What are We Learning about Online Child Sexual Abuse Material and the Predatory Marketplace?

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ILLINOIS
CFRC | Children & Family Research Center 1
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

CROSS ASSOCIATES
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AUGUSTA ASSOCIATES LLC
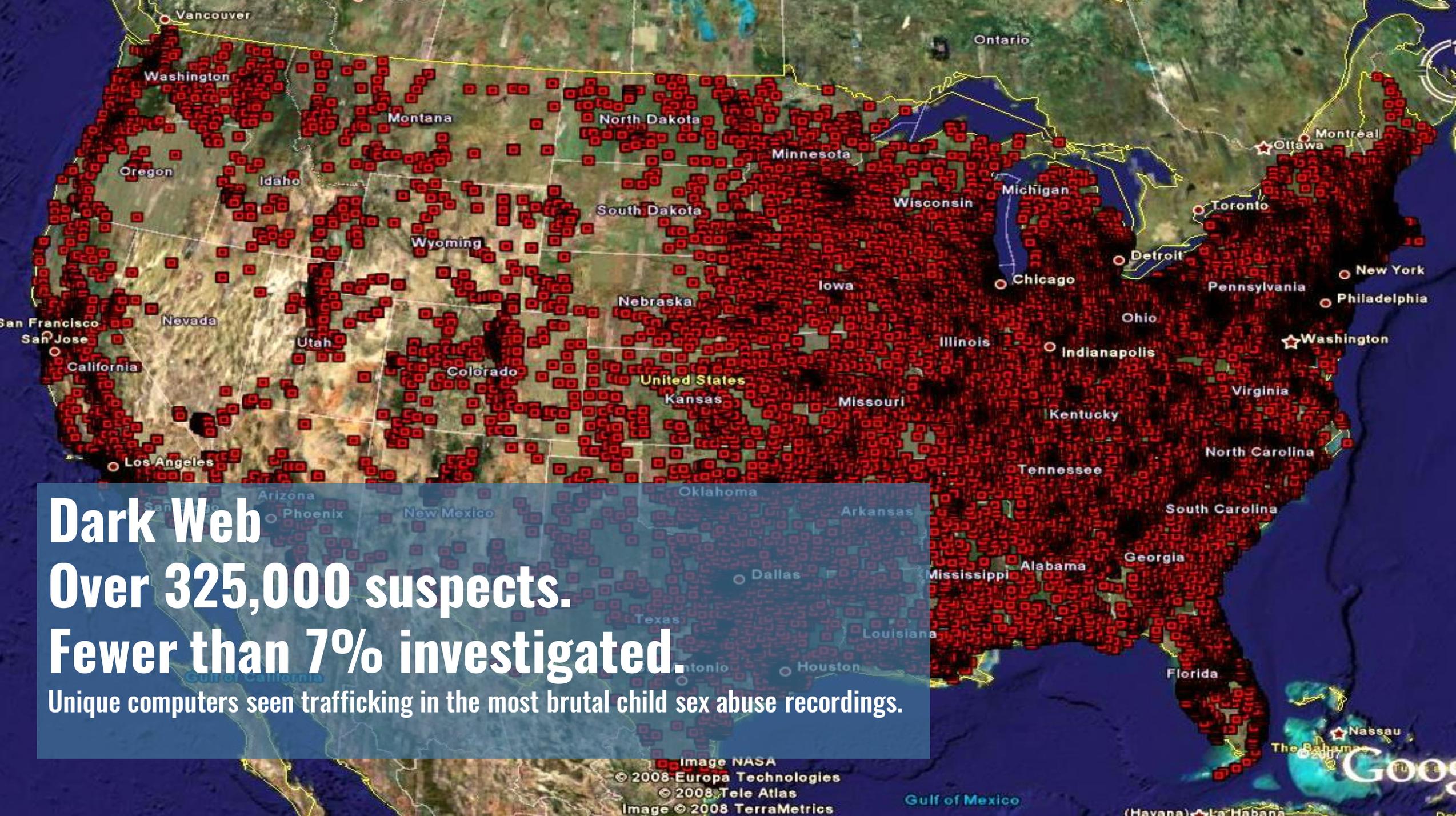GREAT CAUSES. GREAT RESULTS 4

CHiLD RESCUE COALITION

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RAINN 3

Glen Pounder is now the Youth Protection Executive of the Boy Scouts of America and Daphne Pellegrino is a student in the School of Social Work at New York University

29,309,106
Reports of apparent child sexual abuse material
(CSAM) reported to NCMEC Cyber-Tipline.

