



# PROFITS BEFORE PEOPLE

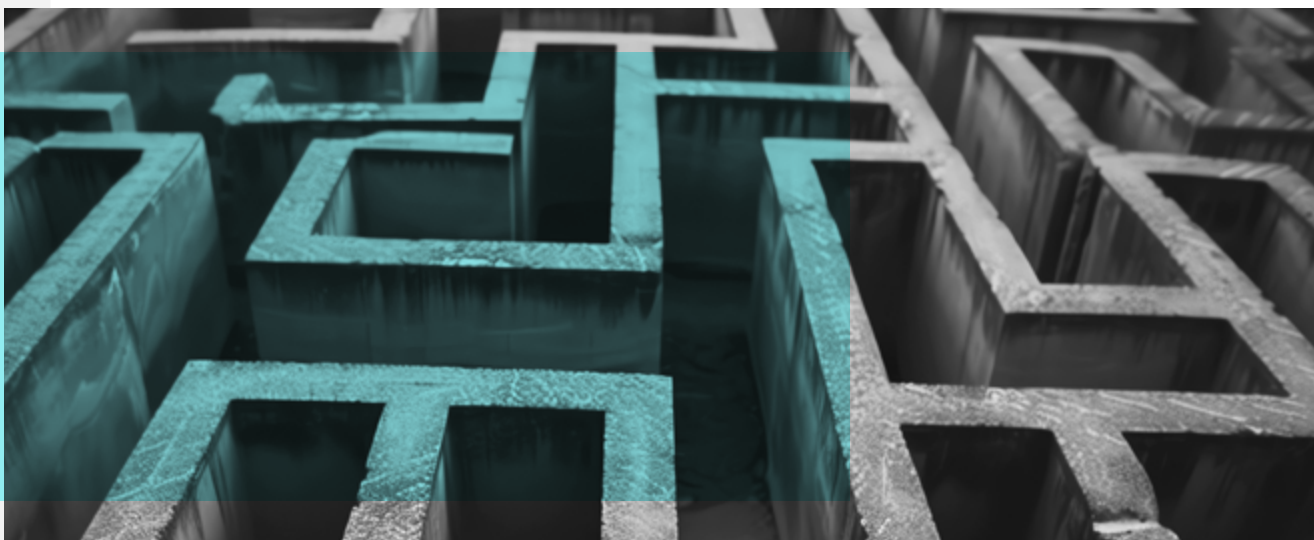
**How the pornography industry  
is normalising and monetising  
sexual violence**

**The full Profits Before People report is available at:  
[www.CEASE.org.uk](http://www.CEASE.org.uk)**



Trigger Warning: Mention of sexual violence, child sexual abuse, rape, torture, grooming and incest.

## **The Profits Before People report examines the multiple harms of pornography to those in the industry and society as a whole.**



It shines a light on the abuse and exploitation that women and girls are subjected to within the pornography industry and the trafficking and coercion that often leads to their involvement. It details the damaging effects of pornography to individuals and society, exploring how pornography shapes the sexual scripts of both adults and children, normalises violence against women and girls, grooms men and boys to perpetrate sexual violence, and has contributed to child-on-child sexual abuse. It also highlights the impact of consuming pornography on the human brain and how users can escalate to consuming more violent and deviant content, including child sexual abuse material. In some cases, viewers may go on to perpetrate further forms of child sexual abuse and exploitation both online and offline.

New forms of harm are outlined such as image-based sexual abuse including deepfake pornography, virtual reality pornography, and the growing threat of AI to women and children's safety, both online and offline. The report situates pornography as a form of commercial sexual exploitation and as a form of violence against women and girls. It lays bare the role of the companies who profit from this exploitation and violence, and their wilful avoidance of regulation and accountability. Informed by forty years of research on the harms of pornography, the Profits Before People report draws from peer reviewed research, survivor testimonies, journalism, and reports from organisations working on the front line.

## **Main Findings**

### **1. Harms within the pornography industry**

CEASE views pornography production as a form of commercial sexual exploitation and pornographers as those profiting from pornography production and distribution. Regardless of the method of pornography production, exploitation and human trafficking are inherent. Women are often forced or coerced into this industry and once in it, even the most famous pornography 'performers' are exploited. This coercion meets the international definition of human trafficking.

**Pornography is, at its core, violence against women and girls.** Women and girls are dehumanised, degraded, tortured, and stripped of all humanity within mainstream pornography. Multiple testimonies from survivors of the pornography industry highlight the extreme violence that women face in the industry. Online pornography sites are now ubiquitous with what is referred to as 'gonzo' pornography which depicts hardcore, body-punishing sex in which women are demeaned and debased. Women are the targets of both physical and verbal aggression in 94% of scenes in pornographic content and most of the time the aggressors are men. This violence is not fake or acting, it is real and the physical, psychological and emotional impacts of it last long after a woman has escaped the industry.

