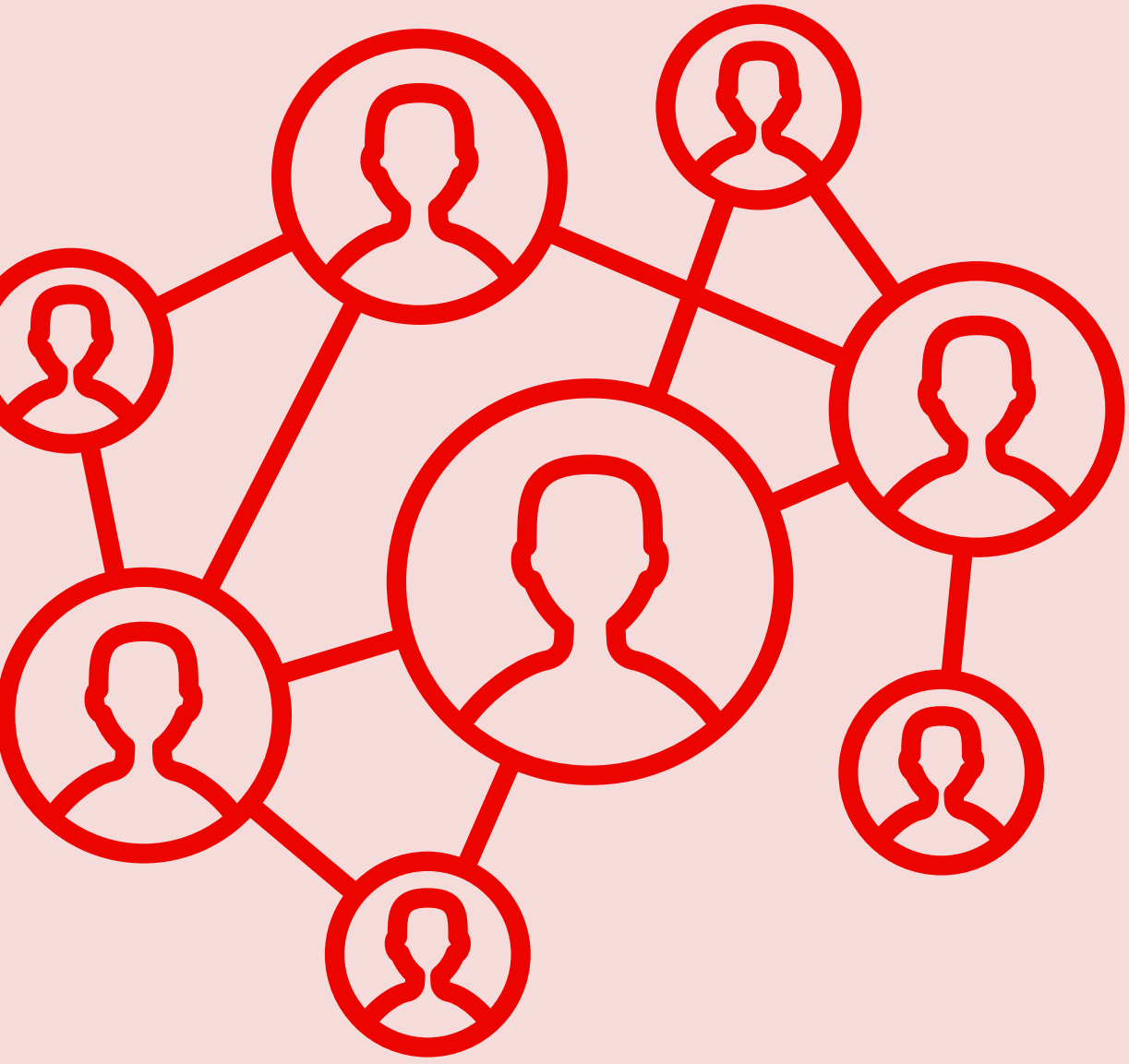
Only Exploitation

An inquiry into the webcamming trade by the APPG on Commercial Sexual Exploitation



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Foreword

By Tonia Antoniazzi MP and Tracy Gilbert MP

Webcamming platforms turn pornography viewers into pornography directors. For a fee, he can control the action: requesting particular sex acts and performances from the woman on camera. Sometimes that involves prostitution, with the viewer paying her to engage in sex acts with another person. But always, it requires the viewer to sexually objectify the woman being filmed, and always it is commercial sexual exploitation – a form of violence against women.

Harms relating to the webcamming trade are severe and wide-ranging, affecting all women and girls – whether they are directly involved in the trade or not. No woman can choose to be unimpacted by the normalisation of pornography – live-streamed or otherwise.

The webcamming trade acts as a magnet for exploiters. Individuals and organisations keen to profit off men paying women to perform personalised pornography coerce young women into the trade, control their activities and threaten them if they attempt to leave.

All women and girls face the consequences of a normalised and legitimised webcamming trade. It fuels attitudes that underpin violence against women and creates financial incentives – and the technological architecture - for future sexual exploitation, putting more women and girls at risk.

Legislation against sexual exploitation has failed to keep pace with technological change. 'E-pimps' operate openly, coercing and controlling women in the webcamming trade, while the platforms themselves function largely beyond the reach of the law, insulated by paywalls that block the view of law enforcement and regulators. By definition, webcamming platforms cannot pre-screen pornography performed live to prevent against illegal content. This creates an unacceptable risk of serious harm – and is why Government must act.

We want to pay special tribute to the survivors who gave evidence to this enquiry. Thank you for your bravery in speaking out. Our thanks also to the many organisations who shared their expertise and insights. Industrialised sexual exploitation in the UK is not inevitable; it is a choice. The Government has the power to stop it. Ministers must act.

