

## What is child sexual abuse?



Child sexual abuse is any sexual act inflicted on a child by any adult for the purpose of sexual gratification of the adult. It may include [contact](#), such as forced sex (rape) or sexual touching and non-contact acts, such as being shown pornography or being watched sexually. There is increasing evidence that young people also engage in sexually abusive and/or harmful sexual behaviour towards other children and young people. This is an area of critical research being undertaken nationally and internationally. All child sexual abuse is a crime.

### What is online child sexual abuse?

Also referred to as [technology-facilitated child sexual exploitation](#), online child sexual abuse includes “the use of technology or the internet to facilitate the sexual abuse of a child, including the production and sharing of child sexual abuse material online.”

### What is grooming?

*Grooming* means all the ways that a person who intends to sexually abuse a child or young person will gain access to them, create the conditions for the abuse to happen, and ensure they don't get caught. People who target children and young people to sexually abuse them will usually find ways to:

- spend time alone with the child or young person
- create a special relationship with the child or their caregivers, and
- isolate the child from the adults in their lives who would usually protect them.

Grooming tactics can isolate children from help and make them feel responsible for the sexual abuse. While the majority of adults inflicting child sexual abuse are [usually known to the child and male](#), a smaller proportion of perpetrators of child sexual abuse are women. Grooming tactics can involve manipulating caregivers and parents, controlling the child through threats, and gradual exposure to increasingly inappropriate and abusive behaviour. They can also include minimising the behaviour, bribing, complimenting, or rewarding the child or young person to build a special relationship with them. These acts of ‘grooming’ or ‘recruiting’ children and young people can look different in different places and communities. In many Australian states and territories, grooming is a criminal offence.

### Who is child sexual abuse perpetrated against?

All children and young people can be the target of child sexual abuse. Child sexual abuse occurs across the entire child and young person age range and different ethnicities, races, socio-economic status, genders and geographical locations.

In Australia, the most recent data tells us that: more than one in three girls, and almost one in five boys have experienced child sexual abuse. That is 28.5% of the population.

Participants in the [Australian Child Maltreatment Study](#) reported child sexual abuse occurring multiple times. Almost four in five of those who participated in the study and identified as having been sexually abused, reported being sexually abused more than once, with 11% of those reporting that they had been abused more than 50 times.



### Where to get support for reporting and responding to child sexual abuse?

Child sexual abuse is a serious crime and should be reported to agencies responsible for investigating and prosecuting criminal activity and ensuring the safety of children who experience it. These include police in every state and territory, the [Australian Centre to Counter Child Exploitation](#) for online child sexual abuse and [statutory child protection agencies](#) in each state and territory.

Support is also available from:



13 11 14



13 92 76



1800 737 732



1300 657 380



1800 551 800

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