

# CHILD PORN

ON

T W I T T E R

Authors:

Andrea S.

Kirill L.

Bernardo P.



Design:

Radek S.



Italy, US · September 21 2022

# 1 Introduction

On August 30, 2022, the online outlet The Verge published a story exposing Twitter's child porn problem<sup>1</sup>. Based on internal sources and documents, its authors revealed that last spring Twitter tried to generate profits from the adult content (quietly widespread on its platform for years) under a project called Adult Content Monetization.

The project was delayed indefinitely, though, when an ad-hoc team comprising 84 employees, called "Red Team", discovered an alarming problem: "Twitter cannot accurately detect child sexual exploitation and non-consensual nudity at scale... [and] lacked tools to verify that creators and consumers of adult content were of legal age".

Twitter executives are apparently well-informed about the issue but are doing next to nothing to fix it: the platform still hosts content that sexually exploits children. Although Twitter is known to have very permissive policies regarding pornographic content<sup>2</sup>, this is a much serious issue. Therefore we tried to understand if and how the platform is actually being used for non-consensual sharing of pornographic material, videos of rapes and sexual violence, and especially child pornography.

---

<sup>1</sup> Casey Newton and Zoe Schiffer, 'How Twitter's child porn problem ruined its plans for an OnlyFans competitor', The Verge <https://www.theverge.com/23327809/twitter-onlyfans-child-sexual-content-problem-elon-musk>

<sup>2</sup> Twitter, 'Non-consensual nudity policy', Help Center | Twitter, <https://help.twitter.com/en/rules-and-policies/intimate-media>

Our Ghost Data team<sup>3</sup> has already conducted research projects on controversial issues related to technology developments and social media platforms, leading us to experiment with innovative methods of data analysis and processing. In recent years we have documented a wide proliferation of counterfeiting luxury items<sup>4</sup>, Covid masks<sup>5</sup> and fake Apple products<sup>6</sup>, while also dealing with digital propaganda<sup>7</sup>, conspiracy groups<sup>8</sup>, recruitment and terrorist activities<sup>9</sup> – all content freely circulating on today's major social networks. We applied the same innovative methods of data analysis and processing to our field study about child pornography material shared on Twitter.

---

<sup>3</sup> Ghost Data - [ghostdata.io](https://ghostdata.io)

<sup>4</sup> Andrea Stroppa et al., 'Instagram and counterfeiting in 2019: new features, old problems', Ghostdata.io, [https://ghostdata.io/report/Instagram\\_Counterfeiting\\_GD.pdf](https://ghostdata.io/report/Instagram_Counterfeiting_GD.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Andrea Stroppa et al., 'Covid-19 emergency masks&ppe, monitoring unreliable sales&scams on social media', Ghostdata.io, [https://ghostdata.io/report/gd\\_covid19\\_masks\\_.pdf](https://ghostdata.io/report/gd_covid19_masks_.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Andrea Stroppa et al., 'Instagram as a wholesale store for fake Apple products?', Ghostdata.io, [https://ghostdata.io/report/0311IG\\_AAPL\\_2.pdf](https://ghostdata.io/report/0311IG_AAPL_2.pdf)

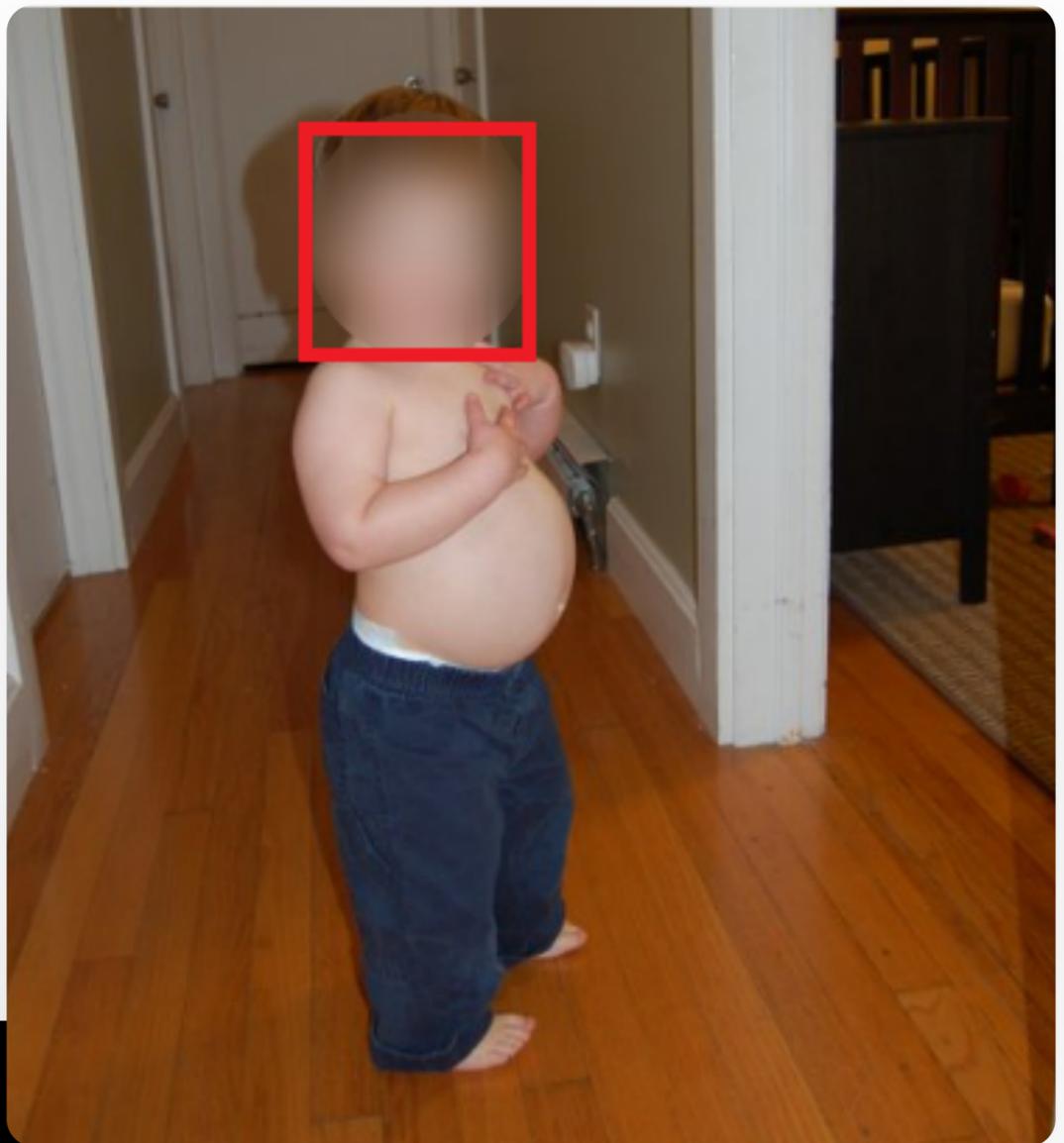
<sup>7</sup> Andrea Stroppa et al., 'What's going on? Anti-Trump memes and other oddities on Instagram', Ghostdata.io, [https://ghostdata.io/report/GD\\_IGDJT05.pdf](https://ghostdata.io/report/GD_IGDJT05.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Andrea Stroppa et al., 'QAnon accounts on Instagram: welcome back - or maybe they next left', Ghostdata.io, [https://ghostdata.io/report/QAnon\\_IG\\_10282020rev.pdf](https://ghostdata.io/report/QAnon_IG_10282020rev.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> Lori Hinnant, 'Islamic State backers find ephemeral platform in Instagram', AP, <https://apnews.com/article/97119155ed934ad9ad438890a29828a2>

