Pornography on Discord Servers

Cover Page: National Center on Sexual Exploitation's Policy on Sharing Proof

WARNING: The material in this document may contain graphic text, blurred images, and survivor quotes that may trigger the viewer.

Why do we post proof in the first place?

NCOSE researchers have collected this proof as evidence of the material that is made, contained, and/or distributed by the corporations and institutions NCOSE is confronting.

Proof is shared with corporate executives, shareholders, and/or board members, as well as with policymakers, law enforcement, journalists, and the general public to give witness to the sexual exploitation and abuse that is often rampant, yet sometimes hidden, on these platforms.

Why do you blur out images, including faces, if they're publicly available?

While we believe it is important to provide ample evidence of wrong-doing to support our claims and inspire change, we also strongly believe that no one – neither adult, nor child – should be exposed to the type of material our researchers collect: either for their own well-being, or out of respect for those being exploited. It is for this reason we pixelate/blur/block not only nudity or sexually graphic content, but also the faces of those being exploited.

We also want to limit access to this material (unfortunately, a luxury not afforded to children and adults using many of the platforms and products made by these companies). Therefore, we add several layers before someone can access the proof, and also don't include all the proof that we have obtained. If someone feels they need to see more evidence to understand the extent of the problem or the type of exploitation that is happening, they may request it of NCOSE by writing to public@ncose.com.

Did you receive people's permission to post?

Any personal testimony shared to NCOSE directly is posted only with the affected parties approval.

For material that is publicly available, we do not seek permission to post. However, we redact names and usernames of survivors from articles, social media, etc. even when publicly available. To read more about our commitment to ethical engagement with survivors, please go here. We do not redact names or usernames of exploiters who have posted publicly.

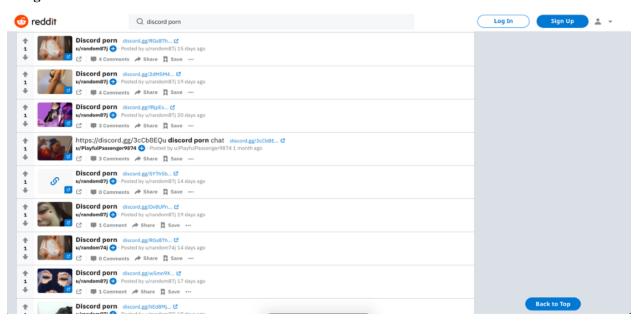
Disclaimer: while we do collect information on those who request access to more proofs, that information will only be used for our own, internal analysis. It will not be distributed, shared, or posted publicly or with outside parties.

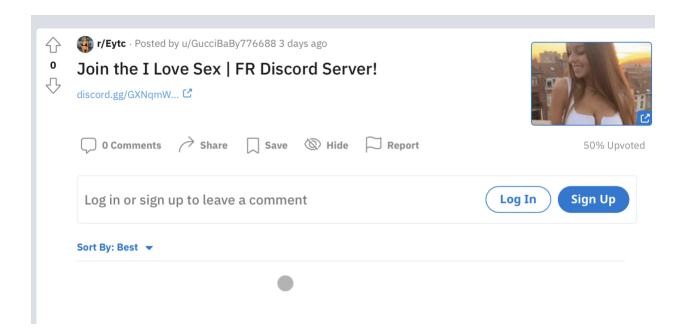
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Discord's lack of robust moderation has allowed pornography to flourish within its thousands of servers. Pornography trading—often including illegally-obtained, non-consensual, and even child sexual abuse material—is rampant on Discord. Entire servers are dedicated to finding and sharing non-consensual sexual images of girls and women—sometimes known as revenge porn. Links to these pornography servers are scattered throughout other sites like Reddit, drawing more and more users to exploitative content through Discord.

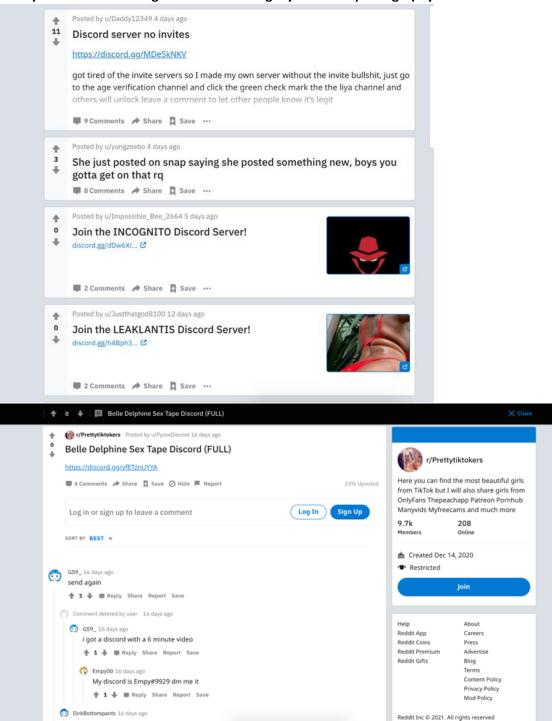
NCOSE researchers found and documented some of these servers in only a few clicks—and accessed the demonstrated content with a Discord account set up as a 13 year old.

