

Submission
No 52

INQUIRY INTO IMPACTS OF HARMFUL PORNOGRAPHY ON MENTAL, EMOTIONAL, AND PHYSICAL HEALTH

Organisation: Collective Shout

Date Received: 31 January 2025

THE IMPACTS OF HARMFUL PORNOGRAPHY ON MENTAL, EMOTIONAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH

Standing Committee on Social Issues, Parliament of New South Wales

31 January 2025

Introduction

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this important and timely inquiry.

Collective Shout is a grassroots movement which campaigns against the objectification and sexualisation of women and girls in media, advertising and popular culture. We target corporations, advertisers, marketers and media which exploit the bodies of women and girls to sell products and services and campaign to change their behaviour. More broadly, we engage in issues relating to other forms of sexploitation, including the interconnected industries of pornography, prostitution and trafficking as well as the growing market in the sale of children for Live Distant Child Abuse (LDCA),¹ child sex abuse dolls and replica child body parts² and AI-enabled Image Based Sexual Abuse and Deepfake sexual abuse.³

Last year our movement achieved a record 34 wins against companies engaging in sexual exploitation.⁴

¹ Tankard Reist, M. (2017). Why are Australian Telcos and ISPs enabling a child abuse pandemic? ABC Religion and Ethics.

<https://www.abc.net/religion/why-are-australian-telcos-and-isps-enabling-a-child-sexual-abuse/10095644>; Collective Shout (06 September 2021). National Child Protection Week 2021: Join our campaigns to protect children and young people. https://www.collectiveshout.org/child_protection_week_2

² Roper, Caitlin (2022). Sex Dolls, Robots, and Woman Hating: The Case for Resistance. Spinifex Press; see also Roper, Caitlin (09 Jan 2020). "Better a doll than a real child:" The spurious logic used to justify child sex dolls. ABC Religion and Ethics; Paedophilia, Child Sex Abuse Dolls and the Male Sex Right: Challenging Justifications for Men's Sexual Access to Children and Child Sexual Abuse Material' in K Richardson & C. Odland, (eds) (2022). Man-Made Women: The Sexual Politics of Sex Dolls and Sex Robots. Palgrave MacMillan.

³ Collective Shout (25 July 2024). Submission to Criminal Code Amendment (Deepfake Sexual Material) Bill 2024 Inquiry.

https://www.collectiveshout.org/inquiry_in_the_criminal_code_amendment_deepfake_sexual_material_bill_2024; Roper, Caitlin (13 June 2024). "A tool to sexually exploit women and children": Why AI will not prevent abuse. https://www.collectiveshout.org/why_ai_will_not_prevent_abuse

⁴ Collective Shout (2025). Wins and Highlights. www.collectiveshout.org/wins

Collective Shout has been at the forefront of exposing the harms of pornography since our inception in 2010. We have been instrumental in influencing the Federal Government to reverse an earlier decision against an age verification (AV) trial through an open letter signed by more than 50 leading child protection and women's safety experts.⁵ We are represented on the Stakeholder Advisory Group for the AV trial.

Our advocacy has included:

- Highlighting published evidence of the harms to children and young people from early exposure to explicit content
- Identifying pornography as a driver of men's violence against women and girls
- Documenting a rise in Harmful Sexual Behaviours in schools through our landmark 'Sexual Harassment of Teachers' (SHoT) Report⁶
- Giving voice to thousands of Australians concerned about the harmful impacts of pornography on their children including through the Kids Exposed page on our website⁷
- Working with global partners to hold the pornography industry to account for the serious harms it has caused including through criminal and civil actions.⁸

We were instrumental in achieving the first Federal inquiry into the harms of pornography to children in 2015. We have contributed to relevant Federal and State inquiries since, including:

- Joint Committee on Social Media and Australian Society 2024⁹
- Draft Industry Codes of Practice for the Online Industry (Class 1C and Class 2 Material)¹⁰
- Criminal Code Amendment (Deepfake Sexual Material) Bill 2024¹¹

⁵ Collective Shout (19 September 2023). Open Letter: Women's safety and child protection experts call for age verification pilot. www.collectiveshout.org/open_letter_age_verification

⁶ Mowle, A., Ewing, S. & Perry, T. (2024). Sexual Harassment of Teachers in Schools. Collective Shout. www.collectiveshout.org/shot-report

⁷ Collective Shout (2025). Kids Exposed. www.collectiveshout.org/kidsexposed

⁸ Collective Shout (23 March 2021). Briefing and Recommendations: Protection of Privacy and Reputation on Platforms Such as Pornhub. www.collectiveshout.org/submission_ethi_mindgeek

⁹ Collective Shout (July 2024). *Submission: Joint Select Committee on Social Media and Australian Society*. www.collectiveshout.org/joint_select_committee_on_social_media_and_australian_society

¹⁰ Collective Shout (January 2024). *Submission: Industry Standards - Public Consultation. Draft Online Safety Industry Standard 2024*.

www.collectiveshout.org/submission_to_esafety_industry_standards

¹¹ Collective Shout (25 July 2024). *Submission to Criminal Code Amendment (Deepfake Sexual Material) Bill 2024*.

www.collectiveshout.org/inquiry_in_the_criminal_code_amendment_deepfake_sexual_material_bill_2024

- Amendment to the Online Safety (Basic Online Safety Expectations) Determination 2023¹²
- eSafety Committee on Social Media and Online Safety 2022¹³
- Inquiry into Age Verification for Online Wagering and Online Pornography 2019¹⁴
- Review of the Australian Classification Regulation 2020 and Submission on Modernising Australia's National Classification Scheme Stage 2 Reforms¹⁵

We provided input to the United Nations Human Rights Council Special Rapporteur Report on Violence Against Women and Girls¹⁶ and the United Nations (UN) review of Children's Rights in the Digital Environment 2020.¹⁷ We also gave evidence before the Canadian Parliamentary Ethics Committee investigation into MindGeek (Pornhub) in 2021.¹⁸

We also gather qualitative data through the accounts of students as shared with our Movement Director Melinda Tankard Reist during her speaking engagements in schools. Female students share their experiences of being subjected to harmful sexual behaviours by male peers influenced by pornography.

These disturbing accounts were the impetus for a partnership with parenting author and educator Maggie Dent in the development of a survey of Australian teachers to ascertain the pervasiveness of sexual harassment in schools.

Survey data from the SHoT Report revealed that teachers identify pornography exposure as a significant driver of the rise in harmful sexual behaviours in schools.

¹² Collective Shout (March 2024). *Submission: Amendment to the Online Safety (Basic Online Safety Expectations) Determination 2023*. www.collectiveshout.org/amendment_to_the_online_safety_base

¹³ Collective Shout (January 2022). *Submission to Select Committee on Social Media and Online Safety*. www.collectiveshout.org/submission_social_media_online_safety

¹⁴ Collective Shout (25 October 2019). *Submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs Inquiry into age verification for online wagering and pornography*.

www.collectiveshout.org/submission_to_inquiry_into_age_verification_for_online_pornography

¹⁵ Collective Shout (5 March 2020). *Submission to the Review of Australian Classification Regulation*. www.collectiveshout.org/submission_to_review_of_australian_classification_regulation; Collective Shout (31 May 2024). *Submission on Modernising Australia's National Classification Scheme - Stage 2 Reforms*. www.collectiveshout.org/submission-national-classification-scheme-stage-2

¹⁶ Collective Shout (31 January 2024). *Input for UN Human Rights Council SR VAWG's report on violence against women and prostitution*.

www.collectiveshout.org/input_for_un_human_rights_council_sr_vawg_s_report

¹⁷ Collective Shout (30 November 2020). *UN Submission: Children's Rights in the Digital Environment*. www.collectiveshout.org/un_sub_children_digital_rights

¹⁸ Collective Shout (23 March 2021). *Submission to Canadian Parliamentary Ethics Committee: Protection of Privacy and Reputation on Platforms such as Pornhub*. www.collectiveshout.org/submission_ethi_mindgeek

The SHoT Report and unpublished survey data are provided in response to the inquiry's terms of reference.¹⁹

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Acknowledge that exposure to pornography is harmful to children and young people
- Acknowledge that exposure to pornography fuels attitudes contributing to male violence against women
- Support the Federal Government age assurance trial and not allow it to be derailed by the vested interests of the pornography industry
- Recommend the Federal Government extend any future age assurance system to apply to online gaming services, such as Roblox. Gaming service providers should be responsible for ensuring all individuals using their services are over the age of 16
- Use the terms 'Image Based Sexual Abuse' and/or Deepfake Sexual Abuse to centre the harms done to victims
- Urge the State government use the full extent of its power to legislate to criminalise the creation, production, soliciting and distribution of AI-enabled Image Based Sexual Abuse [IBSA]/deepfake sexual abuse. Creation of such material (whether distributed or not) should be a stand-alone offence with its own criminal penalty. Consider IBSA as part of a broader offence 'intimate intrusion' proposed by Clare McGlynn²⁰
- Urge other States to develop uniform laws for dealing with Image Based Sexual Abuse/Deepfake sexual abuse including the above
- Provide funding for the development of a dedicated website in line with the recommendations of Dr. Gemma McKibbin and Georgia Naldrett,²¹ with resources and information about:
 - Sex, pornography and harmful sexual behaviour
 - Laws and social rules about sex
 - CSAM and other illegal online behaviour

¹⁹ Mowle, Ewing, & Perry, 2024, op. cit.

²⁰ McGlynn, C. (2024). Towards a New Criminal Offence of Intimate Intrusions. *Feminist Legal Studies*, 32, 189-212. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10691-024-09547-y>

²¹ McKibbin, G., & Naldrett, G. (01 November 2024). *Pathways to onset of harmful sexual behaviour: How do we intervene earlier?* [Conference Presentation] Child Sexual Abuse & Harmful Sexual Behaviours National Conference 2024, Melbourne.

- 'I Need Help Now' resources
 - Stories from children, survivors, victims
- Provide funding for the development of an online helpline and chat support, with experienced practitioners, to help children and young people
- Call on United Nations State parties to:
 - Hold company directors and executives of social media platforms personally liable for harms occurring on their platforms, including trafficking, child sexual exploitation, sextortion, and exposure of children to pornography
 - Urgently address the rapidly growing threat of sextortion on social media platforms and private messaging services
 - Introduce a statutory Duty of Care for all digital services
 - Require sites that host pornography to implement effective, privacy-preserving age verification to reduce risks to children
 - Address ongoing gaps in social media safety, and platforms that do not use safety by design principles
- Support global efforts, such as Justice Defense Fund²², to criminalise porn hosting platforms which have knowingly profited from rape, sex trafficking, child sexual abuse, violence, and degradation.

(a) Age of first exposure to pornography and impacts of early exposure to pornography

Early exposure to pornography harms developing sexual templates in children and young people. It contributes to the development of sexist attitudes, the normalisation of male violence against girls and women and leads to an increase in harmful sexual behaviours.