# 2. Research methodology

Our study, carried out in September, took advantage of various different techniques and algorithms already applied in the above mentioned research projects. In particular, we focused on a detailed network analysis, i.e. the multiple account connections (followers, following, interactions) and their wide reach within the platform.



**MENU !**

**3-17 Yo... ! Teens,Boys,Guys,Mem and son,Young  
Girls,Pedo,CP,Man and Girls-Boys , boys,solo  
girls,black girls, solo boys ,black Boys,Rape,brutal sex !**

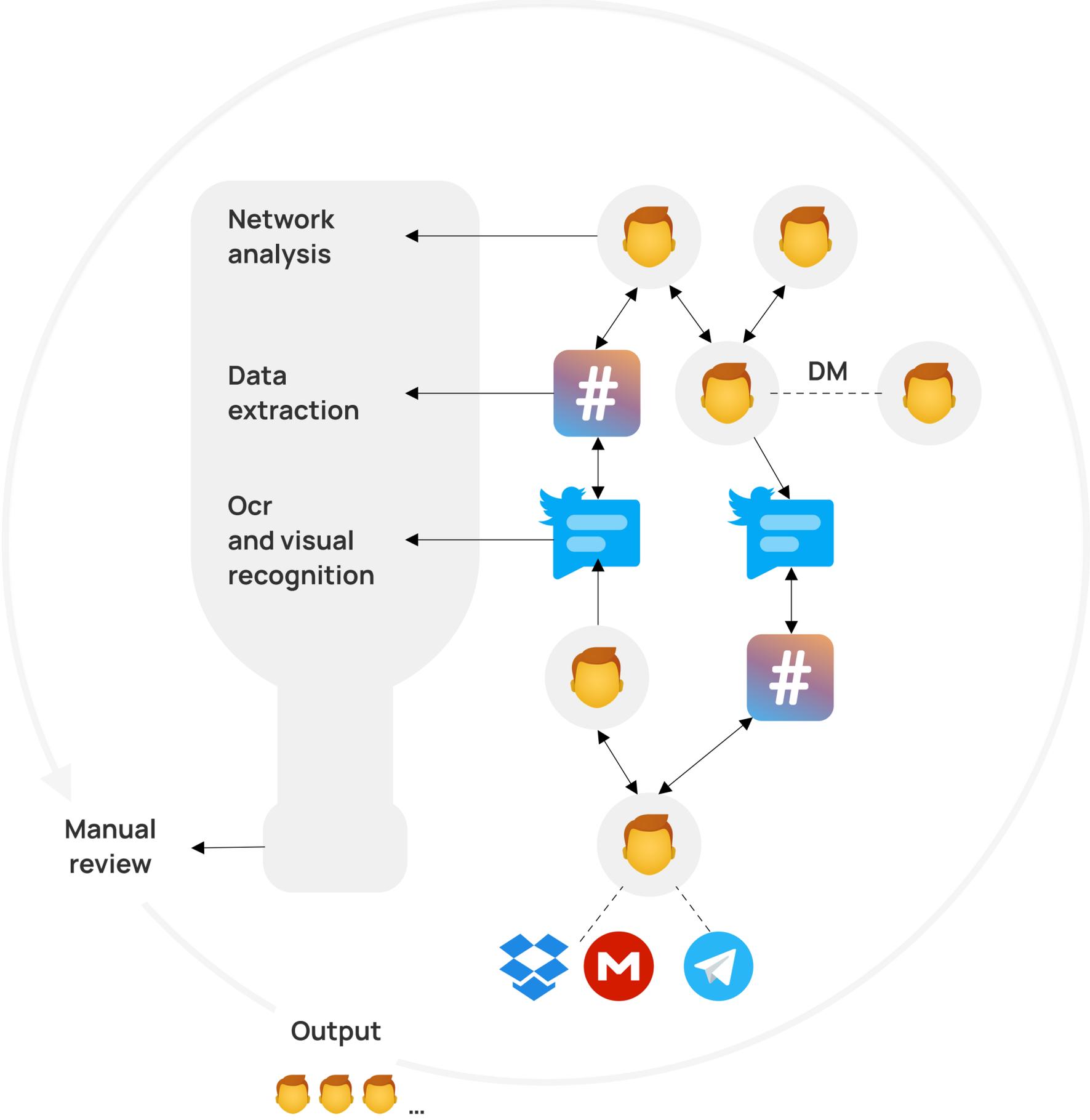
**3TB-99\$**

**4TB-109\$**

**5TB-129\$**

**6TB-149\$**

We also used OCR (Optical Character Recognition)<sup>10</sup> technology to quickly extract text and visual recognition, thus automatically learn about people (adults and or children) showing in photos or videos analyzed.



