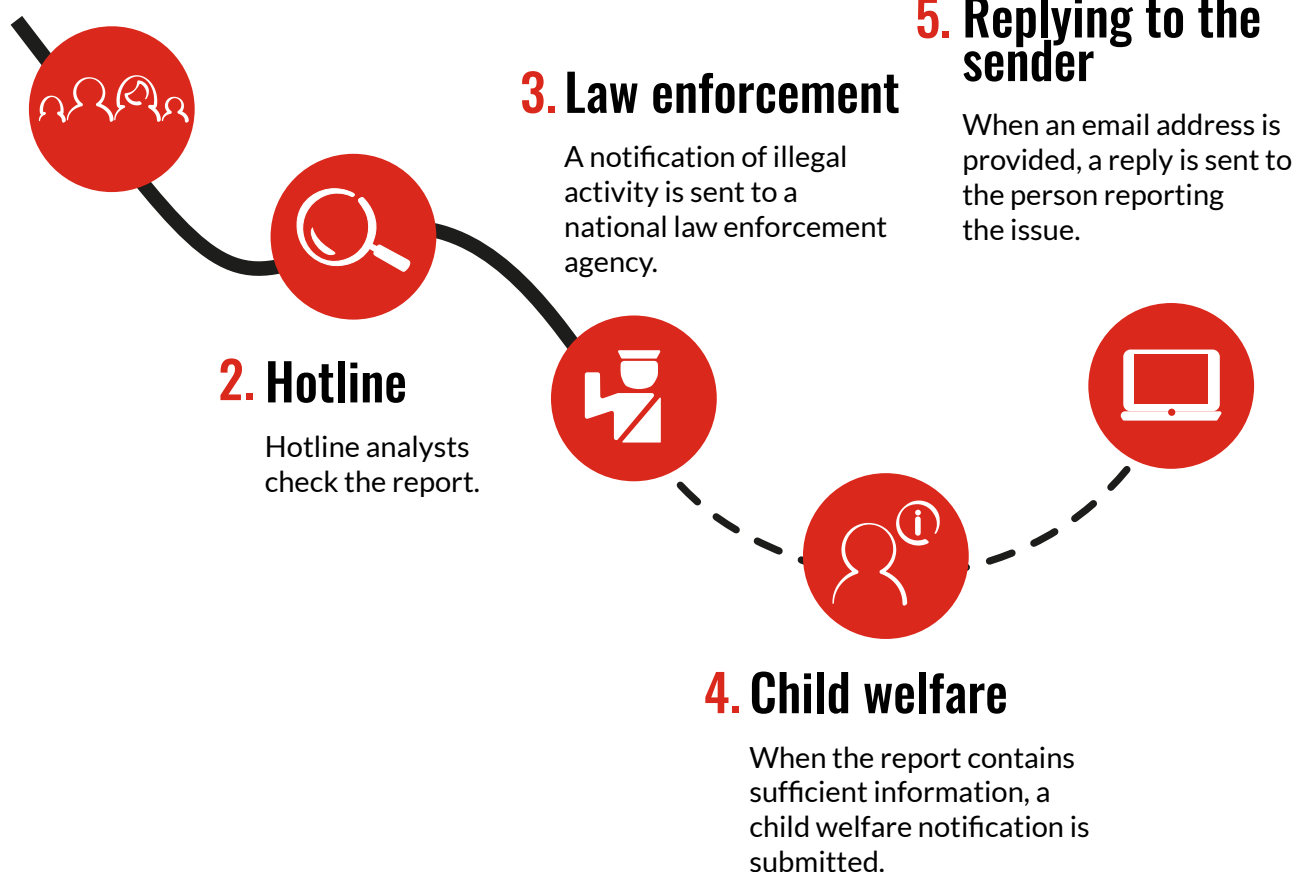


Image: Processing of a report involving an act of sexual violence against a child.