About the APPG on Commercial Sexual Exploitation

The All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Commercial Sexual Exploitation brings together parliamentarians from across the political spectrum to work for an end to commercial sexual exploitation.

Commercial sexual exploitation is the provision of money, accommodation, employment, goods or services in return for sex acts.

We lead research and advocacy in Parliament to tackle all forms of commercial sexual exploitation.



Tonia Antoniazzi MP
Chair, 2024-6



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Executive summary

This report presents the findings of an inquiry into the webcamming trade by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Commercial Sexual Exploitation.

The three objectives of the inquiry were to:

1. Uncover the scale and nature of the webcamming trade.
2. Identify the harms relating to the webcamming trade.
3. Recommend to Government changes needed to combat commercial sexual exploitation via webcamming websites.

Part 1 | The scale and nature of the webcamming trade

Webcamming sites are commercial online platforms that enable individuals to pay a person to strip and/or perform sexual acts live. The live nature of webcamming, and the direct interactions that take place between the buyer and the performer, differentiate these platforms from 'traditional' pornography websites. Visitors to webcamming platforms are no longer just pornography viewers; they become, in effect, pornography directors.

Of the top ten most popular pornography websites in the UK, three are solely or predominantly webcamming platforms. Between 2017 and 2025, the number of views each month of webcamming platforms more than trebled worldwide. The webcamming trade is highly gendered. The majority of performers are female, while the majority of people paying them to perform sex acts are male.

There are multiple commercial actors involved in the webcamming industry, beyond the webcamming platform itself. These include: webcamming studios, performer agencies and 'managers', 'chatters' - who conduct messaging with buyers on behalf of performers, credit card companies, social media platforms and affiliate pornography websites.

Live-streamed pornography (webcamming platforms) and pre-recorded pornography ('traditional' pornography websites) are regulated in the same way by Ofcom under the Online Safety Act 2023.

Part 2 | The harms of the webcamming trade

Harms to women and children on webcamming platforms

Sexual coercion

The risk of being subject to sexual coercion in the webcamming trade is acute. This coercion can come from a range of different actors, including agencies, 'managers', studios and webcamming viewers/buyers. The sexual coercion can come in the form of pressure, manipulation, deception or force. It can result in women performing sexual acts on camera that they do not want to do, and feeling (or being) unable to leave or say no to sexual requests and demands.

Intimate image abuse and harms

There is a significant risk of 'intimate image abuse' on webcamming platforms – which is the sharing of, or threats to share, sexual images without a person's consent, and constitutes a criminal offence in the UK. This may involve content being posted on a webcamming platform without a person's knowledge, or it may involve a person performing via webcam being recorded without their knowledge or consent and that content being shared online.

Security and privacy risks

Women who perform via webcamming platforms face significant privacy and security risks, including the risk of buyers seeking and publishing identifying details about them.

Offline sexual exploitation

Webcamming platforms were identified as a 'stepping stone' to offline sexual exploitation. The Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner reported women had been *"pushed to meet buyers in real life as well, when they were not making as much money as they were promised online."*

Child sexual exploitation

Child sexual exploitation has been identified taking place directly on webcamming platforms and via users being signposted while on webcamming platforms to other streams where they can access this abuse. By its very nature, sexual activity that is broadcast live via webcam cannot be pre-screened to check for the inclusion of criminal offences – including child sexual exploitation.

Harms to all women and girls

Webcamming platforms fuel attitudes that underpin violence against women and girls

Webcamming sites are online pornography platforms, with viewers able to pay to direct the sexual acts women perform and watch the activity live. There is extensive evidence from experimental, non-experimental, longitudinal and cross-sectional studies that pornography plays a significant role in fuelling sexual violence. Both women who perform on webcamming platforms and women and girls in wider society are negatively impacted by the harmful attitudes fuelled by the webcamming trade.

Webcamming platforms normalise and incentivise sexual exploitation

The open operation of webcamming platforms normalises, encourages and incentivises sexual exploitation. Webcamming platforms do not operate in isolation. They engage in extensive public promotion and collaborations with other online companies in order to constantly drive visitor traffic to their sites. This serves to normalise the sexual exploitation they directly promote and profit from, as well as incentivising exploitative third parties such as 'managers'.

Part 3 | Preventing harm: Recommendations

The live, interactive nature of webcamming carries unique risks and harms to women who perform via these platforms – and to all women and girls. Those risks and harms are severe, wide-ranging and an inevitable by-product of the operation of webcamming platforms. The sites cannot be made 'safe'. Urgent action from Government is needed to combat the serious harms of the webcamming trade.

1. Make it a criminal offence for online platforms to enable or profit from commercial live streaming of pornography and prostitution.

2. Outlaw 'e-pimping'. This would make it a criminal offence for individuals to facilitate or profit from the live streaming of pornographic performances and/or prostitution of another person.

3. Recognise 'e-pimping' as human trafficking under anti-trafficking legislation.

4. Enable withdrawal of consent to the continued distribution of pre-recorded pornography.

5. Law enforcement and organisations with designated regulatory powers and functions must be able to access all content hosted and streamed by pornography platforms for investigative and enforcement purposes.

6. Enforcement against the distribution of illegal pornographic content, including via webcamming platforms, must be strengthened via improved monitoring, training and leadership.

7. Support and exiting services should be provided to individuals exploited in the webcamming trade.

Introduction

The All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Commercial Sexual Exploitation is a cross-party group of parliamentarians who lead research and advocacy in the UK Parliament to combat commercial sexual exploitation. The APPG's Secretariat is provided by UK Feminista, a charitable organisation working for a society free from sexism and violence against women and girls.

What is commercial sexual exploitation?
Commercial sexual exploitation is the provision of money, goods or services in return for sex acts. It is a prevalent form of violence against women.