Age of first exposure

In 2023, an eSafety Commissioner report found 75% of 16-18 year olds surveyed in Australia had seen online pornography, and nearly one third of those had seen it

²²Justice Defense Fund. (2025). About JDF. <https://justicedefensefund.org/about/>; Mickelwait, L. (2024) Takedown: Inside the fight to shut down pornhub for child abuse, rape, and sex trafficking. Penguin Random House.

before the age of 13.²³ These findings align with an Australian study of 15- to 29-year-olds which found the median age of first exposure to pornography was 13 years for boys and 16 for girls.²⁴ While this may be the average age of viewing, other research suggests the age of first exposure to pornography is as young as seven.²⁵

These findings correlate with our findings in the SHoT report.²⁶ Survey respondents identified children as young as Year 2 (7-8 year olds) searching for pornography on their school laptop, taking naked photos of themselves with devices in school toilets or on the playground, and making sexual moaning, groaning and grunting noises. One teacher in the survey reported:

11 years is the standard answer for regular porn viewing - airdropped to device on public transport ... to achieve child watching extreme sexual violence in seconds.

Another teacher commented:

Year 7 students are accessing porn online and it seems to be normalising sexualising harassment behaviours.

Exposure by sex

Boys are more likely to be exposed at a younger age and more likely to view pornography more regularly. The aforementioned Australian study reported that 95% of males and 48% of females had viewed pornography at least monthly in the last 12 months.²⁷ In a US study on the age and type of first exposure to pornography, men reported being exposed to pornography as young as four years of age.²⁸

Impacts of early exposure to pornography

Online pornography is recognised as a threat to children in General Comment 25 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.²⁹ For those exposed

²³ NSW Government (02 August 2024) *Harmful pornography the subject of parliamentary inquiry*. www.nsw.gov.au/media-releases/harmful-pornography-subject-of-parliamentary-inquiry

²⁴ Lim, M. S. C., Agius, P. A., Carrotte, E. R., Vella, A. M., & Hellard, M. E. (2017). Young Australians' use of pornography and associations with sexual risk behaviours. *Australian and New Zealand journal of public health*, 41(4), 438–443. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1753-6405.12678>

²⁵ BBFC (2019, 27 September) Children see pornography as young as seven, new report finds. www.bbfc.co.uk/about-us/news/children-see-pornography-as-young-as-seven-new-report-finds

²⁶ Mowle, A., Ewing, S. & Perry, T. (2024). *Sexual Harassment of Teachers in Schools*. www.collectiveshout.org/shot-report

²⁷ Lim, M, Agius, Carrotte, Vella & Hellard, 2017, op. cit.

²⁸ Marshall, E. A., & Miller, H. A. (2023). Age and Type of First Exposure to Pornography: It Matters for Girls and Boys. *Deviant Behavior*, 45(3), 377–393. doi.org/10.1080/01639625.2023.2248338

²⁹ United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (2 Mar 2021). *General comment No. 25 (2021) on children's rights in relation to the digital environment*. docstore.ohchr.org/SelfServices/FilesHandler.ashx?enc=6QkG1d%2FPPrICAqhKb7yhsqlkirKQZLK2

earlier in life, adverse events include higher rates of violent pornography use, more frequent pornography use, more use of pornography as a coping strategy, and more sexual scripts adopted from pornography.³⁰

Early exposure to violent pornography desensitises users, leading them to seeking out more violent, deviant and extreme genres. One consumer described the impact:

*I don't understand how my interests changed. I went from a normal straight guy, to watching shemale and gay porn. I now have a penis and ejaculation fetish and fixation at 30 years old. I wish I'd never found porn as a child.*³¹

When investigating how Child Sex Abuse Material (CSAM) offenders arrived at their 'sexual preference,' it was found that offenders had typically seen adult pornography at a young age, become desensitised to mainstream material, and migrated to the dark web.³²

For females, earlier age of exposure was related to more sexually submissive behaviour and more male sexual dominance in their relationships:

*Pornography use was related to women's submissive behavior but was unrelated to their dominant behavior... It does not align with the perspective that measures of pornography consumption are simply proxies for factors such as high sex drive or an adventurous approach to sex.*³³

Early exposure to pornography is:

- Linked to risky sexual behaviours - early sexual debut, unsafe sex (condomless), unwanted or unsafe sexual acts (such as anal sex), and using alcohol and drugs before sex³⁴
- A predictor of viewing child sexual abuse material as an adult³⁵
- A predictor for children engaging in harmful sexual behaviour³⁶

[M58RF%2F5F0vEG%2BcAAx34gC78FwvnmZXGFUI9nJBDpKR1dfKekJxW2w9nNryRsgArkTJgKelgeZwK9WXzMkZRZd37nLN1bFc2t](https://doi.org/10.1177/2374623817698113)

³⁰ Marshall, & Miller, 2023, op. cit.

³¹ Insoll, T., Ovaska, A. and Vaaranen-Valkonen, N. (2021). *CSAM Users in the Dark Web: Protecting Children Through Prevention: ReDirection Survey Report*.

www.suojellaanlapsia.fi/en/post/csam-users-in-the-dark-web-protecting-children-through-prevention

³² Ibid.

³³ Sun, C. F., Wright, P., & Steffen, N. (2017). German Heterosexual Women's Pornography Consumption and Sexual Behavior. *Sexualization, Media, & Society*, 3(1).

doi.org/10.1177/2374623817698113.

³⁴ Rivas-Koehl, M., Valido, A., Espelage, D. L., & Lawrence, T. I. (2023). Adults and Family as Supportive of Adolescent Sexual Development in the Age of Smartphones? Exploring Cybersexual Violence Victimization, Pornography Use, and Risky Sexual Behaviors. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 52(7), 2845–2857. doi.org/10.1007/s10508-023-02618-

³⁵ Napier, S.S., Seto, M.C., Cashmore, J. and Shackel, R. (2024). Characteristics that predict exposure to and subsequent intentional viewing of child sexual abuse material among a community sample of Internet use. *Child Abuse and Neglect* 156. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2024.106977>.

³⁶ Patterson, T., Hobbs, L., Lorimer, M., & Rapsey, C. (2022). Sexual developmental histories of adolescents who engaged in harmful sexual behaviour. *The Journal of Forensic Psychiatry &*

- Significantly related to a younger age of committing sexual offences³⁷
- Linked to giving a substantial minority new ideas they wanted to try out or adopting sexual scripts from porn³⁸
- Associated with more invasive sexual acts committed against other children.³⁹
- Related to committing more violent and humiliating sexual crimes for sexual offenders⁴⁰
- Correlated with higher risk of mental health issues⁴¹
- Associated with cyber dating violence⁴²
- Associated with teen dating violence victimisation and perpetration and poor romantic outcomes⁴³
- Linked to antisocial behaviour and engaging in child-on-child sexual abuse, overwhelmingly committed against young female family members⁴⁴

Cognitive Script Theory is the basis for understanding the link between pornography use and real world behaviour. This theory proposes that for pornography users, sexual decision making, expectations, desires, and norms are modelled on the

Psychology, 33(6), 810–827. doi.org/10.1080/14789949.2022.2122856; Hollis, V. and Belton, E. (2017). Children and Young People Who Engage in Technology-Assisted Harmful Sexual Behaviour: A study of their behaviours, backgrounds, and characteristics. *NSPCC Learning*. learning.nspcc.org.uk/research-resources/2017/children-young-people-technology-assisted-harmful-sexual-behaviour.

³⁷ Mancini, C., Reckdenwald, A., Beauregard, E., and Levenson, J. S. (2014). Sex industry exposure over the life course on the onset and frequency of sex offending. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 42, 507-516. doi.org/10.1016/j.jcrimjust.2014.09.002.

³⁸ Martellozzo, E., Monaghan, A., Adler, J. R., Davidson, J., Leyva, R., and Horvath, M. A. H. (2017). "I wasn't sure it was normal to watch it": A quantitative and qualitative examination of the impact of online pornography on the values, attitudes, beliefs and behaviours of children and young people. NSPCC and Children's Commissioner for England. repository.mdx.ac.uk/item/8671z

³⁹ DeLago, C., Schroeder, C. M., Cooper, B., Deblinger, E., Dudek, E., Yu, R., & Finkel, M. A. (2020). Children who engaged in interpersonal problematic sexual behaviors. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 105, 104260. doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2019.104260.

⁴⁰ Mancini, C., Reckdenwald, A., and Beauregard, E. (2012). Pornography exposure over the life course and the severity of sexual offenses: Imitation and cathartic effects. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 40(1), 21-30. doi.org/10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2011.11.004; Mancini, C., Reckdenwald, A., Beauregard, E., and Levenson, J. S. (2014). Sex industry exposure over the life course on the onset and frequency of sex offending. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 42, 507-516. doi.org/10.1016/j.jcrimjust.2014.09.002.

⁴¹ Lim, M. S. C., Agius, P. A., Carrotte, E. R., Vella, A. M., & Hellard, M. E. (2017). Young Australians' use of pornography and associations with sexual risk behaviours. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*, 41(4), 438–443. doi.org/10.1111/1753-6405.12678.

⁴² Morelli, M., Nappa, M. R., Chirumbolo, A., Wright, P. J., Pabian, S., Baiocco, R., & Cattellino, E. (2024). Is Adolescents' Cyber Dating Violence Perpetration Related to Problematic Pornography Use? The Moderating Role of Hostile Sexism. *Health Communication*, 39(13), 3134–3144. doi.org/10.1080/10410236.2024.2304495

⁴³ Huntington, C., Willoughby, B., & Rhoades, G. (2022). Associations of Adolescents' Pornography Viewing with their Romantic Relationship Skills and Behaviors. *The Journal of Sex Research*, 61(1), 80–91. doi.org/10.1080/00224499.2022.2096844

⁴⁴ Sharpe, M., Mead, D. Problematic Pornography Use: Legal and Health Policy Considerations. *Current Addiction Reports*, 8, 556–567 (2021). doi.org/10.1007/s40429-021-00390-8

pornography that is consumed.⁴⁵ This is why, for example, adolescent boys' early exposure to pornography *predicts* sexual aggression perpetration two years later.⁴⁶

Early exposures links to addiction and sexual behaviour disorders

In our SHoT survey, one teacher reported that a boy in Year 7 confessed to being addicted to pornography. The brain's over-sensitivity to reward means its owner is more vulnerable to addiction.⁴⁷ Pornography is designed to arouse, and teenager's brains wire together experiences and arousal faster and more easily than adults.⁴⁸

In response to the arousal and novelty of pornography adolescent brains produce higher spikes of dopamine, leading to the young person seeking out the dopamine hit repeatedly.⁴⁹ This can lead to problematic pornographic use (PPU) and compulsive behavior/addiction.⁵⁰

Established effects of PPU include sexual aggression, loneliness, distress, depression, anxiety, neuroticism, sexual dissatisfaction, marital problems, negative body image, moral incongruence, low self-esteem, poor attachment, isolation, and negative cognitive effects such as executive impairment, attentional bias, inhibitory control, working memory and decision making⁵¹. It also affects a user's ability to feel compassion for others.⁵²

Adolescents with sexual-related content addictions are at risk of family and interpersonal relationship dysfunction, social isolation, reduced productivity, and poor

⁴⁵ Brem, M. J., Garner, A. R., Grigorian, H., Florimbio, A. R., Wolford-Clevenger, C., Shorey, R. C., & Stuart, G. L. (2021). Problematic Pornography Use and Physical and Sexual Intimate Partner Violence Perpetration Among Men in Batterer Intervention Programs. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 36(11-12), NP6085–NP6105. doi.org/10.1177/0886260518812806

⁴⁶ Brem, M. J., Garner, A. R., Grigorian, H., Florimbio, A. R., Wolford-Clevenger, C., Shorey, R. C., & Stuart, G. L. (2021). Problematic Pornography Use and Physical and Sexual Intimate Partner Violence Perpetration Among Men in Batterer Intervention Programs. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 36(11-12), NP6085–NP6105. doi.org/10.1177/0886260518812806

⁴⁷ Galvan et al. (2006) Earlier development of the accumbens relative to orbitofrontal cortex might underlie risk-taking behaviour in adolescents. *Journal of Neuroscience*, 26, 6885-6892. doi.org/10.1523/JNEUROSCI.1062-06.2006

⁴⁸ Selemon, L.D.A. (2013) A role for synaptic plasticity in the adolescent development of executive function. *Translational Psychiatry*, 3(238). doi.org/10.1038/tp.2013.7

⁴⁹ Wilson, G. (2014). *Your Brain on Porn: Internet pornography and the emerging science of addiction*. Commonwealth Publishing.

