




APRIL, 2020

**CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE MATERIAL IN INDIA**  
REPORT ON DEMAND FOR CHILD PORNOGRAPHY  
& PILOT DETERRENCE USING ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

INDIA CHILD PROTECTION FUND  
NEW DELHI, INDIA



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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CSAM: Child Sexual Abuse Material

ICPF: India Child Protection Fund

VPN: Virtual Private Network

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The India Child Protection Fund (ICPF) is a social impact fund, focused on solving the problem of child trafficking and child rape in India, Nepal and Bangladesh. It seeks to serve the child protection ecosystem, to end the impunity of child traffickers and child rapists, and create a culture of prevention for all children.

### Rationale

The news media and international organisations have reported the high rate of pornography consumption in India, and alluded to significant demand for child pornography. However, the lack of empirical data creates barriers to understanding the nature of the billion-dollar global industry. Further, the lack of technology-enabled innovation to crack down on this primarily digital crime keeps child protection bodies, both government and non-government, from solving the problem. Therefore, in October 2019 ICPF invested in a research study and pilot to understand the landscape of child sexual abuse material ('CSAM' or 'child pornography') in India, and to deter its demand. This study gains further relevance in current times, as organisations like [Europol](#), [the United Nations](#) and [ECPAT](#) report that COVID-19 lockdowns have led to an increase in the demand for CSAM and other forms of online child sexual abuse like grooming and sexual coercion.

### Key Findings

The 2019 research study focussed on the demand for CSAM on the public web. It revealed that:

- The demand for child pornography was an average of 5 million per month in 100 cities and only on the public web
- A vast majority of individuals were interested in generic CSAM content involving 'school girls sex', the demand for content with specific age groups, sexual actions and locations was growing as much as 200%
- The user base for CSAM content in India was more than 90% male
- The demand for CSAM was present across age groups. The demand was prevalent and active across the nation, with some cities showing increased trends.
- The demand for generic child pornography content on pornographic platforms like Pornhub was the highest in Bhubaneswar and Chennai
- The demand for specific content, where the person was interested in specific actions, age groups, locations etc. was the highest in Kolkata, Siliguri, Howrah, Chandigarh, Guwahati, Indore, Bhubaneswar and Chennai
- A large number of individuals were using virtual private networks (VPN) to circumvent the Government of India ban on CSAM content

- Individuals used a wide range of browsers including Google Chrome, UC Browser, Firefox and Internet Explorer

ICPF also conducted a 10-day pilot in 100 cities to deter the demand for child pornography using sophisticated tracking tools. This led to:

- A 7% drop in the demand for CSAM during the pilot period
- 76% individuals coming back to the public web for CSAM content after about 38 days

## **Recommendations**

Drawing from the finding of this research, ICPF submits its recommendations towards curbing demand of CSAM in India:

1. Creation of a CSAM Tracker through nationwide scale up of artificial intelligence tools deployed for this research
2. An aggressive online campaign through strong deterrence messaging on the public web
3. An ongoing government campaign to educate children and parents on identifying and reporting online child sexual abuse and child pornography
4. Creation of a CSAM Offenders Registry for individuals found to be consuming, distributing or selling CSAM
5. Appropriate orders for mandatory reporting and pulling down of CSAM content and individuals by ISPs and social media platforms
6. India to take the lead to establish a legally binding international convention for international cooperation to eliminate the creation, hosting and viewership of CSAM

## INTRODUCTION

The nationwide lockdown to contain the COVID-19 outbreak has exposed a dark underbelly of our society – millions of paedophiles, child rapists and child pornography addicts have increased their activities online, making the internet extremely unsafe for our children.

Data from Pornhub, the largest pornography website in the world, shows that traffic from India on its website has increased by 95% between 24<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> March 2020, as compared to their average traffic, pre-Coronavirus. This increase has been fuelled by Pornhub making its premium content free during the lockdown. A significant segment of this spike can be attributed to the demand for child pornography content. This is substantiated by online website monitoring data during the same time period, which shows that search for keywords like ‘child porn’, ‘sexy child’ and ‘teen sex videos’ has also jumped, and is projected to spike further in the coming weeks. This presents a chilling reality of the extreme threat faced by India’s children during this period of lockdown.