The APPG's primary objectives are to secure policies and practices that support victims, hold perpetrators to account and deter demand for commercial sexual exploitation. Previous inquiries by the APPG on Commercial Sexual Exploitation include:

- Pornography regulation: The case for parliamentary reform (2023)
- Behind Closed Doors: Organised sexual exploitation in England and Wales (2018)

In 2025, the APPG on Commercial Sexual Exploitation launched an inquiry into the 'webcamming' trade. This is a commercial trade built around websites that enable individuals (usually men) to pay for a person (usually a woman) to strip and/or perform sexual acts live, as well as a range of connected activities. The performance is streamed via the internet and viewed by the buyer on a digital device, such as a phone or a laptop.

The inquiry was prompted by growing reports and increasing concerns about the harms connected to the webcamming trade and the inadequacy of current legislation and regulation to prevent it.

The three objectives of the webcamming inquiry were to:

1) Uncover the scale and nature of the webcamming trade.
2) Identify the harms relating to the webcamming trade.
3) Recommend to Government changes needed to combat commercial sexual exploitation via webcamming websites.

Evidence was gathered by the inquiry via oral evidence hearings with individual survivors and organisations, written evidence submissions from policing and regulatory bodies, and a literature review. This report details the findings of the inquiry and its recommendations to Government.

PART 1

The scale and nature of the webcamming trade



The scale and nature of the webcamming trade

What are webcamming platforms?

Webcamming sites are commercial online platforms that enable individuals to pay a person to strip and/or perform sexual acts live. Unlike in prostitution and strip/lap dancing clubs, the buyer is in a different geographic location to the person performing the sexualised or sexual acts for them. The performance is streamed via the internet and viewed by the buyer on a digital device, such as a phone or a laptop. A range of activities are typically offered alongside live-streamed pornography, including direct messaging and the production of personalised, pre-recorded pornographic material.

The key differences between standard pornography websites and webcamming platforms is that on a webcamming platform the viewer/buyer is able to pay to watch pornography production live, (ostensibly) interact directly with the person performing sexualised or sexual acts via messaging or video chat functions, and commission specific performances or sexual acts from the performer. In short, visitors to webcamming platforms are no longer just pornography viewers; they become, in effect, pornography directors.

There are different types of webcamming platforms, varying in the range of practices they enable and the payment models they employ. Some websites are referred to as 'fan platforms', where buyers pay to subscribe to individual performers.[1]

Regardless of whether subscription is required, payments to performers may be made as one-off purchases, pay-per-minute access to performances or 'tips' during live streaming.[2] Operators of webcamming sites take a standardised cut of the income generated by performers on their platform.

The webcamming industry

There are multiple commercial actors involved in the webcamming industry, beyond the webcamming platform itself. Despite ostensibly being ancillary, these actors can play a pivotal role in the trade. They include:

- Webcamming studios
- Performer agencies and 'managers'
- 'Chatters', who conduct messaging with buyers on behalf of performers
- Credit card companies, who enable buyers to make payments
- Social media platforms, used for promotion and to drive potential buyers to webcamming platforms
- Affiliate pornography websites, which drive viewer traffic to webcamming sites[3]

There is also a further layer of commercial entities who in turn provide services for webcamming agencies, such as companies offering software that support agencies to directly manage multiple performer accounts on webcamming sites.[4]

Profile of users

Consistent with the global sex trade as a whole, the webcamming trade is highly gendered. The majority of performers are female, while the majority of people paying them to perform sex acts are male. A study of the promotion of webcamming platforms reports that 97% of creators on OnlyFans are female, most of whom are young: 18 - 24 years old is the most represented age group.[11] A separate study of Onlyfans subscribers in the US found that the majority were married, white men.[12]

A study involving 331 performers on the webcamming platform LiveJasmin found that the two largest geographical groups of performers were from Columbia (33%) and Romania (17.8%).[13] 87.4% of performers stated that they primarily had male buyers. In a separate study, over 10,000 individuals completed a survey posted on the webcamming platform Chaturbate.com.[14] 94.2% of respondents were men, the majority of whom (75%) were heterosexual.

The webcamming industry in numbers

- Of the top ten most popular pornography websites in the UK, **three** are solely or predominantly webcamming platforms (as of April 2026[5])
- Between 2017 and 2025, the number of views each month of webcamming platforms more than trebled worldwide. In April 2025, there were nearly **1.3 billion** visits to webcamming sites[6]
- **97%** of creators on OnlyFans are female[7]
- An investigation into the webcamming trade in Columbia reported that **12,000** "sexcam" studios were operating in the country[8]
- Onlyfans generated **$7.2bn** in revenue in 2024[9]

"At one point, I had 75 women working for me in four locations and I was doing $600,000 a month,"

– Andrew Tate talking about his "webcam business"[10]

The current legal and regulatory framework

The operation of webcamming platforms and its ancillary enterprises overlap with multiple areas of law, which in some cases differ between the nations of the UK. There is no legislation prohibiting webcamming per se. However, key areas of law that relate to webcamming include legislation on pornography, intimate image abuse, online safety, prostitution and human trafficking.

Key statutes that relate to webcamming platforms operating in the UK include:

- Crime and Policing Act 2026
- Online Safety Act 2023
- Modern Slavery Act 2015
- Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Scotland) Act 2015
- Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Criminal Justice and Support for Victims) Act (Northern Ireland) 2015
- Sexual Offences (Northern Ireland) Order 2008
- Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2008
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- Criminal Law (Consolidation) (Scotland) Act 1995
- Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982

A detailed assessment of all practices facilitated and streamed by webcamming platforms operating in the UK - and whether these do or do not violate relevant legislation in each of the four nations – is beyond the scope of this inquiry. However, this is an important area requiring further enquiry and analysis. For instance, where webcamming platforms stream content that involves two or more people having sex for payment, this would constitute prostitution. In Northern Ireland, it is a criminal offence to pay for sex, and in Scotland it is illegal to trade in the prostitution of others.