INFORMATION ABOUT REPORTS RECEIVED BY THE FINNISH HOTLINE IN 2023

In 2023, a total of 22 584 reports were handled by the Finnish Hotline. Of these, 9 399 were received via reporting forms and 13 185 were processed within the proactive work of the Finnish Hotline. In the global statistics of the INHOPE network of hotlines using the ICCAM reporting system (42 countries), the Finnish Hotline reported the fourth highest number of illegal materials in 2023.

The previous year (2022) was exceptional in terms of the number of reports (33 296), so there was a decrease in the number of reports compared to that year. However, compared to 2020 and 2021, there has been a significant increase. One report means one web address (URL) or one description of suspected illegal activity. Each URL can contain either a single image or video or sometimes hundreds of images or videos.

Reports in 2014 - 2023

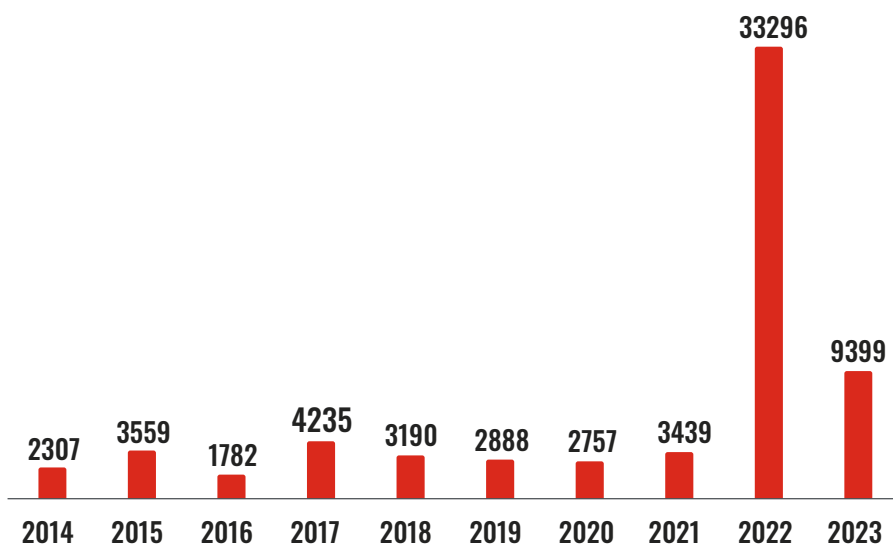


Image: Number of reports received by the Finnish Hotline via the online reporting from 2014 to 2023.

There is a significant monthly variation in the number of reports. The vast majority of reports, 8 417 , were received in the first half of the year. In the second half of the year, 982 notifications were received.

Reports by month 2023

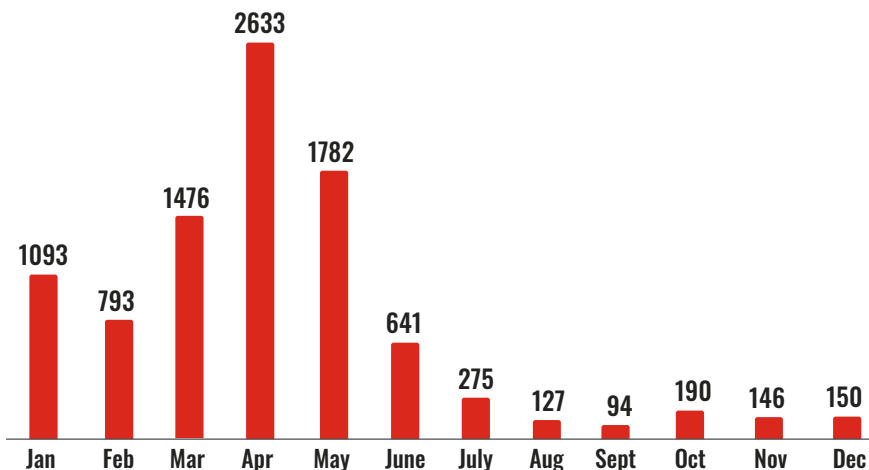


Image: Number of Reports received by the Finnish Hotline via the online report form per month in 2023.