<sup>10</sup> Google, 'Detect Text in Images', Google, <https://cloud.google.com/vision/docs/ocr>

# 3. Major outcomes

We started by studying the activities of three Twitter accounts known for sharing child pornography: we extracted their network of social connections, public interactions and main hashtags. In particular, for each we collected the following data:

ENTITY	DATA
<b>User</b>	id bio name username biography url location n tweets protected verified profile pic url n followers n following
<b>Tweet</b>	text attachments reply settings retweet likes count reply count quote count device
<b>Hashtag</b>	hashtag name text

This analysis quickly led us to a much broader list of inter-connected accounts, where we carried out a manual review to extract their common characteristics and patterns.

We soon noticed that more often than not such accounts follow each other, use well-defined keywords and hashtags, and feature a modest number of followers (generally less than 100). They generally post images with some texts to communicate, describing their child pornography preferences through profile photos, banners, emojis and multimedia content.

 **babies**  
20 files

 **baby**  
files



  **Follow**



  **Follow**

@ **iCP**

 Joined June 2022



  **Follow**

**CP**  
@CP



 **Follow**

@m

 **All-ages**  Joined July 2022

41 Following 57 Followers

Based on these basic characteristics and patterns, we were able to identify over 500 active Twitter accounts that openly shared or requested child pornography material in a period spanning from September 1st to September 20.



**f**  
@



Selling (ill)egal p0rn (boys, teens, rape, cp) aging 2-17  
Message me on telegram:



**G**

- 1m



Looking for more black cp. whoever gives good link, I'll give tb megalink of cp. dm me :



**m**

Sep



Trabalhamos com uma grande variedade de cp



12+ girl only



- 4h



link in bi0 to tr@d3 p3d0m0m



CP/Childs/Loli/Kid/Teen Leaks



discord.com

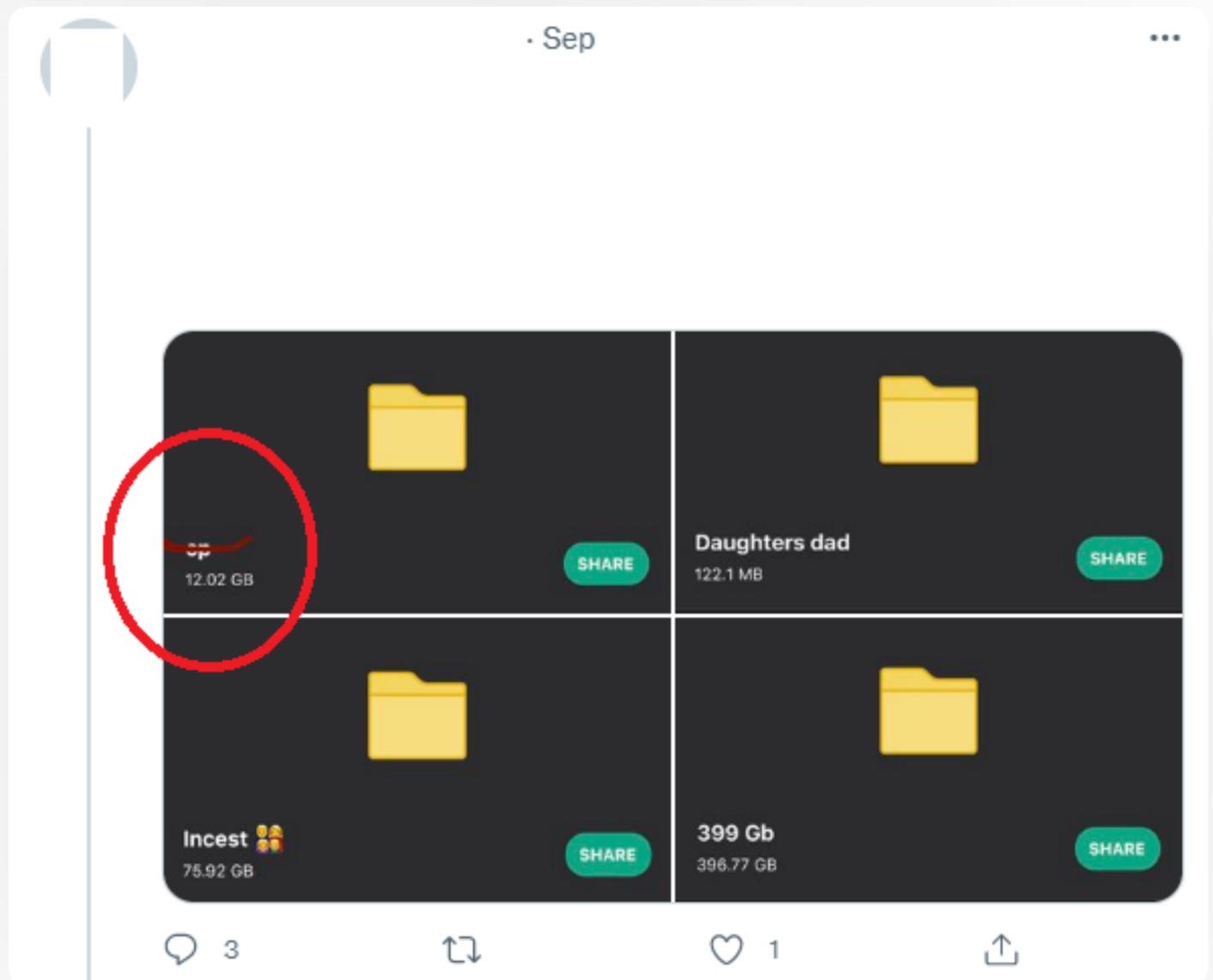
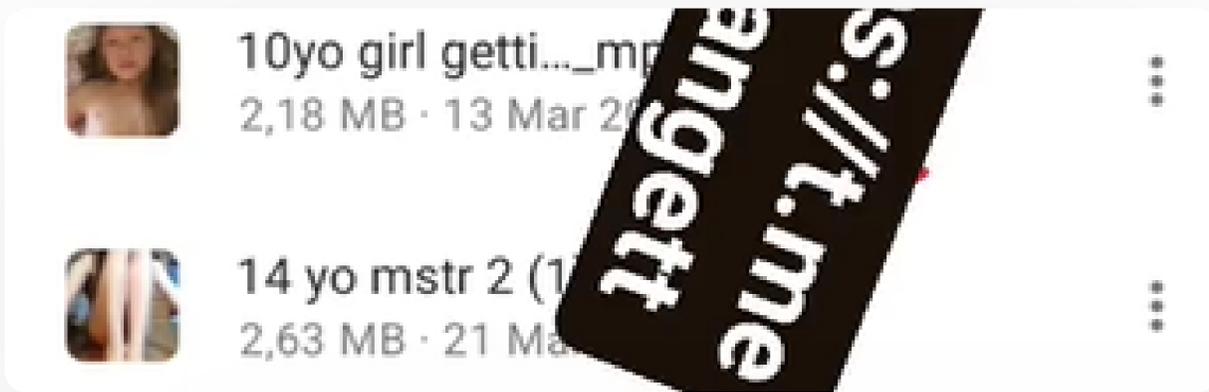
Discord - A New Way to Chat with Friends & Com...