The increased demand for online CSAM makes children more vulnerable to online sexual predators. As children spend more time online during the lockdown, they are often unsupervised. International agencies like [Europol](#), [the United Nations](#) and [ECPAT](#) are reporting that paedophiles and child pornography addicts have increased activity to target children online to ‘groom’ them - befriending them on social media, building an emotional connection and luring them to perform sexual activities through photos and videos. They may also record and store this content to distribute it, and use it to extort the child to commit further abuse and exploitation.

A [recent report from the Childline India Helpline](#) also affirms this trend of increased vulnerability of children to sexual abuse during this period. The helpline received more than 92,000 SOS calls asking for protection from abuse and violence, 11 days into the national lockdown.

The [Rajya Sabha Adhoc Committee](#) on the issue, instituted by Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu, has made more than 40 recommendations to arrest this crime and end the impunity of perpetrators of online child sexual abuse. The report recommends amending the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act and the Information Technology Act, greater regulation of children online, government action to prevent the generation and dissemination CSAM, and making internet service providers and social media companies accountable for the safety of children on their platforms. The Ministry of Home Affairs has also established the National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal which allows reporting of CSAM to the relevant authorities.

As the government contemplates extending the national lockdown, this must not translate into an unchecked reign of online sexual predators. The sheer number of Indian men who actively engage in child sexual abuse online presents a deeply worrying reality of our nation. As a society we must not only demand immediate action to crack down on perpetrators, platforms and internet service providers; but also educate our children to protect themselves, and identify and report sexual abuse.

## KEY FINDINGS

### I. LANDSCAPE RESEARCH FINDINGS

ICPF and its technology partners tracked the demand for child pornography content in 100 cities, as a 30 day rolling average. This included demand registered across thousands of pornography websites and all public social media platforms. The research was designed to track demand in regional languages as well. The findings revealed:

1. **High monthly demand:** The demand for child pornography was an average of 5 million per month in 100 cities and only on the public web.
2. **Generic v/s specific demand:** Most individuals were interested in generic CSAM content such as 'school sex videos' and 'teen sex'. However the trend was explicitly moving towards demand for more specific content. This means the individuals wanted to view content around specific age groups, locations, formats and sexual actions.
3. **Demand for violent content:** Of the individuals who were interested in specific themes in CSAM, a significant number skewed towards violent content. While all child pornography is violent, 18% individuals exhibited explicit intent for videos where children were choking, bleeding, tortured, in pain or screaming. The demand for this kind of content grew as much as 200% during the project duration. This indicates that Indian men are not 'satisfied' with generic child pornography and demand violent and exploitative content.
4. **Geography of demand:** The demand was prevalent and active across the nation, with some cities showing increased trends:
  - i. The demand for generic child pornography content on pornographic platforms like Pornhub was the highest in Bhubaneswar and Chennai
  - ii. The demand for specific content, where the person was interested in specific actions, age groups and locations was the highest in Kolkata, Siliguri, Howrah, Chandigarh, Guwahati, Indore, Bhubaneswar and Chennai
  - iii. Individuals across the country were explicitly demanding child pornography content on various platforms, with the trends indicating high demand in the North in New Delhi, Ludhiana, Raipura, Lucknow, Chandigarh, Agra and Shimla; in Central India in Raipur, Ranchi, and Indore; in the West in

Mumbai, Thane, Pune and Ahmedabad; in the East in Imphal, Guwahati, Kolkata, Howrah and Shillong; in Southern India in Kochi, Bengaluru and Thiruvananthapuram

