

Written evidence from Nordic Model Now! [EOV0043]

Evidence from NordicModelNow!

Nordic Model Now! is a UK grassroots campaign for the Nordic Model approach to prostitution.

To what extent is there evidence that men who exhibit certain non-criminal behaviours, including online, go on to commit criminal offences against women and girls?

The extent of violence and abuse against women and girls in the UK

Acts of violence and abuse against women and girls have reached epidemic proportions in the UK. We are at a crisis point.

- 193,566 sexual offences were recorded by the police in England and Wales in the year ending March 2022, the highest level recorded and an increase of 30,322 compared with the year ending March 2020¹.
- The [Crime Survey for England and Wales](#), which provides the best measure of victimisation, estimates that 3.3% of women aged 16 years and over, equating to 798,000 women, were victims of sexual assault in the year ending March 2022 and that 7.7% of women have been a victim of rape since the age of 16.²
- [Sexual crimes recorded by the police in Scotland](#) increased by 15% from 13,131 in 2020-21 to 15,049 in 2021-22. 17% of these recorded crimes were rape or attempted rape.³ The [level of reported sexual crime in Scotland](#) has increased by 96% over the last decade.⁴
- 1.7 million women experienced domestic abuse in the year ending March 2022, a prevalence rate of approximately 7 in 100 women.⁵
- Just over a quarter (27%) of all girls and young women have experienced unwanted attention or stalking. 67% of girls and young women have experienced sexual harassment from other students at school, with the proportion rising to 83% of 17- and 18-year-old girls.⁶
- The “Everyone’s Invited” website set up by a university student, Soma Sara, in 2021, as a forum on which young people, particularly young women, could share testimonies and experiences of violence, abuse, and harassment they face daily at schools and on campuses around the UK, has received over 50,000 submissions.
- Many young women who contacted the [We Can’t Consent To This](#) campaign said they felt pressured to go along with ‘rough sex’, including strangulation, for fear of being labelled ‘prudish’.

¹ Sexual offences in England and Wales overview: year ending March 2022. Office for National Statistics, 23 March 2023

² *ibid.*

³ Recorded crime in Scotland 2021-2022. Scottish Government, 28 June 2022

⁴ Rape Crisis Scotland press release, 28 June 2022

⁵ Domestic abuse in England and Wales overview November 2022, Office for National Statistics, 25 November 2022

⁶ It happens all the time, Girlguiding Research Briefing, June 2021

- In 2022, the [Internet Watch Foundation](#) (IWF) discovered more Category A child sexual abuse material online than ever before. This material contains the most severe kinds of sexual abuse, more than doubling since 2020. 96% of the victims were girls.⁷
- Girls aged between 12 and 15 years old are most likely to be victims of online grooming.⁸

The influence of online pornography

There is ample evidence to suggest that one of the biggest driving forces behind the increase in acts of abuse and violence against women and girls is free, unfettered access to online pornography.

A vast, unregulated online pornography industry has grown exponentially over the last three decades. The type of pornography now freely available on mainstream pornography sites is misogynistic, racist, degrading, increasingly violent and dehumanising.

More than 10 years ago academic [research](#) into the most popular pornography films found that 88% of the scenes contained physical aggression directed at women, such as gagging, strangulation, spanking, and slapping.⁹ The situation has deteriorated since and, if left unchecked, will continue to do so, because online pornography operates in a competitive marketplace.

The companies operating online pornography sites, and the porn producers who upload films to them, compete for viewers' attention online with filmed acts of destruction, torture, and murder in conflict zones and elsewhere which regularly circulate online.

The websites glamorise the subjugation of women through videos of sexual coercion, abuse and exploitation, humiliation, punishment, torture, and pain. They host enormous quantities of illegal content such as rape, abuse and other non-consensual sex acts, image-based sexual abuse (often wrongly referred to as "revenge porn"), "spy-cam porn" (illegal surreptitious recording of women and girls in changing rooms, locker rooms, gynaecological appointments etc.) as well as Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM).

A research study carried out by Dr Fiona Vera-Gray, Professor Clare McGlynn and colleagues at Durham University published in the [British Journal of Criminology](#) in April 2021 examined the ways in which mainstream pornography positions sexual violence as a normative sexual script by analysing the video titles found on the landing pages of the three most popular pornography websites in the UK - Pornhub, XVideos, and XHamster.