⁵⁰ Problematic Pornography Use (PPU) is a type of compulsive sexual behaviour disorder. It can affect a person's mental health and sexual relationships. It is typically defined as difficulties controlling one's pornography consumption despite recognised adverse consequences, particularly when faced with strong urges or heightened emotional states.

⁵¹ Altin, M., De Leo, D., Tribbia, N., Ronconi, L., & Cipolletta, S. (2024). Problematic Pornography Use, Mental Health, and Suicidality among Young Adults. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 21(9), 1228. doi.org/10.3390/ijerph21091228

⁵² Fernandez, D. P., Kuss, D. J., & Griffiths, M. D. (2021). The Pornography "Rebooting" Experience: A Qualitative Analysis of Abstinence Journals on an Online Pornography Abstinence Forum. *Archives of sexual behavior*, 50(2), 711–728. doi.org/10.1007/s10508-020-01858-w

sleep quality.⁵³ In addition, compulsive pornography users experience changes in brain structure and function. There are reductions in grey matter in critical areas of the brain which play a role in decision making and impulse control.⁵⁴

An industry invested in early exposure

Early exposure to pornography exposes children and young people to an industry that “seeks to shift user’s sexual interests towards those that increase profit.”⁵⁵

The ability of children and young people to develop their own interests and values, and then live in line with them, is compromised as the pornography industry exploits their vulnerabilities. Research finds pornography increases unethical behaviour, even that unrelated to sex, such as lying.⁵⁶ It does this by increasing viewers’ tendency to objectify others and when others are objectified they are seen as less deserving of moral treatment. As Dr Elly Hanson observes:

The commercial pornography companies are using the same techniques as the rest of the internet industry to make their applications ‘sticky.’ Pornography sites are specifically designed to keep people watching, clicking and scrolling. Consumers view pornography and masturbate to give themselves a powerful neurochemical reward via orgasm. This cycle is a self-reinforcing process of ratcheting up sexual tension. Then, unlike real sex with partners, the internet instantly provides them with entirely novel stimuli to repeat the process again, ad infinitum.⁵⁷

(b) Media by which pornography is accessed and circulated

Exposure to online pornography is unavoidable for young people when there is no age verification in place. Devices allow anonymous and free access to pornographic content from any location, at any time. In addition, porn platforms solicit young people by dropping explicit content into their feeds, including through social media.

⁵³ Dadi, A. F., Dachew, B. A., & Tessema, G. A. (2024). Problematic internet use: A growing concern for adolescent health and well-being in a digital era. *Journal of global health*, 14, 03034.

doi.org/10.7189/jogh.14.03034

⁵⁴ Schmidt, C., Morris, L. S., Kvamme, T. L., Hall, P., Birchard, T., & Voon, V. (2017). Compulsive sexual behavior: Prefrontal and limbic volume and interactions. *Human Brain Mapping*, 38(3), 1182–1190. doi.org/10.1002/hbm.23447; Kühn S, Gallinat J. Brain Structure and Functional Connectivity Associated With Pornography Consumption: The Brain on Porn. *JAMA Psychiatry*. 2014;71(7), 827–834, doi:10.1001/jamapsychiatry.2014.93; Voon, V., Mole, T.B., Banca, P., Porter, L., Morris, L., Mitchell, S., Lapa, T.R., Karr, J., Harrison N.A., Potenza M.N., Irvine M. (2014). Neural correlates of sexual cue reactivity in individuals with and without compulsive sexual behaviours, 9(7).

[doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0102419](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0102419)

⁵⁵ Hanson, E. (2021). *Pornography and Human Futures*. Fully Human. www.fullyhuman.org.uk.

⁵⁶ Mecham, N.W., Lewis-Western, M.F. & Wood, D.A. The Effects of Pornography on Unethical Behavior in Business. *Journal of Business Ethics* 168, 37–54 (2021).

doi.org/10.1007/s10551-019-04230-8.

⁵⁷ Hanson, 2021, op. cit.

Social media and video games in particular are vehicles through which children are introduced to pornography. Front-line health care workers, whose jobs bring them into contact with children suspected of being sexually abused, list the following specific sites where sexual assaults and the sharing of pornography take place⁵⁸: Omegle, Snapchat, TikTok, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Roblox, Fortnite, Grand Theft Auto, Pinterest and Discord.

Our SHoT report found students were accessing pornography on school laptops and iPads including in the classroom. Pornography is also being circulated via airdrop on school buses or on messaging apps. One teacher described how this circulation can take place:

*Pornographic videos on simple group chats that start as homework groups and descend as the year wears on.*⁵⁹

Pornography is also being viewed in the public domain “on phones that are witnessed by other students” and “on projectors or interactive screens through screen sharing”. Teachers have also reported that older children and young people are accessing pornography and then sharing it with younger children without their consent, or providing detailed descriptions of it to other children at school.⁶⁰

Research from the eSafety Commissioner found that three in five young people who had encountered online pornography had done so via social media.⁶¹ A nationally representative survey by the UK's Children's Commissioner reports that children and young people access pornography not only on pornography sites, but also on social media platforms. X (Twitter) is the platform where the highest percentage of children have seen pornography (41%), followed by dedicated pornography sites (37%), Instagram (33%) and Snapchat (32%).⁶²

Pornography has pervaded popular online games, such as Roblox. In-game research has found that Roblox is exposing children to grooming, pornography and extremely abusive speech. Online users of Roblox are also trading CSAM.

Roblox allows users to make explicit content on the platform. It is also a platform that is being used by sex offenders to entice children to self generate pornography and

⁵⁸ Culture Reframed. (2023) The social media and video games used to spread pornography: A guide for parents.

culturereframed.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/2023-07-19-SM-and-VG-Guide-Final-1.pdf

⁵⁹ Mowle, Ewing & Perry, 2024, op. cit.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ eSafety Commissioner (2023). Accidental, unsolicited and in your face. Young people's encounters with online pornography: a matter of platform responsibility, education and choice. Australian Government.

www.esafety.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-08/Accidental-unsolicited-and-in-your-face.pdf

⁶² UK Children's Commissioner (2023) 'A lot of it is actually just abuse' – Young people and pornography.

assets.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wpuploads/2023/07/CCO-Pornography-and-Young-People-1.pdf

pornography images. In 2021, police arrested two registered sex offenders for enticing an 8-year-old girl into sending sexual content of herself in exchange for Robux, and for enticing a 12-year-old-boy into sending sexually explicit content of himself through Roblox.⁶³

Exposure to pornography can have profound impacts as highlighted by the eSafety Commission:

*Young people described unintentional encounters with online pornography as frequent, unavoidable and unwelcome. Of the young people who had encountered online pornography, 58% reported they had unintentionally encountered content at least once. One in three (30%) young people who had seen online pornography first encountered content unintentionally before the age of 13. Young people reported that the experience of unintentionally coming across porn felt intrusive and disempowering and made them feel uncomfortable.*⁶⁴

(c) Impacts on body image

In our SHoT survey, teachers made comments on how the rise of sexualised behaviours in schools was linked to the increase in access to and viewing of pornography and this was leading to growing numbers of students concerned about body image, appearance and attractiveness. Teachers also described how pornography was contributing to young men viewing girls and women as objects rather than human beings.

“I believe there is an increasing disconnect between women as human beings, and women as objects and I attribute this corrosion of respectful and boundary driven relationships to unfettered access to pornography.”

“They also need to understand the damaging influence of pornography, the importance of viewing other people as human beings rather than objects.”⁶⁵

In personal correspondence with Melinda Tankard Reist in 2024, a Year 10 female student described how girls were being subjected to objectifying and degrading discussions of female bodies, including comparisons of female genitalia. Male students openly talked about the pornography they recently watched and compared the bodies of their female peers to what they had viewed. This was contributing to body shame.

Another female student also wrote to Melinda Tankard Reist:

⁶³ Hindenburg Research (2024) *Roblox: Inflated Key Metrics For Wall Street And A Pedophile Hellscape For Kids*, 8 October. hindenburgresearch.com/roblox/

⁶⁴ eSafety Commissioner, 2023, op. cit.

⁶⁵ Collective Shout & Dent, M. (2023) Sexual Harassment of Teachers in Schools [Survey Data].

*It makes me upset how us girls and women are sexualised so much by men and they all have unrealistic standards for our body's. I always hear or read stuff like how body hair on girls isn't normal and how we have to have the biggest boobs and ass in the world. I really wished I was a boy most of the time, being a girl makes me unhappy. I wish everything could change.*⁶⁶

These personal experiences correlate with research that demonstrates exposure to cultural body ideals in pornography is related to adolescents' body insecurities, body comparison, feelings of unattractiveness and internalisation of appearance ideals⁶⁷, and body appreciation.⁶⁸ In a recent systematic review of the association between pornography exposure, body image, and sexual body image, researchers found compelling evidence that pornography exposure is associated with negative body image outcomes for both women and men. This included body dissatisfaction, body surveillance, physical self-esteem, drive for muscularity, and other related concepts.⁶⁹

In a qualitative study of 35 adolescents aged between 16 and 19, males and females expressed that pornography presented an unattainable body ideal through porn star stereotypes (i.e., woman symbolised as “Barbie” and man symbolised as “Hercules”).⁷⁰ This unattainable body ideal is causing increased insecurity about penis size, muscularity and fat dissatisfaction in males and increased self-objectification in both sexes.⁷¹ There is an increasing uptake of plastic surgeries among young women - breast implants and labiaplasty - aim to emulate porn actresses' bodies, and are related to sexualisation and body dissatisfaction.⁷²

⁶⁶ Personal correspondence from a 14 year old female student to Melinda Tankard Reist (2024, 20 November).

