



The social, policy and legislative considerations of AI-generated child sexual abuse material

An applied research project in partnership with the University of Queensland's Bachelor of Social Science Program and ICMEC Australia

Key findings

PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL RISKS

- Mental health impacts on child victims and reoccurring trauma from abuse content circulating online
- Social isolation due to stigmatization of the issue and employability issues

PUBLIC AWARENESS

- 41% of the survey respondents have not seen, read or heard about AI-generated child sexual abuse material (CSAM)
- 82% of the survey respondents were unfamiliar with relevant support services
- 36% of the survey respondents believed AI-generated CSAM is occurring often in Australia

NEED FOR CHANGES IN REGULATION

- 72% of survey respondents think AI-generated CSAM needs to be taken more seriously
- The anonymous nature of AI-generated CSAM leads to perpetrators feeling invisible to the law
- The ease of creation and access to AI-generated CSAM exposes children to this material, who may even use it or be subjected to it in school settings for bullying
- Law enforcement faces challenges in regulating the issue due to the vast scale of online abuse cases, lifelike AI complicating real victim identification, and ethical concerns regarding informing victims and families

SYSTEMIC GAPS

- Australian legislation needs to better account for AI-generated CSAM explicitly
- There is a need for Australia to align with emerging international legislation, such as the UK's Online Safety Act 2023

The key findings have combined insights from 128 online survey responses from the general public and 4 interviews with industry experts from NGOs and academia in Australia

Recommendations

Awareness efforts: Educational campaigns should be targeted towards specific populations such as teachers to avoid unnecessary alarmism amongst the general public.

Accountability: Tech companies must be held accountable to ensure safety through prioritising efforts such as "Safety-by-Design".

Legislative and regulatory reforms: Need for better-defined thresholds in the law to clarify what constitutes AI-generated CSAM and aligned reforms on national and international levels to prevent it from being produced in areas with lax regulation.

Improvements in reporting pathways and support services: The awareness, quality and accessibility of reporting pathways and support services regarding online abuse need to be improved.

Future research: More insights from parents and caregivers with children of various ages, who can share further insights regarding the firsthand risks of AI-generated CSAM on children and their families.

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