Ofcom told this inquiry that live-streamed pornography (webcamming sites) and pre-recorded pornography ('traditional' pornography sites) is regulated in the same way under the Online Safety Act,[15] which is a UK-wide statute.

How pornography is defined under the Online Safety Act 2023
"content of such a nature that it is reasonable to assume that it was produced solely or principally for the purpose of sexual arousal"[16]

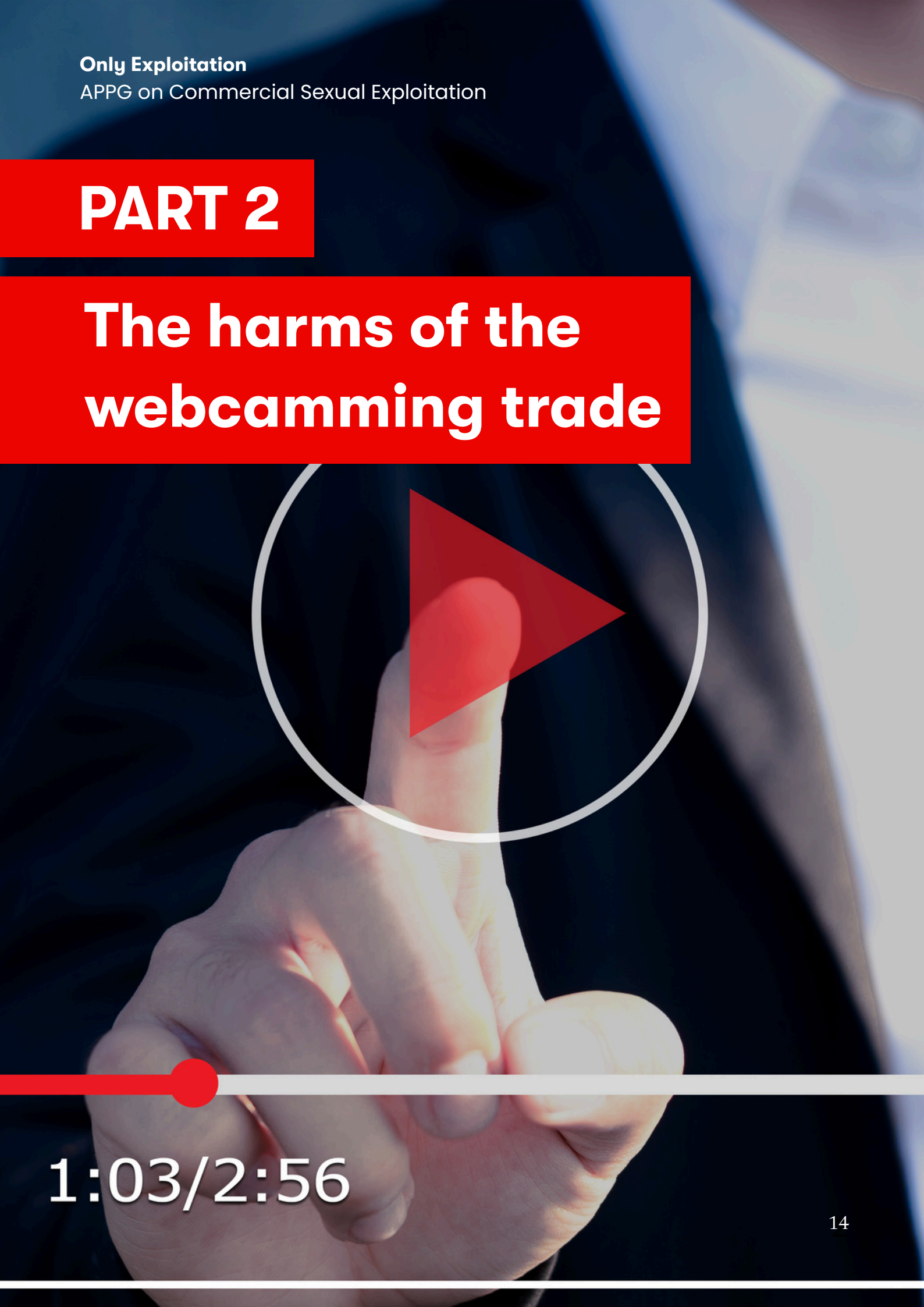
In accordance with the Online Safety Act 2023, webcamming platforms operating in the UK have to conduct an 'Illegal Content Risk Assessment' to assess the risk of harm from illegal content on their platform. They also have to restrict access to pornography on their platforms to adults by implementing highly effective age verification or age estimation.

Ofcom state that websites hosting pornography, including webcamming platforms, should consider themselves at high risk of particular illegal harms, including child sexual abuse materials, intimate image abuse and pornography defined in law as 'extreme'. Ofcom also told this inquiry that they have *"suggested that providers of pornography consider sexual exploitation as a potentially relevant harm".*[17] Offences relating to this harm include human trafficking and controlling prostitution for gain. No platforms dedicated to webcamming are currently under investigation by Ofcom.[18]

Regarding law enforcement pertaining to webcamming platforms, the National Police Chiefs' Council told this inquiry: *"Webcamming platforms have not historically been a focus of proactive law-enforcement activity in relation to adult sexual exploitation."* The National Police Chiefs' Council further highlighted that "*there remains no systematic monitoring framework focused specifically on adult webcamming platforms."*

PART 2

The harms of the webcamming trade



The harms of the webcamming trade

Figure 1: The harms of the webcamming trade



Harms to women and children on webcamming platforms

Sexual coercion

The risk of being subject to sexual coercion in the webcamming trade is acute. This coercion can come from a range of different actors, including agencies, 'managers', studios and webcamming viewers/buyers. The sexual coercion can come in the form of pressure, manipulation, deception or force. It can result in women performing sexual acts on camera that they do not want to do, and feeling (or being) unable to leave or say no to sexual requests and demands.