Discord is the easiest way to communicate over voice, video, and text. Chat, hang out, and stay ...



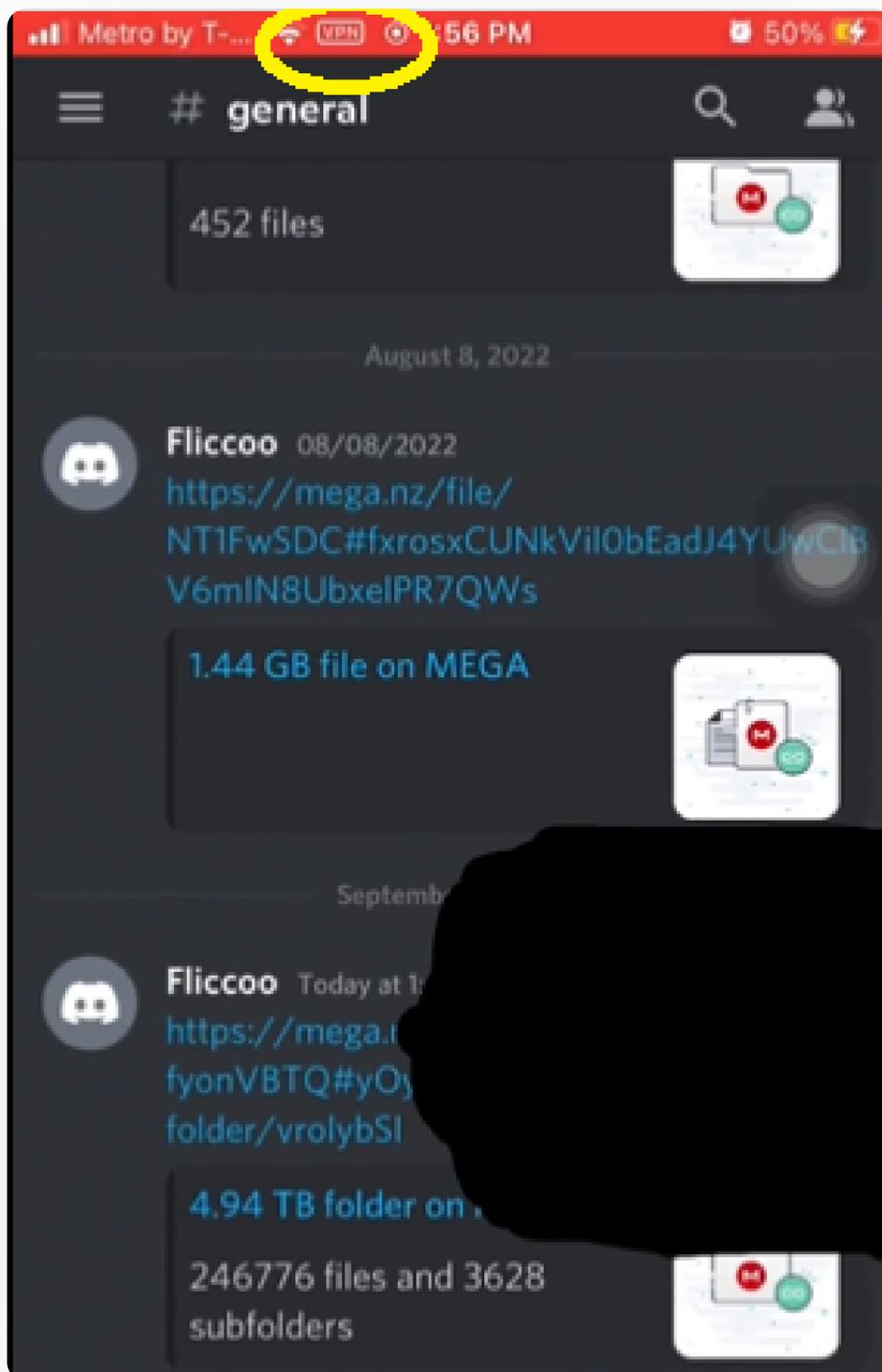
We also carried out a manual review of those accounts in order to rule out those that were mistakenly included in that list.

