

PERMESSONEGATO

STATE OF REVENGE - NOVEMBER 2021

The use of Telegram for Non-Consensual Dissemination of
Intimate Images within the Italian perimeter

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PERMESSO NEGATO

PercessoNegato APS, is a non-profit advocacy organization born in November 2019 and is one of the main affiliation at European level - with almost **4.000 reports of victims managed** - providing technological and legal support to the victims of Non-Consensual Pornography, online violence and hate attacks.

With a multidisciplinary team made of Technology, CyberSecurity, Legal experts and Criminologists, PercessoNegato develops and applies technologies, strategies and policies for the non-proliferation of Non Consensual Pornography (also known as NCII and Revenge Porn) and other forms of violence and online hate.

The main approach is to identify, report and remove (**about 3.500.000 contents in the calendar year**) non consensual intimate material from the main online platforms.

We provide **strategic and educational support** to those who promote policies and laws to protect the targets of attacks of NCII, Revenge Porn or other forms of violence and online hate. Among the partners we have international institutions as well as direct contacts with the main Platforms and special agreements with many of them.

The aim of this report, published every year since 2020, is to share the scale of the problem and how the numbers of both victims and perpetrators have hastily increased in the last year.

In the hope that knowledge of the phenomenon and its numbers will raise the attention by the Legislator and the Civil Society to engage on such an important front.

Milan, 21 Novembre 2021

**The President
Matteo G.P. Flora**



NON-CONSENSUAL PORNOGRAPHY ON TELEGRAM: THE NUMBERS

The data published in a dedicated report on November 25th 2021, born from investigating and monitoring activities carried out by PermessoNegato within the statutory mission of analysis and contrast to the phenomenon of Non-Consensual Pornography (NCP) in Italy, are reported below.

The definition of Non Consensual Pornography encloses the different facets this phenomenon has, e.g. **Revenge Porn** (when there is a revengeful purpose) or **Sextortion** (when someone threatens to publicly release intimate material if you don't provide them money). PermessoNegato has seen an exponential increase of the phenomenon in the last year, as shown within this document.

NOVEMBER 2021 - THE NUMBERS

The Permanent Observatory of **PermessoNegato** found, in November 2021:

- **Groups and channels:** 190 groups and channels active in the sharing of Non Consensual Pornography intended for an Italian audience;
- **Non-unique users:** the groups examined found a number of non-unique registered users equal to 8.934.900 account Telegram;
- **Unique users:** a sample analysis of the largest groups led to an estimate of the overlap of users between groups at around 65%.

A WORKING GROWTH TREND

In the **12 months** that have passed since the last survey, the Permanent Observatory of **PermessoNegato** found:

- The **increase** in Telegram Groups/Channels that share/re-share NCP contents intended for an Italian audience, with an increase **from 89 groups** (November 2020) **to 190 groups** (November 2021);
- An **increase** of **2.921.212** (non-unique) registered users in 12 months.

HISTORICAL GROWTH OF THE PHENOMENON

The phenomenon is rapidly increasing, also considering the numbers shared in the 2020 State of Revenge. Specifically:

- February 2020: 17 groups and channels on Telegram with a total of 1.147.000 non unique users;
- May 2020: 29 groups and channels on Telegram with a total of 2.223.336 non unique users;
- November 2020: 89 groups and channels on Telegram with a total of 6.013.688 non unique users.