The study was unique in focussing on the content immediately advertised to a new user. This is how the researchers summarised their findings:

We found that one in eight titles shown to first-time users on the first page of mainstream porn sites describe sexual activity that constitutes sexual violence. Our findings raise serious

⁷ Internet Watch Foundation Annual Report 2022

⁸ "New figures reveal four in five victims of online grooming are girls" – NSPCC press release 6 October 2021

⁹ Ana J. Bridges, Robert Wosnitzer, Erica Scharrer, Chyng Sun, Rachael Liberman, Aggression and Sexual Behavior in Best-Selling Pornography Videos: A Content Analysis Update, *Violence Against Women*, Volume 16, Issue 10, October, 2010

*questions about the extent of criminal material easily and freely available on mainstream pornography websites and the efficacy of current regulatory mechanisms.*¹⁰

They also found that:

- The word ‘Teen’ was the most frequently occurring word across the entire dataset
- Sexual activity between family members, such as incest, was the most frequent form of sexual violence
- The second most common category was that of physical aggression and sexual assault.

Pornhub’s position as the most popular mainstream pornography site has been unaffected by recent accusations of monetising videos of rape, sexual assault and other acts of violence, and numerous lawsuits related to human trafficking. It is free to view and in 2019, when it stopped providing information about its overall user count, received more than 80,000 visits per minute.

We will not end the epidemic of violence against women and girls if we do not curb the influence of the pornography industry.

[Forty years of research](#) has shown that there is a clear and unambiguous link between the consumption of pornography and violence against women and girls both online and off.

An [independent report commissioned by the UK government](#) and published in 2020 included a literature review of 19 academic papers. It found that “there is substantial evidence of an association between the use of pornography and harmful sexual attitudes and behaviours towards women.” The report found an even stronger association where violent pornography was concerned and that most people agree that “an increase in violent pornography has led to more people being asked to agree to violent sex acts ...and to more people being sexually assaulted.”¹¹

A [2015 meta-analysis](#) which examined the links between pornography and sexually aggressive behaviour also found ‘that exposure to non-violent and violent pornography results in increases in both attitudes supporting aggression and in actual aggression’.¹²

Worryingly, these attitudes and behaviours are being formed at increasingly young ages. Research by the [British Board of Film Classification \(BBFC\)](#) found that children were watching or coming across pornography online from the age of 7 or 8 in some cases, with 51% of 11-to-13-year-olds having seen pornography at some point. This access is damaging children’s mental health and warping their perceptions of healthy sex and relationships, including consent.¹³

Unsurprisingly children’s consumption of online pornography has been associated with the dramatic increase in child-on-child sexual abuse, which now constitutes around a third of all child

¹⁰ Fiona Vera-Gray, Clare McGlynn, Ibad Kureshi, Kate Butterby, Sexual violence as a sexual script in mainstream online pornography, *The British Journal of Criminology*, Volume 61, Issue 5, September 2021, Pages 1243–1260

¹¹ The relationship between pornography use and harmful sexual behaviours – independent report, Government Equalities Office, February 2020

¹² Paul Wright, Robert Tokunaga, Ashley Kraus, A Meta-Analysis of Pornography Consumption and Actual Acts of Sexual Aggression in General Population Studies, *Journal of Communication*, December 2015

¹³ BBFC, 2019, Research into Children and Pornography

sexual abuse. There is also a link between pornography consumption and criminal adolescent behaviour, including sexual offences.¹⁴

[Recent research](#) by the Children's Commissioner for England into case files of child-on-child sexual abuse found that 50% contained at least one term referring to an act of sexual violence commonly portrayed in pornography. According to the Children's Commissioner for England 'additional review of some of these cases found children suggesting direct links between pornography exposure and the harmful sexual behaviour exhibited.'¹⁵

An [Ofsted review of sexual abuse in schools and colleges](#) published in June 2021, revealed how prevalent sexual harassment and online sexual abuse are for children and young people. The review expressed concern that, for some children, incidents are so commonplace that they see no point in reporting them." It highlighted how easy access to pornography had set unhealthy expectations of sexual relationships and shaped perceptions about women and girls. Women and girls are now expected to partake in increasingly dangerous sex acts such as anal sex and strangulation.