Sexual coercion by agencies and 'managers'

An ancillary industry has emerged around webcamming platforms of agencies and individual 'managers' who conduct, coordinate and/or control aspects of performers' webcamming activities. The agency/ 'manager' takes a proportion of the income generated by the performer. The arrangement may be underpinned by a legal contract between the performer and the agency/'manager'.

Agencies and 'managers' perform a range of roles, including:

- Directly replying to messages from viewers/buyers (while pretending to be the performer) and/or employing 'chatters' who perform this function
- Advising or instructing performers what videos or images to create
- Controlling and/or posting promotional content on the performer's social media accounts

While practices will vary among agencies, the incentive for webcamming agencies and 'managers' to sexually coerce women to perform sexual/sex acts is inherent to this financial relationship. Evidence presented to this inquiry suggests that agencies/'managers' financially benefit from women performing more extreme acts, and from them performing more/for longer. Agencies/'managers' have a clear financial incentive to push women's boundaries and exert control over them.

Survivors and industry 'insiders' have revealed that webcamming agencies and 'managers' use a variety of tactics to sexually coerce and control women. These include:

- Verbal 'pushing'
- Threatening to sue women if they violate or leave their contract
- Locking women out of their webcamming and/or social media accounts and assuming financial control over the income they generate
- Threats
- Physical violence

Victoria Sinis previously worked for one of the biggest webcamming agencies in Australia, which focussed on the platform Onlyfans. Victoria has spoken out about what she was required to do as a recruiter for the company and what she witnessed: *"there's so much soft coercion and soft manipulation into these girls to get them to keep doing more and more and more and more."*[19] Victoria also highlights that women represented by the agency had to follow *"rules"* and that *"if they didn't, they would get a call from us".*[20]

Giving evidence to the APPG about the webcamming trade, Marcel van der Watt - President and CEO of the US-based National Center on Sexual Exploitation, stated: *"It's definitely not harmless and it definitely intersperses with sex trafficking and organised crime. And there's a lot of criminal bad actors".* Consistent with this observation, the UK's Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, Eleanor Lyons, published the findings of an inquiry into online sexual exploitation in 2026. She told the APPG: *"we just found consistent signs of exploitation happening on the camming sites, them being not only a stepping stone to more harm to offline exploitation, but that the harm and the violence [was] happening on the camming sites themselves".*

"The sexual coercion women face in the webcamming trade can be compounded by multiple intersecting factors - including poverty, discrimination and insecure immigration status."

Nina Humphries
Director, UK Feminista

Clara (pseudonym), in an interview with journalist Amelia Gentleman, shared her experience of managers as a performer on Onlyfans: *"It is kind of pimp behaviour. It's not like people are being forced on to the platform against their will – at least, in my experience. It's more like: now that I've done this, I can't leave. Managers are very greedy: they always want your money and if you try to leave them they threaten to sue you, or they do sue you, or they threaten to post all your content somewhere else and make money off of you."*[21]

Sexual coercion by studios

Globally, a significant proportion of women who perform via webcamming platforms do so from a studio, with up to 50% of performers on some webcamming platforms streaming from these locations.[22] Studios are commercial operations that provide multiple rooms in the same location (such as an apartment block) for women to record/stream webcamming performances, with the studio operators taking a proportion of the woman's earnings.

Studios perform many of the roles that agencies and 'managers' do: recruiting women, managing their webcamming and social media accounts, issuing instructions and enforcing contractual agreements. As in the case of agencies and 'managers', the financial incentive for webcamming studios to sexually coerce women to perform more and/or perform more extreme sexual acts is built into the trade. Indeed, there is evidence that studios sexually coerce and control women using the same or similar methods to agencies and 'managers', including: financial coercion through fines and 'debts', psychological pressure and violence.

'Onlyfans: Inside the Machine'

During the course of the APPG on Commercial Sexual Exploitation's inquiry, the BBC conducted an investigation into Onlyfans agencies and 'managers'. The APPG's chair for 2024-6, Tonia Antoniazzi MP, was interviewed for the resulting documentary – *OnlyFans: Inside the Machine.*[23]

Key findings from the investigation:

- Of the 60 Onlyfans performers interviewed by the BBC, **83%** had felt pressured by their agency/'manager' to record increasingly explicit sexual material.
- Performer contracts revealed 'managers' taking up to **70%** of performers' earnings and imposing fines if people tried to exit their contract early.
- A private Telegram group called "OFM [OnlyFans Managers] Empire", which had **24,000** members, revealed discussions among members about how to exert control over performers. This included recommendations of threats and violence.
- Rebecca, who bravely spoke out in the programme, was subject to controlling behaviour and violent acts by her 'agency'. After Rebecca changed her account details to remove their control over it, a brick was thrown through her window and, weeks later, two men arrived at Rebecca's house and violently assaulted her.

In a study of the webcamming trade, Jokubauskaitė (2025) noted: *"Most studio performers–often at the [webcamming] platform's request– follow strict schedules, typically morning and evening shifts aligned with peak traffic. They are also required to meet a fixed number of hours per "period" (i.e. 2 weeks), often with-out flexibility, even for illness".*[24] The researcher also reports that studios *"enforce platform standards through their "trainers," who monitor shows and instruct performers."*

Columbia and Romania have been identified as having particularly large webcam studio industries.[25] A Sunday Times investigation into the Columbian webcamming trade in 2025 identified women who had been *"raped, imprisoned and forced to commit degrading acts on camera against their will. Some have been forced into bonded labour to pay off "debts" accrued from working at the studios, or had their wages stolen by studio owners."*[26] The report highlights in particular the vulnerability to exploitation of women in poverty and/or without the legal right to work in Columbia.