In 2023, 78% of the reports submitted to the Finnish Hotline were sites from which material had been removed or it was inaccessible for other reasons. Access to the material would have required, for example, downloading, logging in, or unlocking with a password. The number of reports in this category has fallen slightly since 2022. Then, the proportion was 88%. Nevertheless, the percentage of reports was still the highest in this category in 2023.

Content of received reports (N=9399, n=9317)

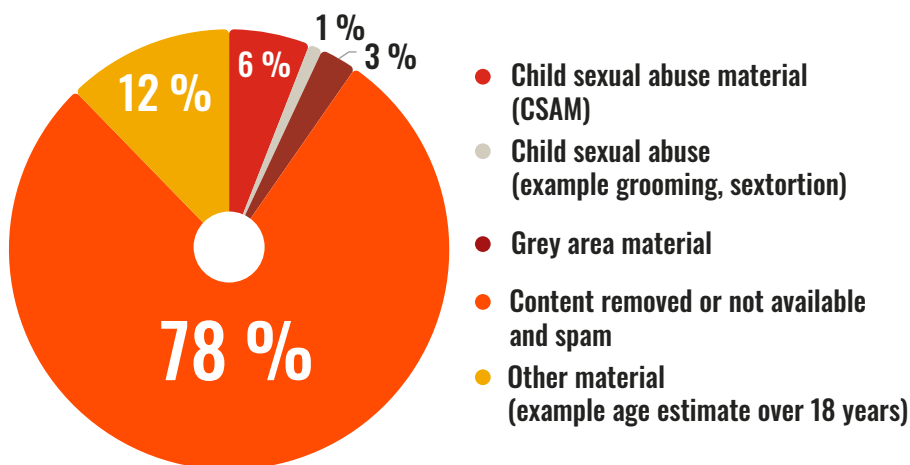


Image: Content of the reports submitted to the Finnish Hotline via the online reporting form in 2023.¹

In 2023, 78% of the reports containing child sexual abuse material was such that the child in the material was estimated to be 3–13 years old. In 2022, the corresponding figure was 88%.

¹ The uppercase “N” refers to the total number of reports in the respective category, whereas the lowercase “n” refers to the number of reports that have been used in the compilation of the chart. In a small number of cases, the information is therefore missing or incorrectly recorded. The statistics are compiled manually. This applies to all charts in the report.

In 2022, three per cent of the reports contained sexual abuse against a child under the age of three but in 2023 the proportion was 7%. 15% of reports contained sexual violence against children aged 14–17. In 2023, fewer reports were received than in the previous year, and this may affect the above percentages.

Age assessment is based on physical development. Due to the challenges in age assessment, the number of children aged 14–17 may therefore actually be higher than the statistics presented in this report.

A direct comparison of the percentages for 2023 with the corresponding figures for 2022 may not give a full picture of the development of the phenomena, as there was a significant difference in the number of reports.

Child sexual abuse material by age (N=549, n=549)

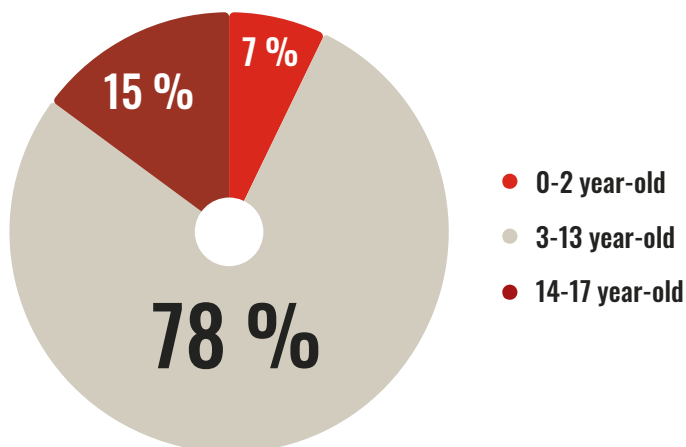


Image: Child sexual abuse material by age group in 2023.