These 500 accounts produced more than 10,000 tweets, almost half about to trading of illicit material. These accounts accumulated over 2,000 unique followers. At least several of these followers, even if they do not show any public activities, are likely involved in illicit trade of child porn material.



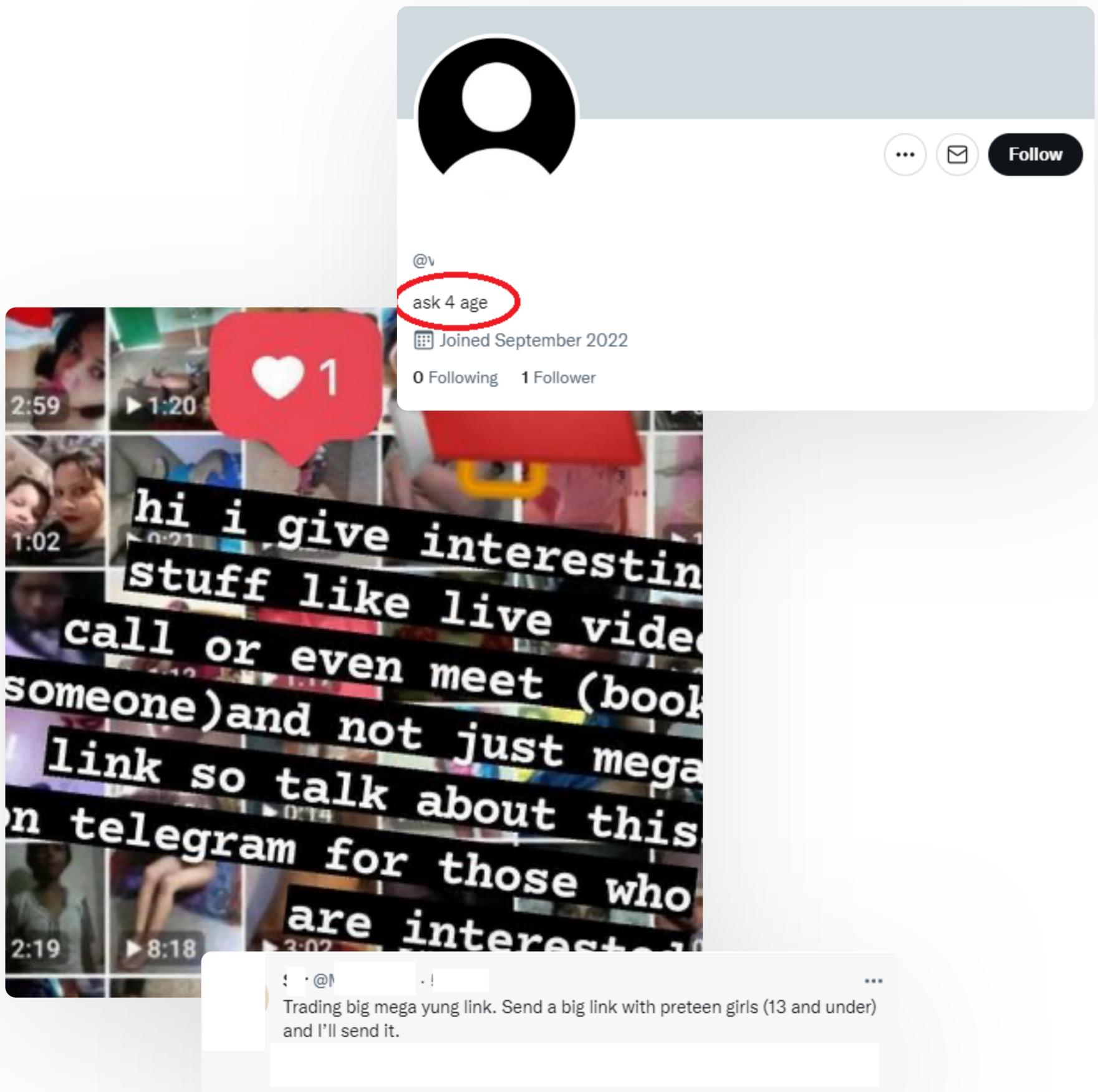
It should be noted that several accounts show obvious social connections (same set of following-followers) with users sharing child pornography, even if they appear to have never published a single tweet. In these cases, we assume that conversations or exchanges take place only through DMs.

There is also a chance that we missed some accounts because we realized only later on that it is common practice to delete tweets related to child pornography after just a few hours.



A user that shares child pornography uses VPN to protect his identity.

We also noticed a specific feature related to non-English posts and hashtags, particularly regarding users from some Arab, Asian and South American countries. Probably these instances deserve a specific study requiring the help of an expert in linguistics.