A BBC report into exploitation and abuse in the Columbian webcam industry interviewed Sofia, who performed at a studio that *"pressured her into carrying out painful and degrading sexual acts"* – which included performing sex acts with other people on camera.[27] Sofia told reporters: *"[...] they said I had no choice."*.

A study of Romanian women's experiences of the webcamming industry highlights the coercive role of fines issued by webcam studios to performers. The research quotes a performer who stated: *"The thing is that you receive a lot of fines, you have to complete all your shifts, never be late logging in, not even five minutes (which at times becomes a big stressor) and you always feel like you're being rushed and panicking over potentially being fined."*[28]

Sexual coercion by abusive partners

Evidence obtained by this inquiry and domestic abuse charities reveals that coercion into performing or producing content for webcamming platforms can be a component of domestic abuse perpetrated by current or formers partners.

Michelle[29]gave evidence to this inquiry about how webcamming was part of the sexual abuse she was subjected to by a former partner during a violent and coercive relationship. She told members of the APPG: *"During this relationship, my abuser forced me to participate in webcam performances involving himself and other men. I did not consent freely to this activity. I was coerced through violence, intimidation, and control."*

Michelle reflected on the men who paid to watch her being abused: *"In my experience, the men purchasing webcam services rarely showed any concern as to whether the woman on the other side of the camera was genuinely consenting or safe. In many cases, there appeared to be an attraction to vulnerability, fear, humiliation, or visible distress."*

In 2026, Women's Aid reported that coerced participation in OnlyFans or other online activity was the most common form of technology-facilitated abuse identified by domestic abuse services in England as new to their organisation's experience. Women's Aid state: *"It is not uncommon for abusers to exploit their partners, and since it is difficult to establish consent online, it is unsurprising that some respondents shared this is an ongoing issue, and others shared it as new to their experience."*[30]

In July 2026, Polly Billington MP, a member of the APPG on Commercial Sexual Exploitation, raised the issue of women being exploited by their abusive partners on Onlyfans in Parliament, highlighting evidence of this practice from domestic abuse charity Oasis.[31]

An investigation by the Mirror in 2025 also identified over 70 crime reports to the police by victims of intimate image abuse, whose images or videos had been posted on Onlyfans without their consent, frequently by former partners.[32] There were additional reports by women of being forced by their partners to perform on Onlyfans.

"my abuser forced me to participate in webcam performances involving himself and other men. "

Michelle
Survivor of sexual exploitation

Sexual coercion by buyers

It is the individuals who log on to webcamming platforms and pay for women to perform sex acts live on camera – the buyers – who create the demand for this industry and who fund the webcamming platforms, agencies, studios and 'managers'. Their actions also constitute direct sexual coercion: they pay women to strip and perform sex acts. The fact that the sexual acts are not motivated by mutual sexual desire is inherent to webcamming; the buyer knows it, or he wouldn't have to pay. There is also significant evidence that buyers also coerce women into performing sex acts they don't like, don't want to do and/or are dangerous by offering financial incentives.

In 2018, Hope Barden, a 21-year-old woman in the UK, died from asphyxia after carrying out a sexual act for a webcamming buyer, Jerome Dangar. Dangar did not alert the emergency services.[33]

A study of home-based performers on predominantly Dutch webcamming platforms found: *"Because there is market value to showing more intimacy to customers, both emotionally and physically, performers experience pressure to move or cross previously set boundaries."*[34]

Amanda J Quick, who has survived through experience of exploitation in the webcamming trade, told members of the APPG on Commercial Sexual Exploitation: *"As a woman, I was pitted against other women and girls in real time by buyers and by the platforms themselves. Algorithms rewarded brutal sexual escalation."*

The Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, Eleanor Lyons, told this inquiry that the live nature of webcamming increases the pressure that performers can be subjected to: *"the fact that it's kind of live and happening in real time means boundaries are eroded quite quickly. And survivors told us that actually the norms were created in the moment. They didn't have a chance to reflect and think, 'actually, am I comfortable doing these things?' They were kind of pushed and pushed and pushed."*

One performer, referred to using the pseudonym Sara, told researchers studying the webcamming trade: *"The customers will ask you to do things, and you're like hm, should I do it or not? You are always questioned. Your boundaries get tested all the time."*[35] Another woman, referred to as Julia, recounted in the study: *"Sometimes I, I'm, I'm not kidding you, sometimes I'll be gagging [choking because of disgust], I'll be [imitates choking sounds]. You know, like, oh my god this is going so far. [...] I just, you know, sometimes it's really nasty, but then I just focus on the money [...]."*[36]

The anonymity of webcamming buyers can also have significant implications for performers, who may be deceived into performing sexual acts. An investigation into Onlyfans by the news agency Reuters cites a woman who found out that one of the men paying her to perform sexual acts via webcam was her uncle. The report notes: *"Creators know their fans by usernames they choose... They can turn out to be relatives, employers, exes or stalkers."*[37]

Intimate image abuse and harms

There is a significant risk of 'intimate image abuse' on webcamming platforms – which is the sharing of, or threats to share, sexual images without a person's consent, and constitutes a criminal offence in the UK. This may involve content being posted on a webcamming platform without a person's knowledge, or it may involve a person performing via webcam being recorded without their knowledge or consent and it being shared online (a practice known as 'capping').[38]

In 2025, an investigation by the Mirror analysed reports to UK police forces of alleged offences linked to Onlyfans in the previous five years.[39] 77 reports were identified as involving intimate images being posted on the site without the alleged victim's consent. 87 reports were of individuals reporting that images they had posted on their Onlyfans account had been leaked. Webcamming 'managers' can also harness their access to and control over performers' webcam accounts to threaten to share sexual images of the performer without their consent.[40]

However, there is another important aspect of intimate image harms relating to webcamming platforms that does not fall under the current legal definition of intimate image abuse, but can nonetheless cause immense harms to the victim. That is where a person is powerless to withdraw their consent to the continued publication and wider commercial dissemination of recorded sexually explicit images of themself, despite it causing them significant psychological, social and/or financial harm to them.

