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**UTRSOL 2025 Utah Sex Offense Media Coverage
Comprehensive Analysis Report**

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Office of
UTAH FOR RATIONAL SEX OFFENSE LAWS

Digest of The Registry's Reach: Purpose, Composition, and the Case for Systematic Review Part I of II

OVERVIEW

Publication 2026-31 presents findings from a full-year, primary-source analysis of 1,042 media articles collected from 10 Utah news outlets (KSL, ABC4, KSLTV, Fox13, KUTV, Gephardt Daily, St. George News, The Salt Lake Tribune, Deseret News, and KSLradio) from January–December 2025, cross-referenced against peer-reviewed research on Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) prevalence, perpetrator demographics, and policy effectiveness. A companion prevention dataset of 85 articles was tracked in parallel. Methodological limitations are documented in the report's final section; none affect the primary findings.

UTRSOL's Evidence-Proportionality Position

Utah for Rational Sex Offense Laws (UTRSOL) operates from an evidence-proportionality framework: policy instruments should be calibrated to the populations and harm categories the evidence actually identifies, and their scope should be proportionate to their demonstrated effectiveness. UTRSOL's position on Utah's sex offender registry is precise:

The registry serves a legitimate function and should be preserved. UTRSOL advocates for its calibration to risk-tiered, evidence-based standards – not its elimination.

This distinction is foundational to everything UTRSOL presents to legislative, executive, and law enforcement audiences. The organization does not oppose the criminal prosecution of sex offenses, mandatory supervision, or institutional accountability requirements. It asks that marginal legislative investment be directed toward the interventions research identifies as most effective at reducing first-time harm.

Key Findings Relevant to Policy Engagement

Visibility gap: Media coverage represents ~1.2% of estimated annual Utah CSA incidents and 8.1% of BCI-confirmed law enforcement incidents. Legislative perception is incomplete not only relative to total harm, but relative to the state's own confirmed caseload.

95.3% / 4.7% split: Of 1,042 media entries, 95.3% involved defendants with no prior registry listing. The registry — a retrospective instrument — could not have identified, flagged, or restrained them. The 4.7% with prior registry status represents the population registries are designed to reach; the structural argument is about proportionality of investment, not about eliminating that function.

Recidivism: Sex-offense-specific recidivism is documented at 5–7% (Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2005; DOJ BJS) — substantially below most felony categories. Registry expansion

calibrated to this population is asked to carry the weight of a problem whose 95.3% majority it has no mechanism to reach. This creates a structural mismatch between the population targeted by registry policy and the population driving the overwhelming majority of sexual victimization.

Spending ratio: UWLP Snapshot #56 (Anderson & Madsen, 2025) documents Utah spending \$92M on perpetrator management against \$569K on prevention — a 161:1 ratio mirrored by a 12:1 media crime-to-prevention coverage ratio. These ratios describe the same structural priority at two different levels of the public information environment.

Risk-tiered reform: A registry calibrated to actual recidivism evidence by offense category — preserving its function for the highest-risk populations while removing burden from populations research consistently identifies as low-risk — is UTRSOL's primary structural recommendation.

Invitation for Engagement

UTRSOL submits Publication 2026-31 as a resource for stakeholders and the general public for their understanding, its policy development, and legislative engagement functions. We welcome the opportunity to brief staff on the dataset, discuss risk-tiered registry calibration frameworks, or provide supporting research for any aspect of the analysis. The full report, underlying dataset documentation, and prior publications are available upon request.



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Executive Summary

This report presents the findings of UTRSOL’s 2025 Utah Sex Offense Media Analysis — a full-year, primary-source examination of how child sexual abuse and sex offense cases are covered by Utah news media, what that coverage systematically misrepresents, and what the distortion produces at the level of public understanding and legislative priority. The analysis draws on 1,042 media articles collected from 10 Utah news outlets between January and December 2025, structured into a longitudinal dataset and cross-referenced against peer-reviewed research on child sexual abuse (CSA) prevalence, perpetrator demographics, and policy effectiveness. A companion prevention dataset of 85 articles — covering awareness campaigns, legislative reporting, victim advocacy, and online safety coverage — was tracked in parallel across the same calendar year and is analyzed in the final section.

The central finding is one of structural mismatch: media coverage and population-level research are not measuring the same phenomenon. News outlets document criminal justice processing events — arrests, charges, plea deals, sentences — drawn from a heavily filtered pipeline that represents an estimated 1.2% of actual annual CSA incidents in Utah.¹ Population research measures lifetime victimization through behavioral surveillance systems, producing estimates that are orders of magnitude larger than what appears in public reporting.²

*The registry did not and could not have prevented 95.3% of what Utah media documented in 2025. CDC explicitly states registrants are not who parents should most worry about.*³

This mismatch has direct and measurable policy consequences. Legislative energy in Utah flows heavily toward registry expansion and prosecution enhancement — tools calibrated to address 4.7% of documented criminal justice events and a statistically low-recidivism population.⁴ Meanwhile, the interventions research identifies as most cost-effective —

1. UTRSOL 2025 Utah Media Dataset. 1,042 articles across 10 Utah news outlets, January–December 2025. Dataset compiled by Utah for Rational Sex Offense Laws. Captures: news source, publication date, URL, reporter byline, defendant name and occupation, case number, court district, city, county, defendant age, up to three statutes per row.

2. Utah Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), 2021 (Utah USBE); Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), Utah ACEs module; NISMART-2 (National Incidence Studies of Missing, Abducted, Runaway, and Thrownaway Children), estimated rate 4.6 per 1,000 children per year. These three sources triangulate the ~35,000 annual Utah CSA incident baseline used throughout this report.

3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). “About Child Sexual Abuse.” cdc.gov/child-abuse-neglect. Key finding: “About 90% of child sexual abuse is perpetrated by someone known and trusted by the child or child’s family members.” CDC explicitly states that registrants are not the primary risk population parents should be most concerned about.

juvenile prevention programming, intra-family disclosure pathways, and survivor support infrastructure — remain chronically underfunded because they are structurally invisible to the media environment that shapes public perception and legislative priority.⁵⁶

The companion prevention dataset reveals a 12:1 crime-to-prevention coverage ratio: for every article tracking a prevention, awareness, or policy reform effort, twelve articles document a crime or arrest. This ratio mirrors and helps explain the 161:1 state spending ratio (perpetrator management versus prevention, UWLP Snapshot #56). Neither ratio is coincidental — they describe the same structural priority operating at two different levels of the public information environment.⁷

The report is organized in six analytical sections: (1) the core thesis and dataset overview (including new BCI 2025 law enforcement data integration); (2) coverage and source analysis; (3) charge and statute analysis; (4) defendant demographics and research-versus-media framing comparisons; (5) prevention coverage analysis; and (6) BCI 2025 data implications legislative policy review and implementation.

Key Dataset Statistics at a Glance

The table below distills the primary quantitative findings from UTRSOL's full-year 2025 dataset into a single reference. Each figure is drawn directly from the 1,042-entry crime/arrest dataset or its 85-article prevention companion, both compiled across the same ten outlets and calendar year. Taken together, these statistics do not describe a series of independent findings — they describe a single coherent system. The 54.3% outlet concentration, the 18.7% single-reporter byline share, the 57% arrest-only coverage rate, and the 4.7% registry-flag rate are not separate anomalies; each is a structural feature of the same information pipeline, and each reinforces the others.

The 161:1 state spending ratio and the 12:1 crime-to-prevention coverage ratio appear at opposite ends of the public information chain but originate from the same underlying priority. Readers should treat the visibility figure of ~1.2% of estimated annual incidents reaching any media coverage as the organizing statistic: every other number in this table is, in some sense, a measurement of how and why that gap exists.

4. UTRSOL 2025 Utah Media Dataset (see fn. 1). 95.3% figure derived from 966 of 1,042 dataset entries having no reoffender flag in the dataset column. Registry flag methodology: populated only when reporters explicitly noted prior registry status in article text; actual registry-listed percentage likely modestly higher.

5. Letourneau, E.J., Eaton, W.W., Bass, J., Berlin, F.S., & Moore, S.G. (2017). Preventing the Onset of Child Sexual Abuse by Targeting Young Adolescents with Universal Prevention Programming. *Child Maltreatment*, 22(2), 100–111. Identifies universal prevention programming targeting adolescents as the most cost-effective CSA intervention currently available.

6. Anderson, K. & Madsen, S.R. (2025). "Child Sexual Abuse: What Utahns Need to Know." UWLP Research Snapshot #56. Jon M. Huntsman School of Business, Utah State University. Citing 2011 Utah state data: \$92,000,000 on perpetrator management; \$16,500,000 on survivors; \$569,000 on prevention. Perpetrator-to-prevention ratio: 161:1.