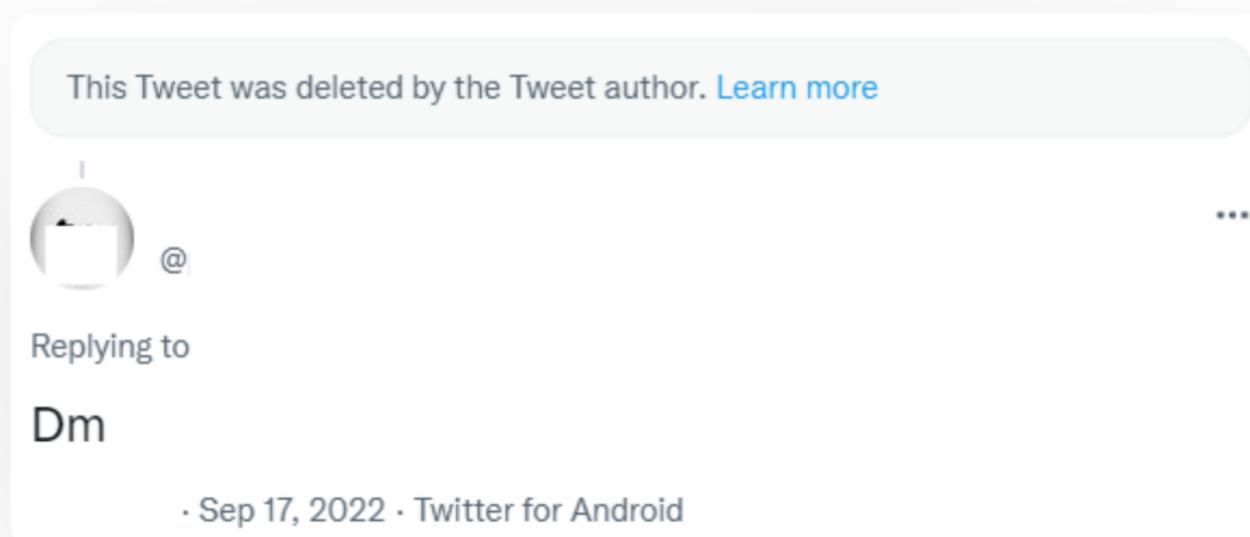


We noted that Twitter suspended less than 30% (27.5%) of the users that publicly shared child pornography links, material, and references in the first 20 days of September. To date, still, more than 400 users are active after « the purge». Many of these users have been active for months.

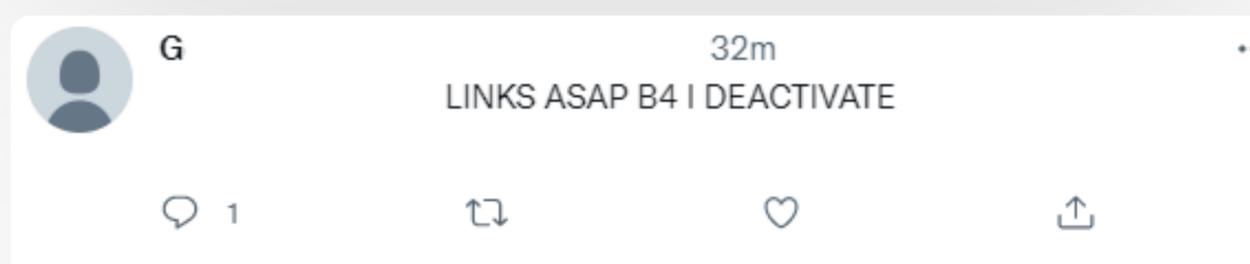
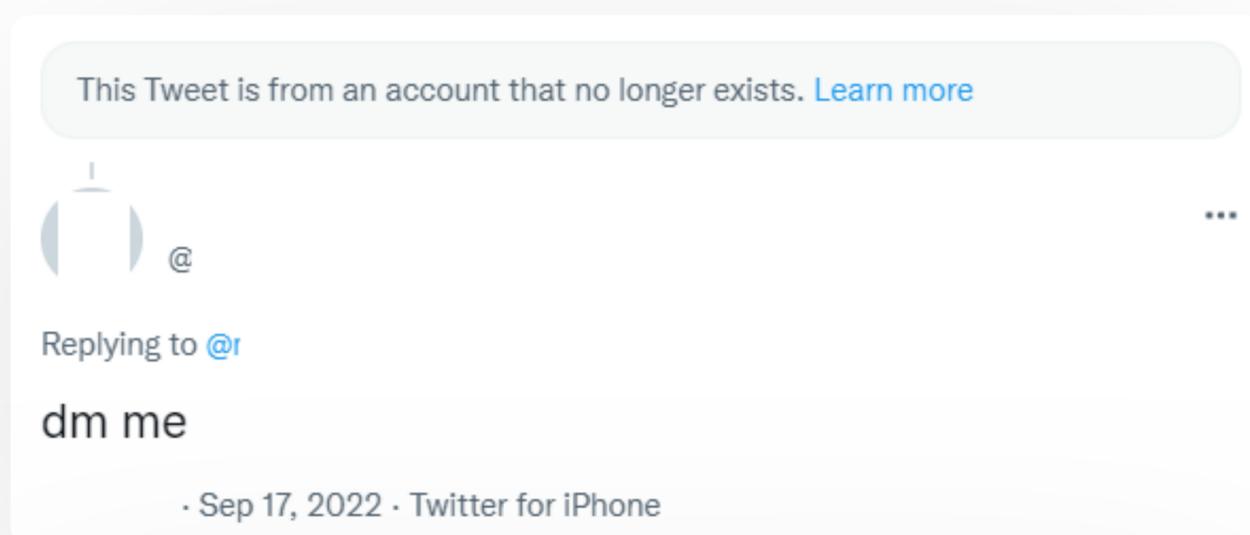
# 4 Major features of suspicious Twitter accounts analyzed

Here is a short list of features and behaviors shared by those suspicious users:

→ The tendency to upload announcement tweets that are removed after a short time (usually a few hours). An option clearly aimed at leaving no traces on the platform itself.



→ In addition to removing tweets, some users decide to periodically delete their account and/or to change their username.