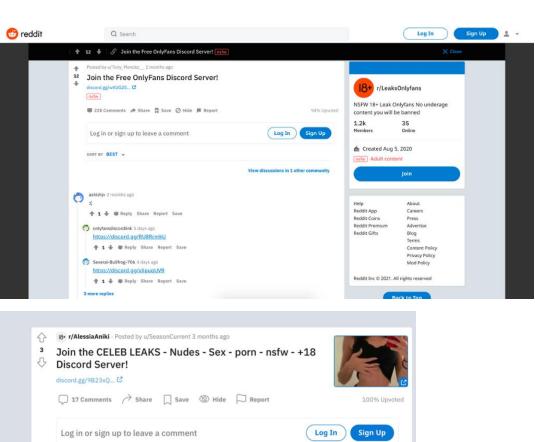
Examples of links to Discord servers with pornography being shared widely across the Internet using sites like Reddit:

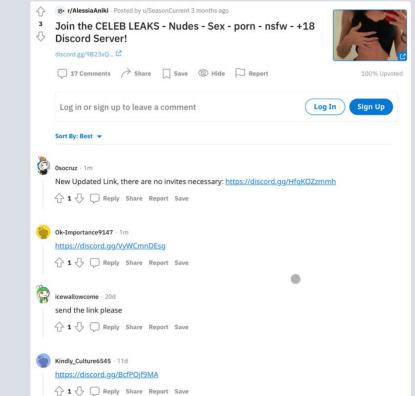


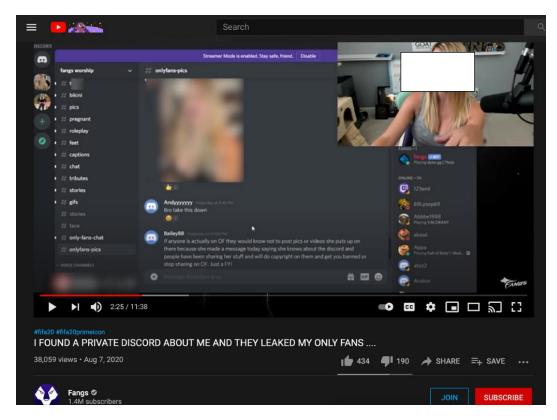


Examples of Discord being used to share illegally obtained pornography:

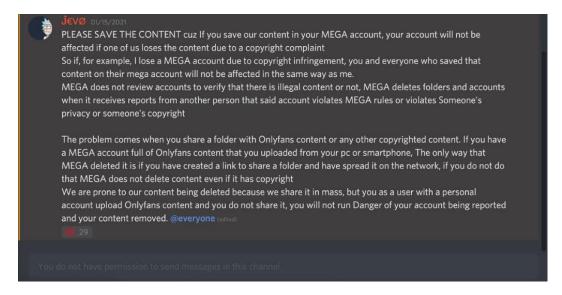






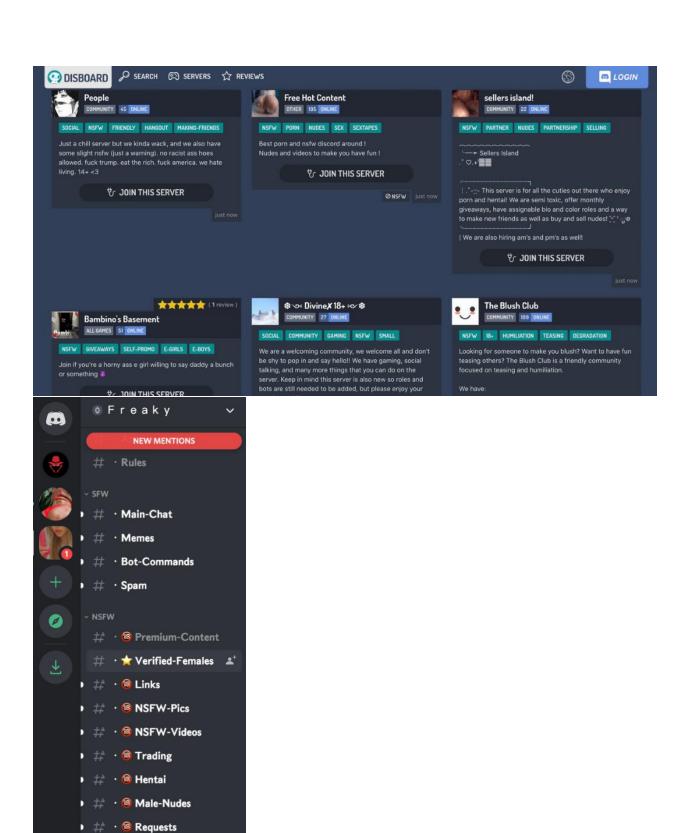


This user shares instructions on how to download and save non-consensually shared pornography on Discord.

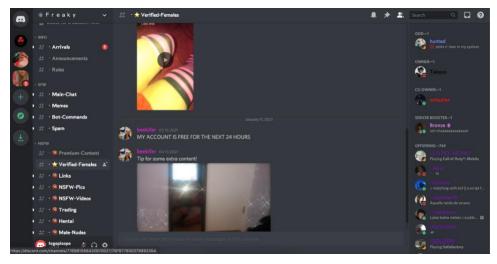


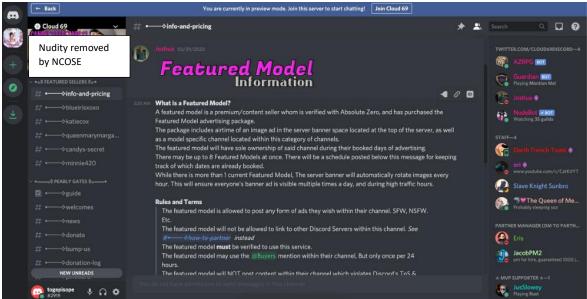
Examples of servers with pornographic content, all joined with a Discord account set up with a 13 year old birthday:

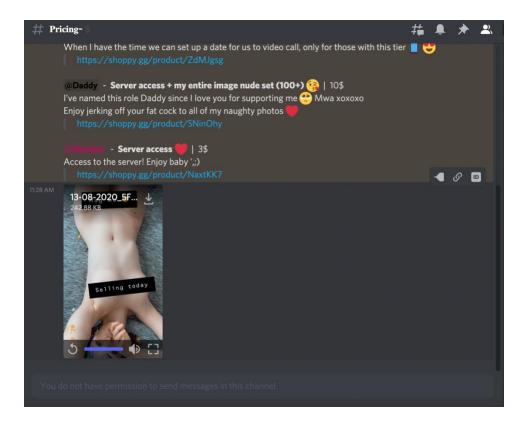




→ ±² · [®] NSFW-BOTS

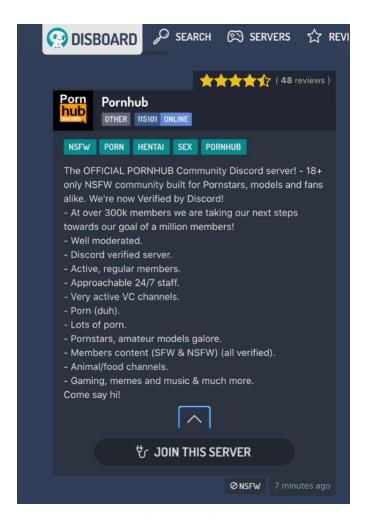




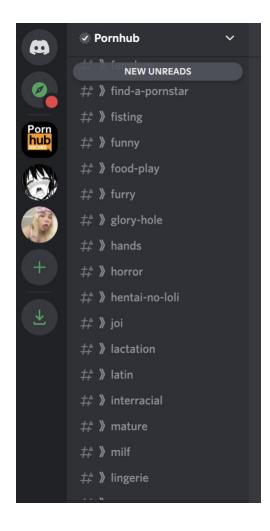


Pornhub, the online pornography tube site, even hosts its own official, verified server on Discord despite the growing legal issues surrounding MindGeek (there are now 6 lawsuits against this criminal empire) and the exploitative content hosted on Pornhub, including child sexual abuse material.

