

Self-Generated Indecent
Imagery Featuring Youth
Challenges & Opportunities - April 2021



Workshop Summary and Highlights

Executive Summary

On April 28 & 29, 2021, the **Tech Coalition** assembled a multi-stakeholder group of experts to begin a collective dialogue about the growing problem of “self-generated indecent imagery featuring youth” (“SGIIFY”). The workshop included some 50 participants from a cross-section of stakeholder groups from 12 countries, namely: representatives from victim/survivor advocacy (1), researchers (3), governments (2), NGOs and hotlines (15), law enforcement (5), and tech companies (21). Participants convened virtually to share knowledge and explore approaches, speaking candidly under Chatham House Rule, and we welcomed the frank and open discussion. This summary presents some, but not all, of the ideas and perspectives offered, and does not reflect the views of the **Tech Coalition** or any individual member or member company. This topic represents important, but nascent, work that remains in the “definitional” stage. Still, we summarize below some of the key discussion points, the suggested hopes and approaches that participants offered, and a few potential opportunities for taking this work forward.

Two Panels, One Story

Day One set the stage with two panels, the first describing the challenges experienced by hotlines, law enforcement, and victims/survivors and their advocates, and the second noting some of the policy, legal, and technological challenges confronting the tech industry. On Day Two, we formed two similarly comprised multi-stakeholder breakout groups, to brainstorm and explore ideas. The goal was to raise awareness of the issue and to better understand its many dimensions in order to identify potential areas of focus and collaboration.

Panel One offered a real-life example from a survivor of sexual abuse who told the story of how her abuser had groomed her online, deceiving her into providing self-generated indecent images well before any in-person abuse took place. The panel further discussed a desire for a mechanism that would allow users or advocacy groups to provide clearer and more consistent information on how to remove images quickly from individual platforms and services. Further, panelists shared their perception that when victims do report to technology companies, they often receive little or no follow-up indicating that action was taken or is underway.

Hotlines focused on the immediate need for image removal and victim support information. They caution that the variety of reasons and ways this material is produced and distributed means that it will take a variety of approaches to address it. Because hotlines help to identify and assemble “series” packages, one suggestion was for industry to add a “self-gen” tag if the company submitting a report to a hotline suspects that the image was self-generated. A barrier to efficient processing is that the criteria used to assess images may force SGIIFY to be deprioritized by law enforcement (potentially due to the apparent

age of the subject). One participant shared that, from NCMEC's database of identified children, 31% of cases are deemed online enticement with some element of coercion, while 17% are youth generated with no known coercion. Both sets of examples, however, would be considered SGII by visual look alone. In many cases, offenders may be observing or directing children who are livestreaming, and then saving and distributing screen-captures.

Law enforcement noted that it is forced to prioritize cases based on immediacy of harm as well as apparent actionability given limited resources. In SGIIFY cases, law enforcement typically focuses on active grooming that is likely to (or has recently resulted in) actual contact with children. Therefore, law enforcement supports approaches that increase the number of reports with sufficient evidence to allow them to immediately identify and act on imminent risk. While industry reports child sexual abuse material (CSAM) regardless of how it may have been generated, hotlines and law enforcement cannot always know the full context, which can impact the ability to assess imminent risk (such as when another person is coercing creation). As this type of context may not be readily apparent from the "four corners" of an image, the ability of industry to tag or annotate the image when such context is available may help that context to be known downstream by others in industry or authorities.

During Panel One's discussion, several questions and suggestions emerged, including:

- Terminology and definitions. Even referring to the material as "self-generated" implies agency and may inadvertently blame the young person for producing it. Can we come up with definitions and terminology that better represent the issue?
- Crimes surrounding SGIIFY. Was an offender involved in the creation of the image? Was the image distributed without consent?
- Awareness raising and education. Participants highlighted awareness-raising and education for the most vulnerable age groups (e.g., 11- to 13-year-old girls) in an effort to teach them how to react to potential instances of online enticement.

Panel Two continued the discussion, highlighting the challenges the technology industry faces in trying to address this problem. Industry can help by anticipating and designing for the developmental changes of young users (and including them in design and beta-testing). This can help identify ways to intervene as needed. It is also important to remember that different technologies present different challenges and opportunities. For instance, typical livestreaming platforms (i.e., gaming, etc.) rarely include actual child sexual abuse material; however, it is on such platforms that groomers may find potential victims, befriend them in chat, and move to other, more private platforms.