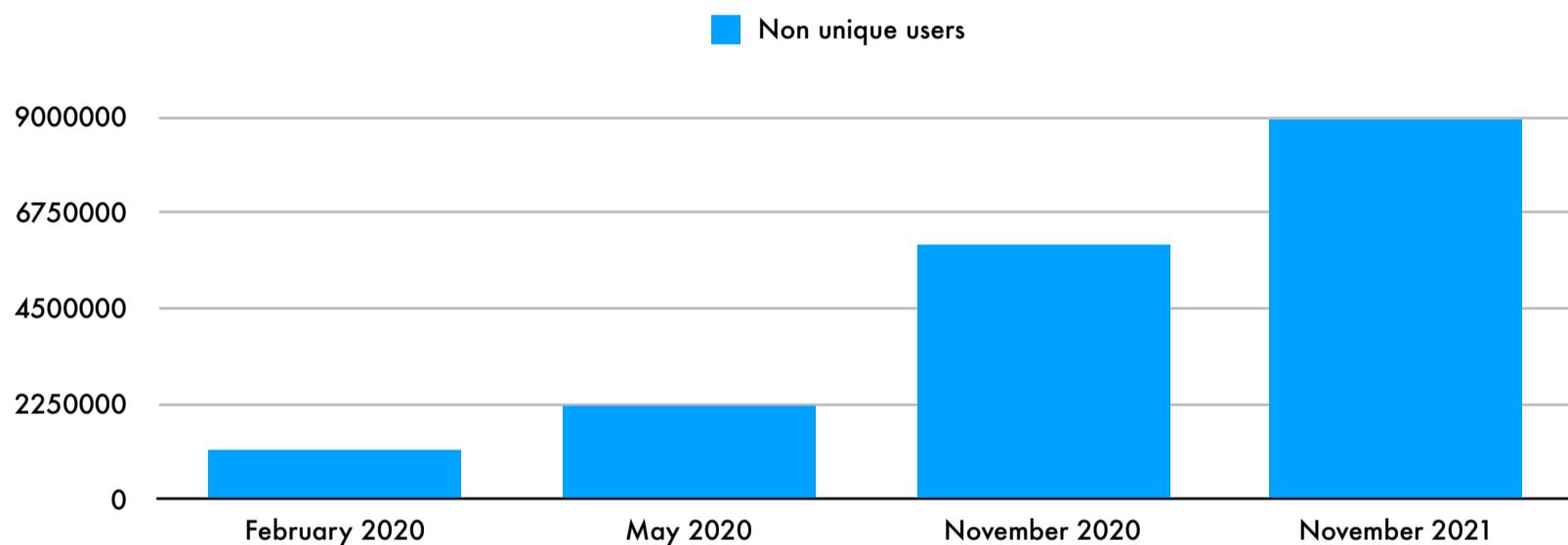


Fig.1 - Increase of the number of non-unique users detected

GROUPS AND CHANNELS

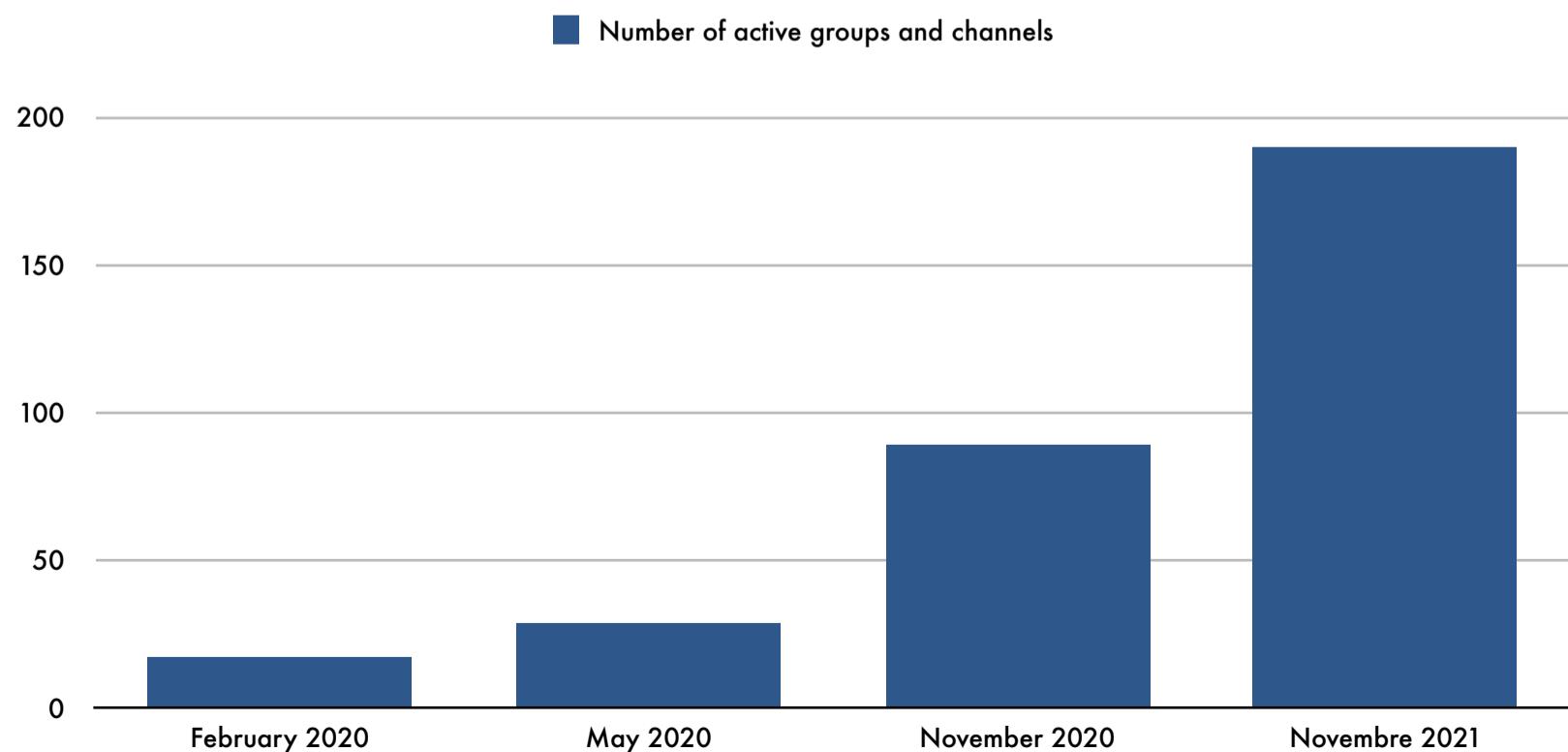


Fig.2 - evolution of the tracked groups and channels

CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

Most of the groups under observation contain specific requests for child pornography, often followed by private chats between tenderers and applicants. Sometimes the material is also shared directly within the groups and/or channels.

The application and use of key words e.g. “baby-girl exchange” (“scambio bambine” in Italian) or “who has baby-girls” (“chi ha le bambine” in Italian)”.

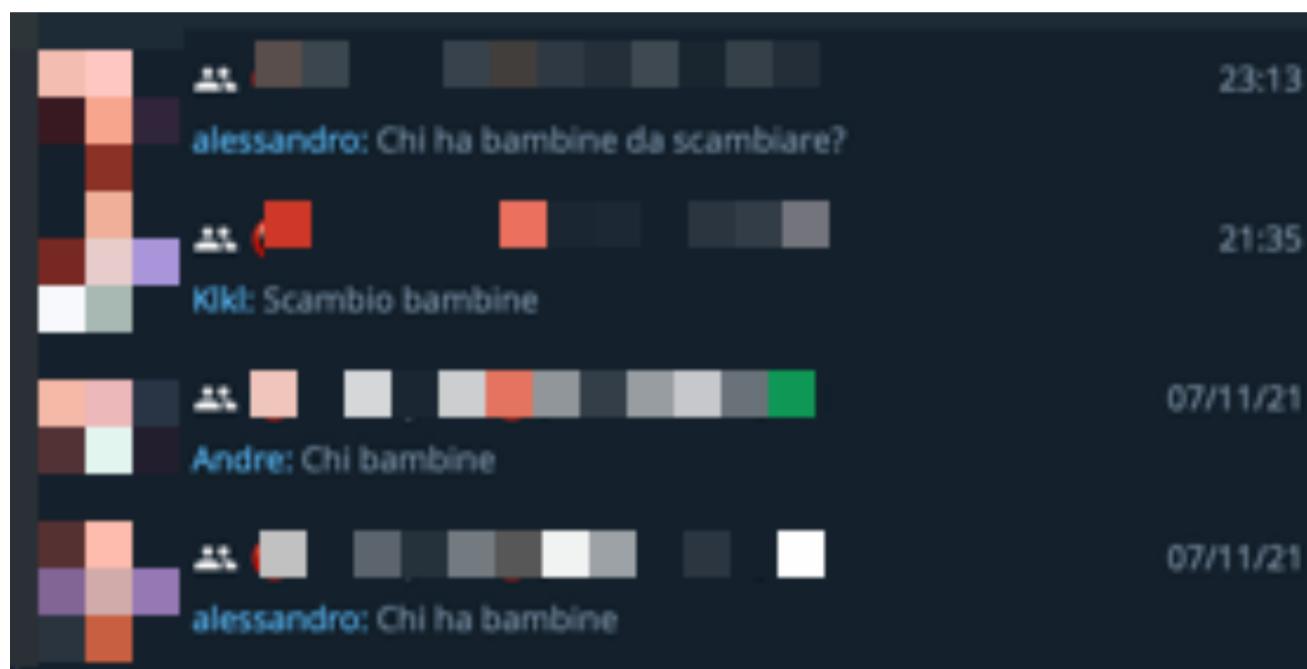


Fig.1 - Keyword research for the Italian word “bambine” (“baby-girls”)



ONLYFANS

OnlyFans is a content-sharing platform, that creators use to offer videos, photos and chat one-to-one for a price. Although is non strictly related to NCP, it's common that users ask for and exchange this material, that outside the OnlyFan¹ site becomes pirates.



Fig.3 - Keyword research for “OnlyFans”

¹ <https://onlyfans.com/>



VIOLENCE, RAPE AND THE MEDIA

PermessoNegato found out that within the Telegram groups and channels dedicated to NCP there is a high demand for violent material, especially sexual assault and rape. Moreover, there is not only a high demand but also a high offer.