Despite Discord's own rules banning verified/partner servers from creating NSFW channels, Pornhub is still allowed to operate with impunity on Discord as a verified server with over 450,000 members. With our fake 13-year old Discord account, we were able to join the Pornhub server. While most of the individual channels were blocked by an age-gate, we were still able to access content and information with ease – even joining a voice chat "workshop" where a woman gave advice on how to do costume-themed pornography.



Here is an example of the type of content on this Discord server, joined as an account set as 13 years old.



Evidence of CSAM on Discord

The most egregious content that proliferates Discord is child sexual abuse material, or CSAM. While Discord has strict policies on paper that prevent the sexualization of minors on their platform, Discord's allowance of pornography and NSFW content has also invited thousands of instances of CSAM into private servers, becoming a halfway house and host for the exploitation of the most vulnerable.

Here are a few examples CSAM on Discord that made news headlines:

- <u>In April 2021</u>, a man was arrested for using the Internet, including Discord, to distribute and receive child sexual abuse images.
 - "According to court documents and today's sentencing hearing, law enforcement learned that Buley was using the Discord messaging app to communicate with a minor male. Court records show that the communications were sexual in nature, and, on at least one occasion, Buley instructed the minor to transmit live video of himself engaging in sexually explicit conduct. On July 30, 2019, HSI agents executed a search warrant at Buley's residence, seizing Buley's cell phone and other electronic devices. A forensic analysis of the devices revealed that Buley used the internet to distribute and receive

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child pornography and to engage in sexually explicit online chats concerning minors. On June 22, 2020, Buley pleaded guilty to sexual exploitation of a child."

- In May 2021, another man was arrested for distributing and possessing child pornography.
 - "MICHAEL HOLM, 42, of Branford, was arrested today on a federal criminal complaint charging him with distribution, transportation and possession of child pornography and obscene visual depictions of minors engaged in sexually explicit conduct...Holm used various websites, mobile applications and online file storage platforms, such as ChatStep, Kik, Discord, Dropbox, Skype, SkyDrive and Gmail, to distribute, transport, and store material depicting the sexual abuse of children."
- <u>In October 2021</u>, investigators found child pornography on Discord containing imagery of girls as young as 6 years old.
 - "According to the arrest citation, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children
 in June provided a tip regarding a suspect uploading three images of child sexual abuse
 material on Discord, a social media app used to post text, pictures and video.

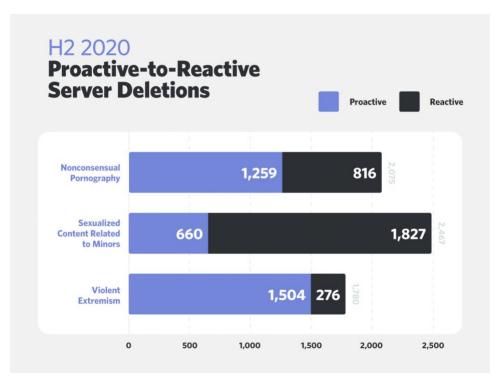
According to the report, investigators reviewed the images and discovered two featured a girl under 6 years of age. In the photo, the report said the female was being sexually assaulted by an unknown adult male.

The third image was of a female child, who appeared to be younger than 12, and was shown being forced to perform a sex act, the warrant said."

Discord's quarterly <u>transparency report</u> also reveals evidence of CSAM throughout the platform. The report revealed:

• A high volume of reports.

- o Trust & Safety received a total of **355,633 user reports** in the six months between July and December 2020. 1.4% was CSAM, and 7.1% exploitative content, now marked separately from CSAM when Discord used to count them together. That means that in just a few short months, over 4,000 reports of CSAM were made to Discord.
- Discord has the ability to remove CSAM.
 - 23,030 individual accounts were deleted because of CSAM, 129,403 deleted because of exploitative content.
 - 669 servers deleted because of CSAM, and 5,103 servers deleted because of exploitative content.
 - Discord reported 6,948 accounts to NCMEC during the second half of 2020. This figure represents distinct accounts reported and not the total number of reports submitted. 83 reports were for "higher harm grooming or endangerment situations"





It still is unclear just how much of this content is truly captured by these reporting numbers, especially considering Discord's scanning software is trained to catch already-known instances of CSAM. It's also unclear just how Discord differentiates between "proactive" and "reactive" actions when moderating —

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and just how much content they are missing while allowing NSFW content to fly free under their banners.
By allowing this kind of "NSFW" content on their servers, Discord is operating as an avenue for online exploitation, including CSAM, and has become an integral part of the commercial sex marketplace.
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