

HARMS OF PORNOGRAPHY

Over the past 20 years, a vast, global pornography industry has developed online. This commercial behemoth dwarfs its print predecessor in scale, profitability and extremity. However, unlike other global industries, online pornography has avoided virtually all regulation, scrutiny and accountability, which has allowed it to pursue profit without restraint. It is only now, after forty years of research documenting the harms of pornography that the need for regulation is beginning to be recognised.

The Pornography Industry at a Glance

Globally, the pornography industry's revenue estimates are as high as \$97 billion. (For comparison, Netflix brings in around \$11.7 billion.)

\$97_B

Pornography sites received more website traffic in 2020 than Twitter, Instagram, Netflix, Zoom, Pinterest, and LinkedIn combined.

↑
2020

In 2019, there were more than 42 billion site visits to Pornhub, and during the pandemic Ofcom reported that Pornhub had a bigger audience than the BBC.

42_B

In 2020, a study by a digital marketing company concluded that Pornhub was the technology company with the third greatest-impact on society in the 21st century.

3_{RD}

Online Pornography

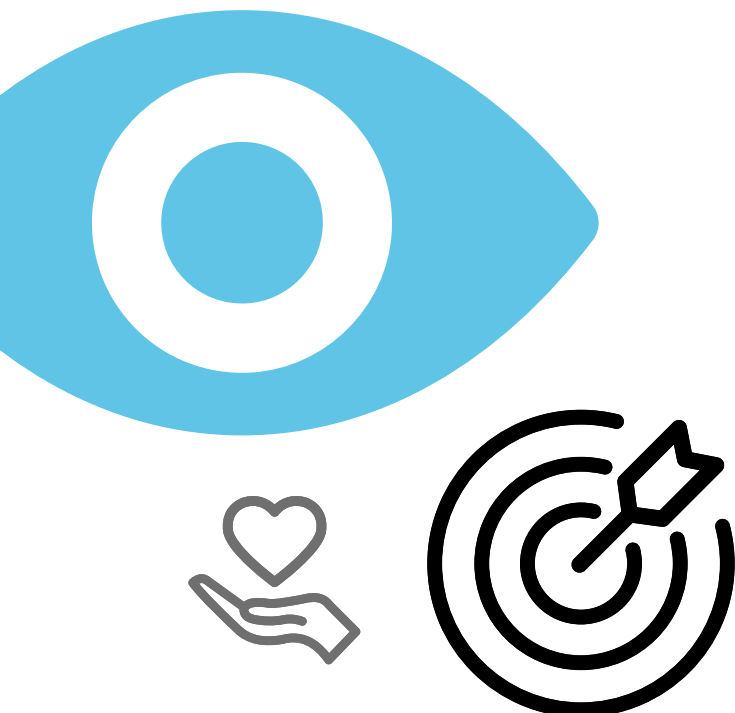
- Mainstream pornography platforms host vast, unknown quantities of illegal content including:
 - Videos of trafficking, rape and other non-consensual sexual violence
 - Image-based sexual abuse (“revenge porn”)
 - Covertly filmed material (“spy-cam porn”) showing footage from cameras hidden in women’s bedrooms, toilets, locker rooms, gynaecology wards, etc
 - AI generated pornography such as ‘deepfake’ pornography of women and girls
 - Child sexual abuse material
- Mainstream pornography hosts increasingly hardcore content, which although it does not meet the narrow definition of illegal content, is nonetheless extremely harmful. Legal videos on pornography sites include depictions of:
 - Sexual coercion, abuse and exploitation of vulnerable women and children
 - Intrafamilial rape (“incest porn”)
 - Humiliation, punishment, torture and pain
 - Child sexual abuse

- Analysis⁹ of 131,738 titles of videos recommended to first-time users on Pornhub, XVideos, and XHamster, found that:
 - 1 in every 8 titles described sexual activities that constitutes sexual violence as defined by the World Health Organization
 - The word ‘Teen’ was the most frequently occurring word across the entire dataset
 - Sexual activity between family members was the most frequent form of sexual violence i.e. incest
 - The second most common category was that of physical aggression and sexual assault
- Racist narratives are commonplace in pornography. A content analysis¹⁴ of more than 1,700 scenes from XVideos and Pornhub, the two most popular pornography sites found that:
 - Black women are more often the target of aggression when compared to white women
 - Black men are more often portrayed as the perpetrators of aggression against women and are depicted as significantly less intimate with their partners in comparison to white men
 - depictions of aggression towards women are highest in scenes featuring black couples compared to all other racial pairings including interracial
- The pornography industry fetishizes race; sorting videos by categories based on race (among other ‘features’), which promote racial stereotypes and overt racism. In 2019, “Ebony” was the 10th most searched for term on Pornhub. Three of the other ten most-searched-for terms were “Korean”, “Asian”, and “Japanese”, the latter topping the list.¹⁵