In the process of signing up to webcamming platforms, the terms and conditions performers are required to sign up to can include giving the platform all intellectual property rights over the content they produce in the process of webcamming.[41]

Thus, platforms can profit from publishing sexually explicit imagery of performers across the internet, with the performers receiving no financial benefit and having no say over where and when it is posted. Women can sign up to these terms in situations of financial desperation, coercion or without realising or understanding the implications. Regardless, women's personal circumstances can change, and the ongoing ability of webcamming platforms to publish and profit from pornographic images of them against their will can cause enormous harm.

In a study of webcamming performers' experiences, one woman told the researcher that she only found out her performances were recorded by the platform three weeks after beginning webcamming: *"I felt crushed. I was like, "oh my god, I'm never going to have another job again." I felt like the world was ending.""*[42]

Security and privacy risks

Women who perform via webcamming platforms face significant privacy and security risks,[43] including the risk of buyers seeking and publishing identifying details about them.

Amanda J Quick, who has survived through experience of exploitation in the webcamming trade, told this inquiry that security risks and threats followed her long after she had ended her involvement in webcamming: *"I was contacted incessantly, even years after I stopped. Unknown numbers. Messages that demonstrated knowledge of my movements, my car, my daily routines."*

A woman referred to as 'Maria' revealed to researchers that a webcamming buyer appeared one day at her home: *"I was coming home and he was putting aeh, aeh, some aeh cream on my windows and write things, and I was coming back home with my kids. [...] so there are really risks, there are people that if you don't tell them aeh on time to back off, they can come too close to you and I think that's aeh, aeh, a fine boundary [...]."* [44]

Meghan Donevan, Research Director at Talita – a support service for women experiencing commercial sexual exploitation in Sweden – told this inquiry: *"Many [women in webcamming] are subjected to doxing, where someone spreads their personal data, so their name, their address, et cetera, which can also lead to physical stalking by one of these so-called fans or followers."*

Offline sexual exploitation

Links between online and offline sexual exploitation were highlighted to this inquiry by the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, Eleanor Lyons. Recent research by the Commissioner found women exploited via webcamming had been *"pushed to meet buyers in real life as well, when they were not making as much money as they were promised online."*

The Commissioner referred to webcamming platforms as *"a stepping stone to more harm to offline exploitation".* A report detailing the findings of the Commissioner's investigations noted: *"Popular subscription platforms were described as the "first step" into prostitution. Survivors were lured by glamour and financial promises, only to find themselves pressured into offline sex and controlled by abusers."* [45]

One of the survivors interviewed by the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner was exploited from a location in Romania via a UK-based website. She had no control over her webcamming account and income and was subsequently trafficked into prostitution across Europe. The survivor described the exploitation via webcamming as *"sort of grooming": "you start crossing the boundaries and then you just cross another one more boundary to go see someone."* [46]

Harms to children: child sexual exploitation

By its very nature, sexual activity that is broadcast live via webcam cannot be pre-screened to check for the inclusion of criminal offences – including child sexual exploitation. Ofcom told this inquiry: *"All of the dedicated webcamming services Ofcom has engaged with operate an identity verification process during the onboarding of new streamers."*

However, evidence reported by witnesses to this inquiry and via journalistic investigations calls into serious question the effectiveness of this measure in preventing child sexual abuse (and other forms of exploitation). Child sexual exploitation has been identified taking place directly on webcamming platforms and via users being signposted while on webcamming platforms to other streams where they can access this abuse.

An investigation into the Columbian webcamming industry by the BBC in 2025 identified individuals who had started being filmed for webcamming platforms before the age of 18.[47] Platforms that women told the BBC they were exploited on as children included Chaturbate and Stripchat – which are among the top 10 most popular pornography websites in the UK. The individuals exploiting these children were able to get round the official verification mechanisms of webcamming platforms by 'recycling' old accounts of adult women no longer using them, as well as using fake identification documents.

Simon Bailey CBE, Chair of the International Policing and Public Protection Research Institute, told this inquiry that a significant proportion of child sexual exploitation material accessed via webcamming platforms is self-generated. He stated that many of these children *"appear to simply be replicating older influencers/OnlyFans stars and seeking to earn money from providing online content. The 'fame' of OnlyFans and the lure of apparent earning potential seem to be a large driver distorting the behaviours of these young children."*

Similarly, the National Police Chief's Council told this inquiry: *"Policing intelligence highlights a growing prevalence of self-generated abuse, where children produce sexual content of themselves under encouragement, coercion or financial incentive. This behaviour is often influenced by broader online 'influencer' culture that normalise sexualise performance and monetisation, and frequently escalates into blackmail, extortion and sustained exploitation. The permanence of digital content means the harm is ongoing, with a risk of significant long-term psychological and social impact on victims."*

In 2021, a BBC investigation found children in the UK posting sexually explicit material of themselves on Onlyfans.[48] This involved children using fake identification documents, or identification documents belonging to adults, to set up accounts on the platform.

One 14-year-old girl had set up an account on Onlyfans using a passport belonging to her grandmother. Crucially, BBC News tested how easy it was for children to set up accounts on Onlyfans. Journalists were able to successfully set up an account for a 17-year-old girl using her 26-year-old sibling's passport.