In 2023, the Finnish Hotline started to disaggregate material with more than one girl or more than one boy in the statistics regarding the child's sex. Previously, material with more than one girl or more than one boy was explicitly recorded as either girl or boy.

If the material contains both a girl and a boy or both girls and boys, the sexes are recorded as "both". "Not specified" means that the sex of the child could not be determined from the image or video, but the image or video clearly showed a child. The sex of the child is determined by the physical characteristics of the child (genitals and breasts). This could not be done for 3% of the material.

24% of child sexual abuse material included sexual violence against boys and 22% of the footage only included boys as victims. The same figures in 2022 were 17% and 9% respectively. There has been a significant increase in this area.

However, despite the increase in the amount of material showing sexual violence against boys, most of the material showing sexual violence against children still had girls as victims: 75% of the material showed sexual violence against girls, 73% of the material showed only girls as victims. In the previous year, 85% of the material contained sexual violence against girls, with 77% of victims being girls only. 2% of the material contained both girls and boys as victims.

Child sexual abuse material by gender (N=549, n=545)

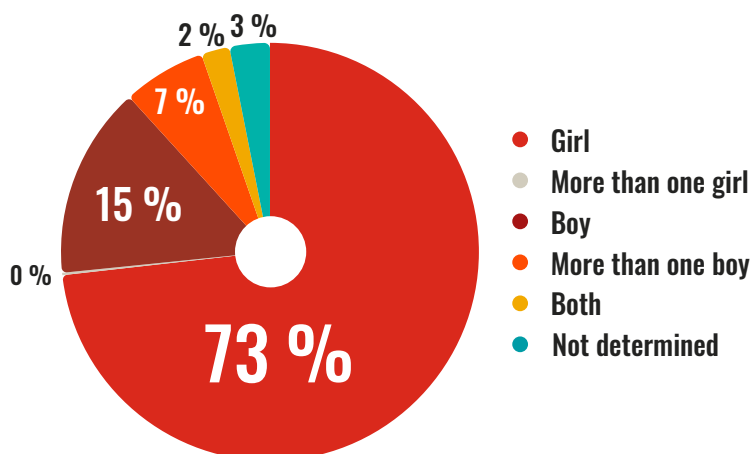


Image: Child sexual abuse material by sex in 2023.

More than half (52%) of the child sexual abuse material submitted to the Finnish Hotline in 2023 included penetration. In 21% of the material, the focus of the image or video was on the child's genital or anal area. Eleven per cent of the material involved sexual activity without an adult and nine per cent with an adult. Seven per cent contained sadism or other brutality, down from eight per cent in 2022.

Child sexual abuse according to the form of sexual abuse (N=549, n=541)

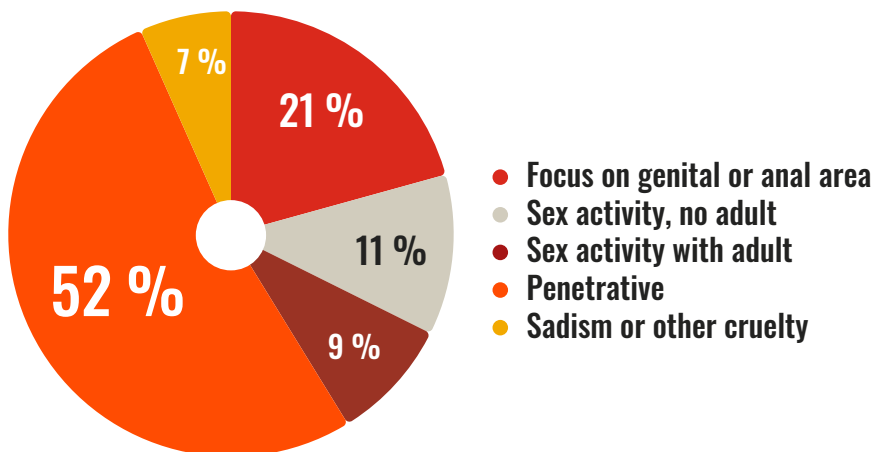


Image: Child sexual abuse material classified by form of sexual violence in 2023.