Several users asked for specific material, e.g. “*Cerco stupro Grillo* - looking for Grillo rape”, as in the below table. Ciro Grillo, son of the Italian Five Star political movement founder Beppe Grillo, has been accused of involvement in a group sexual assault in Sardinia during summer 2019.



Fig.3 - Keyword research for “rape”

NON- CONSENSUAL PORNOGRAPHY

The State of Revenge 2021 shows with unpublished and exclusive numbers the investigation and monitoring activities carried out by PermessoNegato, which aim is to analyze and contrast the phenomenon of Non Consensual Pornography (NCP) in Italy.

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A GENERALIZED RISK

The non-consensual dissemination of private material with a sexual content can be considered a generalized risk: most of the victims are women but it's a crime that affects every gender and social identity.

As in the cases of sexual abuse, even when Non-Consensual Pornography occurs victims used to suffer serious harm, both social and

psychological. It was in fact demonstrated that Non-Consensual Pornography is identified more and more as a form of sexual abuse.

The results of a study conducted in 2019 by the American Psychological Association² shows that the victims of NCP would be **10% of the population**, with a higher incidence of minors. Moreover, about **51%** of the victims had **suicidal thought** in order to stop suffering the consequences after the dissemination of the material³.

Such images and / or videos are either produced **consensually** (e.g. by knowing individuals with both parties consent during intercourse or willingly sent by an individual to a third trusted party) or **non-consensually** (e.g. with spy cameras, hidden recordings of sexual assault or by downloading images and / or videos from electronic devices), but in both cases, **there is no consent to the dissemination of them**.

SPECIFIC GROUPS

Within the Italian perimeter there are several groups on the main used Social Networks and channels dedicated to the dissemination of NCP: this conduct encourage the users in sort of "competition" to upload and exchange intimate videos and photos: most

² <https://www.cybercivilrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/RPStatistics.pdf>

³ www.cybercivilrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/RPStatistics.pdf

of the victims are the current or former partner. Furthermore, after also the so called **doxing** occurs, consisting in the **publication of private information online**, even when illegally stolen, often resulting in de-anonymizing the identity of a mere photo and/or video providing personal details and social media accounts and phone numbers.

The consequences of these behaviors causes an extent damage to the victims, not only from a psychological perspective but also social and financial (e.g. victim blaming, firing).

NCP & MINORS

As previously highlighted, **NCP usually involves also minors**: explicit requests for child pornography materials on groups originally created to share NCP material between adults are common. Moreover, the use of sexting and requests for pornographic content received in messages, even upon the promise of compensation, are increasing. In many cases, however, minors who sent content have been coaxed, coerced or heavily pressured.

DEVELOPMENT IN ITALIAN CRIMINAL LAW

The Italian Law No. 69/2019, enacted on July 19th, 2019, aims to protect the victims of domestic and gender-based violence, also perpetrated through electronic devices and

today Non-Consensual Pornography is punished according to Article 612-ter of the Italian Penal Code, named “*Illicit distribution of sexually explicit images or video*”.

The perpetrators are punished with imprisonment from one to six years and a fine from 5.000 to 15.000 euros.

However, the situation still bad, if we consider networks like **Telegram**: the platform **do not “process any requests”** regarding illegal content that appears in chats or private groups / channels. This hands-off approach is the reason with the dissemination of NCP is so widespread and there is no possibility for the victims to protect themselves. Together with Telegram, also Twitter and several porn sites **do not support either the victims or the associations** as **PermessoNegato** that denounced these crimes on a daily basis.

On the contrary, **in more than 400 cases followed by PermessoNegato in the first year of activity**, other platforms had (and still have) a *zero tolerance strategy* towards non consensual dissemination of intimate material and child pornography.

Among this, **Facebook, Instagram, Microsoft and Google** have been on the frontline, providing support between 24-72 hours from the report, and in several cases they provided support within 24 hours.

PREVENTION

There are several efficient systems to prevent the intimate material from being shared online. One of these is the *Pilot Program on intimate images shared without Meta's authorization⁴* of which **PermessoNegato** has been selected as European Partner for a specific collaboration. This partnership allow victims and potential victims to send, in a safe and secure way, a copy of the material, in order to prevent the upload on Facebook and Instagram.

Similar strategies are being adopted on other Social Networks and websites: this technological solutions, together with the social reaction will play a predominant role to contrast the phenomenon of NCP both in Italy and abroad, since this type of dissemination do not have territorial boarders.

⁴ <https://www.facebook.com/safety/notwithoutmyconsent/pilot/partners>

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