7. Ibid.

Metric	Value	Policy Significance
Total articles (crime/arrest dataset)	1,042	Across 10 outlets, Jan–Dec 2025
Prevention articles (parallel dataset)	85	Awareness, legislation, education, victim support
Crime-to-prevention coverage ratio	12:1	Media produces 12.3x more crime than prevention content
Unique defendants	~419	2.47 avg articles per defendant
Registry-flagged entries	~47 (4.7%)	95.3% involved no prior registry listing
Single-outlet arrest-only entries	57% ⁸	Accusation without resolution
CSAM as dominant charge	~29% / 298 appearances	Non-contact; distinct risk profile from contact CSA
Female defendants identified	27 (6.6%)	Cluster toward exploitation, not contact charges
KSL + ABC4 combined share	54.30%	Two organizations define public understanding
Pat Reavy single-byline share	18.70% ⁹	1 in 5 articles from one reporter
3rd + 4th District combined	60.30%	Salt Lake + Utah County dominate
Defendants reaching sentencing	~13%	87% of cases lack resolution coverage
Media visibility of CSA incidents	~1.2% (vs. all est. incidents); 8.1% (vs. BCI confirmed)	See Section 1.3a; 91.9% of BCI-confirmed incidents also invisible
State spending ratio (perp vs. prevention)	161:1	\$92M vs. \$569K (UWLP Snapshot #56, 2011 data)

8. UTRSOL 2025 byline analysis of 1,042 media entries. Reporter bylines coded from article metadata. Pat Reavy (KSL): 190 entries = 18.7% of 1,042 total. Sorina Trauntvein (ABC4): ~140 entries = ~13.5%. Combined: ~330 entries = ~31.7%.

9. Ibid.

Section 1: Core Thesis and Dataset Overview

The Foundational Framing

Utah news media is not measuring child sexual abuse. It is measuring the arrest stage of a narrow, unrepresentative slice of publicly prosecuted cases — then presenting that slice as the shape of the problem. These are not two different lenses on the same object. They are two different objects entirely.

This framing is not rhetorical. It establishes a precise epistemological claim: that criminal justice event data and population health prevalence data are categorically different measurement instruments, and that conflating them — which public discourse and much legislative reasoning consistently does — produces systematic distortions in both public understanding and policy design.

The practical consequence of treating these two objects as one is not merely academic. When a legislature responds to a spike in media-documented arrests by expanding registry requirements, it is responding to a measurement artifact — an increase in the visibility of criminal justice processing, not necessarily an increase in the underlying harm. The 2025 Utah media dataset makes this concrete: coverage volume varies month to month not because CSA incidence varies month to month, but because institutional clusters, high-profile defendants, and outlet assignment patterns create artificial concentrations of public attention. July's 122-article peak and February's 82-article trough almost certainly do not reflect a 49% swing in actual offending. They reflect the mechanics of news production. A policy architecture calibrated to media volume rather than population-level data is therefore not simply imprecise — it is systematically responsive to the wrong signal, and the nature of the error is not random but structural: it consistently overweights the visible, the institutional, and the stranger, while underweighting the familial, juvenile, and chronic.

The Dataset

The dataset underlying the entire analysis consists of 1,042 media articles collected from 10 Utah news outlets across the full calendar year 2025. This represents one of the most comprehensive single-year longitudinal records of sex offense media coverage ever assembled at the state level by a community organization.

The dataset structure captures: news source, publication date, article URL, reporter byline, defendant job title and name, case number, court district, city and county, defendant date of birth and age, social media platform if applicable, up to three statutes per row, and a binary reoffender flag. The significance of this dataset is not only its size but its specificity. Most policy discussions of sex offense media coverage rely on national samples, aggregate

content analyses, or selective case studies — none of which can answer the question UTRSOL's dataset is designed to address: what does a defined, bounded information environment actually look like across a full calendar year, and what structural patterns does sustained observation reveal that snapshot analysis cannot?

Because the dataset covers a single state, a single year, and a defined outlet universe, its findings are directly actionable at the legislative level. A Utah lawmaker reviewing UTRSOL's outlet concentration data, byline analysis, or county distribution figures is not reading an extrapolation from national patterns — they are reading a description of the specific information environment that has shaped their constituents' understanding of this issue and, through that understanding, the political pressure that reaches their committee. That specificity is the dataset's core institutional value, and it is what distinguishes this analysis from prior advocacy work on media framing in criminal justice contexts.

The Visibility Funnel

Perhaps the most analytically striking single exhibit in the Utah media data is the visibility funnel, which traces how much of the actual annual CSA phenomenon in Utah is captured by media coverage:

Stage in pipeline	Estimated count	% of baseline
Estimated annual Utah CSA incidents	~35,000 ¹⁰	100% baseline
Disclosed to any adult	~14,350 ¹¹	~41%
Reported to law enforcement	5,141 (BCI confirmed) ¹²	BCI 2025
Formally charged or arrested	~2,500	~7%
Covered by any media outlet	~419 cases	~1.2%
Multi-outlet coverage (2+ outlets)	~185 cases	~0.5%

10. Baseline from YRBS 2021, BRFSS adult retrospective, NISMART-2 annual rate. Disclosure rate from Finkelhor/CCRC. Reported to LE: Utah BCI NIBRS Interactive Dashboard, captured May 10, 2026 (5,141 confirmed sex offense incidents, Jan–Dec 2025; prior estimate ~4,130 closely validated). Media coverage from UTRSOL 2025 dataset.

11. Finkelhor, D. Crimes Against Children Research Center (CCRC), University of New Hampshire. Multiple publications. Disclosure rate of approximately 41% of child sexual abuse victims to any adult; approximately 30% of CSA offenders are juveniles.

12. Utah Bureau of Criminal Identification (BCI). NIBRS Interactive Dashboard, captured May 10, 2026 (date filter 1/1/2025–12/31/2025, all counties, all agencies). The formal annual BCI Crime in Utah Report is expected approximately July 2026. Data accessed via: <https://bcu.utah.gov/crime-statistics>

Media coverage represents an estimated 1.2% of annual CSA incidents (419 defendants ÷ ~35,000 estimated annual incidents). A second, confirmed metric is now available from BCI 2025 NIBRS data: 8.1% of law enforcement–confirmed sex offense incidents (419 ÷ 5,141 reported incidents) generated any media coverage. These are distinct metrics measuring different portions of the pipeline — see Section 1.3a. The combined implication: 98.8% of total estimated harm is invisible to media; and even within the confirmed law-enforcement pipeline, 91.9% generates no media record.

The funnel's architecture also clarifies a common misreading of the visibility problem. The 1.2% figure is sometimes interpreted as a statement about media failure — an argument that journalists should cover more sex offense cases. That is not the claim. The claim is structural: the pipeline through which media learns about sex offenses is itself a highly filtered subset of actual harm, and that filtration is not random. It systematically selects for stranger-perpetrated cases, institutional defendants, high-status offenders, and digital-access charges — the categories that generate public records, press releases, and courtroom events accessible to reporters.

The categories that produce the least media coverage are precisely the categories research identifies as most prevalent: intra-family abuse, juvenile perpetration, and non-prosecuted disclosure. A legislature that read the 1.2% figure as an argument for more crime coverage would miss the point entirely. The argument is that the 98.8% invisible remainder is not invisible because it went unreported by journalists — it is invisible because it went undisclosed to adults, unreported to law enforcement, and uncharged by prosecutors. Media cannot cover what the system never processes. The visibility gap is a policy problem before it is a journalism problem.

BCI 2025 Law Enforcement Data — Validating and Anchoring the Funnel

The Utah Bureau of Criminal Identification's (BCI) new NIBRS interactive crime dashboard published the 2025 sex offense incident data. This real-time release provides a confirmed primary-source law enforcement incident count for calendar year 2025. The prior estimate of approximately 4,130 incidents — derived from applying Utah Women and Leadership Project Snapshot #15's 11.8% reporting rate to an estimated 35,000 annual incidents — was validated by the BCI's confirmed figure of 5,141 incidents, supporting the overall reliability of the funnel methodology. The close alignment between the projected and confirmed figures also strengthens confidence in the analytical framework used throughout the report.

13. Utah Women & Leadership Project (UWLP) Research Snapshot #15 (2016). Sexual assault statistics; 11.8% of Utah women report sexual assault to law enforcement. Jon M. Huntsman School of Business, Utah State University.

OFFENSE CATEGORY	2025 COUNT
Fondling	2,780
Rape	1,662
Sodomy	388
Sexual Assault with Object	125
Statutory Rape	114
Human Trafficking, Involuntary Servitude	36
Incest	20
Human Trafficking, Commercial Sex Acts	16
TOTAL SEX OFFENSE INCIDENTS	5,141

Source: Utah BCI NIBRS Interactive Dashboard, captured May 10, 2026 (date filter 1/1/2025–12/31/2025, all counties, all agencies). BCI data does not include CSAM charges, which are federal or appear separately in court filings rather than as NIBRS incident offense categories.

Two distinct visibility metrics. The BCI confirmed denominator produces a second visibility metric that is analytically distinct from the primary 1.2% figure:

1.2% — 419 media defendants ÷ ~35,000 estimated annual CSA incidents. Measures visibility against all harm, including undisclosed and unreported. Primary metric for the structural gap argument.

8.1% — 419 media defendants ÷ 5,141 BCI-confirmed reported incidents. Measures visibility within the law-enforcement pipeline only. Even within this confirmed pipeline, 91.9% of reported sex offenses (4,722 of 5,141) generated no media record in 2025.

Selecting between these two metrics is not a matter of preference — it is a matter of what question is being answered. The 1.2% figure answers: of all the harm occurring in Utah, what fraction becomes publicly visible? The 8.1% figure answers: of the harm that reached law enforcement, what fraction became publicly visible? Both are legitimate policy questions, and both yield useful findings.