In addition to reports related to child sexual abuse material, reports about grooming, sexual harassment, sextortion, or possession or distribution of nude images, among others, are also received by the Finnish Hotline. Compared to the exceptional year 2022, the number of reports related to these themes has decreased, but compared to 2021, a more statistically standard year, the numbers have increased for some categories. For example, the number of reports related to the distribution of nude images has increased significantly since 2021. **The 2023 statistics also show a growing trend of sextortion, with no reports last year and only a few in previous years combined.**

SEXTORTION

Sextortion (a combination of sex and extortion) refers to blackmail with sexually explicit material previously taken and sent by a person. In 2023, Finnish Hotline received 16 reports of extortion using sexually explicit images, 14 of which involved a child. In the previous year, there were no such reports involving children.

The National Bureau of Investigation's CSE team has also noticed an increase in the phenomenon. In 2023, the number of extortion cases involving sexually explicit material in Finland will have more than doubled compared to the previous year, according to statistics compiled by the NBI.

INFORMATION ON THE PROACTIVE WORK DONE BY THE FINNISH HOTLINE IN 2023

In the summer of 2022, the Finnish Hotline started proactive work as part of the hotline work. In proactive or investigative work, the Finnish Hotline will further process the URLs received via the report form if it believes the link contains illegal material. Proactive work is done when there are no new reports in the Hotline.

For example, the links that are sent via the report form may open pages which contain hundreds of illegal images that are links to other similar sites. The hotline may continue to analyse the site until all material on or linked to the site has been passed on to the appropriate authorities, such as national law enforcement and hotlines in other countries. The aim is to advance the rapid removal of more material from the web.

In the first year, the Finnish Hotline proactively found 369 reports, or web addresses. **In 2023, the number of proactive reports was 13,185. One report means one web address (URL) or one illegal image.**

Proactive work contains mainly child sexual abuse material or material that sexualises a child, not other types of reports related to sexual violence against children. Of the 13 185 reports handled, child sexual abuse material accounted for 63% and material that sexualizes a child for 37%. Sometimes the material analysed also includes other illegal or grey area material. However, in 2023, the proportion of such material was so small that it appears as a zero percentage in the graph. This material has been, for example, AI-generated material.

Proactive reports (N= 13185)

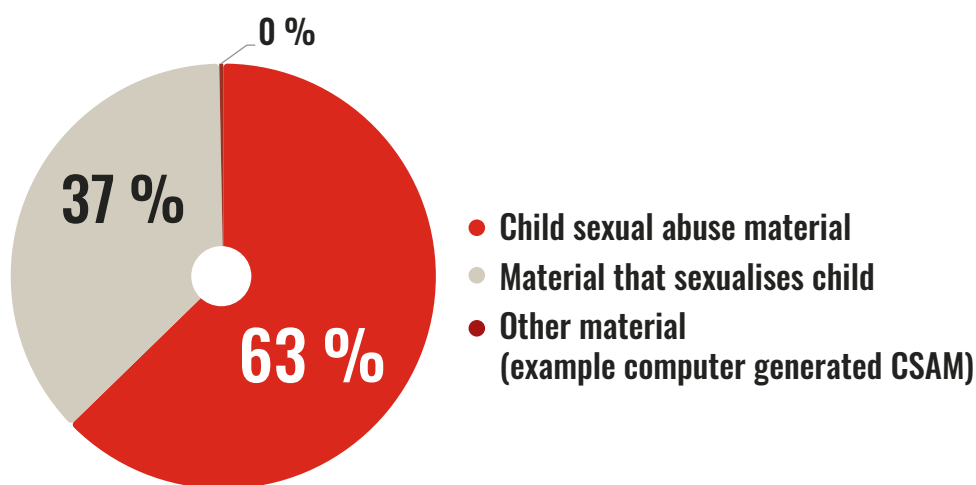


Image: The content of proactive work in 2023.