⁶⁷ Lofgren-Mårtenson, L., & Månsson, S.A. (2010). Lust, love, and life: A qualitative study of Swedish adolescents' perceptions and experiences with pornography. *Journal of Sex Research*, 47(6), 568–579. doi.org/10.1080/00224490903151374; Vandenbosch, L., & Eggermont, S. (2013).

Sexualization of adolescent boys: Media exposure and boys' internalization of appearance ideals, self-objectification, and body surveillance. *Men and Masculinities*, 16(3), 283–306. doi.org/10.1177/1097184X13477866

⁶⁸ Paquette, M.M., Bóthe, B., Dion, J., Girouard, A., Bergeron, S. (2023). Can I Love My Body Even if It Doesn't Look Like the Porn Stars'? Longitudinal Associations Between Pornography Use Frequency and Body Appreciation in a Diverse Sample of Adolescents. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 52(8), 3471–3489. doi.org/10.1007/s10508-023-02679-3

⁶⁹ Paslakis, G., Chiclana Actis, C., & Mestre-Bach, G. (2022). Associations between pornography exposure, body image and sexual body image: A systematic review. *Journal of Health Psychology*, 27(3), 743–760. doi.org/10.1177/1359105320967085

⁷⁰ Paquette, M.M., Bóthe, B., Dion, J., Girouard, A., & Bergeron, S. (2023), op. cit.

⁷¹ Cranney S. (2015). Internet Pornography Use and Sexual Body Image in a Dutch Sample. *International Journal of Sexual Health : Official journal of the World Association for Sexual Health*, 27(3), 316–323. doi.org/10.1080/19317611.2014.999967

⁷² Privara, M., & Bob, P. (2023). Pornography Consumption and Cognitive-Affective Distress. *The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*, 211(8), 641–646. doi.org/10.1097/NMD.0000000000001669

While both sexes have access to pornography and can experience negative body image after viewing it, research suggests “girls tend to be more objectified by it” and experience greater body shame.⁷³

Pornography is causing girls to dissociate from their own bodies. Therapist Karin Nadrowski writes:

*Female adolescents today are left alone with the painful discrepancy between the theoretical idea of gender equality and the harsh reality of sexual objectification targeted specifically at young females...By carefully working through these experiences, it may be possible to enhance mentalization capacity and alleviate the fear, shame, and pain associated with becoming a woman. It is only after exploring the influence of misogynistic pornographic content on the conception of self of the female patient, that the impact of this content on gender dysphoria can be assessed.*⁷⁴

Finally, the problematic use of pornography to escape negative emotions was found to significantly predict participants’ body image and relationship dissatisfaction in a cross-sectional study of 306 participants in Italy.⁷⁵

(d) The relationship between pornography use and respect and consent education

Consent lessons are no match for the power and influence of the global pornography industry, now the number one source of “sex education” in the world.⁷⁶

Pornography undermines any teaching on consent and respect. Lead author of the Victorian Education Department’s respectful relationship curriculum stated: “This kind of normalisation of violence [in pornography] is teaching storylines around entitlement, about who women are, what they’re there for and what real men do.”⁷⁷

⁷³ Kelly, R. (2022) Inside the mental health epidemic among teenage girls: Our girls are struggling. How can we help? *The New Statesman*.

www.newstatesman.com/politics/health/2022/03/inside-the-mental-health-epidemic-among-teenage-girls

⁷⁴ Nadrowski K. (2024). A New Flight from Womanhood? The Importance of Working Through Experiences Related to Exposure to Pornographic Content in Girls Affected by Gender Dysphoria. *Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy*, 50(3), 293–302. doi.org/10.1080/0092623X.2023.2276149

⁷⁵ Barchielli, B., Cricenti, C., Lausi, G., Quagliari, A., Mari, E., Rocca, G., Antinori, A., Giannini, A. M., & Ferracuti, S. (2024). Exploring the Interplay of problematic pornography use, sexism, and rape myth acceptance: An Italian cross-sectional study. *Heliyon*, 10(13), e32981. doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e32981

⁷⁶ Tankard Reist, M. (9 Mar 2021). Why “consent” doesn’t stand a chance against porn culture. *ABC Religion and Ethics*.

www.abc.net.au/religion/consent-education-does-not-stand-a-chance-against-pornography/13231364

⁷⁷ Sanders, O. & Kendall, J. (31 July 2024) Concerns student sexism towards teachers contributes to gendered violence. ABC News.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-08-21/what-can-be-done-about-sexism-by-students-towards-teachers/104141858>

Pornography is conditioning boys to accept rape myths⁷⁸ and that “no” in fact means “yes”. It is also normalising aggression, coercion and domination. An Italian cross-sectional study showed that problematic pornography use had a positive correlation with rape myth adherence - “She wanted it,” “He didn’t mean to,” “It wasn’t really rape,” “Women usually say ‘no’ when they really mean ‘yes’”.⁷⁹

Melinda Tankard Reist has seen first-hand how pornography is countering any consent education:

*I speak frequently about consent and respectful relationships... But with every school workshop I run, I see that overwhelming cultural forces are overpowering any hoped-for advancement. Consent education won't be effective if women are not first seen as human and worthy of dignity and respect.*⁸⁰

Many of the testimonies collected by Chanel Contos on her website Teach Us Consent demonstrate the limitations of the language of “choice” and “consent” within consent education.⁸¹ Girls often feel as though they didn’t really have a choice; consent became merely giving in, or passive compliance. The reality of this is highlighted by a number of testimonies that indicate that the sexual offenders had already participated in “consent” sessions. For instance:

A [school name] boy who I considered a friend, had sat in the same auditorium as me, through the same consent education day our schools held together. Three months later he raped me at a party. It's not just about consent education but entitlement.

It was last year in 2020, I was really drunk ... He had been my boyfriend for 11 months ... I told him I didn't want to have sex ... I was a virgin, he knew how important it was for me ... He proceeded to do it ... He then broke up with me and proceeded to say 'I know I didn't rape you, because I did a sexual consent course at university and what I did was not rape'.⁸²

Researchers have highlighted that “sex and sexuality education in Australian schools needs to provide practical strategies that can be used to gain consent before sex.”⁸³ This is particularly important in light of their findings that young Aboriginal women feel they lack the skills or power to negotiate safe sex.

⁷⁸ Hedrick, A. (2021) A Meta-analysis of Media Consumption and Rape Myth Acceptance. *Journal of Health Communication*, 26(9), 645-656. doi.org/10.1080/10810730.2021.1986609

⁷⁹ Barchielli, Cricenti, Lausi, Quagliari, Mari, Rocca, Antinori, Giannini, & Ferracuti, 2024, op. cit.

⁸⁰ Tankard Reist, 09 Mar 2021, op. cit.

⁸¹ Contos, C. (2024). Testimonies. *Teach Us Consent*. www.teachusconsent.com/testimonies

⁸² Ibid; Tankard Reist, 09 March 2021, op.cit.

⁸³ Graham, S., Martin, K., Beadman, M., Doyle, M., & Bolt, R. (2023) Our relationships, our values, our culture - Aboriginal young men’s perspectives about sex, relationships and gender stereotypes in Australia. *Culture, Health & Sexuality*, 25(3), 304-319. doi.org/10.1080/13691058.2022.2039776

We recommend respect and consent education addresses pornography explicitly, and calls out its harmful messaging and representations. A Dutch longitudinal study found that the more a young person had learned about the harms of pornography use from their school-based sex education, the weaker sexist attitudes became over time.⁸⁴

SHoT survey respondents⁸⁵ highlighted that respect and consent education is necessary in schools but it needs to be conducted at younger ages. Teachers made the following comments:

“Better education about consent at all stages of education.”

“Consent taught from first year at school.”

“National sex ed curriculum beginning in k/pp starting with consent with all materials provided.”

“Education and prevention on sex education and consent at an earlier age across contexts both in home and at school.”

“Sexual harassment and consent need to be explicitly taught every year starting in year 7. Students need to be taught about the laws and legal consequences of these behaviours and actions from year 7, as that's when the inappropriate behaviours are starting.”

SHoT survey respondents wanted to see education around the unrealistic nature of pornography and programs that provide protective behaviours that empower girls. Other teachers reinforced that teaching about consent is not enough to combat the storylines students are being taught through pornography.

[W]e deliver content about sexual harassment, consent and healthy relationships but there is still a lack of applying this content to real life behaviours in our boys. They are as nice as pie one on one, but the pack-like behaviour gives them power.⁸⁶

Dr Elly Hanson points to the realities of women's lives to show that consent by itself is a very poor substitute for a richer sexual ethic. While consent is a cornerstone of our sexual offence laws, as Dr Hanson writes, promoting it as the leading answer to the epidemic of sexual assault or harassment in schools, and the wider community, does not have an evidence base, and is plagued with problems.⁸⁷ For example:

⁸⁴ Dawson, K., Tafro, A. and Štulhofer, A. (2019). Adolescent sexual aggressiveness and pornography use: A longitudinal assessment. *Aggressive Behavior* 45(6):587-597. doi.org/10.1002/ab.21854

⁸⁵ Collective Shout & Dent, M. (2023) Sexual Harassment of Teachers in Schools [Survey Data].

⁸⁶ Collective Shout & Dent, M. (2023) Sexual Harassment of Teachers in School. [Survey Data]

⁸⁷ Hanson, E. (Nov 2024). Beyond consent: Moving to a full-bodied sexual ethics. www.fullyhuman.org.uk

“The reality is that much consensual sex is unwanted, harmful, or profoundly regretted.”

“The consent model assumes that girls and women can decline sex without consequence, but in fact for many, a ‘no’ may lead to aggression, break-up, or being shamed as frigid or a tease.”

“Males may read a female’s disinterest as token resistance, simply an act the girl or woman is under obligation to perform, and so attempt to get round this through persuasion until she consents.”

“When people have been taught through past abuse and neglect that their worth lies in sex, that their safety lies in pleasing others, or that their feelings aren’t to be taken seriously, they are powerfully primed to consent to sex they don’t want.”

e) the production and dissemination of pornography, including deepfake or AI-generated pornography

Collective Shout cautions against using the term ‘deepfake’. The term ‘deepfake’ tends to obscure the reality that images of real women and girls are used in the AI-enabled production of this material. We made this point in our submission to the Criminal Code Amendment (Deepfake Sexual Material) Bill 2024.⁸⁸ Although we have used the term ‘deepfake’ in this submission, as per the terms of reference, we recommend the use of other terminology such as Image Based Sexual Abuse (IBSA) and deepfake sexual abuse as it is the faces of real women and girls (primarily) which are morphed into pornographic imagery using easily accessible AI tools.