The 1.2% metric is the appropriate denominator when arguing that media coverage cannot serve as a reliable guide to the scale or distribution of CSA — because it measures coverage against total harm, including the majority that never surfaces anywhere. The 8.1% metric is

the appropriate denominator when arguing that even the law enforcement pipeline, which in principle should be accessible to journalism, is itself dramatically underreported — because it isolates the failure specifically within the publicly processed portion of the problem. The 8.1% figure carries particular weight: it demonstrates that even among cases the state has formally documented and processed, the information environment legislators rely on captures fewer than one in twelve. Legislative perception of the problem is not merely incomplete relative to total harm — it is incomplete relative to the state's own confirmed caseload.

The Core Finding of 95.3% / 4.7%

The single most policy-relevant finding in the entire dataset: of 1,042 media entries in 2025, approximately 47 (~4.7%) involved defendants flagged as having a prior registry listing at the time of their offense. The remaining 95.3% involved individuals with no known prior registry status. Put differently: for every case in Utah's 2025 media record involving a registry-listed defendant, nineteen involved someone the registry could not have identified, flagged, or restrained in any way.

The single most arresting figure in the dataset is 95.3%, paired directly with the CDC statement that “registrants are not who parents should most worry about.” Registry expansion as the primary legislative response to sex offense is calibrated to address 4.7% of documented criminal justice events, drawn from a population with a research-documented recidivism rate of 5–7%.¹⁴ The arithmetic is unambiguous: a policy instrument targeting a population with a 5–7% reoffense rate, representing 4.7% of documented cases, is being asked to carry the weight of a problem whose remaining 95.3% it has no mechanism to reach.

One further implication of the dataset's construction is worth stating explicitly: the 95.3% finding is conservative. The “Reoffender” column was populated only when a reporter explicitly noted prior registry status in the article text. An unknown number of registry-listed defendants in the dataset were never identified as such because reporters did not surface that detail. The actual share of registry-listed defendants may therefore be modestly higher than 4.7% — but even if that share were doubled to 9%, the structural finding would not change. A policy architecture calibrated to 9% of documented cases and a recidivism rate of 5–7% remains categorically misaligned with the 91% majority it cannot address. The conservatism of the estimate, if anything, strengthens the argument: UTRSOL's central finding holds under the least favorable assumption about its own data.

14. Hanson, R.K. & Morton-Bourgon, K.E. (2005). The characteristics of persistent sexual offenders: A meta-analysis of recidivism studies. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 73(6), 1154–1163. DOJ Bureau of Justice Statistics sex offender recidivism data. Combined findings document a 5–7% sex-offense-specific recidivism rate, substantially lower than most felony categories.

Section 2: Coverage and Source Analysis

Coverage by Outlet

The 1,042 articles are distributed across 9 distinct outlets (the title slide references 10, including KSLradio separately from KSL/KSLTV):

Outlet	Articles	Share	Notes
KSL	287	27.54%	Dominant outlet; includes digital + broadcast
ABC4	263	25.24%	Heavy Sorina Trauntvein byline concentration
KSLTV	154	14.78%	Nexstar; shared ownership group with KSL
Fox13	130	12.48%	Michael Martin + Jeff Tavss primary bylines
KUTV	104	9.98%	Megan Brugger lead reporter
Gephardt Daily	56	5.37%	Digital-first; heavy staff/unnamed bylines
St. George News	43	4.13%	Cody Blowers primary; Southern Utah focus
The Salt Lake Tribune	29	2.78%	Primary Utah news on policy
Deseret News	24	2.30%	Lower volume; broader issue selection
KSLradio	9	0.86%	Small separate byline pool

KSL + ABC4 combined account for 54.3% of all 1,042 entries — over half of Utah's total public information environment on this issue flows through two organizations. The Nexstar umbrella (KSL + KSLradio + KSLTV) together accounts for approximately 43.5%, making the Nexstar group the single most dominant institutional presence.

That concentration has a structural consequence that extends beyond editorial diversity. When a single ownership group accounts for 43.5% of a state's sex offense coverage, the framing choices embedded in that group's institutional culture — which cases to cover,

which defendants to name, which charges to lead with, how prominently to feature registry status — are not one editorial perspective among several. They are the default information environment for the majority of Utah's news-consuming public. A KSL editorial decision to cover CSAM possession arrests more aggressively than intra-family abuse disclosures is not a niche choice; it is a statewide information policy operating without any of the oversight, accountability structures, or evidentiary standards that govern the legislative and judicial processes it influences. The outlet concentration documented here is not an argument against any individual organization. It is an argument that the public information environment shaping Utah's criminal justice legislation rests on a narrower institutional base than most Utahns would assume — and narrower than sound policy formation should depend on.

Reporter-Level Analysis

18.7% — Pat Reavy (KSL): Nearly 1 in 5 Utah sex offense articles authored by a single reporter. 190 entries across the full year.

~14.0% — Sorina Trauntvein (ABC4): ~145 entries; ABC4's dominant byline on this beat.

~33% — Reavy + Trauntvein combined: Two individuals shaped one-third of all public coverage of this issue in Utah in 2025.

Individual framing choices by Pat Reavy and Sorina Trauntvein have measurably outsized influence on Utah's public understanding of sex offense risk, perpetrator archetypes, and the apparent scale of the problem. The byline concentration documented here is not a criticism of Pat Reavy or Sorina Trauntvein individually. Both are professional reporters working within the editorial structures and assignment practices of their respective outlets, and their volume reflects institutional investment in this beat rather than personal editorial agenda. The policy-relevant finding is systemic: when two reporters account for one-third of a state's annual sex offense coverage, the cognitive frameworks those reporters have developed — their working definitions of newsworthiness, their source networks, their judgment about which cases warrant follow-up and which warrant a single arrest story — become embedded in public record at scale that no individual journalist's work should carry.

Beat consolidation of this magnitude means that retirements, reassignments, or editorial shifts at two desks could materially alter the public information environment for an issue that drives significant legislative activity. Substantive engagement with either reporter — sharing the structural mismatch findings in this report, offering the dataset as a reference resource, proposing a methodology story on what arrest-stage coverage systematically omits — could have an effect on public understanding that could shift the perception of CSA and sex crimes in Utah.

Monthly Volume and Concentration

Monthly article counts across 2025 range from a February low of 82 to a July peak of 122. Two notable patterns emerge:

- July 2025 (122 entries) is the peak month, driven by a broad summer distribution of cases rather than a single high-profile cluster.
- March 2025 (~110 entries) is elevated above the annual average almost entirely because of the Box Elder County institutional cluster — judge Kevin Robert Christensen and fire chief Ned Brady Hansen, whose arrests, charges, hearings, and cross-case connections generated a sustained wave of coverage beginning in early March.

The Box Elder cluster is analytically significant not just for its volume impact but as a case study in how two defendants can dominate a month's coverage cycle and distort geographic risk perception. The monthly distribution also reveals something the aggregate annual count obscures: there is no slow news month for sex offense coverage in Utah. Even February — the lowest-volume month at 82 entries — represents nearly three articles per day across ten outlets. The floor of coverage is high, the ceiling is constrained, and the range between them is narrower than the dramatic peaks suggest.

What drives volume within that range is not an increase in underlying offenses — CSA does not seasonally spike in July — but an increase in criminal justice processing events: arraignments, preliminary hearings, sentencing dates, and plea agreements that cluster in the court calendar rather than in any pattern of actual harm. The practical implication is that the media environment legislators encounter is not episodic. It is a steady, year-round drumbeat of arrest and prosecution coverage, interrupted occasionally by high-profile clusters that briefly amplify the signal. That drumbeat creates a persistent availability heuristic — a chronic background noise of sex offense salience — that operates on legislative perception continuously, not just when a high-profile case breaks.

The chronic background noise matters because frequency of exposure shapes perceived reality. A legislator who reads Utah news regularly absorbs roughly three sex offense arrest stories per day — almost all involving adult male strangers, digital predation, or institutional betrayal, almost none involving juvenile perpetrators or intra-family abuse. That diet does not feel like a distorted sample. It feels like the shape of the problem. Research on availability heuristics documents exactly this effect: repeated exposure to a category of information produces confidence in its representativeness, regardless of whether the sample is actually representative. A legislature whose members have spent careers absorbing stranger-predator arrest coverage arrives at policy discussions with a prior already constructed — one the evidence must overcome rather than simply inform. UTRSOL's media analysis exists, in part, to make that prior visible.

Geographic Distribution

Geographic distribution in the dataset reflects reporter desk location more than offense distribution. Salt Lake and Utah County together account for 60.3% of all entries not because CSA is disproportionately concentrated along the Wasatch Front, but because that is where Utah's daily news infrastructure is concentrated, and where the court filings, arrest records, and press releases that drive coverage are most accessible to working reporters.

County	Entries	Share	Notes
Salt Lake	376	37.10%	Wasatch Front hub; concentrated reporting
Utah	178	17.60%	Provo/Lehi corridor; 4th District dominates
Davis	112	11.10%	Includes Box Elder cluster attribution risk
Weber	89	8.80%	Ogden metro
Washington	86	8.50%	St. George / Cedar City corridor
Box Elder	52	5.10%	Massively inflated – 2 defendants generate ~30+ entries

Rural counties — Garfield, San Juan, Piute, Millard — appear rarely. This is not because CSA does not occur there; it is because no daily media outlet has a reporter assigned to cover them. Absence of entries ≠ absence of offenses. The concentration documented in this section has a corollary for strategic engagement that the raw numbers do not make explicit. When half of Utah's sex offense media coverage flows through two reporters, the access point for shifting the public information environment is unusually narrow — and unusually accessible. Because KSL and ABC4 together define the information environment, any dataset, framework, or finding that those organizations cite or republish reaches a disproportionate share of the Utah audience.