AI-GENERATED CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE MATERIAL

Generative AI (Gen AI) is one of the most advanced forms of AI today. AI usually refers to either a computer or a computer program (application) that is capable of using skills commonly associated with human intelligence, such as planning, creating, reasoning, and learning. Generative AI is taught by feeding it a large set of data, for example a large set of images of children. Parts of the images used to teach the model may also end up in new images created by the model. Thus, for example, a fictional image may contain the eyes or facial features of a real child.

The number of AI applications has grown exponentially over the past year. New models that AI uses to create new material are constantly emerging. These models can be used to produce a variety of illegal material; for example, AI can be used to produce new images of a known victim of sexual violence. This model is also used to create nude images of public figures. AI can be used to change the face in an image, either by attaching a person's face to another person's body or by creating the body entirely using AI. AI can be used to create material depicting sexual violence against children, using a variety of everyday images of children, such as holiday photos shared by parents on social media channels.

In the proactive work, in 61% of the reports processed the child was estimated to be 3–13 years old. 38% of the proactive work reports included sexual violence against children aged 14–17 and 1% included sexual violence against children aged 0–2.

Proactive reports by age (N=13185, n=13148)

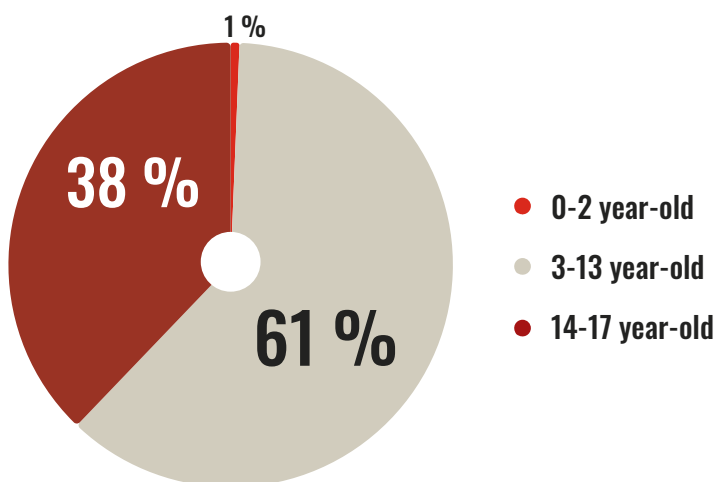


Image: Reports in proactive work by age group in 2023.

91% of proactive reports involved a girl and 4% involved a boy as the victim of sexual violence. More than one girl was the victim of sexual violence in 3% of proactive reports and more than one boy in 1% of proactive reports.

Also, in the case of proactive reports, “Not specified” means that the sex of the child could not be assessed, but the image or video clearly showed a child. Sex was not determined in one percent of proactive reports.

Proactive reports by gender (N= 13185, n=13177)

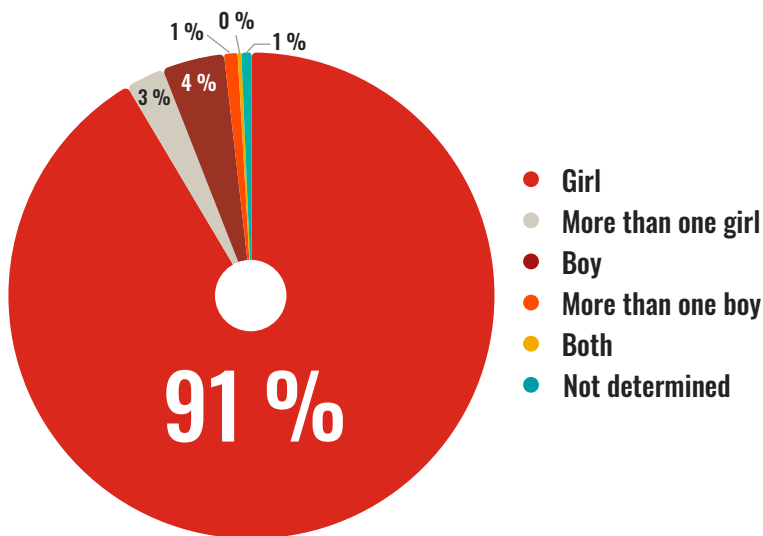


Image: Reports of proactive work by sex in 2023.