- Most videos on pornography sites are user-generated and uploaded instantaneously. There are no controls or verification procedures in place to check that those on camera are consenting adults.¹² Therefore there is no way of verifying how much pornography on the internet is consensual.¹³
- In 2023, Pornhub’s parent company Aylo admitted it had profited from sex trafficking. Several other lawsuits are pending. Allegations relate to sex trafficking, profiting from child sexual abuse materials, Image-Based Sexual Abuse, and profiting from uploaded videos of sexual assault.
- A separate class action lawsuit was filed against popular pornography site, XVideos alleging that XVideos (and its parent company, WebGroup Czech Republic) distributed sexual content that featured a minor and made no attempts to verify identity or age.
- In 2023, after months of hearings and reviewing millions of videos on the biggest international pornography sites, France’s High Council for Equality between Women and Men found that “90% of pornographic content online features verbal, physical and sexual violence towards women, and a significant amount of violence shown is punishable under existing laws in France”.

Sexual Scripts and Culture

- A 2020 UK government report recognised that “there is substantial evidence of an association between the use of pornography and harmful sexual attitudes and behaviours towards women”.
- Young women feel under pressure to play out the ‘scripts’ their male partners learned from pornography and are pressured into having sex in uncomfortable positions, faking sexual pleasure and consenting to perform unpleasant or painful sex acts.
- Pornography has normalised strangulation/ choking during sex. Strangulation risks traumatic brain injury, increased risk of stroke and death in women.
- We Can’t Consent To This have stated that “women in their teens and twenties now are being told that not enjoying being slapped or choked is abnormal. It’s a default expectation now”.



Children and Pornography

- The UK government estimated that online pornography was accessed by 1.4 million UK children each and every month before the pandemic. This number is likely much higher now.
- The BBFC found that children aged six to 12 are disproportionately exposed to pornography sites hosting content featuring cartoons likely to appeal to children, such as superheroes and Disney characters.
- A report by the Children’s Commissioner for England found that:
 - 79% of children surveyed had encountered violent pornography before the age of 18.
 - 50% of children who had seen pornography had seen it by age 13.
 - 47% of respondents stated that girls expect sex to involve physical aggression.
 - A further 42% of respondents stated that girls enjoy physically aggressive sex acts.
 - Among respondents, 39% stated that boys expect sex to involve aggression.
- The UK’s Big Talk Education Report found that, for many boys, pornography is the main source of information about sex and sexual behaviour.
- A wide range of studies show that children’s viewing of pornography can profoundly impact their psychological, social, emotional, neurological and sexual wellbeing and impede their ability to form healthy intimate relationships.
- Children are now committing half of all reported child sexual abuse offences in the UK. The national policing lead for child abuse protection and investigation stated that the rise of child-on-child abuse is fuelled by access to violent pornography. The most common offences committed by 10 to 17-year-olds were sexual assault on a female (15%), rape of a female under 16 (12%), and taking, making or sharing indecent images.
- The Online Safety Act 2023 has mandated that pornography sites, and social media sites that host pornography, must implement age verification that is highly effective in preventing children from accessing pornography.

Escalation Pathways to Child Sexual Abuse

- Online pornography platforms host vast amounts of videos depicting sexual activity with children, including petite, young-looking performers made to look underage through props such as stuffed toys, lollipops and school uniforms. Although not strictly illegal, this is extremely harmful as it normalises children as objects of sexual desire, and drives the demand for ‘real’ child sexual abuse material.
- The Lucy Faithful Foundation states that “the link between easy access to hardcore and deviant pornography and an interest in child molestation is unambiguous”.
- One of the most frequent search terms on pornography sites is ‘teen’. Depictions of sexual activity with the title ‘teen’ are often particularly violent.
- According to a study which analysed the content of the three most accessed pornographic websites in the UK (Pornhub, XHamster and XVideos), the three most common words in videos which contained coercion and exploitation were ‘schoolgirl’, ‘girl’ and ‘teen’.
- Research undertaken with 1500 British men, released in 2023, found that:
 - 10% of men admitted they had engaged in child sexual offending, either online or offline.
 - Nearly one in twenty said they had had sexual contact with a child when they themselves were aged 18 or older.
- According to the Internet Watch Foundation, sexual abuse imagery of primary school children has increased by 1,000% since the pandemic lockdown.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT
CEASE.ORG.UK**



**CENTRE TO END ALL
SEXUAL EXPLOITATION**

CEASE.ORG.UK