IBSA is defined as “all forms of the non-consensual creation, taking or sharing of intimate images or videos, including altered or manipulated media, and threats to distribute such material.”⁸⁹

We also argued in our 2024 submission to eSafety Industry Standards⁹⁰ that it was not AI itself creating Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM) or Image Based Abuse material. AI content is generated by real people who prompt machine learning software. This software is trained on a vast body of digitised images and videos including real child sexual abuse material, images of real children and other real pornography created by real people.

⁸⁸ Collective Shout, 25 July 2024, op.cit.

⁸⁹ Rigotti, C., & McGlynn, C. (2022) *Towards A European Criminal Law on Violence Against Women: The Ambitions and Limitations of the Commission Proposal to Criminalise Image-Based Sexual Abuse*, *New Journal of European Criminal Law*, 13, 452-454. doi.org/10.1177/20322844221140713

⁹⁰ Collective Shout, January 2024, op. cit.; Collective Shout. (2024, 02 February). Made by men: How the term “AI generated” invisibilises sex offenders. www.collectiveshout.org/ai_a_tool_for_abusing_women_and_children

For this reason we question the validity of the term ‘AI-generated’ in connection with CSAM and IBSA. These types of abuse are highly gendered, with males most often the perpetrators and consumers of CSAM. Males are also more likely to perpetrate Image Based Sexual Abuse while females are more likely to be victimised by a partner or ex-partner.

The term ‘AI-generated’ serves to dehumanise the act of creating abuse content and shield sexual offenders - the men creating it - from critique and accountability. In reality, AI is merely another tool men are utilising in their abuse and exploitation of women and children.

Discussions of AI should always directly address the reality of how it is created and who its perpetrators and victims are. We will continue to push back against language which shields sex offenders.

The production and dissemination of IBSA is rising exponentially and causes significant harm. A study across Australia, New Zealand and the UK found that 1 in 3 adults report victimisation across all forms of IBSA.⁹¹ In terms of harms:

Image-based sexual abuse can be life-ending and it is often life-shattering... Rather than experienced as a discrete incident which happens and then comes to pass, victims feel the ‘constancy’ of the abuse, with each new distribution or viewing being experienced as abusive.⁹²

Collective Shout has been highlighting the harms of IBSA, deepfake sexual abuse and nudifying apps since 2019.⁹³ Easily available tools, including undressing/nudifying apps, are contributing to a rise in the production and dissemination of pornography using the images of real women and girls taken from their social media pages⁹⁴ and official school photos. In June 2024, AI-generated ‘fake’ nudes of 50 girls in years 9 to 12 were created at a Victorian Grammar school.⁹⁵ In January 2025, a teenage boy at a south-western Sydney high school

⁹¹ Henry, N., McGlynn, C., Flynn, A., Johnson, K., Powell, A. & Scott, A.J. (2020) Image-based Sexual Abuse: A study on the causes and consequences of non-consensual nude or sexual imager. Routledge.

⁹² Rigotti, C., McGlynn, C., & Benning, F. (2024, December 10) Image-Based Sexual Abuse and EU Law: A Critical Analysis. *German Law Journal*, pp.1-22. doi.org/10.1017/glj.2024.49

⁹³ Collective Shout, 25 July 2024, op. cit.

⁹⁴ The Feed. (2023, 09 February). A deepfake porn scandal has rocked the streaming community. Is Australian law on top of the issue? *SBS News*. www.sbs.com.au/news/the-feed/article/a-streamer-was-caught-looking-at-ai-generated-porn-of-female-streamers-the-story-just-scratches-the-surface/vfb2936ml

⁹⁵ Whitson, R. (2024, 25 June). Principals say parents need to be vigilant as explicit AI deepfakes become more easily accessible to students. *ABC News*. www.abc.net.au/news/2024-06-25/explicit-ai-deepfakes-students-bacchus-marsh-grammar/104016178

was alleged to have created explicit ‘deepfake’ images of female students and circulated them using fake social media accounts.⁹⁶

Through AI, perpetrators can morph regular images into CSAM. An individual’s age can be changed, with a photo of a young adult being morphed to look like a child. A non-sexualised image of a child can be morphed into an image depicting them being sexually abused. Perpetrators can also use AI to modify real child sexual abuse images so they appear to be fake, editing them to look like cartoons or sketches and in the process, concealing the abuse of an actual child.⁹⁷

We recently exposed how images of girls and female teachers are being morphed into pornography in our SHoT Report. One teacher commented that boys were making ‘deepfake porn’ of classmates. Another respondent noted that there has been an “increase in reports of sexual harassment generally but particularly that which involves image-based sexual abuse eg. revenge porn and threatening to share nudes.”⁹⁸

IBSA contributes to harmful sexual socialisation especially in adolescent males. AI-enabled IBSA contributes to more peer-to-peer abuse and predatory attitudes. The technologies and apps associated with the creation of this material provide the abuser with enhanced tools to harass and intimidate women and girls.⁹⁹

Collective Shout’s own research and research conducted by specialists in this area highlight¹⁰⁰:

- Almost 100 percent of individuals targeted in IBSA are women
- 98% of all ‘deepfake’ videos online are pornography
- It is often men known to the victim who create IBSA
- The ease of access of this technology means men and boys can see anyone they desire naked

⁹⁶ The Guardian. (2025 09 January). Sydney teenager allegedly used AI to create deepfake pornography of students. *The Guardian*.
www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2025/jan/09/sydney-high-school-ai-deepfake-porn-scandal-ntwnfb

⁹⁷ Roper, C. (2024) “No way of knowing if the child is fictional”: How ‘virtual’ child sexual abuse material harms children. *Collective Shout*.
www.collectiveshout.org/how_virtual_child_sexual_abuse_material_harms_children

⁹⁸ Mowle, Ewing & Perry, 2024, op. cit.

⁹⁹ Alaimo, Kara (10 Apr 2024). Opinion: This harmful trend is so much more than a ‘youthful transgression.’ *CNN*.
www.cnn.com/2024/04/10/opinions/nude-deepfakes-schools-girls-alaimo/index.html

¹⁰⁰ McGlynn, C. (9 Apr 2024). Deepfake porn: Why we need to make it a crime to create it, not just share it. *The Conversation*.
theconversation.com/deepfake-porn-why-we-need-to-make-it-a-crime-to-create-it-not-just-share-it-227177; Lavinia, Emilie (24 June 2024). ‘I’ve seen boys request fake nudes of their teachers and mothers’: How nudify apps are violating women and girls in the UK. *Glamour*.
www.glamourmagazine.co.uk/article/nudify-apps-investigation; Rigotti, & McGlynn, 2022, op. cit.

- More than 100,000 individuals use the ‘Undress AI’ website every day, according to its parent company
- Individuals occupying public positions, younger women, LGBTQIA+ people, or members of historically oppressed groups are disproportionately targeted and harmed.
- ‘Deepfakes’ steal women and girl’s identity and autonomy. Research details the specific harms to victims and society¹⁰¹:
- Physical and psychological well-being is negatively affected
- Economic setbacks such as work absences and financial burdens related to seeking assistance and support
- Social isolation stemming from victim-blaming and a general sense of distrust.
- A climate of fear, shame and censorship where victims feel unable to express themselves
- Socio-economic costs for society including the loss of economic productivity and incurring of health expenses.

We highlighted the specific dangers of ‘deepfake’ pornography in our submission to the Inquiry into the Criminal Code Amendment (Deepfake Sexual Material) Bill 2024:

For free or as little as \$2, the user can, within seconds, create genres of porn such as ‘schoolgirl’, ‘pregnant’, ‘maid’ and ‘Hentai’ using real images of women and girls. Users can “change the pose” to create graphic content. “Change the age” is also offered as an attractive feature. We have specific concerns about this tool, given it provides users with the capacity to childify images of adults and to create child sexual exploitation material.

The apps allow users to enhance sexual parts and body shape. They are promoted using wording such as “Undress Your Girlfriend”, “Pornify your friends”, “Add faces to all kinds of porn videos and GIFS you love”, and “Nude Colleagues,” where workplace videos of colleagues can be turned into IBSA material. It takes less than 25 minutes to create a one-minute-long deepfake IBSA video using just one clear face image (Home Security Heroes, 2023).¹⁰²

The production and dissemination of IBSA provide new ways of degrading, debasing and intimidating women. They act as an accelerant for men’s violence against women because they normalise non-consensual sexual activity.

¹⁰¹ Nygård, S., Kvalem, I.L. & Bente Træen, B. (17 Apr 2024). “It Spread Like Wildfire, As These Things Do”: Exploring Mechanisms of Harm in Young Norwegians’ Experiences of Image-Based Sexual Abuse, *Journal of Sex Research*. doi.org/10.1080/00224499.2024.2341129; Huber, A.(2023). “A Shadow of Me Old Self”: The Impact of Image-Based Sexual Abuse in a Digital Society, *Int Rev Victimology*, 199(206):209–11, doi.org/10.1177/02697580211063659; Rigotti, McGlynn & Benning, 10 Dec 2024, op. cit.

¹⁰² Collective Shout, 25 Jul, 2024, op. cit.

The popular platform MrDeepFakes was analysed recently by researchers, showing a rapid expansion of an extremely harmful but popular market. As of November 2023, Mr DeepFakes hosted 43,000 sexual deepfake videos depicting 3,800 individuals, and the videos have been watched 1.5 billion times. The most common targets are women - 95.3% are women actors and musicians. IBSA is “commonly used to financially sextort targets, generate ‘revenge pornography,’ and explore sexual fantasies without obtaining consent.”¹⁰³

Despite rape scenes, abuse and humiliation being prohibited on MrDeepFakes, 2.4% of videos depicted rape, abuse, or humiliation, sometimes portraying the targeted individual as the perpetrator rather than the victim. The scale of engagement highlights that consumption and discussion of sexual deepfakes has become mainstream and occurs openly online.¹⁰⁴

Legislation is needed to curb the creation of non-consensual sexual deepfakes/IBSA as well as distribution.

(f) the impact of exposure to violent and/or misogynistic pornography on children, teenagers and young adults

Children, teenagers and young adults are being exposed to pornography that consistently depicts men’s violence against women and girls.

- Research from 2020 found that 35-45% of all videos on two major pornography platforms contain violence, with women the target of violence in 97% of these scenes¹⁰⁵
- A report by the French equality watchdog found that 90% of porn features violence against women with much of it amounting to torture¹⁰⁶
- A study carried out in 2021 found that one in eight titles shown to a first-time visitor on mainstream porn sites depict sexual violence, with incest (including between step- and biological family members) the most frequent form of sexual violence on the landing page¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Vera-Gray, F., McGlynn, C., Kureshi, I., & Butterby, K. (2021) Sexual violence as a sexual script in mainstream online pornography, *The British Journal of Criminology*, 61(5), 1243–1260. doi.org/10.1093/bjc/azab035

¹⁰⁶ Christafis, A. (27 Sep 2023) French equality watchdog finds 90% of online pornography abuses women. *The Guardian*. www.theguardian.com/world/2023/sep/27/online-pornography-breaks-french-law-equality-watchdog-france

¹⁰⁷ Vera-Gray, McGlynn, Kureshi, & Butterby, 2021, op. cit.