Research from the Children's Commissioner for England found that 47% of young people think that girls expect sex to involve physical aggression. A further 42% think that girls enjoy physically aggressive sex acts.¹⁶

Andrew Tate is one of the more widely-publicised instances of men taking advantage of the entitlement years of exposure to [online porn](#) has given to men, but he is far from alone. The very success of his Hustler's Academy is built on the ideas that society owes men access to the bodies of women, that the dehumanisation and degradation of women is normal and a measure of a man's success, and that the only issue is how a man goes about achieving it. His views about the legitimacy of sexual exploitation of young women found fertile ground because of the online porn industries and would not have gained the traction they have done without it.

Surveys in the US have shown that teenagers are now having [less sex than their parents did](#).¹⁷ In a [paper](#) published in 2019 reporting the results of seven large, nationally representative surveys, Jean M. Twenge and Heejung Park noted that between 1976 and 2016 there was a significant decline in adolescents engaging in adult activities, including having sex and dating.

This is not what teenage boys think if their expectation of the level and nature of sexual activity happening around them comes from online porn.

The same contempt for women expressed on "incel" forums, to great condemnation, is routinely expressed on [sex buyer forums](#),¹⁸ reviews by sex buyers of prostituted women on [commercial sex websites](#)¹⁹, and in many contexts on social media and elsewhere to widespread indifference.

What unites them is that the women in question declined to fulfil misogynist sexual expectations largely created by pornography. Women are at the highest risk of serious violence or homicide from men with whom they are, or have been, in relationships, or from family members. It isn't a lack of access to sex or relationships that has given these men a propensity to violent misogyny.

¹⁴ Mori C, Park J, Racine N, Ganshorn H, Hartwick C, Madigan S. Exposure to sexual content and problematic sexual behaviors in children and adolescents: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Child Abuse Negl.* 2023 Sep;143:106255.

¹⁵ Evidence on pornography's influence on harmful sexual behaviour among children, Children's Commissioner, 9 May 2023

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ Charles Fain Lehman, Fewer American High Schoolers Having Sex Than Ever Before September 2020

¹⁸ Nordic Model Now!, accessed September 21st 2023

¹⁹ Ibid

Common pornography categories such as ‘teen porn’ and ‘barely legal’ porn (including incest-themed porn) depict sexual activity with children, by using small, young-looking performers who are made to look underage by using props such as stuffed toys, lollipops and school uniforms. This material is extremely harmful; normalising children as objects of sexual desire and [driving the demand for “real” child sexual abuse material](#).²⁰

Police and practitioners in the UK have noted the increasing trend of men ‘crossing the line’, acquiring a sexual interest in children because of their heavy porn use, often via the bridge of ‘teen porn’. Research also shows that high consumption of content which sexualises children can also result in offenders viewing illegal child sexual abuse material.²¹

Simon Bailey, the former Chief Constable of Norfolk Constabulary who is the National Police Chief’s Council lead on child protection, told the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse that free online pornography is ‘creating a group of men who will look at pornography and the pornography gets harder and harder and harder, to the point where they are simply getting no sexual stimulation from it at all, so the next click is child abuse imagery. This is a real problem.’²²

Michael Sheath, who worked with the Lucy Faithfull Foundation, a UK-wide charity dedicated to the prevention of child sexual abuse, for over 20 years agrees, argues that “what we are seeing on a daily basis is the conflation of easy access to hardcore and deviant pornography and an interest in child molestation. The link is unambiguous.”²³

The porn industry is actively monetising videos that promote child sexual abuse, and while sites like Pornhub may have changed their search tags, due to the ongoing scrutiny of its practices, videos with titles which relate to incest, refer to “teen” or are deliberately ambiguous about the age of a person on whom sexual violence is being inflicted, are still common on mainstream pornography sites.²⁴

The pornography industry is grooming men and boys to commit acts of violence against women and girls, while grooming girls to accept violence as normal. History has shown that dehumanising, degrading and objectifying human beings is always the first step in committing violence against them and this is exactly what the pornography industry does.

- **How effective is (a) the police service and (b) the criminal justice system at responding to these behaviours and offences and how might those responses be improved?**

Online depictions of sexualised violence create expectations in viewers which greatly underestimate risks of pain, serious harm or even death that the acts depicted can carry if emulated in real life. Porn films tend to feature positions chosen to fit with camera angles, rather than because they increase sexual pleasure. Injuries and harm inflicted on women during porn shoots are edited out.