Industry struggles to understand what information should be reported, particularly when services and technologies vary. Moreover, once information is collected and

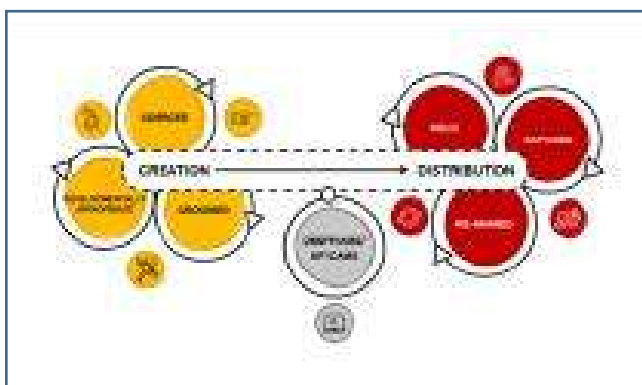
retained, it is important to have enough statutory retention time to allow hotlines to gather data and for law enforcement to make appropriate legal requests of companies. Further, the need for “armies” of trained, cared-for human moderators and reviewers is significant. This presents a challenge to all companies, but an even greater one to new and growing companies. One way to reduce the burden on moderation and review teams is to continually improve and advance technological solutions; however, current laws make retention and use of images to innovate and train new technology all but impossible. From the industry perspective, a reactive model focusing on finding images after they have been uploaded is inefficient and cannot be the only available option.

During Panel Two’s discussion, several questions and suggestions emerged, including:

- Join forces. If industry is simultaneously working to solve the separate problem of adult non consensual intimate imagery, is there a way to leverage that work and existing resources?
- Use platforms for good. On the prevention side, can we create and leverage compelling awareness-raising and educational campaigns to teach youth to recognize and avoid grooming, as well as the risks and harm from distribution?
- Increase communication. Are there opportunities to better share hash information, such as quality or verification of hashes?
- Solve related problems. What can tech do to improve age verification?

Our Turn: Coming Together in Search of a “Solution”

We opened the breakout sessions by proposing two visuals to spark discussion. One sought to characterize the issue and the other looked at roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders and available mechanisms for mitigation.



In addition to the four remediation focus areas identified in the second graphic, participants suggested adding a formal role for victims/survivors. On the focus areas, one group suggested combining prevention with education and perhaps distinguishing reporting from removal (i.e., take downs). Some participants challenged industry to take on a bigger role in prevention/education and reporting, while encouraging governments to set clearer, brighter lines. Some participants would have preferred to see the graphic suggest more collaboration, noting that the matrixed visual amplified siloed roles. We received valuable feedback on the graphics and are revisiting them in preparation for the **Tech Coalition's** Multi-Stakeholder Forum (MSF) in June. One group further discussed whether the label proposed for this content was right. "Self-generated indecent imagery featuring youth" implies agency, and perhaps even moral judgement, and may fail to fully capture the crimes of coercion and grooming. This point was also noted and will be revisited during the workshop portion of the MSF.

Suggested Approaches

Both groups discussed the prioritization of education. The starting point for good education is research. We need to know more about what we don't know. We need to understand why some children create and share images and some do not; why some children pass along images and some do not; what makes grooming effective and how to combat it; how stigma affects young people; and how to talk about what is "normal." Children and families need to be the starting point. Many industry partners are doing incredible research and we can amplify and better expose that work. Education can help grow a "culture of reporting."

Participants from all stakeholder groups were eager to hear more from survivors and how their experiences can help shape policies and tools. To reduce the emotional burden, it may be helpful to take a page from how human trafficking work has evolved to be more victim-informed or victim-centric, including through the use of survivor surveys or advisory councils.

Potential legislative approaches could include increased efforts to ensure minors that report the unauthorized distribution of images are not liable for the production of the image. Other efforts could include legislation (e.g., amendments to privacy laws) to make it possible for companies to coordinate and share information to better facilitate the removal of images.

Both groups noted that reporting refers to a mechanism for a child or their advocate to report to a platform that their image is available on that platform (i.e., posted, shared, etc.) without their consent. Attendees suggested a mechanism for advocacy groups to file a "trusted" report and a standard industry interface, including educational messaging for victims of non-consensual distribution.

Thank you

This summary isn't a "final report"; it's a starting point for further conversation. The **Tech Coalition** thanks our participants for their deep engagement over two very energetic days of information-sharing. We had hoped to start a conversation and you came with passion and a willingness to dive in and collaborate. This summary is subject to interpretation and human error - please notify us if you think we got something wrong. We also remind you that this workshop was conducted under Chatham House Rule and if you talk to others about what we discussed, please do so without any attribution.

Please don't forget to join us for the **Multi-Stakeholder Forum on 15 & 16 of June** (you should already have received a Save the Date)—we hope to see you there!