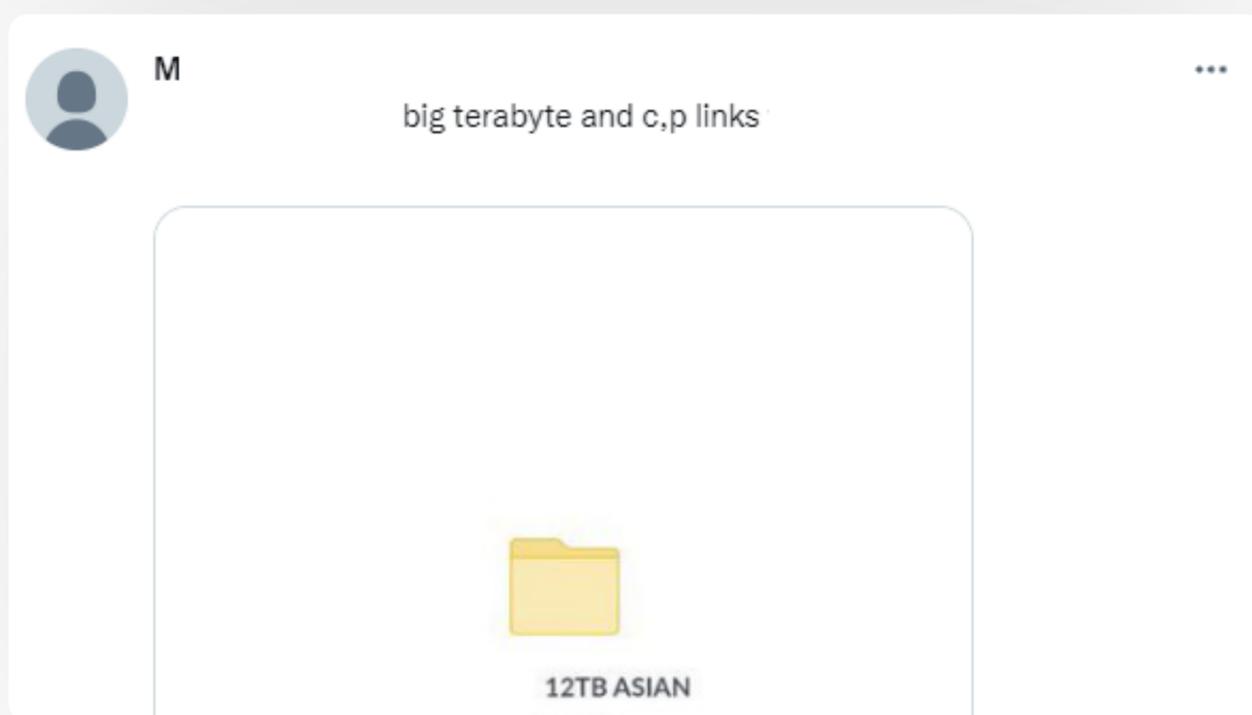
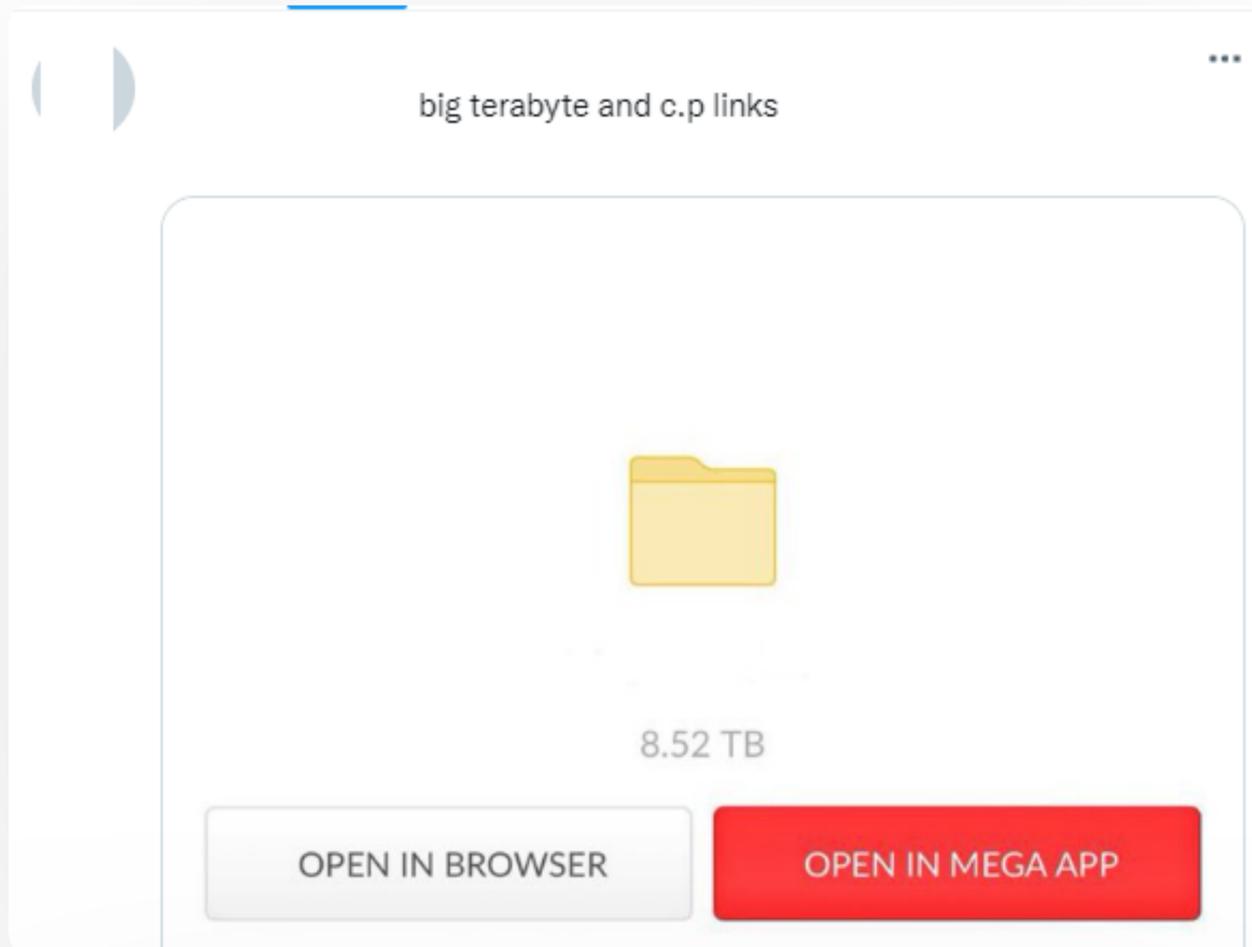
→ Direct messages (DMs) are still the preferred communication choice for these users. Even if DMs on Twitter are not protected by end-to-end encryption, they are openly used to share content and direct links.