Dark Web
Over 325,000 suspects.
Fewer than 7% investigated.
Unique computers seen trafficking in the most brutal child sex abuse recordings.

In 2022, 30% of new child sexual abuse images seen on the dark web originated in Latin America.

"You often see posted by peds themselves that Mexico is the Number 1 country for CEM production." Task Force Officer/Australia

"In Ghana, the motivation to sell indecent images for money was perceived as overwhelming for many poor children in both the city and rural school. The selling of images for money to 'white foreign men' and to local men was described as commonplace…"

Partnership in the Current Research

- RAINN (Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network)
  - ➢ Won grant from Oak Foundation
  - ➢ With Augusta Associates, using results to support advocacy

- Child Rescue Coalition
  - ➢ Tracks millions of online CSAM users across the world
  - ➢ Downloaded a random sample of 3000 filenames of online CSAM files

- Cross Associates Research and Evaluation Services, LLC
  - ➢ Developed coding method and coded the 3000 filename
  - ➢ Analyzed data and developing research products

  Partners collaborate on framing research questions, and interpreting and communicating results

Research Questions

What can filenames tell us about the sexual and physical abuse depicted in CSAM?

What is the role of incest in this marketplace?

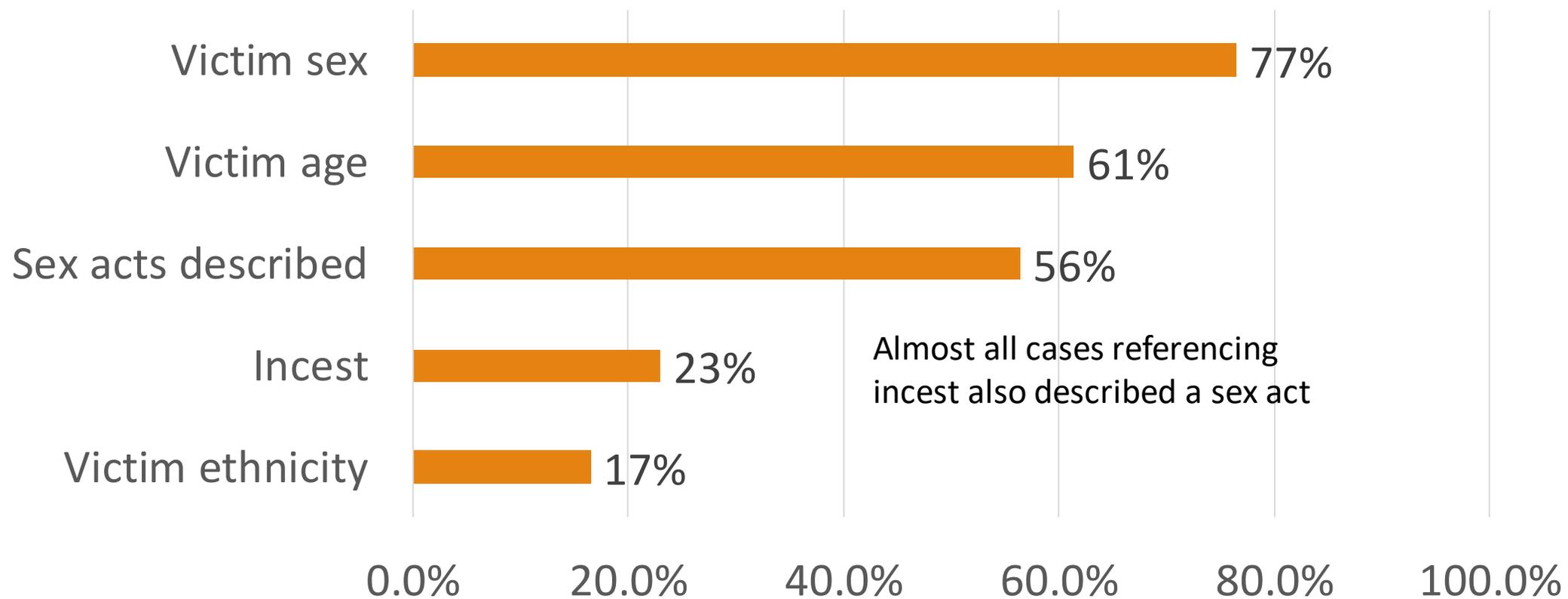How are race and ethnicity used to market CSAM?