In 2023, 65% of the material in proactive work had focus on the child’s genital or anal area. Penetration was present in 16% and sexual activity with an adult in 3% of the material covered in the proactive work. 15% of the material contained sexual activity without an adult. One per cent of the material contained particularly brutal sexual violence against children, such as sadism.

Child sexual abuse material according to the form of sexual abuse in proactive work (N=13185, n=8256)

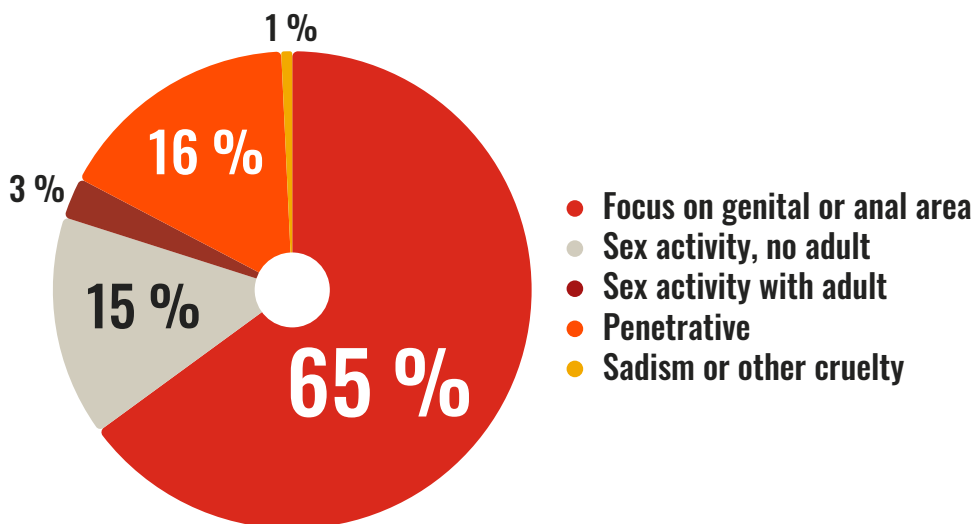


Image: Proactive work reports classified as illegal by form of sexual violence in 2023.

INCREASING KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING

The Finnish Hotline aims to prevent sexual violence against children by providing information and training for professionals working with children. Information is also produced and disseminated to children and young people, their guardians and other adults. Increasing knowledge and understanding of sexual violence will contribute to safer use of the internet and social media. It will also expedite intervention and raise awareness of children's rights.

In 2023 the Finnish Hotline

- Trained 622 professionals and future professionals
- Met 363 parents at three parents' evenings
- Released 28 TikTok videos
- Released a total of 96 different versions of six animated videos in four languages (Finnish, Swedish, English, Northern Sámi)
- Gave 9 interviews
- Organised the "Recognise and Protect" seminar, attended by around 803 professionals, authorities, and decision-makers

The Finnish Hotline was featured at *SuomiAreena* organised by the Salvation Army and broadcasted by MTV in the summer of 2023, when Tanja Simola, the Development Manager of the Finnish Hotline, participated in a discussion on grooming.

In the Save the Children Finland's episode of *Vain elämää* tv programme on Nelonen, the Finnish Hotline was also presented as part of Save the Children Finland's activities. The programme raised funds for the organisation's Christmas fundraising. Tanja Simola, and Aleksi Karjalainen from the National Bureau of Investigation's CSE team spoke about the themes of the Finnish Hotline. More than 412,000 Finns saw the episode.

In 2023, for example, the following were published.