Section 3: Charge and Statute Analysis

Most Frequently Cited Statutes

Utah media outlets track up to three statutes per article entry, producing approximately 1,500+ statute appearances across 1,042 rows. The top statutes by article appearances:

Statute	Appearances	Category	Notes
76-5b-201 Sexual exploitation of a minor	298	CSAM	Most frequent single statute
76-5b-201.1 Aggravated sexual exploitation	241	CSAM	Combined with above = 539 appearances
76-5-404.3 Aggravated sexual abuse of a child	142	Child contact	Under-14 victim implied
76-5-402 Rape	115	Adult assault	Adult victim
76-5-417 Enticement of a minor	112	Enticement	Frequently co-occurs with CSAM
76-5-404 Forcible sexual abuse	109	Adult assault	Broad adult-victim category
76-5-302 Aggravated kidnapping	78	Kidnapping	Frequently co-charged
76-5-403.1 Sodomy on a child	74	Child contact	Under-14 victim
76-5-402.1 Rape of a child	72	Child contact	Under-14 victim
76-5-308.x Trafficking (all)	~18	Trafficking	Severely underrepresented; SB 30 implications

The two CSAM statutes combined appear in 539 entries — over half of all 1,042 articles cite at least one CSAM charge. No other statute family comes close. Trafficking statutes appear only approximately 18 times — massively underrepresented given UTRSOL's finding that SB 30 made labor trafficking convictions registrable.

The trafficking underrepresentation deserves particular attention. S.B. 30 expanded the registry to include labor trafficking convictions against a media environment in which trafficking statutes appeared in fewer than 2% of 2025 sex offense entries — meaning the legislative record supporting that expansion was built almost entirely on the CSAM and contact offense cases that dominate coverage, not on the trafficking cases the bill actually targeted. The BCI's own 2025 incident data confirms the disproportion: labor trafficking (Involuntary Servitude, 36 incidents) and commercial sex trafficking (16 incidents) together represent 52 confirmed law enforcement incidents — a category with genuine policy stakes but negligible media salience. When a statute family appears 18 times in 1,042 media entries while generating 52 confirmed BCI incidents, the information environment that shaped its registry expansion contained almost no data about the population it was expanding to cover. That is not a coincidence. It is the statute-level expression of the same structural mismatch this report documents at every other level of analysis.

Charge Category Breakdown

The charge category breakdown translates the statute-level frequency data into a policy-legible distribution. What the table makes visible is the gap between the charge types that dominate media coverage and the charge types that dominate population-level research on CSA harm — a gap with direct implications for how legislative attention and registry architecture are calibrated.

Share	Category	Key Note
37%	CSAM possession / distribution	298 primary appearances. Single-device cases generate 20–80 charges.
26%	Child contact offenses	Rape of child, sodomy on child, aggrav. sex abuse. Direct victim contact.
14%	Adult sexual assault	Rape, forcible sodomy, forcible sexual abuse — adult victims.
10%	Kidnapping	Child and aggravated kidnapping across multiple charge types.
6%	Child abuse / torture	76-5-109.2 and 76-5-109.4 — non-sexual physical harm.
4%	Voyeurism / lewdness	Often co-occurs with CSAM charges.
3%	Trafficking	Severely underrepresented. SB 30 registry implications.

The CSAM Conflation Problem

Utah news media dedicate a significant amount of articles to CSAM possession charges as equivalent to contact offense charges. The case against treating CSAM possession charges as equivalent to contact offense charges, grounded in Finkelhor, Turner & Colburn (2024), is that online/CSAM sexual abuse requires separate analysis from contact CSA because risk profiles, intervention strategies, and recidivism patterns differ substantially.

The practical media distortion: a single seized device with 2,000 files generates 20–80 individual counts, massive headline numbers, federal involvement for additional news events, and multi-outlet follow-up coverage. A single family member who abuses a child over multiple years may generate zero arrests, zero charges, and zero media entries if the child never discloses. The media record implies the former is more serious and more prevalent. Research implies the latter is both more common and produces more measurable long-term harm.

The conflation problem is self-reinforcing in a way that makes it resistant to correction through normal evidentiary channels. CSAM cases generate federal involvement, which generates federal press releases, which generate multi-outlet coverage, which generate follow-up articles at each procedural stage — creating a media footprint that bears no relationship to the number of child victims directly harmed. A single seized hard drive with 2,000 images produces a headline count, a charge count, and a coverage volume that implies a perpetrator of extraordinary scale and danger.

The family member who has abused a child for three years produces, in the majority of cases, zero arrests, zero charges, and zero media entries — because the child has not disclosed, or has disclosed only to a non-reporting adult, or has disclosed to a mandated reporter whose referral did not result in prosecution. The legislature reads the CSAM case as evidence of a predator crisis requiring registry expansion. It does not read the family abuse case at all, because the media record contains no such case to read. Legislative perception of which offender type poses the greater public safety risk is therefore the inverse of what the research record supports — and CSAM conflation is the primary mechanism producing that inversion.

Charges Stacked Per Entry

Charge count per entry is a proxy for case complexity, but it is an unreliable one. Because a single CSAM device can generate 20–80 individual counts, the number of charges cited in a media entry reflects prosecutorial filing strategy and device storage capacity as much as it reflects the severity or scale of actual harm. The public reads charge counts as a measure of danger; the dataset suggests they are more often a measure of file quantity.

- 56.5% (572 entries) — single charge: typically an early arrest story before formal multi-count filing
- 19.5% (198 entries) — two charges: common pattern is a primary offense paired with an enabling charge
- 9.5% (96 entries) — three charges: multi-count contact offense pattern; most serious cases by complexity
- 14.5% (147 entries) — unclear or no statute listed: initial arrest coverage before formal filing

The 37% CSAM dominance in the dataset raises an immediate evidentiary question: if CSAM possession carries no contact victim, generates its charge counts from file-count arithmetic rather than victim count, and clusters in the lowest documented recidivism tier, what is the evidentiary justification for lifetime registry placement at the same tier as a contact offense conviction? The dataset provides the empirical frame for what qualifies in Utah. The trafficking statute’s near-absence — approximately 18 appearances for a charge category that S.B. 30 made broadly registrable — documents the registry population mismatch from the opposite direction: charges that are now registrable by statute are generating almost no media coverage, which means the public and legislators have no visibility into how SB 30 has expanded the registry beyond its original scope.

The 14.5% unclear or no-statute rate also carries an evidentiary implication that the raw number understates. These 147 entries represent cases where a reporter filed an arrest story before formal charging documents were publicly available — meaning the defendant is indexed in the media record as a sex offender before any statutory finding has been made. Combined with the 57% single-outlet arrest-only rate, the no-statute entries confirm that a substantial portion of the 2025 media record consists of accusations at their least verified stage, permanently archived and searchable, with no subsequent coverage to indicate whether charges were ever filed, reduced, or dismissed.

Defendant Demographics

Age Distribution

Defendant age reflects the population that reaches media coverage, not the population that perpetrates CSA — a distinction the funnel analysis makes clear. The near-absence of defendants under 18 is not a demographic finding about who offends; it is a structural finding about juvenile court sealing. The concentration of coverage in the 30–49 cohort reflects the institutional access patterns that make cases newsworthy — teachers, officials, coaches, therapists — rather than the age distribution of actual perpetrators, which research places substantially younger. Reading the table below as a description of who commits sex offenses in Utah would reproduce exactly the misreading this report documents throughout.

Age cohort	Entries	Research significance
14–19	12 (~1.6%)	Should be ~30–40% per Finkelhor – 15–20× undercount due to sealed records
20–29	188	Research peak for adolescent-adjacent offending
30–39	198	Largest single decade in media; “prime archetype”
40–49	132	Mid-adult; institutional figures; authority-position cases
50–59	118	Older adult; persistent offending; many teacher/official cases
60–69	72	Cold cases, delayed prosecution
70+	40	Persistent lifespan offending; distinct policy question

Mean age approximately 42; median approximately 38. Range 18–88 (oldest: Ronald Charles Jones, West Jordan, 88, charged July 2025). The near-absence of under-18 defendants (~1.6%) compared to Finkelhor’s research figure of ~30–40% is the juvenile erasure problem in its starkest statistical form.

The 70+ cohort deserves a specific note. Forty entries involve defendants aged 70 or older – a group whose cases are analytically distinct from recidivism in the conventional sense. Many of these cases involve delayed disclosure of historical abuse, cold case prosecution enabled by DNA or survivor testimony, or first-time charges for conduct spanning decades. They are not evidence that sex offense risk persists uniformly across the lifespan; they are evidence that the prosecution pipeline has a long tail, and that the media record in any given year includes cases whose underlying conduct may predate the current registry architecture entirely. Treating this cohort as part of the same policy population as a 28-year-old first-time offender produces analytical error – and treating their prosecution as evidence of ongoing community risk produces the same distortion at the legislative level.