Methods

Full study database: Random selection of 3000 filenames flagged by the Child Rescue Coalition.
- United States downloads only
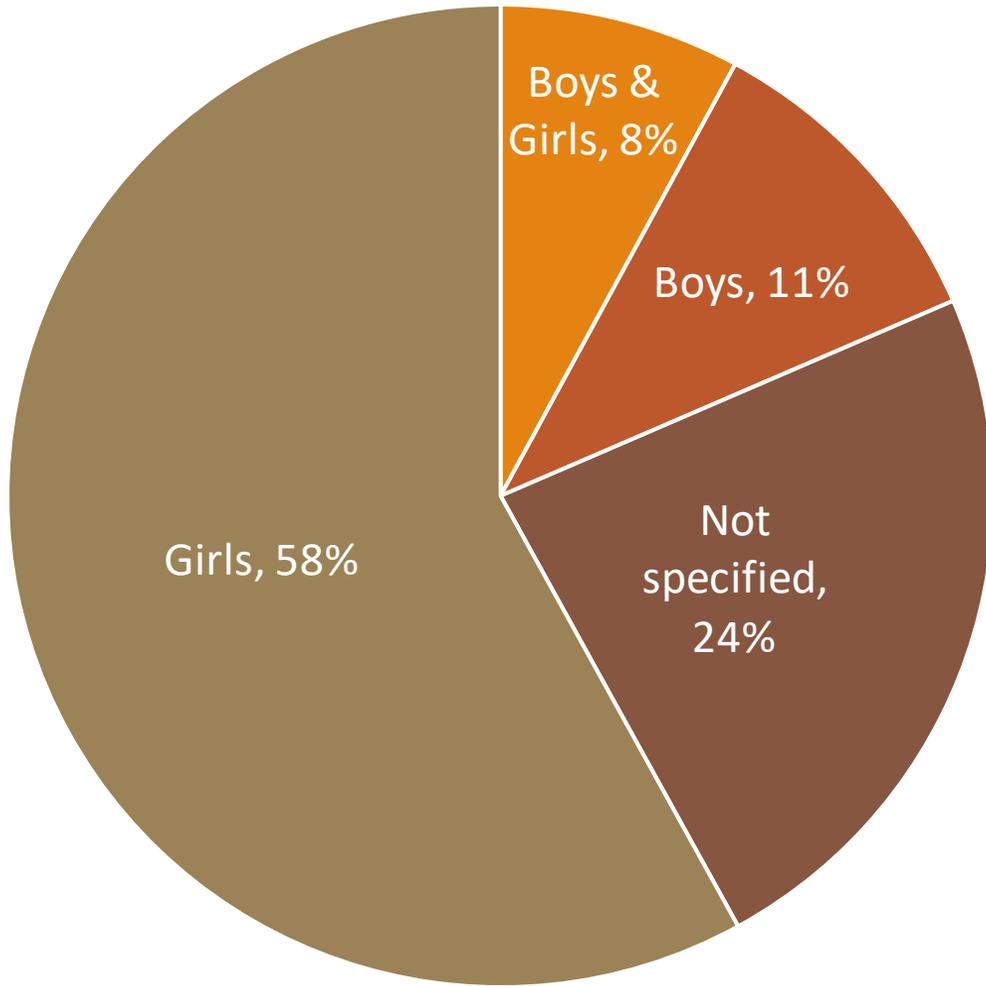- July 2021 to December 2021

2980 filenames analyzed through:
- Keyword search
- Content analysis
- Expert input