For someone to be convicted of murder in England and Wales, the prosecution must prove beyond reasonable doubt both that the defendant caused the victim’s death and that they had the required level of intent at the time. For murder, the level of intent is subjective. In 2003 the Supreme Court confirmed that the necessary level of intention exists if the defendant feels sure that death, or serious bodily harm, is a virtual certainty as a result of the defendant’s actions and that the

²⁰ CEASE, 2021, Expose Big Porn Report

²¹ Ibid

²² Ibid

²³ Ibid

²⁴ Ibid

defendant appreciated this was the case.²⁵ This is a high bar to cross and is partly the result of the mandatory penalty for murder being a life sentence.

The porn viewer does not see harm suffered by performers because, like using condoms and lube in scenes involving heterosexual sex, the consequences are seen as an interruption of the fantasy. What would a porn viewer then understand was a “virtual certainty”?

Advocates for ‘rough sex’ and BDSM have appeared frequently on the mainstream media in recent years, following trials of men who have murdered women during ‘rough sex’, to stress that what took place violated BDSM ‘norms’ and could have been avoided had the killer and victim taken proper instruction from people like them.

At the same time, they are reticent about criticising acts of extreme violence which clearly violated ‘norms’ and resulted in serious injury or death because they fear being accused of ‘kink-shaming’. This does not inspire trust in them as providers of instruction and guidance.

Pornography [erodes empathy](#)²⁶ and research shows users of pornography are also [more likely to believe rape myths](#).²⁷

The offences of rape, assault by penetration, sexual assault and causing another person to engage in sexual activity set out in sections 1-4 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 require the prosecution to prove beyond reasonable doubt that:

- the defendant acted intentionally;
- that the complainant did not consent to the act; and
- that the defendant did not reasonably believe that the complainant consented.

A jury must determine whether a belief is reasonable by having regard to all the circumstances, including any steps the defendant took to ascertain whether the complainant consented. There is no requirement that a complainant demonstrate or communicate to the defendant a lack of consent.

The test of “reasonable belief” is a subjective test with an objective element. The Crown Prosecution Service’s legal guidance on rape and sexual offences recommends dealing with the issue by asking two questions:

- Did the suspect genuinely believe the complainant consented? This relates to his or her personal capacity to evaluate consent (the subjective element of the test).
- If so, did the suspect reasonably believe it? It will be for the jury to decide if his or her belief was reasonable (the objective element).

Porn directors prefer to induce expressions of fear and distress on the faces of porn performers through acts of sexual violence because this content, which then associates sex as something painful for women, attracts more attention from viewers.

Esther, a survivor of porn and prostitution, summarises some of the consequences of this here:

²⁵ *R v Matthews (Darren John)* [2003] EWCA Crim 192.

²⁶ The Conversation, 2017, How pornography removes empathy – and fosters harassment and abuse

²⁷ John D. Foubert, Matthew W. Brosi, R. Sean Bannon, Pornography Viewing among Fraternity Men: Effects on Bystander Intervention, Rape Myth Acceptance and Behavioral Intent to Commit Sexual Assault, *Sexual Addiction & Compulsivity, The Journal of Treatment & Prevention*, November 2011, Pages 212-231

There is a lot of ignorance about female anatomy and physiology and a lack of curiosity about risks of serious harm and injury among men exposed to porn. Expressions of pain, discomfort, and fear on the faces of porn performers are intentional and are used as a means of arousal. Lube and condoms are often discouraged on porn shoots involving heterosexual anal sex for this very reason.

When I see what is claimed to be sexual education advice on anal sex aimed at young teenagers the giveaway for me that the advice has been written by men, or by women with little experience of what they are writing about, is the omission of the need to change condoms if you are having vaginal sex after anal sex. Not doing so exposes the woman to serious risk of urinary tract infections and other health problems.²⁸

Acts of sexual violence and cruelty featured in online porn are not received by viewers as outlier behaviours but as part of a rote-learned sexual curriculum.

Performers are depicted reacting to acts of violence with pleasure or neutrality. They are often required to sign agreements after a shoot has ended, but before they are paid, consenting to what happened during the shoot and stating that they were not harmed. They risk not being hired again if they complain or are considered uncooperative or “difficult”.