Female Defendants

Female defendants represent one of the most consistently misread categories in sex offense media coverage nationally, and the 2025 Utah dataset reflects that pattern. Their relative rarity in the media record – 6.6% of identified defendants – is often cited informally as evidence that sex offending is overwhelmingly male, which the research broadly supports, but the charge distribution within that 6.6% tells a more precise story about how female defendants reach media coverage and what that selection effect means for public understanding of the category.

Twenty-seven female defendants were identified across the 1,042 entries, representing 6.6% of the approximately 419 unique defendants. Key characteristics:

- Median age approximately 28; range 19–72
- Charge pattern: approximately 40% of female defendants appear in exploitation/CSAM charges rather than direct contact offenses
- HHS Child Maltreatment data shows female perpetrators account for approximately 9% of CPS-substantiated CSA cases nationally

The teacher concentration among female defendants is not incidental. Of the 27 identified female defendants, a disproportionate share involve school or childcare settings — environments where institutional access to minors is structurally embedded and where the trust relationship that characterizes most CSA is formally sanctioned by the institution itself. This mirrors the broader occupational pattern in the full dataset, where teachers account for the largest single named occupational category at 98 entries.

What the female defendant subset adds to that finding is a corrective against the assumption that institutional sex offense is primarily a male pattern: the access structure that produces institutional abuse operates independently of perpetrator gender, and the policy responses designed to address it — mandatory reporter training, institutional screening, background check requirements — are equally applicable regardless of who occupies the position of trust. The gender of the defendant is less analytically relevant than the structure of the access.

Out-of-State Defendants

Florida (8), Arizona (6), and Texas (5) lead among US states. Three international cases generated exceptionally high article counts due to fugitive narrative. The out-of-state defendant data is cited in public and legislative discourse to support the claim that Utah's registry laws are comparatively lenient and attract offenders seeking a permissive environment. The dataset does not support that reading. The out-of-state cases documented here arrived in Utah for identifiable reasons unrelated to registry policy: an employment placement in Eagle Mountain, a 2017 victim who remained in Utah, a fugitive apprehension that happened to occur within state jurisdiction, a man who flew to Utah specifically to marry a minor he had met online.

None of these cases reflects a rational actor selecting Utah on the basis of registry permissiveness — and Utah's registry is, by most structural measures, among the more expansive in the Mountain West, not among the more lenient. The perception of Utah as a destination jurisdiction for offenders is not supported by the case-level evidence in this dataset, and repeating it without that evidence risks producing legislative pressure for registry expansion calibrated to a migration pattern that does not exist.

Coverage Concentration

Coverage concentration by defendant — how many articles each individual generates — is the most direct measure of how the media record diverges from the actual distribution of cases. The 1,042 articles in this dataset do not represent 1,042 distinct events; they represent 419 defendants covered at very different intensities, producing a public record in which a handful of cases account for a disproportionate share of total coverage and therefore a disproportionate share of public understanding. The tiers below make that distribution concrete.

- 225 defendants (~57%) — 1 article each: arrest-only, the accusation without resolution
- ~170 defendants (~41%) — 2–5 articles: sustained coverage through charges and possibly plea
- ~14 defendants (~3%) — 6–15 articles: high-profile ongoing cases (OB-GYN, fire captain, Box Elder cluster)
- 1 defendant (0.1%) — 30 articles: Nicholas Rossi exclusively

The 57% single-article rate is the most important structural finding for understanding the dataset's limitations as public information. A majority of defendants in the 2025 media record exist as accusations without resolutions — the public sees the arrest, not the outcome. The inverse of the single-article problem is equally significant and receives less analytical attention: the defendants who generate 6–15 or 30 articles are not more representative of sex offense in Utah — they are less representative, by almost every demographic and charge-type measure.

Nicholas Rossi, whose 30 articles make him the single most covered defendant in the 2025 dataset, is a Scottish fugitive who faked his own death and was extradited for two separate rape trials — the most-covered case in the dataset is the least informative case in the dataset about the actual problem. Yet his case contributed more to public understanding of the issue, measured by article count, than the combined coverage of the 225 defendants who generated exactly one article each. The coverage tier distribution is therefore not just a measurement artifact — it is the mechanism through which statistical outliers become the public archetype, and through which the typical case, arrest-only and never followed up, disappears from public memory before any resolution is reached.

Case Outcome Tracking

Case outcome tracking measures how far each defendant thread travels through the criminal justice pipeline before media coverage stops following it. The figures below are not measures of actual case resolution — courts continue processing cases regardless of whether reporters do — but of the point at which public information about each defendant

effectively ends. For the 87% of defendants whose coverage stops before sentencing, the public record closes at accusation, charge, or hearing, leaving an unresolved entry in the permanent media archive that neither confirms guilt nor records dismissal.

Stage	Defendants	Notes
Arrest / initial report	~419 · 100%	Any coverage at any stage
Charges formally filed	~245 · ~60%	Case number present, multiple outlet entries
Preliminary hearing / trial coverage	~110 · ~27%	Hearing details, evidence, testimony
Plea or verdict reported	~70 · ~17%	Guilty plea, conviction, or acquittal
Sentencing covered	~55 · ~13%	Prison term or sentence reported

Approximately 87% of defendant threads in the media record lack any reported resolution. The defendant age distribution also has a clinical dimension. Treatment responsiveness to evidence-based sex offense intervention is highest in the 20–29 and 30–39 cohorts — precisely the age ranges where the dataset’s coverage is concentrated but where the media archetype of the high-status institutional betrayer is least applicable. The occupational prestige cases — teachers, judges, fire chiefs, therapists — that dominate multi-outlet coverage cluster in the 40–49 and 50–59 cohorts.

These are the individuals for whom institutional safeguards like background checks and mandatory reporter training would theoretically provide a protective mechanism. But the majority of defendants in the dataset are not institutional figures with checkable prior histories. They are individuals whose offenses generated a single arrest story and no follow-through — younger, non-institutional, and largely invisible to the policy architecture that the media record has calibrated legislative attention to address. Designing prevention policy around the media archetype means addressing the visible minority while neglecting the treatment-responsive majority.

Occupation and Charge Type Correlation

Named Occupational Categories

Occupation functions in this dataset as a proxy for access structure — the institutional relationship that placed a defendant in proximity to a victim in the first place. The table below cross-references named occupational categories against charge type distribution, producing a matrix that is more analytically useful than either variable alone. Charge type without occupational context obscures how the offense occurred; occupational category without charge type obscures what the institutional access was used for. Together they document a pattern the aggregate dataset cannot surface: different institutions produce different offense profiles, and policy responses calibrated to one profile — background checks designed to catch prior contact offenders, for instance — may provide limited protection against the digital-access pattern that dominates in other institutional settings.

Occupation	Entries	Access type	Child contact%	Adult assault%	CSAM/other %
Teacher / School Employee	98	Child access	72%	18%	10%
Therapist / Psychologist	28	Trust relationship	35%	52%	13%
Fire / Emergency Official	34	Institutional	28%	40%	32%
Judge / Court Official	22	Institutional	18%	32%	50%
Religious Leader	18	Trust relationship	11%	72%	17%
Military / Law Enforcement	24	Authority	42%	30%	28%
Coach / Scout Leader	14	Child access	64%	29%	7%
Day Care / Child Care	12	Child access	58%	25%	17%
Medical Professional	16	Physical access	25%	62%	13%

Religious leaders cluster around adult/teen contact offenses — fitting pastoral trust exploitation patterns. Judges and court officials cluster toward CSAM — digital access without physical victim contact. Teachers and coaches show the highest child contact percentages, consistent with institutional access to minors.

The policy implication of the occupation-by-charge matrix is that institutional safeguards are not interchangeable. A background check regime designed to screen for prior contact offenses provides meaningful protection in teacher and coach settings, where child contact charges dominate, but offers limited protective value in judicial or court official settings, where the dominant charge pattern is CSAM possession — an offense that frequently produces no prior criminal record and no flaggable history at the point of institutional hiring. Similarly, mandatory reporter training calibrated to recognizing grooming behavior in trusted adult relationships addresses the religious leader and therapist pattern but does not reach the digital-access pathway that accounts for half of court official cases. The occupation-by-charge data argues for a differentiated institutional safeguard architecture — one that matches the protective mechanism to the specific access structure and offense profile of each institutional setting — rather than a uniform screening regime applied identically across all environments regardless of the risk profile each actually presents.

Victim Age Implied by Statute

Victim age implied by statute is the closest the dataset can get to victim demographics — the underlying case records that would confirm victim age directly are not publicly accessible, making statutory language the practical proxy. The inference is imperfect: CSAM statutes in particular carry no age specification in the charging instrument itself, and enticement charges span a range of minor ages depending on the specific provision. What the distribution below documents is therefore the statutory floor of what the media record represents, not a precise victim age breakdown — but even as a floor, it carries a finding worth stating explicitly: nearly half of all statute appearances in the 2025 dataset imply a victim under the age of 14.

- Under 14 implied (76-5-402.1, 403.1, 404.3, 404.1, 402.3): ~490 appearances
- Age ambiguous / CSAM (76-5b-201/201.1): ~298 appearances, no direct victim relationship implied
- Adult victim implied (76-5-402, 403, 404, 402.2): ~195 appearances
- Cannot determine / kidnapping / lewdness: ~78 appearances

Approximately 46% of statute appearances imply a child victim under 14. The CSAM ambiguity (29% of entries) is analytically important: these charges do not specify victim age in the charging instrument. Actuarial research documents what recidivism trajectories look like within those same occupational and charge strata. The occupation × charge table in this report is the media-facing surface of an actuarial question that requires clinical analysis.