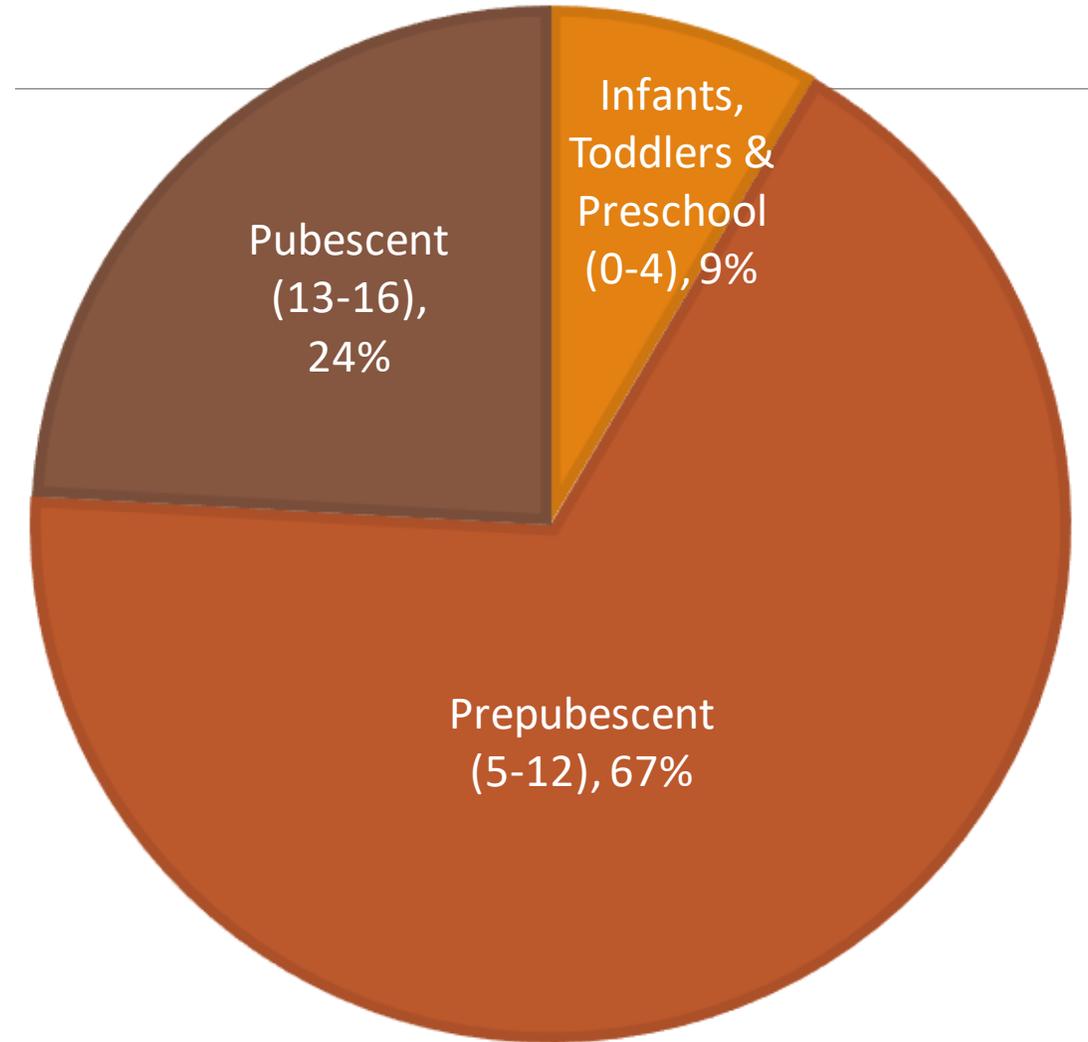Frequency of 5 key descriptors found in filenames (n=2980)

Descriptor	Percentage
Victim sex	77%
Victim age	61%
Sex acts described	56%
Incest	23%
Victim ethnicity	17%