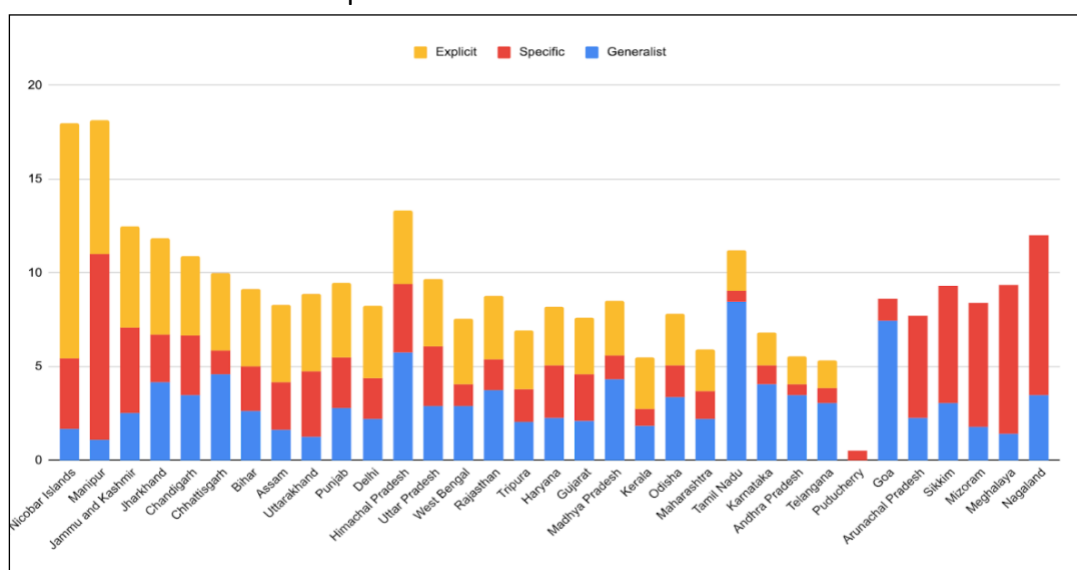


Figure 1: Explicit, specific and general demand by state

5. **Predominantly male users:** The user base for CSAM content in India was more than 90% male, 1% were women and the rest were undefined
6. **No age preference:** The demand for CSAM was not specific to a particular age group
7. **Visible supply in escort directories:** On the public web, the “visible supply” of CSAM is seen in simple escort directories and listings
8. **Use of VPN:** A large number of individuals were found to be concealing their location and criminal activity by using virtual private networks (VPNs) to circumvent government regulation and platform security. Users in the states of Puducherry, Goa, Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Nagaland were found to be circumventing their online activity through Andaman and Nicobar Islands
9. **Browsers used:** Individuals used a wide range of browsers including Google Chrome, UC Browser, Firefox and Internet Explorer

## II. DETERRENCE PILOT FINDINGS

ICPF deployed sophisticated artificial intelligence tools to track individuals who were exhibiting an explicit demand for child pornography on the internet. The campaign was implemented from the 3<sup>rd</sup> December to 14<sup>th</sup> December, 2019. Identified perpetrators were tracked and targeted across Google, Facebook and Instagram. They were sent targeted messages to induce fear and guilt, to make them realise that the



internet is not a safe space to indulge in the criminal activity of viewing child pornography.

### Reach

Of the total 1,428,531 sample, 54% individuals showed explicit intent to consume CSAM. Of these, 35% received targeted deterrence messaging across social media platforms, about 3.5 times each.

### Impact

ICPF validated the impact of its deterrence campaign through the reduction of engagement for child pornography on based on online website monitoring data\*. This allows for a historical comparison of online engagement, and the findings are publicly auditable by any third party.

Online website monitoring data revealed that **during the campaign**:

1. Demand for 'Teen Sex Video' dropped from the 90 mark to the 75 mark for the first time in four years (see Figure 3). Some residual effect is seen post-campaign.