- A revised self-care programme for sexual interest in children on the Mentalhub.fi website, for which the Finnish Hotline was responsible for the English implementation
- *Mu gorut mu ráját* ("My body, my boundaries") - a guide for young people in Northern Sámi
- Finnish translation of the COP Online safety activity book - Work with Sango guide
- How to discuss sexual abuse with a young person? Videos and instructions for a professional webpage in English and Finnish

With funding from the Ministry of Justice, the Finnish Hotline produced six animated videos to implement the programme to combat violence against women. The aim of the project was to raise awareness among young people aged 11–17 about sexual harassment and sexual violence online and on social media channels. **To ensure the visibility of the videos, a campaign was carried out during which the videos were shown to young people aged 13–17 on social media a total of 4 609 077 times.** The videos were shared on TikTok, YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook. Raising awareness helps young people protect themselves and their boundaries and encourages them to tell an adult about their experiences of violence. These videos were also used as a basis for the How to discuss sexual abuse with a young person? Videos and instructions for a professional webpage in Finnish and English. The pages provide a clear structure for viewing and discussing the animated videos. The questions on the page give young people more information and help them to reflect on issues related to the videos themselves.

FINNISH HOTLINE'S ANNUAL SEMINAR

Every year, the Finnish Hotline organises a seminar on sexual violence against children and its prevention. In 2023, the seminar was called Recognise and Protect – Perspectives to child sexual abuse through research and practice. The seminar was held in November in Helsinki in cooperation with the Regional State Administrative Agency for Southern Finland. The hybrid event could also be followed remotely. The seminar attracted a total of 803 professionals from different fields to listen to a diverse range of speakers. The seminar generated many contacts for new partnerships and the feedback was exclusively positive.

Expansion of TikTok activities

In 2023, the Finnish Hotline expanded its activity on TikTok, with the aim of increasing the flow of information directly to children and young people. Nearly 30 videos were published on the Finnish Hotline's account, covering topics such as sexual violence, The Finnish Hotline's activities, and video vlogs of employees' working weeks. During the year, the videos have attracted close to 40 000 views and the number of active followers on the account has steadily increased.

ADVOCACY WORK

The Finnish Hotline works in Finland and internationally to promote the right of children to be protected from sexual violence. In 2023, a particular effort was made to influence an EU regulation to prevent and combat child sexual abuse. For example, this was done through the ECLAG network. This advocacy work was carried out both independently and as part of various networks. ECLAG (European Child Sexual Abuse Legislation Advocacy Group) is a European consortium of children's rights organisations that aims to protect children from sexual violence through advocacy.

In 2023, the Finnish Hotline collaborated with Nordic hotlines not only on advocacy work, but also on research and tech-related opportunities. The Finnish Hotline is responsible for coordinating Nordic cooperation on advocacy. The Finnish Hotline was also heavily involved in the work of the international ECPAT organisation.

The Finnish Hotline Nettivihje participated in several networks and working groups in 2023. The Finnish Hotline represented Save the Children Finland in, among others, the NGO working group of the Committee for Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (NAPE JÄTY), in the Steering Group for the Non-Violent Childhoods Action Plan (Väkivallaton lapsuus), in The Finnish Civil Society Platform against Trafficking in human beings (IKV), in the Prevention Project SeriE of the Metropolitan area, in the national Seri network, and in the sexual rights network (Seksuaalioikeusverkosto). The UN Special Rapporteur on the right to education, **Farida Shaheed**, visited Finland in November and met with members of the sexual rights network, including Save the Children Finland and the Finnish Hotline.

” The Finnish Hotline does its work, because every child has the right to a non-violent childhood.

Paula Soini, advisor, Finnish Hotline

In cooperation with:



INHOPE

KANSALLINEN AUDIOVISUAALINEN INSTITUUTTI
NATIONELLA AUDIOVISUELLA INSTITUTET
NATIONAL AUDIOVISUAL INSTITUTE





Pelastakaa Lapset

Save the Children is the world's leading independent children's organization, creating both immediate and lasting changes in children's lives.

Together, we secure every child's right to life, protection, education, and participation in Finland and around the world.

Because children's future starts now.

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