Almost all cases referencing incest also described a sex act

VICTIM SEX IN 77% (N=2279) OF FILENAMES

Boys & Girls, 8%

Boys, 11%

Girls, 58%

Not specified, 24%

VICTIM AGES IN 61% (N=1829) OF FILENAMES

Infants, Toddlers & Preschool (0-4), 9%

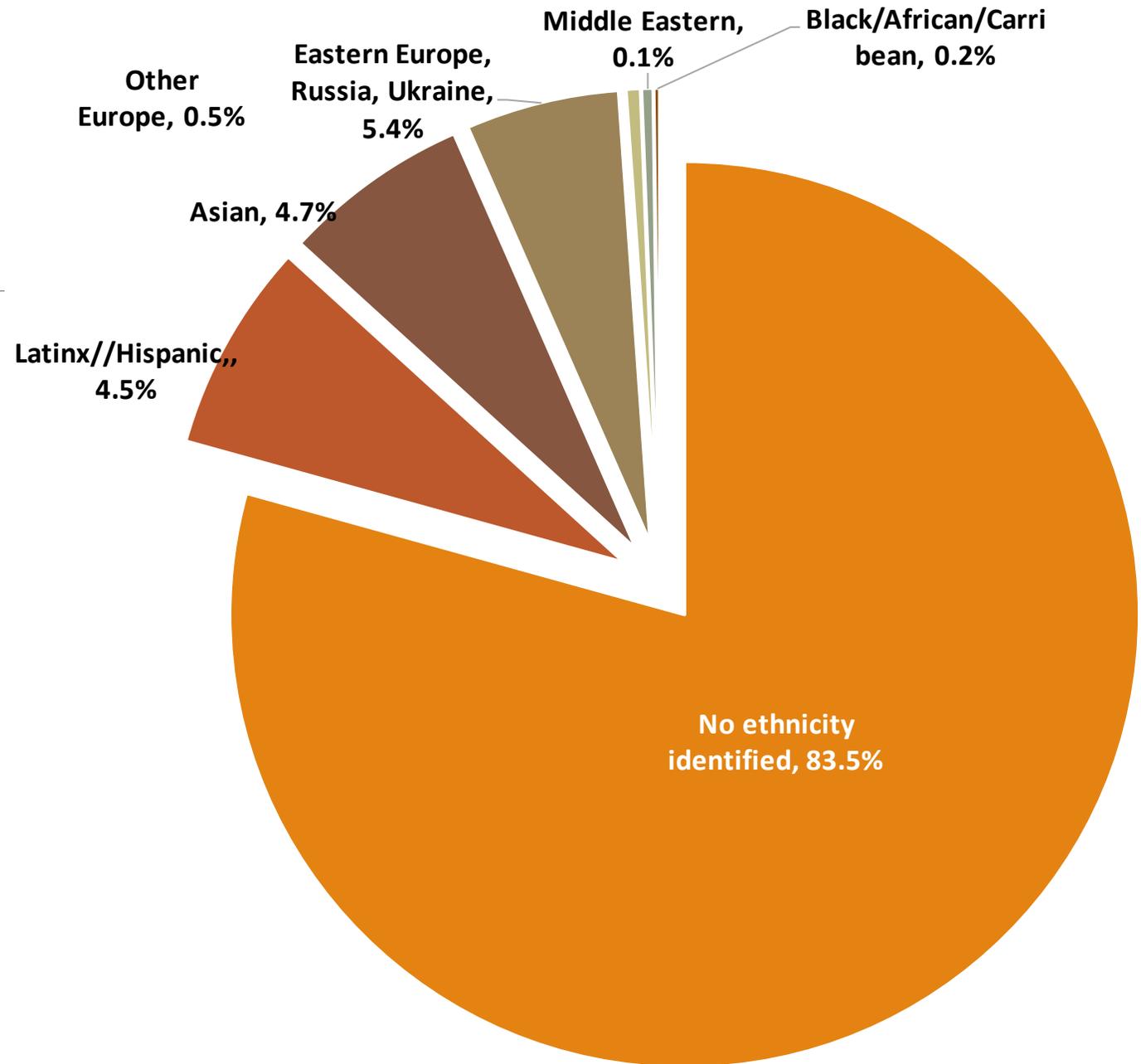Pubescent (13-16), 24%

Prepubescent (5-12), 67%

Ethnicity and language in filenames (n=2980)

Victim ethnicity identified in 17% of filenames

People of Color referred to in approximately 10% of files.; racist language used in some cases.

