Sexual exploitation of children and youth over the internet: a rapid review of the scientific literature

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Authors' conclusions
The problem of online sexual exploitation has emerged as a new field of inquiry on how the Internet influences the lives of children and youth. Research in this area is in the early stages. At the present time, the evidence from the studies included in this rapid review shows that up to one in five youth have been approached for sexual solicitation purposes over the Internet; Similar results were found for unwanted sexual material over the Internet, with up to one third of youth reporting that they saw sexual material online that they did not want to see. Only a small proportion of youth describes these experiences as stressful or reports them to their parents or law enforcement agencies. Research has mainly focused on identifying the characteristics of online activities that children and youth engage in, and the frequency of and risk factors related to sexual solicitation and unwanted exposure to sexual material over the Internet. Expanded research is necessary in order to develop appropriate strategies for the assessment and prevention of online sexual exploitation. Evaluation of treatment approaches in relation to their efficacy, effectiveness, and safety is also necessary. Government agencies and the new technology industries should be aware of the existence of this problem, should have a proper knowledge of its characteristics and consequences, and should understand the policy and practice challenges to which they give rise.

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