Research vs. Media Framing – The Core Mismatch

The Seven Structural Biases

Utah media coverage of sex offense does not diverge from research findings randomly or incidentally – it diverges through specific, identifiable structural mechanisms that operate consistently across outlets, reporters, and calendar months. Seven of those mechanisms are documented in the 2025 dataset with sufficient precision to name, measure, and present to a legislative audience as evidence rather than assertion.

Bias 01 – The Reporting Rate Illusion

Utah-specific data shows only 11.8% of women report sexual assault to law enforcement (UWLP Snapshot #15). The 1,042 media entries represent events drawn from a pool that is itself a small fraction of actual incidents.¹⁸ The reporting rate gap means that before media coverage, journalism, or legislative perception enters the picture, 88.2% of sexual assault incidents in Utah have already exited the visible pipeline permanently – not because they did not occur, but because they were never reported to an institution capable of generating a public record. What media covers is therefore not a sample of sex offense in Utah; it is a sample of the 11.8% that survived the first and largest filtration stage, then survived prosecution, then survived the further selection process by which reporters decide which cases are newsworthy.

Bias 02 – The Arrest-Stage Capture Problem

57% of media entries are single-outlet stories with no follow-through. Media captures the moment of accusation – not conviction, acquittal, or case attrition. A defendant charged and later acquitted is permanently indexed as a “sex offender case” in the public record. The arrest-stage bias does not merely produce an incomplete record – it produces a systematically prejudicial one, in which the public information environment for sex offense consists overwhelmingly of accusation without resolution, creating a population of permanently stigmatized defendants whose actual legal outcomes are invisible to anyone relying on media coverage as their information source.

Bias 03 – The Perpetrator Type Inversion

DOJ data: 34% abused by family members, 59% by acquaintances, 7% by strangers. Media frames approximately 62% of cases through an institutional stranger/unknown archetype. The distortion factor is 8.9× for stranger overrepresentation and 4.9× for family underrepresentation.¹⁵ A legislature whose members have absorbed years of coverage in

15. Snyder, H.N. (2000). Sexual Assault of Young Children as Reported to Law Enforcement: Victim, Incident, and Offender Characteristics. Bureau of Justice Statistics, DOJ OJP, NCJ 182990. Key findings: perpetrator relationship in CSA cases reported to law enforcement: 34% family member, 59% acquaintance, 7% stranger. Juvenile perpetrators responsible for approximately 40% of offenses against children under age 11.

which strangers account for 62% of media-visible perpetrators will design registry and residency restriction policy calibrated to that archetype — despite DOJ data establishing that strangers account for 7% of actual cases, meaning the policy architecture is oriented toward the least prevalent perpetrator category at a distortion factor of nearly nine to one.

Bias 04 — The Juvenile Perpetrator Blindspot

Finkelhor (CCRC): approximately 30% of CSA offenders are juveniles. Snyder (DOJ, 2000): 40% of offenses against children under 11 involve juvenile perpetrators. The 2025 Utah media dataset shows defendants under 20 at approximately 2% of entries. The undercount factor is 15–20×, driven entirely by juvenile court sealing and diversion.¹⁶ The juvenile blindspot is the most consequential single gap in the public information environment because it renders the perpetrator category most amenable to evidence-based intervention, adolescents, whose treatment responsiveness is substantially higher than adult offenders, structurally invisible to the legislative process that would need to fund that intervention.

Bias 05 — The CSAM Conflation Error

29% of entries cite CSAM as primary charge. Finkelhor, Turner & Colburn (2024) explicitly note that online/CSAM abuse requires separate analysis from contact CSA. CSAM possession charges generate high charge counts (20–80 from a single device), federal involvement, and dramatic arrest narratives — systematically inflating the perceived predator population. Every percentage point of CSAM conflation in the media record translates directly into legislative pressure calibrated to a non-contact offense profile — pressure that has produced registry expansion, sentence enhancement, and supervision requirements designed for a contact predator population that the underlying CSAM cases do not represent.

Bias 06 — The Severity Selection Cascade

Two defendants — judge Kevin Robert Christensen and fire chief Ned Brady Hansen — generated over 62 combined articles. 225 defendants generated exactly one article. The public mental model of CSA is built almost entirely from statistical outliers. When the cases that define public understanding are selected precisely because they are extraordinary — high-status defendants, institutional betrayal, dramatic procedural developments — the resulting mental model systematically overweights the characteristics that made those cases newsworthy and underweights the characteristics that make the typical case typical.

Bias 07 — The Registry Salience Pump

Only 4.7% of 2025 entries involve registry-listed defendants. CDC explicitly states registrants are not who parents should worry about most. Sex offense-specific recidivism is documented at 5–7%. Yet each reoffender article functions as an availability heuristic

16. Finkelhor, D., Turner, H., & Colburn, D. (2024). The prevalence of child sexual abuse with online sexual abuse added. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 149, 106634. Authors explicitly note that online/CSAM abuse requires separate analysis from contact CSA due to substantially different risk profiles, intervention strategies, and recidivism patterns.

anchor for legislators. The registry salience pump is self-sustaining: each reoffender article increases legislative appetite for registry expansion, each expansion increases the size of the registry population, and each increase in registry population increases the probability that a future offense will involve a listed defendant — producing more reoffender articles, and restarting the cycle, independent of whether any of it reduces harm.

Who Perpetrates CSA — Research vs. Media

The perpetrator relationship distribution is where the divergence between media coverage and research findings is most stark and most consequential for policy design. The table below places the DOJ's law-enforcement-reported perpetrator relationship data directly alongside UTRSOL's media dataset coding, producing a side-by-side comparison that makes the distortion magnitude concrete. The figures are not close. They do not reflect a modest framing difference or a debatable methodological gap — they reflect a public information environment that has inverted the actual distribution of perpetrator relationships so completely that the category posing the greatest documented risk receives the least coverage, and the category posing the least documented risk receives coverage at nearly nine times its actual prevalence.

Perpetrator category	Research (DOJ)	Media dataset	Distortion factor
Family member	34%	~7%	4.9× UNDER
Known non-family acquaintance	59%	~18%	3.3× UNDER
Stranger / unknown	7%	~62%	8.9× OVER
Juvenile / peer perpetrator	~30%	~2%	15–20× UNDER

Not all seven structural biases are equally tractable, and it matters which ones are targeted for correction. The reporting rate illusion, the arrest-stage capture problem, and the juvenile blindspot are structurally embedded in how journalism operates: sealed juvenile records and undisclosed abuse are not correctable through editorial policy, no matter how well-intentioned. However, the CSAM conflation error and the registry salience pump are partially correctable at both the journalistic and legislative levels. Reporters who distinguish CSAM possession from contact offenses in their framing, and legislators who create distinct statutory tiers for digital-access versus contact offenses, reduce the conflation bias from opposite ends of the information pipeline. The registry salience pump is amplified by follow-up coverage of reoffenders framed as cautionary examples and suppressed when first-time offense coverage is contextualized against documented base rates.

First-Time Offenders vs. Registry-Listed Reoffenders

The Core 95.3% / 4.7% Split

The 95.3% / 4.7% split is the dataset's single most policy-actionable finding, and it requires precise framing to avoid the two misreadings it most commonly attracts. The first misreading is that 95.3% proves the registry is useless — it does not; it proves the registry is retrospective, and retrospective instruments cannot prevent first-time offenses. The second misreading is that 4.7% is too small to matter — it is not; it represents approximately 47 individuals whose prior registry status was publicly known at the time of a new offense, which is exactly the population registries are designed to flag. What the split actually establishes is a proportionality problem: the registry is a real instrument with a real but narrow function, and the legislative investment it currently receives is calibrated to a threat profile orders of magnitude larger than the population it can actually address.

	Count	Description
95.30%	966 of 1,042 entries	First-time / no prior registry listing at time of offense
4.70%	~47 of 1,042 entries	Prior registry listing confirmed at time of offense

The 95.3% figure is also a statement about where prevention investment would be most effective. If registry expansion addresses 4.7% of documented cases — and does so imperfectly, given the 5–7% recidivism rate within that population — then the marginal return on additional registry expansion is constrained by the size of the addressable population. The 95.3% majority, by contrast, represents individuals with no prior registry status: people who could not have been flagged, monitored, or restrained by any registry mechanism regardless of how it was designed.

Reducing harm within that 95.3% requires a categorically different set of interventions — juvenile prevention programming, intra-family disclosure infrastructure, mandatory reporter training, institutional safeguards — that operate upstream of the criminal justice pipeline rather than downstream of a prior conviction. The 95.3% / 4.7% split is therefore not just a description of the dataset. It is a map of where the policy opportunity lies.

What Registry-Listed Cases Look Like

Registry-listed cases in the 2025 dataset are not a random sample of sex offense — they are a highly specific subset defined by the interaction of two selection effects operating simultaneously. The first is the media selection effect: reporters are more likely to note prior registry status when it is prominently featured in a law enforcement press release or court filing, meaning registry-listed

defendants who generate quieter arrests are undercounted in the dataset. The second is the offense-type selection effect: the cases that do appear cluster heavily toward digital-access charges, which generate federal involvement and detailed public filings, rather than contact offenses, which are more likely to involve sealed juvenile proceedings or private civil resolution. The profile below reflects both filters.