- Our own investigations found that on Pornhub, of the first eight thumbnails, seven referenced ‘incest’. Of the next eight titles, four references either ‘incest’, ‘violence’ or “‘surprise’ sex acts’

An Australian study explored what adolescents and young adults actually see when they view porn. It found that 70% frequently saw men portrayed as dominant; 36% frequently saw women being called names or slurs; 35% frequently saw ‘consensual’ violence towards women; and 11% frequently saw non-consensual violence towards women.¹⁰⁸

The National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032 highlights that “viewing pornographic material that showcases violence can have negative impacts on a young person’s development with regard to their well-being and relationships and it can influence their attitudes and beliefs about sex, intimacy and consent.”¹⁰⁹

A systematic review of 20 years of research into pornography and violence found that violent content in pornography may serve to legitimise violence through knowledge transmitted among men.¹¹⁰ Other impacts of exposure to violent and/or misogynistic pornography are multitudinous and none of them are positive:

- Exposure to violent and/or misogynistic pornographic content has a significant association with attitudes supporting violence against women¹¹¹
- Exposure to violent pornography is the strongest predictor of sexual violence among males and females¹¹²

¹⁰⁸ Davis, A. C., Carrotte, E. R., Hellard, M. E., & Lim, M. S. (2018). What behaviors do young heterosexual Australians see in pornography? A cross-sectional study. *The Journal of Sex Research*, 55(3), 310-319. [doi:10.1080/00224499.2017.1417350](https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499.2017.1417350)

¹⁰⁹ Commonwealth of Australia (2022). *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032*. pg. 52.

www.dss.gov.au/national-plan-end-gender-based-violence/resource/national-plan-end-violence-against-women-and-children-2022-2032

¹¹⁰ Mestre-Bach, G., Villena-Moya, A., & Chiclana-Actis, C. (2024). Pornography Use and Violence: A Systematic Review of the Last 20 Years. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 25(2), 1088-1112. doi.org/10.1177/15248380231173619

¹¹¹ Upton, J., Hazell, A., Abbott, R. and Pilling, K. (Feb 2020). *The relationship between pornography use and harmful sexual behaviours: A primary research report prepared by The Behavioural Architects for the Government Equalities Office*.

www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-relationship-between-pornography-use-and-harmful-sexual-behaviours/the-relationship-between-pornography-use-and-harmful-sexual-attitudes-and-behaviours-literature-review

¹¹² Upton, J., Hazell, A., Abbott, R. and Pilling, K. (Feb 2020). *The relationship between pornography use and harmful sexual behaviours: A primary research report prepared by The Behavioural Architects for the Government Equalities Office*.

www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-relationship-between-pornography-use-and-harmful-sexual-behaviours/the-relationship-between-pornography-use-and-harmful-sexual-attitudes-and-behaviours-literature-review; Ybarra, M. L., & Thompson, R. E. (2018). Predicting the Emergence of Sexual Violence in Adolescence. *Prevention Science: The Official Journal of the Society for Prevention Research*, 19(4), 403–415. doi.org/10.1007/s11121-017-0810-4; Dawson, K., Tafro, A. and Štulhofer,

- The use of pornography in couples can normalise violence even in nonsexual contexts¹¹³
- The use of violent pornography (specifically sadomasochistic content) is associated with an increased tendency to demonstrate aggressive behaviour and attitudes¹¹⁴
- Pornography use is associated with (and even predictive of) sexual aggression, teen dating violence, and experiences of sexual victimisation¹¹⁵
- Exposure to pornography has been linked to sexual coercion, as well as higher levels of rape-supportive beliefs, peer approval of forced sex and acceptance of myths about rape¹¹⁶
- Men who watched mainstream pornography scored significantly higher on self-reported likelihood of raping¹¹⁷
- The more often young men consume pornography, the more likely they are to enact sexual behaviour that the other person does not want.¹¹⁸

Expectation of sexual aggression and violence

The global pornography industry has become the most prominent sex educator. It normalises violent or coercive behaviours as part of “sexual expression”. Young men now seem to believe that extreme content is “normal.”¹¹⁹ Many young people *expect* sex to involve physical aggression, and many believe that girls expect or enjoy physical aggression such as strangulation or slapping (42% of 16-21 year old

A. (2019). Adolescent sexual aggressiveness and pornography use: A longitudinal assessment. *Aggressive Behavior* 45(6):587-597. doi.org/10.1002/ab.21854.

¹¹³ Dawson, K., Tafro, A. and Štulhofer, A. (2019). Adolescent sexual aggressiveness and pornography use: A longitudinal assessment. *Aggressive Behavior* 45(6):587-597. doi.org/10.1002/ab.21854.

¹¹⁴ Tomaszewska, P., & Krahé, B. (2018). Predictors of Sexual Aggression Victimization and Perpetration Among Polish University Students: A Longitudinal Study. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 47(2), 493–505. doi.org/10.1007/s10508-016-0823-2

¹¹⁵ Rostad, W. L., Gittins-Stone, D., Huntington, C., Rizzo, C. J., Pearlman, D., & Orchowski, L. (2019). The Association Between Exposure to Violent Pornography and Teen Dating Violence in Grade 10 High School Students. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 48(7), 2137–2147.

doi.org/10.1007/s10508-019-1435-4; Huntington, C., Willoughby, B., & Rhoades, G. (2022). Associations of Adolescents’ Pornography Viewing with their Romantic Relationship Skills and Behaviors. *The Journal of Sex Research*, 61(1), 80–91. doi.org/10.1080/00224499.2022.2096844

¹¹⁶ Commonwealth of Australia (2022). National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022-2032.

www.dss.gov.au/system/files/resources/national-plan-end-violence-against-women-and-children-2022-2032.pdf

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Warren, D. and Swami, D. (2018). ‘Teenagers and sex’ in AIFS, LSAC Annual Statistical Report 2018, AIFS, Australian Government, 2018: 47–56.

static.aifs.gov.au/files/r1GplwOaS7tS/LSAC-ASR-2018-Chap5-teenagers-and-sex.pdf

¹¹⁹ Antevska, A., & Gavey, N. (2015). “Out of Sight and Out of Mind”: Detachment and Men’s Consumption of Male Sexual Dominance and Female Submission in Pornography. *Men and Masculinities*, 18(5), 605-629. doi.org/10.1177/1097184X15574339

respondents), more than boys (37%), according to a UK nationally representative survey of young people aged 16-21.¹²⁰

Children have grown up in a porn-saturated world, surrounded by sexually objectifying images, with women often glamourised as the subject of aggression.

Strangulation, a dangerous and criminal act, has been normalised by pornography as a sexual practice.¹²¹ Australian research among 18-35 year old adults reveals that 57% report having been sexually strangled.¹²² And many erroneously believe it can be done safely.¹²³ Other research has clarified that this practice is inspired by pornography - specifically, more exposure to sexual strangulation in pornography inspired more strangulation of women by men.

Erroneous beliefs about sex

In research among adolescents, false beliefs were more often held by those who had been exposed to pornography. This included, for example, the idea that rough sex is common (gagging, spanking, verbal abuse) while gentle sex is rare (kissing, hugging, and compliments), and that most women enjoy anal sex.¹²⁴ These erroneous beliefs were held by porn-exposed adolescents whether or not they had sought porn out to learn from it. As gained real sexual experience, their erroneous beliefs continued - suggesting that their sexual partners had internalised and acted out those erroneous beliefs.

Exposure to violent or misogynistic pornography warps boys' perspectives of what is normal in sexual relationships, and how they should conduct themselves appropriately in a respectful relationship. According to UK Labour MP Sarah Champion, in the 2016 Dare2Care report one young boy asked "If I have a girlfriend,

¹²⁰ UK Children's Commissioner (2023) 'A lot of it is actually just abuse' – Young people and pornography.

assets.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wpuploads/2023/07/CCO-Pornography-and-Young-People-1.pdf

¹²¹ White, C., Martin, G., Schofield, A. M., & Majeed-Ariss, R. (2021). 'I thought he was going to kill me': Analysis of 204 case files of adults reporting non-fatal strangulation as part of a sexual assault over a 3 year period. *Journal of Forensic and Legal Medicine*, 79, 102128.

doi.org/10.1016/j.jflm.2021.102128; De Boos J. (2019). Review article: Non-fatal strangulation: Hidden injuries, hidden risks. *Emergency Medicine Australasia : EMA*, 31(3), 302–308.

doi.org/10.1111/1742-6723.13243.

¹²² Hou, J., Huibregtse, M. E., Alexander, I. L., Klemsz, L. M., Fu, T. C., Fortenberry, J. D., Herbenick, D., & Kawata, K. (2023). Association of Frequent Sexual Choking/Strangulation With Neurophysiological Responses: A Pilot Resting-State fMRI Study. *Journal of Neurotrauma*, 40(13-14), 1339–1351. doi.org/10.1089/neu.2022.0146

¹²³ Sharman, L. S., Fitzgerald, R., & Douglas, H. (2024). Prevalence of Sexual Strangulation/Choking Among Australian 18-35 Year-Olds. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 10.1007/s10508-024-02937-y. Advance online publication. doi.org/10.1007/s10508-024-02937-y

¹²⁴ Wright, P. J., Tokunaga, R. S., Herbenick, D., & Paul, B. (2021). Pornography vs. sexual science: The role of pornography use and dependency in U.S. teenagers' sexual illiteracy. *Communication Monographs*, 89(3), 332–353. doi.org/10.1080/03637751.2021.1987486; Nadrowski K. (2024). A New Flight from Womanhood? The Importance of Working Through Experiences Related to Exposure to Pornographic Content in Girls Affected by Gender Dysphoria. *Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy*, 50(3), 293–302. doi.org/10.1080/0092623X.2023.2276149

do I need to strangle her when I have sex with her?”¹²⁵ In 2016, Melinda Tankard Reist reported that “Girls and young women describe boys pressuring them to provide acts inspired by the porn they consume routinely. Girls tell of being expected to put up with things they don't enjoy” and that girls are “expected to provide sex acts for tokens of affection.”¹²⁶ She cited an incident where a male high school student said, “If you suck my dick I'll give you a kiss.” Another girl asked her, “If he wants to hit me, tie me up and stalk me, does that mean he loves me?”

Pornography introduces new anxieties, presents sex as performative and compulsory, implies that natural bodies are not good enough, and portrays deviance as normal.¹²⁷ Research finds that those most likely to believe pornography reflects reality also are more likely to watch it.¹²⁸ Adolescents who consume pornography are more likely to hold erroneous beliefs about sex than those who don't.¹²⁹

Engaging in aggressive and dominating acts

Ejaculation on a woman's face is a common act in pornography, and research indicates that men understand it is aggressive and dominating, and that women don't like it - but men engage in it nonetheless.¹³⁰

Other Australian research investigates unpleasant, painful and unwanted sexual experiences, from the perspective of health practitioners.¹³¹ Women are the primary group experiencing this, often participating in unwanted 'diverse' sex acts, like anal sex, strangulation, or hitting. Other pornography-inspired acts include hair pulling, spanking hard enough to leave marks, facial ejaculation, confinement, double-penetration, anal-to-mouth penetration, penile gagging, and abusive

¹²⁵ Tankard Reist, M., 2018, op. cit.