94% of filenames were in English; 3% in Spanish; *3%* mix of Portuguese, Dutch, German, French

Other Europe, 0.5%

Eastern Europe, Russia, Ukraine, 5.4%

Middle Eastern, 0.1%

Black/African/Carribean, 0.2%

Asian, 4.7%

Latinx//Hispanic,, 4.5%
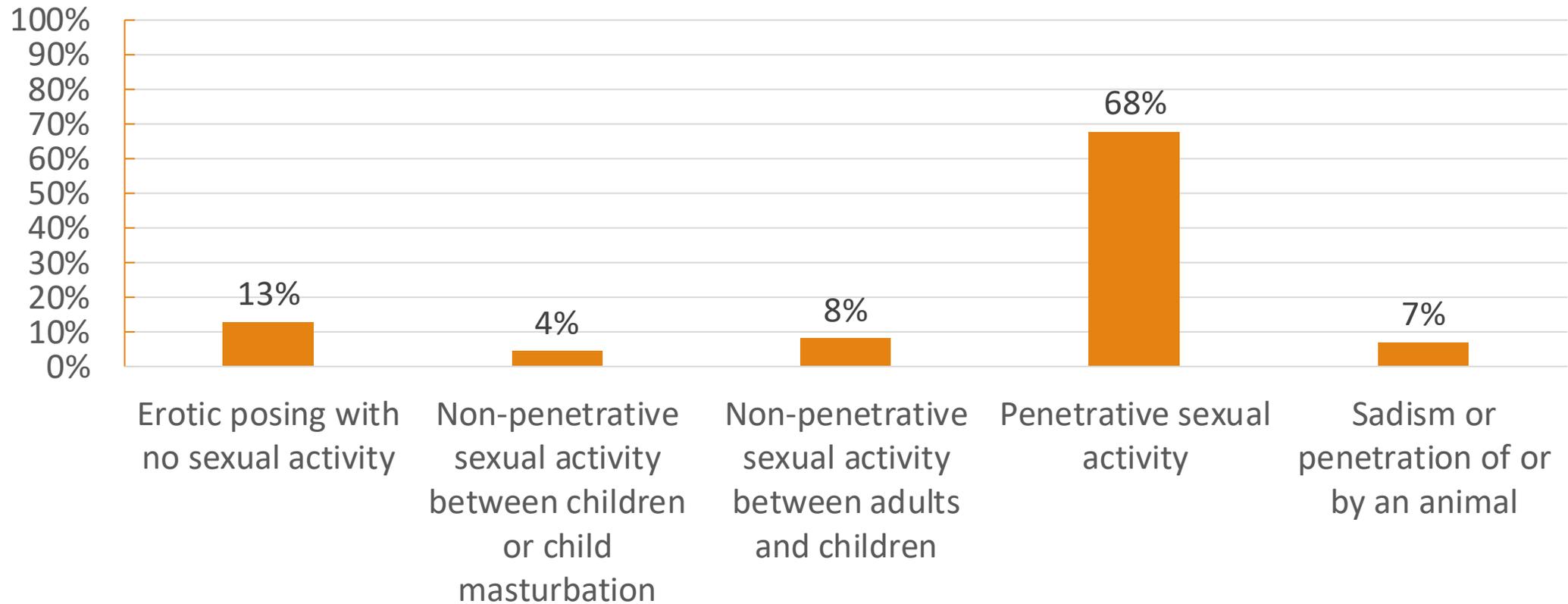
No ethnicity identified, 83.5%