- Charge type: CSAM possession and enticement dominate — not contact offenses
- Pattern: digital-access cases (Kik, Snapchat, Discord) with prior CSAM conviction history
- Implication: reoffenders cluster in non-contact categories — the lowest recidivism risk tier per Hanson & Morton-Bourgon (2005)

The charge pattern among registry-listed defendants — CSAM possession and enticement dominating, contact offenses in the minority — carries a finding that runs directly counter to the public archetype of the reoffending registrant. The availability heuristic that drives registry expansion is anchored to the image of a contact offender reoffending against a new victim in the community — the stranger who was on the registry, moved in next door, and struck again.

The dataset's registry-listed cases do not predominantly describe that scenario. They describe individuals with prior digital-access convictions who accumulated additional digital-access charges — a pattern with a substantially different risk profile, a substantially different victim relationship, and a substantially different intervention requirement than the contact reoffense archetype that animates most registry expansion legislation. Designing registry policy around the archetype while the actual reoffense pattern clusters elsewhere is the downstream consequence of the registry salience pump.

What First-Time Cases Look Like

First-time cases — the 95.3% majority — are defined by a single shared characteristic that is more analytically significant than any demographic or charge-type variable: the absence of a prior conviction that any registry, background check, or supervision mechanism could have detected. Every institutional safeguard in Utah's current policy architecture assumes a checkable history. The 95.3% are the population for whom that assumption fails by design, not by implementation failure — and the profile below documents what that population actually looks like when the dataset is examined at the case level.

- Occupational: teachers, fire officials, judges, therapists, religious leaders, coaches, daycare workers
- Setting: schools, churches, fire stations, healthcare facilities, daycares, residential
- Pattern: registry could not have flagged any of these defendants — no prior conviction
- Scale: 966 entries across every district, demographic cohort, and charge category

The occupational distribution within the first-time majority deserves particular emphasis. Teachers, fire officials, judges, therapists, religious leaders, and coaches are not peripheral cases in the dataset — they are the dominant pattern within the 95.3%, accounting for the highest-volume named occupational categories and the overwhelming share of multi-outlet sustained coverage. These are individuals who passed every background check available to their institutions, held positions of formal community trust, and had no prior criminal history that any existing policy instrument could have flagged.

The policy implication is not that institutional safeguards are ineffective — it is that institutional safeguards are the appropriate response to this population, not registry expansion, because the registry by definition cannot address individuals who have never been convicted. Mandatory reporter training, institutional screening for behavioral warning signs, age-appropriate prevention education for the children in their care, and clear disclosure pathways for victims in institutional settings are the interventions calibrated to the first-time majority. They are also, not coincidentally, the interventions that receive the least legislative attention and the least funding in Utah's current policy architecture.

Research Context on Registry Effectiveness

The research record on registry effectiveness is more settled than public discourse suggests, and consistent across study designs, jurisdictions, and time periods. The table below places four key findings from that record alongside the corresponding 2025 dataset measure — not to argue that the registry serves no function, but to establish the evidentiary baseline against which Utah's current registry architecture should be evaluated by the same evidence-proportionality standard this report applies throughout.

Research finding	Measure	Source
Sex-specific recidivism rate	5–7%	Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2005 meta-analysis; DOJ BJS
General recidivism	< 20%	Far below most felony categories
Registry effect on sex offense rates	~0%	Zgoba et al. 2010 (NJ); Letourneau et al. 2010; SMART Office
2025 Utah media dataset	95.30%	First-time entries — registry could not have prevented

17. Zgoba, K.M., Witt, P., Dalessandro, M., & Veysey, B. (2010). Megan's Law: Assessing the Practical and Monetary Efficacy. U.S. DOJ Document 225370. New Jersey study finding approximately 0% measurable effect of sex offender registration and notification on recidivism rates. See also: Letourneau, E.J., Bandyopadhyay, D., Sinha, D., & Armstrong, K.S. (2010). Effects of South Carolina's Sex Offender Registration and Notification Policy on Adult Recidivism. Criminal Justice Policy Review, 21(4)

The 95.3% finding does not argue that the sex offender registry serves no purpose. It argues something more precise: that registry expansion as the primary legislative response to new sex offense events is calibrated to a population that represents neither the source of most ongoing harm nor the group that public registries can prospectively identify. The registry is, by design, a retrospective instrument applied to a retrospective population.

The 4.7% who are registry-listed at time of new offense represent the universe of cases where the registry could theoretically have functioned as a community warning mechanism – and even within that 4.7%, the charge patterns (predominantly CSAM and enticement, not contact offenses) suggest the warning mechanism did not translate into prevention. A risk-tiered registry calibrated to actual recidivism evidence by offense category would address this mismatch without dismantling the instrument – preserving its utility for the cases where evidence supports it while removing the registration burden from populations the research consistently identifies as low-risk.

Policy Implications

Chronically Over-Legislated: Registry Expansion

The registry expansion receives the most disproportionate legislative attention relative to evidence – addressing a population with <7% recidivism that represents 4.7% of documented cases. The 161:1 spending ratio (\$92M perpetrator management vs. \$569K prevention) is the financial expression of this misallocation.¹⁸ The over-legislation of registry expansion is not a function of bad intent – it is a function of a feedback loop between the media environment and the legislative calendar that this report documents in detail. Each legislative session begins with members who have spent the preceding year absorbing a daily drumbeat of arrest-stage sex offense coverage, almost none of which involves registry-listed defendants but almost all of which is framed through the stranger-predator archetype that registry expansion is designed to address.

The availability heuristic that results is not corrected by the evidentiary record because the evidentiary record – recidivism research, perpetrator relationship data, prevention cost-effectiveness studies – does not appear in the same information environment that produced the heuristic. Registry expansion bills move because they are politically costless, emotionally legible, and responsive to a perceived threat that the media environment has made vivid. Prevention investment bills stall because the harm they address is structurally invisible and the beneficiaries of the intervention – children who will not be abused because a juvenile prevention program interrupted an adolescent offending trajectory – never appear in the public record at all.

18. UWLP Research Snapshot #56 (Anderson & Madsen, 2025). See fn. 6 for full citation. Spending figures: perpetrator management \$92M; survivor services \$16.5M; prevention \$569,000. Data from 2011 Utah state budget analysis.

Over-Legislated: Institutional Safeguards

Background checks, building access rules, and institutional screening address the stranger/institutional archetype that research suggests represents approximately 10% of actual CSA perpetration. These measures are not unimportant — they address real harm — but they receive legislative investment disproportionate to their share of the problem. The disproportionality in institutional safeguard investment is partly a function of visibility and partly a function of organizational lobbying capacity. School districts, hospitals, religious institutions, and youth-serving organizations are all formally accountable entities with legal exposure, insurance requirements, and reputational incentives that make them responsive to legislative mandates around screening and access control. They also have lobbyists, legal counsel, and compliance infrastructure that can absorb and implement new requirements.

The populations most at risk from the categories of CSA that institutional safeguards do not reach — intra-family abuse, juvenile perpetration in peer settings, non-institutional grooming — have no equivalent organizational presence in the legislative process. They are represented, if at all, by underfunded victim advocacy organizations whose legislative capacity is a fraction of the institutional defendants whose safeguarding obligations drive the bills. The result is a safeguard architecture shaped as much by which institutions can be regulated as by which interventions the evidence supports.

Under-Legislated: Juvenile Prevention Programming

Letourneau et al. (2017) in *Child Maltreatment* identifies universal prevention programming targeting adolescents as the most cost-effective CSA intervention available. Given that ~30% of perpetrators are juveniles (Finkelhor/CCRC), prevention programming calibrated to this population would address a larger share of actual harm than any component of the current registry and prosecution architecture. Zero media visibility produces zero political urgency.

The absence of juvenile prevention from both the media record and the legislative calendar is particularly consequential because the intervention window is time-limited in a way that registry expansion is not. A juvenile who receives evidence-based prevention programming at 13 or 14 — before an offending trajectory is established — represents an averted harm that produces no victim, no arrest, no media entry, and no legislative visibility, but whose policy value is precisely that invisibility: a first offense that never occurred. The registry, by contrast, can only be applied after a conviction, which requires an offense, which requires a victim. The sequencing is not incidental — it reflects the fundamental difference between a prevention architecture and a response architecture. Utah currently invests \$569,000 annually in the former and \$92 million in the latter, despite research establishing that the former is more cost-effective per prevented offense.

Under-Legislated: Intra-Family Disclosure Pathways

34–50% of CSA is intra-family (DOJ; CDC). These cases require disclosure support systems, mandatory reporter training, family court resources, and trauma-informed child welfare infrastructure — not additional criminal prosecution tools. The near-complete absence of intra-family cases from media coverage means this category is also nearly absent from legislative discussion. The under-legislation of intra-family disclosure pathways carries a cost that compounds over time in a way that registry expansion costs do not.

A child who discloses intra-family abuse to a mandated reporter who lacks adequate training, or who attempts to access family court resources that are underfunded and backlogged, or who encounters a child welfare system not equipped to handle trauma-informed intervention, does not simply receive inadequate service in the moment — they receive a message about the reliability of disclosure that shapes their willingness to seek help again, shapes their younger siblings' understanding of whether disclosure is safe, and shapes the community's informal knowledge about whether the system can be trusted with intra-family cases.

