

Experts urge global action on child sex offenses

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The global nature of child sexual exploitation and abuse demands it be treated as an international public health emergency, a landmark report

suggests.

Research by the Childlight data institute—based at the University of Edinburgh—concludes that legislation and policies need updating in response to emerging technologies.

The pivotal role that technology has played—and continues to play—in facilitating the exploitation and [abuse](#) of children has to be acknowledged, the report states.

Technology is rapidly evolving and with it comes new ways to sexually offend against children, say the authors of [Searchlight 2023](#)—the institute's first annual flagship report.

More can be done by online content-sharing services to measure and report their efforts to tackle online exploitation and abuse, researchers say.

Extensive review

Childlight's review of the metrics reported by companies that provide online content-sharing services shows that the majority do not transparently report harms.

Of those that do, 19 company reports were analyzed, though these captured a range of metrics that makes it difficult to compare preventative and response efforts across services.

Childlight's Chief Executive Officer Paul Stanfield said, "The [research](#) in this report shows some alarming trends—perhaps most horrifying is just how young this abuse is occurring for many victims.

"Governments and technology providers simply aren't doing enough to

protect children who, in many instances, are too young to advocate for themselves, researchers say.

Global expertise

The Childlight report explores the nature of exploitation and abuse through nine new research studies authored by multi-disciplinary teams of experts in their fields from across the globe.

Childlight is a University of Edinburgh-based institute, founded by Human Dignity Foundation. It seeks to harness the power of data and achieve real impact for children and [young people](#) at risk of sexual exploitation and abuse.

Its [vision](#) is to establish a world-leading, independent data institute that gathers and visualizes the prevalence and nature of child [sexual exploitation](#) and abuse across the world in order to safeguard children.

More information: The reports are available online: childlight.org/searchlight-2023-dashboard

Provided by University of Edinburgh

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