Assessing Severity of Abuse in Filenames

There are several tools that assess child sexual abuse severity but most require seeing the victim or providing sexual assault forensic exams.
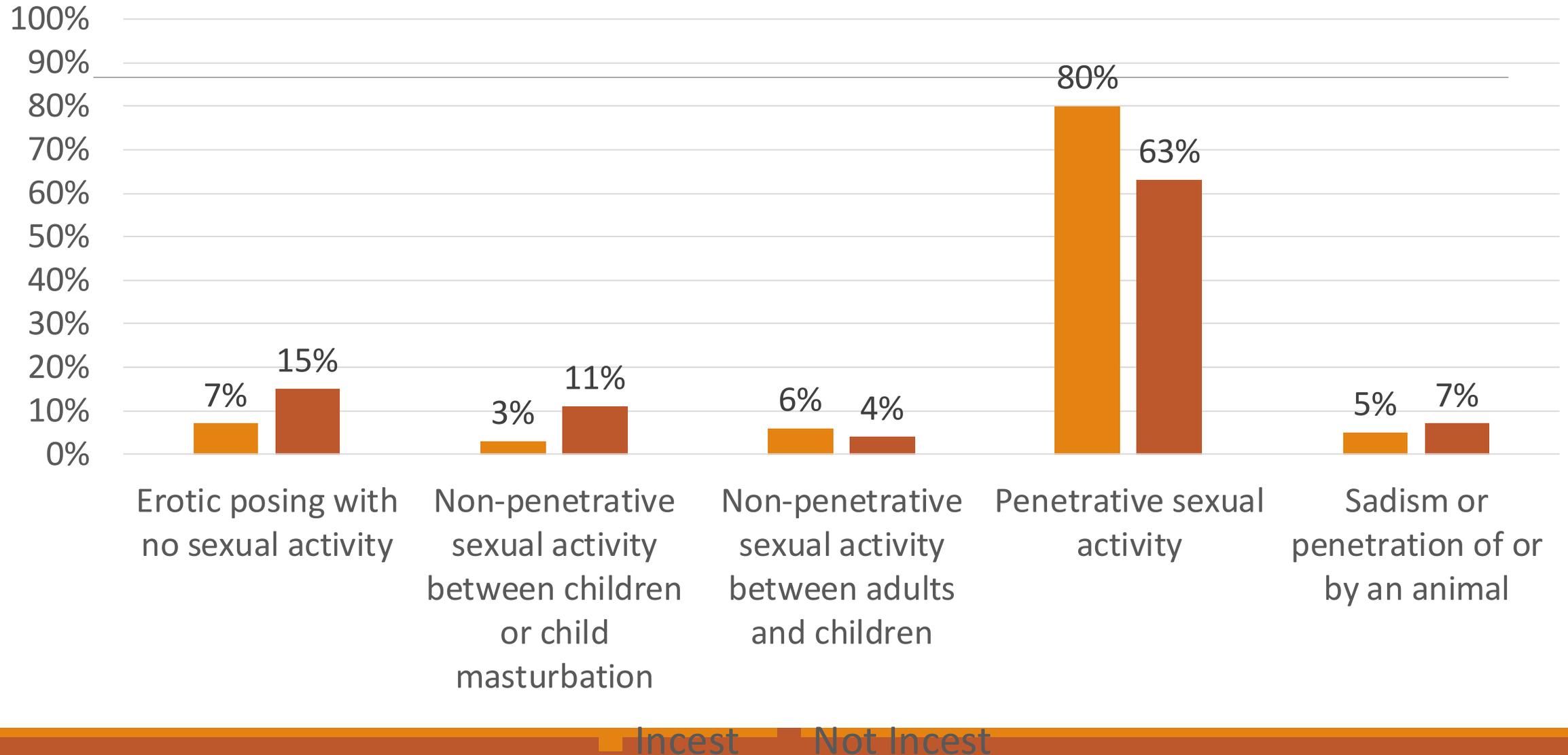
The Sentencing Advisory Panel (SAP) in the U.K. developed a 5-point scale for sentencing offenders. We find it to be a useful for classifying CSAM filenames.

      1 -- Images depicting erotic posing with no sexual activity

      2 – Sexual activity b/w children or solo masturbation by a child

      3 -- Nonpenetrative sexual activity b/w adults and children

      4 -- Penetrative sexual activity involving a child or children or both children and adults