¹²⁶ Tankard Reist, M. (2016). Growing Up in Pornland: Girls have had it with porn conditioned boys. *ABC Religion & Ethics*.

www.abc.net.au/religion/growing-up-in-pornland-girls-have-had-it-with-porn-conditioned-b/10097244

¹²⁷ Bauer, M., Hämmerli, S., & Leeners, B. (2020). Unmet Needs in Sex Education-What Adolescents Aim to Understand About Sexuality of the Other Sex. *The Journal of Adolescent Health: Official Publication of the Society for Adolescent Medicine*, 67(2), 245–252.

doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2020.02.015

¹²⁸ A meta-analysis (n=3846) found a positive association (r=0.39) between perceived realism, “the extent to which one views pornographic media as reflecting reality,” and pornography consumption in adolescents. Gunnoo, A., Powell, C. The Association Between Pornography Consumption and Perceived Realism in Adolescents: A Meta-analysis. *Sexuality & Culture* 27, 1880–1893 (2023).

doi.org/10.1007/s12119-023-10095-x

¹²⁹ Wright, P. J., Tokunaga, R. S., Herbenick, D., & Paul, B. (2021). Pornography vs. sexual science: The role of pornography use and dependency in U.S. teenagers' sexual illiteracy. *Communication Monographs*, 89(3), 332–353. doi.org/10.1080/03637751.2021.1987486

¹³⁰ Sun, C., Ezzell, M. B., & Kendall, O. (2017). Naked Aggression: The Meaning and Practice of Ejaculation on a Woman's Face. *Violence Against Women*, 23(14), 1710-1729.

doi.org/10.1177/1077801216666723

¹³¹ Sharman R, Allen A, van Niekerk K, Coles A, Manocha R, Foran T. (2024). "What Is Normal?": A Qualitative Exploration of Health Practitioners' Reports of Treating Patients Presenting with Unpleasant Sexual Experiences. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*. 53(10):4099-4116.

DOI:[10.1007/s10508-024-02994-3](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-024-02994-3)

name-calling.¹³² Pornography is a major player in promoting sexual submission and subservience of women, and acceptance of male aggression.

One doctor says:

I often talk with younger female patients presenting for contraception about consent and the impact of pornography on sexual acts and body dysmorphia—as a lot of issues that patients present with tend to be related to being coerced into unpleasant sex that their (usually young male partner) has learned to be 'normal' through pornography.

Porn-fuelled injuries

Exposure to violent pornography is also leading to a rise in pornography-fuelled injuries in women and girls seeking their help. In correspondence with Collective Shout Movement Director Melinda Tankard Reist, Di McLeod, director of the Gold Coast Centre Against Sexual Violence (GCCASV), wrote:

In the past few years, we have had a huge increase in intimate partner rape of women from 14 to 80+. The biggest common denominator is consumption of porn by the offender. With offenders not able to differentiate between fantasy and reality, believing women are 'up for it' 24/7, ascribing to the myth that 'no means yes and yes means anal', oblivious to injuries caused and never ever considering consent. We have seen a huge increase in deprivation of liberty, physical injuries, torture, drugging, filming and sharing footage without consent. There is a cost in the trickle-down effect that some of us bear witness to every day ... GCCASV has experienced a 56% increase in referrals from emergency departments of local public hospitals in the past year. Women have been hurt, sustained vaginal, anogenital and other physical injuries in the perpetration of forced sexual contact ... It is rare for us to have a recent rape presentation that involves only vaginal penetration. Porn inspired sex signature acts of anal, deep throating, the money shot accompanied by choking and strangulation are the new 'norm'.¹³³

¹³² Wright, P. J., Sun, C., Steffen, N. J., & Tokunaga, R. S. (2014). Pornography, Alcohol, and Male Sexual Dominance. *Communication Monographs*, 82(2), 252–270.
doi.org/10.1080/03637751.2014.981558

¹³³ Tankard Reist, M. (2024) Never Again? Addressing Sexual Violence Must Include Pornography. *ABC Religion & Ethics*.
www.abc.net.au/religion/never-again-addressing-sexual-violence-must-include-pornography/10094568

Sexual assault and sexual abuse

In 2024, an alleged incident of sexual assault in a Victorian schools, perpetrated by a 12 year-old, is being attributed to porn fuelled behaviour by police. University of Melbourne researcher, Gemma McKibbon also commented on the incident, saying “the pornography industry is culpable and is basically grooming our children to be abusers,” and some boys are “abusing because...they’re acting out what they’re understanding to be their entitled rights.” Around 6 child-on-child sexual abuse incidents are reports in Victorian schools every week, and many remain unreported.¹³⁴

Teachers observations of impacts of porn exposure

Teachers in the SHoT Report reinforced these findings. They commented that boys as young as Year 7 are making comments about rape in class or making rape ‘jokes’ towards girls. In addition, “girls in year 7 are being told by boys that they will be raped”, other boys are making “violent rape threats”, and one teacher commented that “older boys [state] they intend to rape their future partners when they grow up.” A total of 23 teachers reported personally experiencing rape threats and 118 reported personally experiencing rape jokes. That means, that of the teachers surveyed, almost 12% have experienced rape jokes and 2% had had received a rape threat.

Teachers also made the following observations:

“I did teach high school but I resigned after 15 years of teaching. I just couldn’t believe how the boys had changed. When you are trying to teach about consent and boys are saying ‘consent is a myth’ because there isn’t any consent in the porn they are watching.”

“Pornography is a poison for youth. Twisting their perception of normal behaviour.”

“Most younger students assume what they see on pornography is what to expect and how it is acceptable to treat people.”

“As a PDHPE teacher I have seen an increase in students watching porn and explicit content from a young age. This has distorted their perceptions of what is acceptable.”

¹³⁴ Longbottom, C., Hilderbrandt, C., & Karagic, D. (2024). Inside the world of ‘kidfluencers’ where children make thousands from social media - at a cost. *ABC News*. www.abc.net.au/news/2024-05-21/kidfluencers-children-instagram-social-media-four-corners/103810250

(g) Impacts on minority groups including but not limited to First Nations, CALD, or LGBTIQ+ people and people living with disability

Pornography harms all who are exposed to it regardless of identity.

Pornography is not designed to educate, it is designed to make profit for the corporations creating and streaming it. Pornography producers admit that they produce 'fetish' pornography such as 'transsexual' for straight audiences because of the high levels of stimulation and arousal.¹³⁵ Girl-on-girl/faux lesbian porn is made as sexual entertainment for a heterosexual male audience as "the lesbian market is just too small to be attractive to the key players in porn. Therefore anything in the 'girl on girl' genre must, if it is to generate profit, appeal to men."¹³⁶

Survivor and human trafficking consultant Jay Benke argues all children and young people deserve to be protected from the harms of pornography. He has called for online safeguarding for LGBTIQ+ children, saying, "I believe that all children deserve protections and I believe that queer children deserve the same protection."¹³⁷

As lawyer Chris Kendall argues in *Big Porn Inc*, pornography promotes unequal power dynamics in both heterosexual and homosexual pornography. Gay male pornography rejects compassion, affection and equality between gay men instead promoting homophobia and sexism, self-hate, hate for others and harm to others.¹³⁸

Survivor and author Aaron Crowley has highlighted how pornography doesn't help LGBTIQ+ individuals understand their sexuality:

I was only 9 years old when I was first exposed to pornography. I didn't even know what sex was. So when I saw these scenes of sexual violence, I learned sex is violent ... It normalized sexual violence for me, so much so that when I was raped, I didn't even realize I was raped. A group of guys I met on social media raped me. They took pictures and shared them online. The Internet taught me it was normal. And so, because I thought it was normal, I didn't have a healthy way to process that trauma. Instead, I thought, 'If it's going to happen to me anyway, I might as well get paid for it.' So, when I met my pimp

¹³⁵ Wilson, G. (2014). *Your Brain on Porn: Internet pornography and the emerging science of addiction*. Commonwealth Publishing.

¹³⁶ Bindel, J. (2024, 15 March). There's no such thing as lesbian porn. 'Girl on girl' videos are made for men. *UnHerd*. unherd.com/2024/03/theres-no-such-thing-as-lesbian-porn/

¹³⁷ Moric, L. (2024). #BigTechBS: How Tech Lies about Child Safety and the Needs of LGBTQ+ Youth. National Centre on Sexual Exploitation (NCOSE). endsexualexploitation.org/articles/bigtechbs-how-tech-lies-about-child-safety-and-the-needs-of-lgbtq-youth/

¹³⁸ Kendall, C.N. (2011). The Harms of Gay Male Pornography In. M. Tankard Reist & A. Bray (2011) *Big Porn Inc*. Spinifex Press.

*on social media and he gave me the opportunity to do 'mainstream porn,' I was already groomed to say yes.*¹³⁹

In regards to people living with disability, pornography's influence can be even more challenging. *Porn is Not the Norm* is an initiative that aims to prevent pornography's harm to autistic young people. The program states:

*Monotropism, the key characteristics of autism, can make autistic young people particularly vulnerable to the impacts of pornography...the messages conveyed by pornography can be a source of confusion and concern, and shape unrealistic and unhealthy sexual understandings and expectations.*¹⁴⁰

(h) the effectiveness of any current education programs about use and misuse of pornography, and how these may be improved

Discussions in the literature regard pornography literacy as an approach aimed at increasing young people's skills to critically appraise messages in the material viewed and increasing awareness of the potential harms associated with viewing sexual exploitation material.¹⁴¹ The approach is grounded in media literacy theory¹⁴² and is viewed as a harm reduction strategy to mitigate potential negative impacts of pornography viewing.¹⁴³

We agree with this approach based on the high levels of incidental and accidental exposure. Young people need to be able to critically appraise pornography's harmful messages if they are exposed to it.

Through her work with thousands of students, Melinda Tankard Reist has found that young girls are desperate for help to resist pornographic scripts, to be empowered and educated to say no to sexual behaviour they don't want. Young men are distressed by their pornography addictions and need help to develop healthy sexual

¹³⁹ Moric, L. (2024). #BigTechBS: How Tech Lies about Child Safety and the Needs of LGBTQ+ Youth. *National Centre on Sexual Exploitation (NCOSE)*. endsexualexploitation.org/articles/bigtechbs-how-tech-lies-about-child-safety-and-the-needs-of-lgbtq-youth/

¹⁴⁰ Porn Is Not the Norm. (2024). Understanding the Issues. Imagine Do Pty Ltd. www.notthenorm.com.au/understanding-the-issues

¹⁴¹ Moric, L. 2024, op.cit.