What potential impact would having acquired your understanding of consent through using pornography have on your answers as a juror to the questions about whether the belief of a defendant charged with an offence under sections 1-4 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 that there was consent to an act was genuine, or that the genuine belief was reasonable?

Through which lens would a defendant have acquired “genuine belief”? How would a juror whose understanding also came from regularly watching sexually violent porn online determine what was “reasonable”?

How can a police officer or prosecutor for whom images featuring the degradation, dehumanisation and abuse of women are entertainment claim objectivity in assessing evidence relating to these questions?

Although there is no requirement that a complainant demonstrates or communicates to the defendant a lack of consent, not doing so may have consequences if acts the complainant dislikes or found harmful continue during what then becomes a relationship. There are many reasons why she may not initially have demonstrated or communicated a lack of consent, including worrying about what she perceives as her lack of experience, or being concerned about being called a prude, but has decided to raise it a few months into the relationship.

In the [Crown Court Compendium](#), which was most recently updated in June 2023, the Judicial College provides guidance to judges about directions they should give to juries. Section 20-4 of the compendium is about directions on consent and reasonable belief in consent in cases involving sexual offences. The guidance says:

The jury may need to be alerted to the distinction between consent and mere submission: see Doyle1332 in which the Court of Appeal described the distinction between (i) reluctant but free exercise of choice, especially in a long-term loving relationship, and (ii) unwilling submission due to fear of worse consequences. In Zafar, Pill J directed that: “C may not

²⁸ [The Colonisation of Intimate Life | Nordic Model Now!](#)

particularly want sexual intercourse on a particular occasion, but because it is her husband or her partner who is asking for it, she will consent to sexual intercourse. The fact that such consent is given reluctantly or out of a sense of duty to her partner i[t i]s still consent.”
[Paragraph 20-4.4]

It then gives these examples about “long-term relationships”:

Example 6: Non-consensual sexual activity within or immediately after a long term relationship *It is agreed that D and W have had a long term sexual relationship. This is relevant to the question of whether or not W consented to D {specify act} on this occasion. That is because the situation between two people who have/have had a long term sexual relationship is different from a situation in which two people are strangers or have met one another only a few times.*

When two people have/have had such a relationship, there may be some give and take between them in relation to any number of things, including their sexual relationship. And sometimes a partner who is not feeling enthusiastic may nevertheless reluctantly give consent to sex.

However, when two people are/have been in a long term sexual relationship it is not the case that both of them will consent to any sexual activity which takes place. One person is fully entitled not to consent regardless of their relationship. What you must decide in this case is whether W consented freely and by choice, even if reluctantly, to what took place or whether W did not consent but submitted to it. You must also decide whether D may have reasonably believed that W was consenting, taking into account all the evidence including the nature of the [previous] relationship between W and D.

Interpretation of the consent/submission distinction is likely to depend on how jurors view the testimony given by the complainant.

How often are these interpretations influenced by sexual scripts derived from pornography? How often is a complainant judged through the lens of similar, porn-derived interpretations from the very point at which she reports her abuse to the police?

Marital rape was criminalised after the House of Lords decision in *R. v R* in October 1991²⁹ and subsequent legislation, but there are still circumstances in which there is a higher likelihood of sexual violence going unpunished if the complainant is in a long-term relationship than might be the case if the sexual activity took place during a single encounter.

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 made changes to the offence of coercive control, which can now be committed through a single act, as well as by a course of conduct.

As with other offences, the effect of these changes will depend on their implementation and therefore on the enforcement priorities of the police and Crown Prosecution Service. In considering this and the use which can be made of other offences, it is important to note that the different

²⁹ *R v R* [1991] UKHL 12

branches of the criminal justice system have experienced some of the largest funding cuts since the introduction of austerity budgets following the 2008 banking crisis.

- **To what extent is there evidence that escalating behaviours is a particular problem within the emergency services and other public sector organisations?**

Sexism, misogyny and violence against women and girls are endemic in some of the UK's emergency services and public sector organisations.

In July 2022 Ben Wallace, who was then Secretary of State for Defence, announced, that paying for sex while on overseas operations would become a disciplinary offence for members of the UK armed forces.