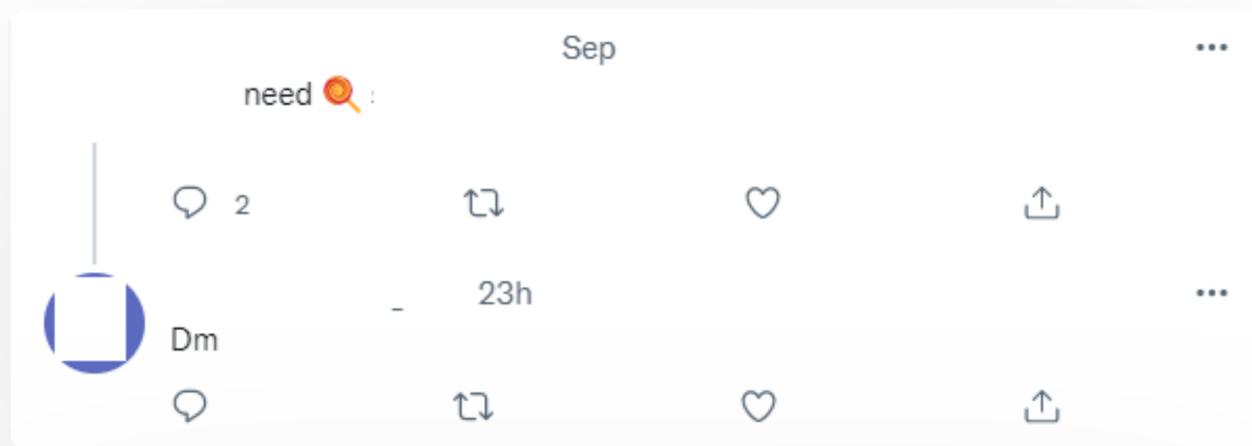
→ Twitter seems to operate mostly as a showcase, a bulletin board for announcements. Telegram, on the other hand, appears to be the platform devoted to important “bargaining” among users or to join groups sharing illegal porn content.



→ Well-known content hosting platforms, such as Mega and Dropbox, are instead the preferred choices for actual uploading of such illegal material.



→ A particular inside jargon is often used, but sometimes a few emojis are enough to hint at the kind of content offered or sought. For instance, the lollipop emoji is a frequent reference to child pornography content.



→ These users tend to deploy specific hashtags and keywords (e.g. candy shop, club penguin, pc trade) to reach people with the same interests. For example, most Latin American users looking for child pornography include the 'caldodepollo' (chicken soup) as an hashtag or keyword.



# 4 Conclusions

As mentioned earlier, Twitter is known to have very permissive policies regarding pornographic content and indeed such content is easy to find on the platform. However, our research shows something much more troublesome: in the initial 20 days of September 2022, over 500 accounts shared, requested and/or publicly exchanged child pornography material.

Our brief research details some basic features and activities carried out by these criminals. These results validate the alarming problem already discovered by internal employees and exposed by online media: Twitter cannot accurately detect child sexual exploitation and its executives are doing almost nothing to address this disaster.

We also uncovered evidence that such permissive policies on pornographic content are also inducing users to post non-consensual and rape videos, not to mention minors trying to sell their own nudity or sexual content.

It is obvious that Twitter is even more unable to moderate this illegal content when accompanied by texts in languages other than English, particularly those pertinent to Asian countries (especially in the Philippines and Thailand) and to Arab and South American countries (Brazil in particular). In fact, we estimate that the illegal activities we were able to identify in this study are just a small percentage of those that publicly and daily are taking place on the global platform.

Probably a modest investment and a dedicated team, even applying our own basic techniques, would be sufficient to easily locate and drastically reduce the illicit activities described above, thus making the platform a safer place for everyone.

To date, Twitter removed only one-third of the accounts we found that publicly shared child pornography links, material, and references and still, more than 400 accounts are active. Moreover, many of these users have been active for months.

However, despite such evidence and numerous public reports by users and media outlets, pornographic content is still widespread on Twitter and easily accessible to minors who could become the actual victims of these permissive policies. This reality clearly collides with Twitter claims to have removed hundreds of thousands of accounts over a six-month period, as explained in their latest transparency report<sup>11</sup>.

Shareholders, authorities, legislators, advertisers and users should become aware of this well-known but somehow overlooked issue that is becoming more serious every passing day<sup>12</sup>. It is about time for the entire internet and social media community to step up and act accordingly in the face of a company's failure to curb illicit adult content, to protect minors and to support its users worldwide.

---

<sup>11</sup> Twitter, 'Twitter Transparency Center', Twitter, <https://transparency.twitter.com/>

<sup>12</sup> Phobe, 'tweet', Twitter.com, <https://twitter.com/FantasticPhobe/status/1552305541006954497>