



Image-based Sexual Abuse: The Facts

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What is Image-based Sexual Abuse (IBSA)?

Image-based sexual abuse (IBSA) is a broad term that includes a wide range of harmful experiences involving the weaponization of sexually explicit or sexualized images/videos. According to the National Center on Sexual Exploitation, IBSA is defined as “the creation, theft, extortion, threatened or actual distribution, or any use of sexualized or sexually explicit materials without the meaningful consent of the person depicted.”[1] IBSA exists on a continuum and captures a variety of digital harms. For example, IBSA can consist of not only images sent out as a punishment for women exiting intimate relationships, but also the nonconsensual taking of pictures in public and private places, sexualized photoshopping, “sextortion” (e.g., coercing people into creating and sharing private sexual images), recording sexual assaults and distributing them online, and sharing images “for a joke” or for no particular reason at all.[2]

Have you Heard?

- IBSA, widely referred to as “revenge porn” affects millions of people around the world and causes much harm.[2]
- Sexting—the creating, sending, receiving, or forwarding of sexually suggestive/explicit materials—can also be a form of IBSA.[1]
- IBSA is committed mainly by men against women and it often co-occurs with offline forms of male-to-female abuse like rape and stalking.[2]
- In the United States, 48 states, Washington D.C. and two territories have laws prohibiting the distribution or production of nonconsensually recorded/shared sexually explicit materials. However, there is no U.S. federal law regarding IBSA.[1]

What are the Consequences?

Despite the creation of new legislation aimed at curbing IBSA, the criminal legal system’s response thus far has been largely inadequate.[2] In fact, a recent study found that 73% of victims of IBSA didn’t turn to anyone for help when they discovered that sexual images of themselves had been shared without their consent. Additionally, survivors of IBSA have spoken out about their trauma, damage to their well-being, and the difficulty of getting such images removed from the Internet.[1]

How to Support Survivors of IBSA?

Although the general public largely disapproves of IBSA and supports its criminalization, they also tend to attribute blame to survivors due to a limited understanding of IBSA.[3] Therefore, in order to better support survivors, it is necessary to:

- Increase public education and awareness to help debunk myths related to IBSA
- Recognize the diversity of victim-survivor experiences and the intersection of IBSA with other forms of sexual and gender-based violence
- Implement additional means of control and prevention to reduce IBSA

Resources

Texas

- **Cyber Civil Rights Initiative (CCRI) Crisis Helpline -- 844-878-2274**

National

- **National Center on Sexual Exploitation (NCSE) -- <https://endsexualexploitation.org/issues/image-based-sexual-abuse/>**
- **Cyber Civil Rights Initiative (CCRI) -- <https://cybercivilrights.org/>**
- **Stop Non-Consensual Intimate Image Abuse -- <https://stopncii.org/>**

References

- [1]National Center on Sexual Exploitation. (2023) <https://endsexualexploitation.org/issues/image-based-sexual-abuse/>
- [2]DeKeseredy, W. S. (2021). Image-based sexual abuse: Social and legal implications. *Current Addiction Reports*, 8, 330-335.
- [3]Call, C. (2021). Perceptions of Image-Based Sexual Abuse Among the American Public. *Criminology, Crim. Just. L & Soc’y*, 22, 30.

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Resources

- Texas Abuse Hotline (suspicions of abuse, neglect, and exploitation of children, adults with disabilities, or people 65 +) <https://www.txabusehotline.org/Login/>
800-252-5400
- Texas Council on Family Violence <https://tcfv.org/survivor-resources/>
- Texas Association Against Sexual Assault <https://taasa.org/get-help/>
- National Domestic Violence Hotline 800-799-7233
- National Sexual Assault Hotline 800-656-4673
- National Human Trafficking Hotline 888-373-7888
- Aging and Disability Resource Center 855-937-2372
- Victim Connect Resource Center 855-484-2846
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 988