¹⁴² Davis, A. C., Carrotte, E. R., Hellard, M. E., & Lim, M. S. (2018). What behaviors do young heterosexual Australians see in pornography? A cross-sectional study. *The Journal of Sex Research*, 55(3), 310-319. [doi:10.1080/00224499.2017.1417350](https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499.2017.1417350)

¹⁴³ Pinkleton, B.E., Austin, E., Weintraub, Y.Y., & Cohen M. (2012). The Role of Media Literacy in Shaping Adolescents' Understanding of and Responses to Sexual Portrayals in Mass Media. *Journal of Health Communication: International Perspectives*, 17, Issue 4, 460-476. doi.org/10.1080/10810730.2011.635770

relationships. Research supports the effectiveness of health-focused media literacy interventions,¹⁴⁴ including for developing positive sexuality attitudes.¹⁴⁵

In our SHoT survey, teachers made a number of comments around pornography education. They want more education about pornography and “the unrealistic nature of it”, “the dangers of pornography”, that it is a “damaging influence” and “a form of self-harm”. Overwhelmingly, teachers want to educate students and have frank and honest discussions around pornography and its harmful effects.

Parents also express what they want around pornography education. They want their children to be media literate and educated about pornography and sexuality. Most indicate that sexuality education including discussions about pornography should begin in the first years of high school as the most appropriate age.¹⁴⁶

In the SHoT survey, some teachers commented on the important influence of parents and the role they can play in education around pornography.

“I think there needs to be greater parent awareness. They need to be monitoring what teens are watching and also having those difficult conversations about what is reality and what happens in porn.”

“Parents need to be more involved in students' online activities to ensure they are navigating safely - what's acceptable and what's not and what to do if they see unwelcome content.”

A relevant and current education program that addresses what students and teachers want, and involves parents is DigiHelp. It is an evidence-based “school-based program addressing sexualised media (pornography), self-promoting social media, identity, consent and respectful relationships.”¹⁴⁷ The program covers grades 5 to 10 in Australia and aligns with the Australian Curriculum and the NSW PDHPE curriculum. DigiHelp integrates peer-based critical thinking with engaging education and parental oversight.

DigiHelp is currently being run in schools and has received praise for its effectiveness and ease of teaching. An analysis of the program found that:

¹⁴⁴ Vahedi, Z., Sibalis, A., Sutherland, J.E. (2018) Are media literacy interventions effective at changing attitudes and intentions towards risky health behaviors in adolescents? A meta-analytic review. *J Adolesc*, 67, 140-152. [doi:10.1016/j.adolescence.2018.06.007](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.adolescence.2018.06.007)

¹⁴⁵ Pinkleton, B.E., Austin, E., Weintraub, Y.Y., & Cohen M. (2012). The Role of Media Literacy in Shaping Adolescents' Understanding of and Responses to Sexual Portrayals in Mass Media. *Journal of Health Communication: International Perspectives*, 17, Issue 4, 460-476. doi.org/10.1080/10810730.2011.635770

¹⁴⁶ Zen, M., Hendriks, J., & Burns, S. (2024). Sexually explicit media literacy education: a scoping review of parental perspectives and relevant resources. *Sex Education*, 1–17. doi.org/10.1080/14681811.2024.2338275

¹⁴⁷ DigiHelp. (2024). School-based solutions for pornography and social media risks. <https://digihelp.io/>

- there was a significant reduction in the objectification of women
- students became less influenced by peer culture
- there was an increase in efforts to abstain from pornography use
- there was an increased sense of pornography being ethically wrong

Education programs like DigiHelp are vital for young people as research suggests young people look to pornography (aka “the internet” and “friends”) to learn about sexual pleasure of others and self, and about sexuality - thinking it will be helpful.¹⁴⁸ However, overwhelmingly research determines that it is not helpful.

(i) the effectiveness of current restrictions on access to pornography and consideration of any need to improve these

eSafety says it works with online service providers to ensure access to material which is considered unsuitable for children and young people under 18 is restricted. However, a simple Google search for “incest porn” allows an individual to access pornographic content in two clicks, with no blocks or restrictions in place. In Australia, children and young people have quick and unfettered access to pornography with the click of a button.

In the SHoT survey, many teachers explicitly commented on how unfettered access to pornography is contributing to the rise of sexual harassment in schools. A number of survey respondents highlighted the need for the government to put age verification on access to pornography. One teacher commented that “the government needs to put age verification on porn, society needs to value relationships - not porn.” Another states: “Nationwide ban on pornography for under 18s.”

In September 2023, Collective Shout spearheaded an open letter signed by more than 50 women's safety and child protection experts calling on the Federal Government to reverse an earlier decision against an age verification pilot.¹⁴⁹ In May 2024, the Federal Government committed more than \$900 million for a suite of measures including measures to combat young people viewing pornography. We welcomed the commencement of the Age Verification Pilot.

¹⁴⁸ eSafety Commissioner (2023), op. cit.

¹⁴⁹ Collective Shout, 19 Sep 2023, op. cit.

(j) the resources and support currently available to parents and carers to educate children about pornography, and how these might be improved

Many parents are unaware of how pervasive pornography has become, the level of male violence their children are being exposed to in pornography and how it has impacted their understanding of sexual relationships and experiences. Parents need to be equipped with effective resources and support to educate their children alongside schools and other community groups. Collective Shout's Movement Director works with parents across the country to help equip them to help their child navigate a pornified landscape.

Parents and carers have access to various resources designed to educate children about the risks of pornography and online safety. However there is room for improvement to ensure broader accessibility, engagement and effectiveness.

Programs such as Culture Reframed's *Parents of Tweens and Teens*¹⁵⁰ course equips parents with tools to navigate hypersexualised culture, while *Defend Young Minds' Digital Defense*¹⁵¹ course provides families with strategies to combat exposure to pornography specifically. Organizations like Thorn¹⁵², Protect Young Eyes¹⁵³, and Bark Technologies¹⁵⁴ offer conversation guides, parent courses, and resources to foster open communication about online safety and create tech-ready homes. Enhanced collaboration between these programs and schools could strengthen their impact by reinforcing consistent messaging across home and educational environments.

The eSafety Commissioner also provides advice to parents on pornography, parental controls, how to protect your child and what to do if a child has found pornography online.¹⁵⁵

The following gaps exist in regards to social media safety:

- Parent-run accounts remain a significant concern and enable predatory behaviour by adult men
- Engagement with children's posts (likes, follows, views, and comments) continue to act as flags for paedophilic networking, pointing to sites where child exploitation material is sold and traded
- Pornography actively promoted to users especially adolescent males. Sexual content on platforms is often not removed when reported, with evidence

¹⁵⁰ Culture Reframed. (2025). <https://culturereframed.org/courses/>

¹⁵¹ Defend Young Minds (2025) <https://www.defendyoungminds.com/>

¹⁵² Thorn (2025). Defend children from sexual abuse. <https://www.thorn.org/>

¹⁵³ Protect Young Eyes (2025). Creating Safer Digital Spaces. <https://www.protectyoungeyes.com/>

¹⁵⁴ Bark (2025). <https://www.bark.us/>

¹⁵⁵ eSafety Commissioner. (2023), op. cit.

suggesting that accounts used to aggressively report such content are sometimes suspended¹⁵⁶

(k) any other related matters

Pornography is destructive to relationships

Psychotherapist scholars point out that there is very little evidence to support the concept that looking at pornography as a couple can increase sexual satisfaction. The opposite has been demonstrated by research: pornography harms relationships because it undermines trust and weakens the integrity of the relationship, damaging intimacy, sexual satisfaction, and relationship satisfaction in heterosexual relationships.¹⁵⁷

Few studies exist to describe the impacts on the female partners of men who use pornography as part of sexual addiction (SA) or compulsive sexual behaviour (CSB). According to psychotherapists, the expansion of the sex industry, with the rise of digital technologies, plus the recent accessibility and cultural acceptance of sexually explicit materials, have all contributed to an increasing prevalence of both. A 2025 study explored the relational effects of betrayal trauma (in connection with sexual addiction including pornography) on women in relationships with men.¹⁵⁸

The impacts on women were severe and extensive, including:

- Shock and grief on discovering a double identity
- Self-harm and suicidal thoughts or attempts
- Compulsive self-comparison with other women
- Low self esteem, social shame, isolation, self-doubt
- Fracturing of other relationships as a result
- Hopelessness, desolation, shock
- All impacted women lost confidence in their own competence and self-worth

The authors conclude with this striking comment:

The women's desire for society to stop trivialising CSB and start referring to it as a real and serious relationship killer with far-reaching societal effects was

¹⁵⁶ Facebook post by Paul Litherland, 9 July 2024, @SurfOnlineSafe. Cited in Appendix 2 of Collective Shout (July 2024). Joint Select Committee on Social Media and Australian Society.

www.collectiveshout.org/joint_select_committee_on_social_media_and_australian_society

¹⁵⁷ Seyed Aghamiri, F., Luetz, J. M., and Hills, K. (March 2025). Compulsive sexual behaviours and relational consequences: A phenomenological study on intimate female partner impacts. *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research*, Vol. 25, Issue 1. doi.org/10.1002/capr.12850

¹⁵⁸ Seyed Aghamiri, F., Luetz, J. M., and Hills, K. (March 2025). Compulsive sexual behaviours and relational consequences: A phenomenological study on intimate female partner impacts. *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research*, Vol. 25, Issue 1. doi.org/10.1002/capr.12850

echoed in the unanimity of the narratives. It appears SA is like a dreadful type of disease that seemingly strikes the unsuspecting intimate partner worse than the one engaging in the CSB.

Pornography is not 'fake' - criminal acts in pornography should be treated as they would be in the real world

Significant harm to real girls and women used in the production of pornographic content must be acknowledged - "real people suffer real harm through pornography."¹⁵⁹ Proponents of pornography sometimes defend it as harmless fantasy; however, it is real women who experience these acts of degradation and violence.

As feminist legal scholar Catharine MacKinnon noted, pornography is a record of men's violence against women. It is not fantasy, not speech, but acted out on the bodies of real women who are directly used to produce it – "what pornography does, it does in the real world."¹⁶⁰ A pornographic scene featuring a woman being strangled, for example, cannot be produced without an actual woman being strangled in front of the camera.

We are accustomed to dismissing the savagery of pornography by saying, it is only a movie, they are just actors. But no one pretends to cover a woman's face in semen, or choke her, or piss in her mouth. She did not pretend to gasp or burst into sobs when she awoke. The action is irreversible.¹⁶¹

Conclusion

Pornography is a public health crisis which breaches the social contract. It is contributing to rising rates of violence against women and girls and harmful sexual behaviours in schools. It is negatively impacting the developing sexual templates of a generation. It is time the wellbeing of the community was put before the vested interests of a predatory global industry. We commend our recommendations and those of our allies to committee members.

January 31, 2025

¹⁵⁹ Tankard Reist, M. & Bray, A. (2011) *Big Porn Inc. Exposing the Harms of the Global Pornography Industry*. Spinifex Press.

¹⁶⁰ MacKinnon, C.A (1993). *Only Words*. Harvard University Press. www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvjk2xs7

¹⁶¹ West, A. N. (2016). *The Aesthetics of Degradation*. UK: Repeater