This was a very welcome, particularly as he mentioned the growing numbers of women serving in the armed forces as a factor behind this change. He asked what it says to women in the armed forces when their male colleagues come back from a night out and talk about their exploits in the brothels, saying that it was not acceptable that they should have to work with male colleagues who displayed such misogyny.

A factor in the political background to the Secretary of State's announcement was the murder of Agnes Wanjiru by a serving British soldier in Kenya and its subsequent cover-up.

As female members of the armed forces also work with male colleagues within the UK, and the arguments about taking steps to recruit more female members by reducing misogyny are the same here, the rule introduced by Ben Wallace should apply to members of the UK armed forces while they are stationed here.

Recent events have also uncovered the institutional misogyny and sexism in police forces across the UK, particularly in the London Metropolitan Police Force ('the Met'). The below are just some examples that have come to the public's attention in the last few years:

- The kidnapping and murder of [Sarah Everard](#) in March 2021 by Wayne Couzens, an elite serving police officer.
- The [strip search of Child Q](#),³⁰ a Black child, at school by Met officers.
- Revelations about the misogyny, homophobia and racism at [Charing Cross Police Station](#).³¹
- The [IOPC report](#) that found misogyny and sexism to be rampant across the Met including the shocking revelations that officers openly boast of 'having sex' with women they arrest.³²
- The conviction of [David Carrick](#), another elite and long-serving Met officer, for 85 serious offences against women over 17 years. The Met knew of the allegations yet repeatedly failed to act on them.³³

³⁰ The Guardian, June 2022

³¹ The Mirror, February 2022

³² IOPC, Reports of misogyny and sexual harassment in the Metropolitan Police

³³ The Guardian, January 2023

Far from protecting women, it is now clear that a culture of misogyny, sexual harassment, sexism, racism and discrimination is deeply embedded within the Met.

These problems are not confined to London. An [independent report](#)³⁴ published in November 2022 looked at eight separate police forces and concluded that “a culture of misogyny, sexism, predatory behaviour towards female police officers and staff and members of the public” was prevalent in all the forces inspected. They found:

- Police officers made unwarranted stops of women in public places.
- Crimes such as sexual assault were covered up and ignored.
- Widespread harassment of female officers and members of the public.

Every single female police officer and staff member the inspectors spoke to reported being harassed, and sometimes also assaulted, by their male police colleagues.

These attitudes and behaviours do not exist within a vacuum but rather are part of the wider culture that is becoming increasingly misogynistic and sexist through easy access to pornography, the seepage of porn into mainstream culture, and the trivialisation, normalisation and increase in size of the sexual exploitation (commercial sex) industry in all its forms – from pornography, through lap dancing and webcamming, right up to prostitution, escorting and ‘sugar dating’.

Police officers are not immune to the impacts of the pornography industry, and it is extremely distressing that the people who are tasked with protecting women and girls are also some of the men who are the biggest threat to their safety.

As well as the consumption of pornography, it is important to highlight the role that sex buying plays in positioning women as sexual objects for men’s use. Buying sex is both a driver and result of sex inequality, is inextricably linked to sex trafficking and is inherently violent. Yet, research shows that police officers regularly buy sex from vulnerable and exploited women, as well as committing other violence against them during this process.

While the recently released, National Police Chiefs’ Council’s (NPCC) “[Sex Work National Police Guidance](#)” for the UK, does now restrict police officers from buying sex, a welcome step, it does not position buying sex as violence against women.

The Scottish Government considers prostitution to be a form of violence against women and girls. The Home Secretary announced earlier this year that the abuse of women and girls is a national threat on a par with terrorism. This would suggest that more public funding and staff resources should be devoted to it and that it should be as high a priority for police forces in England & Wales as terrorism.

The NPCC on the other hand, has framed prostitution as a legitimate form of work, while also stating that it is something which police officers should not partake in, as it may undermine public

³⁴ His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services, An inspection of vetting, misconduct, and misogyny in the police service, November 2022

trust, run the risk of officers committing or condoning offences, or may result in individual police officers being the target of blackmail.