      5 -- Sadism or penetration of or by an animal

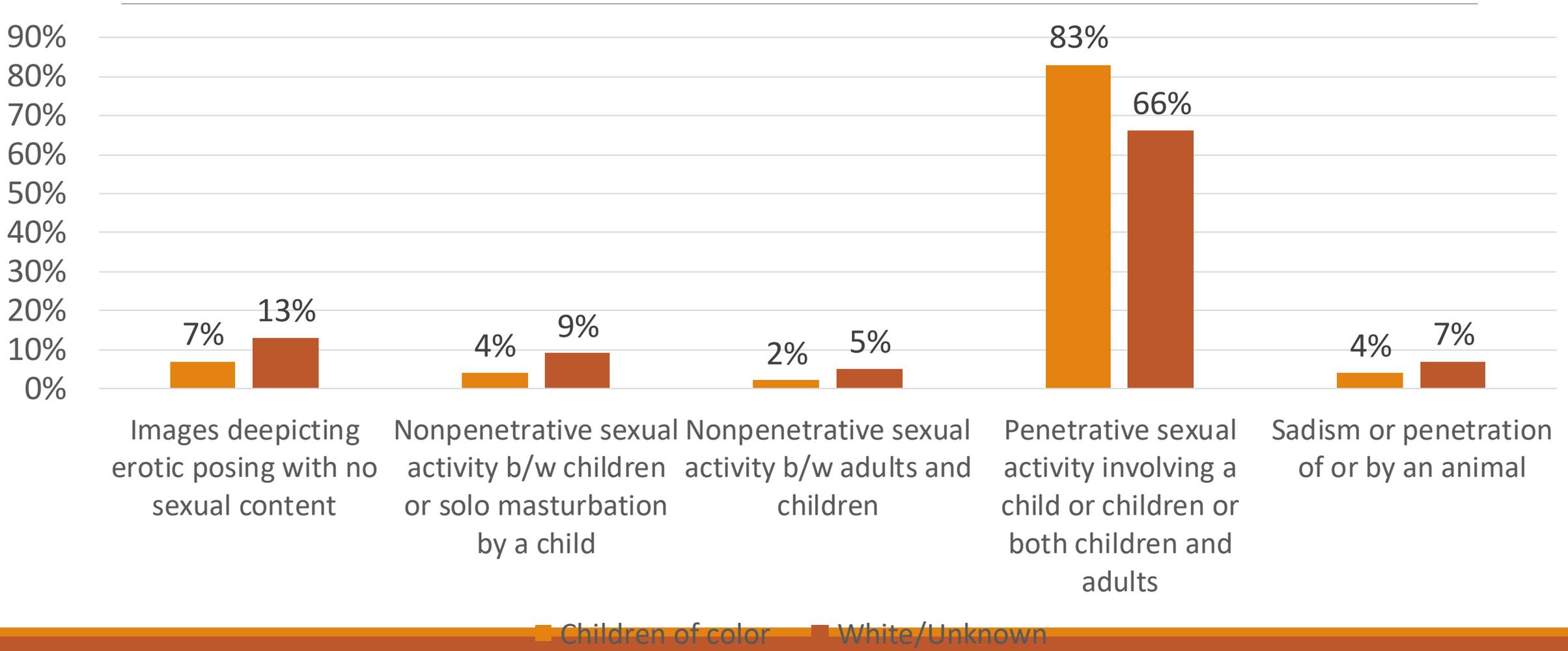# Most sexual abuse described in filenames involved penetration and some involved sadism (n=1680)

Filenames referencing incest were more likely to feature penetration

Filenames referencing children of color (Asian, Latina, African/Black) were more likely to feature penetration

Children of color were 26.5x more likely to be described as prostitutes.

	Children of color	White/Unknown
Images deepicting erotic posing with no sexual content	7%	13%
Nonpenetrative sexual activity b/w children or solo masturbation by a child	4%	9%
Nonpenetrative sexual activity b/w adults and children	2%	5%
Penetrative sexual activity involving a child or children or both children and adults	83%	66%
Sadism or penetration of or by an animal	4%	7%

Implications

- Incest is a major theme in CSAM filenames

- Consumers of online incest CSAM may be more likely to perpetrate contact incest

- Investigating suspects' use of online CSAM needs to be a standard component of both law enforcement and CPS investigation of child sexual abuse

- Online CSAM is a racial and economic justice issue

- International monitoring and coordination is needed to combat CSAM

Criminal Response: Project Safe Childhood Act

Reauthorizes and updates Project Safe Childhood program established under Adam Walsh Act in 2006

Project Safe Childhood fights online child sexual exploitation through intergovernmental partnerships

➢ Coordinates child sexual exploitation investigations and prosecutions across federal, state, and local law enforcement

➢ Provides training to law enforcement on best practices

➢ Supports public education programs

Tech Accountability: EARN IT Act

- **Remove immunity** for social media and technology companies that knowingly facilitate or profit from the distribution of CSAM on their platforms.

- Require electronic service providers to **preserve the contents of reported CSAM for one year** to facilitate law enforcement investigations.

- Exclusively target the **prevention and removal of sexually abusive images and videos of children** on online platforms.

- **Update federal statutes to use the term CSAM** instead of child pornography.

Survivors' support

Nearly 40 survivors traveled to Capitol Hill for Congressional Day of Action on May 10 to advocate for Project Safe Childhood Act, EARN IT, etc.

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