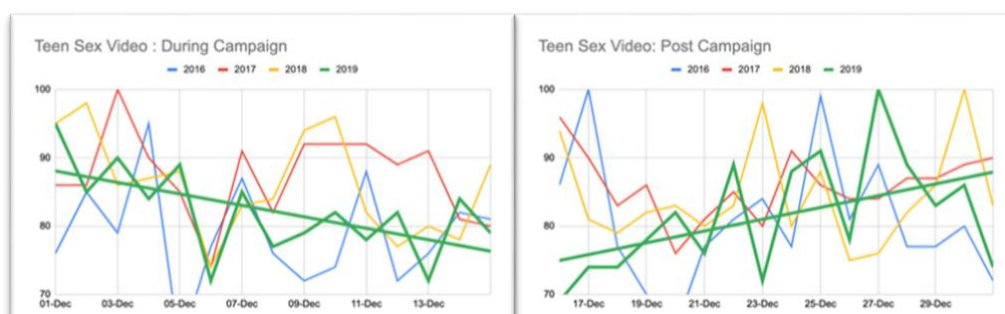


Figure 2: Drop in demand for 'Teen Sex Video' from 90 to 70

2. Demand for 'Child Porn' dropped from the 75 mark to around the 40 mark for the first time in four years (see Figure 4). Some residual effect is seen post-campaign.

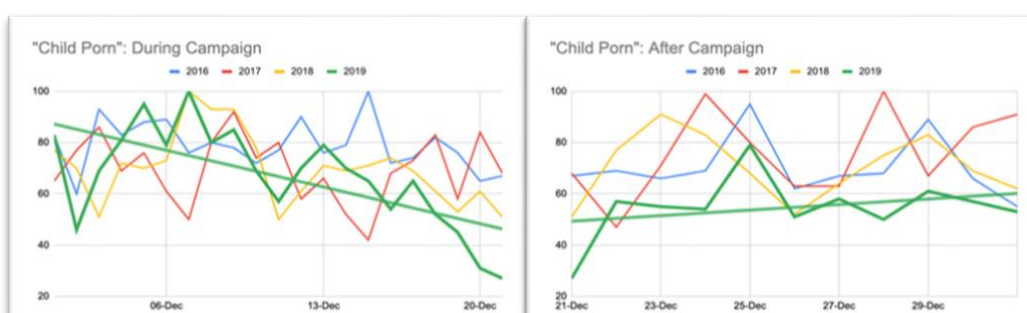


Figure 3: Drop in demand for 'Child Porn' from 75 to 40

\* 0-100 scale on Online website monitoring data: Numbers represent search interest relative to the highest point on the chart for the given region and time. A value of 100 is the peak popularity for the term. A value of 50 means that the term is half as popular. A score of 0 means there was not enough data for this term.

An analysis of trends **after the campaign** revealed that:

1. 7% reduction in demand could be attributed to the pilot
2. 76% people who returned to the public web and explicitly re-exhibited a demand for child pornography
3. On an average the impact of the campaign lasted for 38 days, individuals exhibiting recidivism after this period

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Drawing from the finding of this research and deterrence pilot, ICPF submits the following recommendations towards curbing demand of CSAM in India:

1. Creation of a CSAM Tracker through nationwide scale up of artificial intelligence tools deployed for this research. The CSAM Tracker will track the hosting, sharing viewership and download of CSAM and link it with existing cyber security systems of the Government of India
2. An aggressive online campaign through strong deterrence messaging on the public web, targeted at users who exhibit demand and intent to consume CSAM
3. An ongoing government campaign to educate children and parents on the relevance and modus operandi of online child sexual abusers, and on how to report the crime
4. CSAM Offenders Registry for individuals found to be viewing CSAM which will be made available to national and local ISPs. Individuals proven to be consuming, distributing or selling CSAM may be denied personal internet services for an appropriate amount of time
5. Appropriate orders for mandatory reporting and pulling down of CSAM content and individuals by ISPs and social media platforms. Failure to report or remove CSAM shall qualify for violation of terms for permission to provide networking services
6. India to take the lead to establish a legally binding international convention for international cooperation to eliminate the creation, hosting and viewership of CSAM

**REPORT CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE MATERIAL**

National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal: <https://cybercrime.gov.in/#>

OR

Call: 1800 102 7222

**CONTACT INDIA CHILD PROTECTION FUND**

Email: [contact@icpf.org.in](mailto:contact@icpf.org.in)

Phone: 011-49411111