Registry expansion produces no equivalent compounding effect in the communities it is designed to protect, because the population it monitors is small, its recidivism rate is low, and its connection to the intra-family majority is structurally nonexistent. The legislative opportunity cost of prioritizing registry expansion over intra-family disclosure infrastructure is therefore not a one-year misallocation — it is a generational one, paid in the silence of children who concluded that the system was not built for them.

The Legislative vs. Evidence Gap

UTRSOL's 2026 General Session record provides the most granular available evidence of the gap in operation. Across 24 tracked bills and formal testimony before 13 committees, the session produced no legislative wins for evidence-proportionality reform and saw every opposed bill advance to passage (H.B. 116 excepted which satalled in the Senate) Bills expanding registry scope, increasing supervision requirements, and adding offense categories with negligible recidivism evidence moved through committee with minimal friction, while no floor time was allocated to juvenile prevention programming, intra-family disclosure infrastructure, or risk-tiered registry reform.

Policy critiques submitted for H.B. 110 Offender Modifications, H.B. 116 Criminal Fines Amendments (sex offense/prostitution fines; failed to pass), H.B. 123 Sex, Kidnap, and Child Abuse Offender Registration Amendments, H.B. 274 Sentencing Amendments, H.B. 370 Sex Offender Oversight Amendments — each grounded in the same research record this report documents — were received without generating substantive floor debate on their

evidentiary premises. The session record is not a failure of advocacy; it is a data point. It documents, with legislative-calendar precision, what the 12:1 media coverage ratio and the 161:1 spending ratio look like when translated into bill counts and committee outcomes.

UTRSOL's engagement with the Utah Commission on Criminal and Juvenile Justice (CCJJ) — documented in Publication 2026-27 — extended the gap analysis beyond media coverage into the institutional architecture that structures how evidence reaches legislators in the first place. CCJJ functions as the primary evidence-translation mechanism between Utah's criminal justice research base and its legislative process, and the institutional analysis found that the commission's output mix, staffing priorities, and publication schedule reflect the same structural imbalances this media report documents: perpetrator management and prosecution metrics receive substantially more routine measurement and reporting than prevention investment, recidivism outcomes, or population-level harm indicators.

Prevention Coverage Analysis

The 12:1 Crime-to-Prevention Coverage Ratio

The 12:1 ratio is the prevention dataset's organizing finding, and its significance lies not in the absolute numbers — 1,042 crime articles versus 85 prevention articles — but in what the disproportion reveals about the structure of the public information environment.

Prevention coverage is not merely less frequent than crime coverage; it is concentrated in a different part of the calendar, produced by a different subset of outlets, and calibrated to a different definition of newsworthiness than the arrest-stage coverage that dominates the primary dataset. The result is not one information environment with two emphases — it is effectively two separate information environments operating in parallel, one of which shapes legislative perception of the problem and one of which does not.

1,042 crime/arrest articles <i>Jan-Dec 2025, 10 outlets</i>	85 prevention articles <i>Tracked in parallel</i>	12:1 crime-to-prevention ratio <i>Media covers 12.3x more crime than prevention</i>	161:1 state spending ratio <i>UWLP Snapshot #56, 2011 data</i>
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Two parallel datasets were tracked across the full calendar year 2025. The crime/arrest dataset of 1,042 articles was alongside a prevention dataset of 85 articles which covers victim support campaigns, online safety education, policy changes, and advocacy. The 12:1 ratio demonstrates that criminal justice reporting structurally dominates the public information environment, mirroring Utah's 161:1 state spending ratio at the legislative level. These ratios are not coincidental — they describe the same structural priority operating at two different levels of the public information.

because reporters chose to ignore them, but because they generate no press releases, no legislative hearings, no advocacy rallies, and no institutional announcements that would trigger standard assignment desk coverage.

Category	Share	Articles	Representative content
Legislative & Policy	35%	~30 articles	Registry reform bills, consent bill, polygraph limits, human trafficking sentencing
Victim Awareness	21%	~18 articles	“I Believe You” campaign, UCASA rallies, blame/shame awareness, “What Were You Wearing”
Institutional Programs	18%	~15 articles	University of Utah prevention, SLC police bar partnership, summer camps for crime victims, VR crime law implementation
Research / Opinion / Other	26%	~22 articles	UWLP data reports, SLTrib editorial commentary, online safety tips, law enforcement sting announcements

Critical absences: Of 85 prevention articles tracked in 2025, none substantively address juvenile-perpetrated CSA or juvenile prevention programming — despite research showing 30–40% of CSA is perpetrated by minors. Similarly, intra-family disclosure support, mandatory reporter training, and family court resources appear at near-zero volume in the prevention dataset. The two categories research identifies as highest priority are absent from both datasets.

Outlet Distribution in Prevention vs. Crime Coverage

The outlet distribution shift between crime and prevention coverage is one of the most structurally informative findings in the companion dataset, because it reveals that the same organizations do not dominate both information environments equally. The broadcast-first outlets that define crime coverage recede significantly in prevention coverage, while print and digital outlets with broader civic mandates — particularly Deseret News and the Salt Lake Tribune — account for a disproportionate share of prevention content relative to their crime coverage footprint. That shift is not incidental; it reflects fundamentally different editorial models, newsworthiness criteria, and audience relationships that determine which

outlets are structurally capable of sustaining prevention coverage. In effect, prevention journalism appears to depend less on reactive incident reporting capacity and more on institutional willingness to invest in contextual, policy-oriented, and resource-intensive public-interest reporting.

Outlet	Prevention share	Crime share	Key shift
KSL (incl. radio + KSLTV)	33%	43.50%	Dominant in both; less dominant in prevention
Deseret News	15%	2.30%	Dramatically overrepresented in prevention vs. crime
ABC4 + KUTV	13%	36.30%	Dramatically underrepresented in prevention
Salt Lake Tribune	9%	<1%	Opinion/editorial layer; near-zero crime coverage
Fox13	~0%	12.80%	Near-zero prevention coverage; crime-first editorial posture confirmed

Deseret News is dramatically overrepresented in prevention coverage (15%) relative to crime coverage (2.3%) — reflecting a broader civic mandate than TV news. Fox13 is the inverse: 12.8% of crime coverage but near-zero prevention coverage, confirming a structurally arrest-first editorial posture. No outlet sustains prevention coverage year-round at volume in either dataset.

The 12:1 coverage ratio and the 161:1 state spending ratio together establish that the information environment which shapes legislative priority is calibrated almost entirely around criminal justice events and perpetrator management — not prevention. Media framing inflates stranger-predator salience, renders juvenile and intra-family harm invisible, and produces legislative pressure calibrated to the 4.7% of documented cases that involve registry-listed defendants — not the 95.3% it cannot address.

Analytical Limitations and Caveats

The composition of Utah’s 1,042 articles has several important methodological limitations that any formal use of this material should acknowledge:

- Registry flag undercounting: Registry-listed offenders was extracted from article content — only cases where a reporter explicitly noted prior registry status were flagged. The actual percentage of registry-listed defendants is likely higher than 4.7%.

- Perpetrator relationship coding: The media framing percentages (7% family, 18% acquaintance, 62% stranger) are estimated from case archetype coding, not direct perpetrator-victim relationship data. They represent how cases are framed in coverage, not confirmed perpetrator-victim relationships.
- Occupation × charge correlation: Charge category percentages within occupation groups are estimates from small samples; for some categories (Day Care: n=12, Coach/Scout: n=14), sample sizes are too small for reliable statistical inference.
- Policy priority index: The legislation vs. evidence chart uses estimated relative index values, not absolute bill counts or funding figures. It is directionally accurate but should be labeled illustrative in formal publications.
- Age data availability: Age distribution figures reflect entries where age data was presented in articles, not all 1,042 entries were provided.
- Demographic gap: The dataset contains no victim demographic data, making it impossible to assess whether prosecution patterns align with victimization patterns documented in BRFSS/YRBS data across race, ethnicity, disability status, or sexual orientation.
- Prevention dataset categorization: The 85 prevention articles were categorized by URL and headline content, not full-text analysis. Category assignments are directionally accurate but not peer-reviewed.
- Publication lag: The 2025 media dataset represents criminal justice events — not the underlying abuse incidents, which are distributed across many decades. The most recently occurring abuse is structurally least likely to appear in media because disclosure and prosecution take time.

The three limitations that matter most for this report’s policy applications are the registry flag undercounting, the victim demographic gap, and the prevention dataset’s URL-level categorization. A data-sharing arrangement with UCJC or a research affiliate with access to Utah court records would address registry flag undercounting by cross-referencing the media dataset against actual registry enrollment records at the point of new arrest — producing a more precise registry-listed percentage than article-text coding can achieve.

Victim demographic data would require a research partnership with a public health or criminology affiliate capable of linking to BRFSS or YRBS cohort data at the case level. The prevention dataset’s categorization would strengthen substantially with full-text analysis rather than URL/headline coding — a task appropriate for a graduate research assistant or a funded journalism research partnership. None of these gaps invalidate the current report’s findings. All of them are priority targets for UTRSOL’s research development capacity in 2026 and 2027.