This reckless position ignores the decades of research that shows that buying sex is violence against women and girls. The links are long [well established](#) between men's prostitution use and attitudes that underpin male violence towards women and girls.³⁵ This wasn't mentioned in the NPCC guidance, which is a missed opportunity given the epidemic of male violence against women and girls that we are now witnessing and the extent to which perpetrators in police forces throughout the UK have operated with impunity. There is unequivocal evidence that both [porn consumption](#)³⁶ and [buying sex](#)³⁷ are associated with a decrease in empathy and an increase in attitudes that underlie men's verbal and physical aggression towards women, including rape and sexual harassment.

In a [2012 study](#)³⁸ of men who buy sex, one man said: "Men pay for women because he can have whatever and whoever he wants. Lots of men go to prostitutes so they can do things to them that real women would not put up with." (Notice he doesn't consider the women involved in prostitution to be "real women".) Nearly half of the men interviewed clearly agreed with this because they said they believed that once they had paid, they were entitled to do whatever they wanted to her – regardless of what she wanted. And once you get used to treating women as not "real women" in one situation, you're likely to start treating women disrespectfully in other situations too.

It is no surprise therefore that both Wayne Couzens and David Carrick were self-confessed avid porn users, that the crimes they committed were straight out of a mainstream porn scene, and that Wayne Couzens boasted to his Met colleagues about using women in prostitution.

It is simply inconceivable that the misogynistic and sexist culture within the Met and other UK police forces will change while police officers experience no sanction for watching porn and engaging in porn-style banter and are only forbidden to pay to sexually use and abuse women in prostitution in order to protect themselves.

What does it say to women whose male colleagues are dissuaded from buying sex from vulnerable women purely because it may harm the men. The implication of the NPCC Guidelines is that buying women like they are nothing but sex objects is perfectly acceptable provided it cannot be used against you. With this insinuation coming from the highest echelons of the police service in the UK, is it any wonder that misogyny, sexism and violence is rampant across police forces in the UK?

The role of commercial sex websites based in the UK in contributing to huge increases in the numbers of women and young girls entering the sex industry because of trafficking, austerity budgets and media misrepresentation of what involvement in the sex industry is like, has been enormous.

³⁵ Nordic Model Now!, accessed 21st September 2023

³⁶ Mary Sharpe, Darryl Mead, Problematic Pornography Use: Legal and Health Policy Considerations, *Current Addiction Reports (2021)* Volume 8, July 2021

³⁷ Nordic Model Now!, accessed 21st September 2023

³⁸ Eaves, Men who buy sex, December 2009

Creating and maintaining an over-supply of women is a deliberate strategy in all parts of the sex industry, designed to place pressure on women who enter the industry to cross boundaries, such as not having paid sex itself, or not performing certain acts. Their returns diminish either way, while the profits of the owners of the commercial sex websites through which their exploitation is facilitated increase exponentially through the hundreds of millions.

The Scottish Parliament Cross-Party Group on Commercial Sexual Exploitation in its March 2021 report [Online Pimping: An inquiry into Sexual Exploitation Advertising Websites](#) reached these conclusions:³⁹

- Existing legislation fails to prevent the operation of these sites, which are major enablers of sex trafficking and sexual exploitation and knowingly facilitate and profit from the prostitution of others.
- It is not possible to design out opportunities and incentives for third parties to traffic and exploit women through them.
- They do not enhance women's safety and they endanger vulnerable women by incentivising and enabling sex trafficking.

The report also commented that:

Current UK-wide law enforcement collaboration with these websites fails to meet its ostensible objectives, provides political cover to the companies running them, and underplays the level of threat they pose.

The NPCC has not addressed these conclusions.

Recent oral evidence from representatives of the NPCC and the National Crime Agency to the Home Affairs Select Committee for its inquiry into human trafficking that these national police organisations have escalated their involvement with a UK-registered company which owns one of the largest commercial sex websites. The company has at least one former UK police officer employed as a member of its staff. It is difficult to avoid considering the possibility that the prospect of future employment possibilities for former or retired police officers with these organisations is a factor behind the failures by law enforcement agencies to take effective action to shut them down.

It is vital that there is a systematic overhaul of police culture, beginning with the NPCC going back to the drawing board on its ill-advised Guidance and putting women and girls' human rights at the centre of its policy on prostitution. Without intervention, there is little hope the police will be able to properly maintain law and order in this country or regain the respect of those they are tasked to protect.

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³⁹ Cross-Party Group on Commercial Sexual Exploitation, *Online Pimping An Inquiry into Sexual Exploitation Advertising Websites*, 2021