## 2. Harms of pornography to society

Violent online pornography has caused immeasurable harm to society and individuals. Misogynistic, sexist and racist pornography is profoundly shaping the sexual scripts of both adults and children. Watching online pornography normalises sexual aggression, risky sexual practices and men's violent sexual domination over women. It reduces women and girls to objects on whom acts of sex and violence are performed. Women, especially younger women, feel under pressure to play out the 'scripts' their male partners have learned from pornography and are pressured into painful and dangerous sex acts such as strangulation and anal sex which men and boys are groomed to want by pornography. **Forty years of research shows that there is a clear and unambiguous link between the consumption of online pornography and violence against women and girls both online and offline.** Further, through genres such as 'barely legal', 'teen' and 'incest', pornography is sexualising children and driving the demand for child sexual abuse material.

Online pornography is also acting as sex education for children with disastrous results. Children's consumption of online pornography has been associated with the dramatic increase in child-on-child sexual abuse, with children now committing half of all reported child sexual abuse offences in the UK. This has increased from a third in 2022. The public health impacts of pornography are wide ranging and include physical, psychological, emotional, behavioural and neurological implications for people who consume pornography. Dozens of neuroscientific studies support the notion that the way online pornography is designed and used matches the addiction framework and there has been a surge in men seeking help for pornography addiction as well as children self-reporting pornography addictions. Pornography 'performers' also suffer from long term health issues as a result of the physical, emotional and mental trauma they suffer during the production of pornography. This requires a holistic public health approach.

## 3. The culpability of the pornography industry

The pornography industry is not neutral in the proliferation of sexual violence. Far from it, it is the basis of its business model. All internet platforms work off the basic principle that 'content is king' and increasing traffic is the ultimate goal. The more traffic a site has, the more profitable it is. So, the pornography industry markets sexual violence as entertainment and is now worth an estimated \$97 billion globally.

Pro-pornography groups may wax lyrical about freedom of expression, but the reality is, **pornography is about money, not sex.** It has shown time and again that it will not sacrifice profits for the protection of women and children. Aylo, owner of Pornhub, is, as of July 2024, facing 25 lawsuits in relation to human trafficking, image-based sexual abuse, profiting from child sexual abuse material, and more. Yet like other pornography companies, it is unrelenting in its avoidance of regulation.

**“ THE PORNOGRAPHY INDUSTRY MUST BE HELD TO ACCOUNT.”**

It is no longer a question of whether pornography is harmful: the evidence is overwhelming. Yet, some governments and indeed regulators are reluctant to act with measures that are proportionate to the harms of the industry. This is a mistake. The pornography industry is not an industry to be negotiated with. It is an industry where exploitation, human trafficking and the cruellest forms of violence against women and girls are inherent. It is unfathomable that titles of pornography videos such as these are so normalised and accepted: 'Dazed 18 year old fuck-meat choked and degraded by 42 year old cock', 'Slave Tied Up in Filthy Mattress', 'Stupid slut gets beat and degraded in hotel room', 'bound gagged stripped whipped vibed machine-fucked', 'Oriental slave girl tortured'.

Pornography is awash with sexual violence, filmed rape and abuse. Putting a camera in a room and calling it entertainment should not make rape and torture immune from prosecution. Yet, regulation is minimal and criminal sanctions next to non-existent. This cannot continue. If the UK is a country that cares about the safety of women and children, then the government must act now. Impunity for the pornography industry must end. Join us in calling on the UK government to implement the following recommendations as a matter of urgency to curb the harms of pornography.

## **Recommendation 1: Bring all regulation of pornographic content into one new UK-wide Act of Parliament**

This Act should ensure that content common in pornography that meets the definition of torture by international standards would be illegal to possess, produce, or host online in the UK. It should also close the current loophole in legislation that allows content such as 'barely legal porn', 'incest porn' and 'teen porn' to be prolific online. This Act should apply to dedicated pornography sites, social media sites, search engines and to all user-to-user platforms and applications.

## **Recommendation 2: Human trafficking must be recognised as a key feature of the pornography industry and mitigation strategies enacted to combat it**

The new Pornography Act, or any other legislative change, should reflect that sexual exploitation and violence against women and girls are inherent in the pornography industry. The Act must ensure that any illegal pornographic material that either depicts or is a direct result of human trafficking as defined by the UN Palermo Protocol must not be allowed to appear on any dedicated pornography site, social media site, search engine or relevant user-to-user platforms and applications. The Act must also mandate that all pornography and camming sites open up their sites to law enforcement and/or a dedicated anti-trafficking organisation so they can determine the level of risk that human trafficking and exploitation are taking place on their site, take proactive action to identify where these are happening, intercept perpetrators, and protect victims.

## **Recommendation 3: The creation and sharing of images without consent should be illegal and the removal of non-consensual content should be improved**

It should be illegal to create, take, share, threaten to share, or solicit any intimate image without consent. Applications that are solely created for the creation of AI-generated pornography of real people such as nudifying apps must be made illegal in the UK.

## **Recommendation 4: Better guidance and training is needed to increase rates of prosecution**

A new Act should be straightforward and easy to interpret and implement, simplifying the current convoluted and disparate legislation that governs pornography. All parts of the criminal justice system must be trained in the impacts of pornography, specifically the harms to women and girls both within and outside of the industry.

## **Recommendation 5: The harms of pornography should be tackled through public health interventions**

The public health impacts of pornography must be fully assessed, pornography named as a public health priority and treated as such by public health services. This should include government sponsored information campaigns on the harms of pornography to individuals and society and appropriate behavioural interventions.



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