Witnesses to this inquiry also highlighted the 'sign-posting' role that legally operating webcamming platforms can play in child sexual exploitation. Simon Bailey CBE told the inquiry: *"Webcamming sites featuring content creators from developing countries often act as a first portal for offenders seeking contact with those offering the live streaming of child abuse."* Bailey stated that *"the platforms allow for quick engagement with a content creator who will, if not offering those services themselves, often signpost a user to a further party who will orchestrate a child sex show (on a platform away from the webcamming site)."*

The Chair of the International Policing and Public Protection Research Institute also highlighted: *"On occasions the original webcamming platform's tipping system has been utilised to receive payment for CSA shows taking place on a different platform."*

The National Police Chiefs' Council also told the inquiry that webcamming platforms are *"part of an exploitation pathway"*, wherein *"offenders use them to establish initial contact with adult creators in developing countries and then seek access to child abuse via secure one to one platforms."*

"The 'fame' of OnlyFans and the lure of apparent earning potential seem to be a large driver distorting the behaviours of these young children."

Simon Bailey CBE
Chair of the International Policing and Public Protection Research Institute

Harms to all women and girls

Webcamming platforms fuel attitudes that underpin violence against women and girls

Webcamming sites are online pornography platforms, with viewers able to pay to direct the sexual acts women perform and watch the activity live. In 2023, the APPG on Commercial Sexual Exploitation conducted an inquiry into the pornography trade, analysing evidence of the harms associated with both the production and consumption of pornography. The inquiry concluded that pornography consumption fuels sexual violence:

"Extensive evidence from experimental, non-experimental, longitudinal and cross-sectional studies reveals that pornography consumption plays a significant role in fuelling sexual violence. ...Pornography also serves to dehumanise and sexually objectify women, fostering attitudes that underpin violence against women and girls."[49]

Importantly, pornography and other sexually objectifying media do not need to portray overtly violent acts in order to fuel sexist attitudes and attitudes that underpin violence against women and girls. For instance, a meta-analysis of 30 research papers documenting experimental studies found that pornography depicting both 'violent' and 'nonviolent' sexual behaviour increases aggressive behaviour in the viewer.[50]

Sexual objectification plays a crucial role in the harmful impact of pornographic material. A study of men's consumption of media that sexually objectifies women found that *"frequency of exposure to men's lifestyle magazines that objectify women, reality TV programs that objectify women, and pornography predicted more objectified cognitions about women, which, in turn, predicted stronger attitudes supportive of violence against women."*[51]

Both women who perform on webcamming platforms and women and girls in wider society are negatively impacted by the harmful attitudes fuelled by webcamming platforms. As previously highlighted in this report, the viewers/buyers on webcamming platforms are overwhelmingly men, and this cohort is not a small, niche group: three of the top 10 most popular pornography websites in the UK are solely or predominantly webcamming platforms.[52]



Webcamming platforms normalise and incentivise sexual exploitation

At its core, the webcamming trade enables its male consumers to pay women to strip and perform sex acts; that is, it enables men to buy sexual access to women's bodies. The fact that these men's sexual interactions with women on webcamming platforms are not based on mutual, shared sexual desire is inherent to the act and fully known to the buyer – otherwise he would not have to pay.

Giving a person money, accommodation, goods or other services in exchange for sex acts is commercial sexual exploitation - a form of violence against women. Webcamming platforms not only enable and profit from sexual exploitation, they incentivise its future perpetration.

Marcel van der Watt, President and CEO of the US-based National Center on Sexual Exploitation, told the inquiry that it is *"unfettered demand"* from male buyers that *"creates the market forces for pimps and traffickers to exist"*. It is demand from viewers/buyers that fuels and funds webcamming platforms. Gemma Kelly from the Sexual Exploitation Research and Policy Institute in Ireland, reflected that *"for the most part, other men, pimps, traffickers, the people who own and run the platforms, they make the money"* as a result of this demand.

However, the open operation of these platforms itself encourages, incentivises and normalises sexual exploitation. Webcamming platforms do not operate in quiet, isolated secrecy. On the contrary, webcamming platforms engage in extensive public promotion and collaborations with other online companies in order to constantly drive visitor traffic to their sites. This serves to normalise the sexual exploitation they directly promote and profit from, as well as incentivising exploitative third parties such as 'managers'.

For instance, Jokubauskaitė (2025) highlights how popular webcamming platforms have corporate partnerships with some of the world's biggest mainstream/'traditional' pornography websites (wherein viewers watch pre-recorded content and do not interact with performers).[53] For example, the webcamming platform Streamate has a partnership with Aylo – which owns Pornhub, the most popular pornography website in the UK.[54] Stripchat, one of the most popular webcamming platforms in the UK, has a corporate partnership with XHamster – the second most visited pornography website in the UK, according to analytics company Semrush.[55]

Onlyfans, in particular, has an exceptionally high public profile. The platform's CEO has been interviewed repeatedly in mainstream press publications,[56] while a decision by L'Oréal to hire a pornography performer on Onlyfans as a makeup brand ambassador itself attracted headlines.[57] Onlyfans' reliance on individual members driving traffic to the platform, particularly via promotion on social media, has also played a significant role in building its public profile.

Findings from a recent academic study involving high school students in Spain illustrates how widely known and normalised Onlyfans has become, including among young people. The study found most of the children *"easily explained"* the purpose of Onlyfans and had a *"good grasp of the business model"*.[58] Despite being children, some female participants reported receiving communications encouraging them to set up an account on the platform as a 'creator', while boys reported receiving or encountering communications encouraging them to 'consume' content on the platform. One girl said: *"When I open Instagram, I always get a request with a picture of a penis."*[59] Two girls replied: *"Ugh, that happens to all of us!", "Or to get you to make an OnlyFans account."*

The study found that the young participants *"perceive the platform as an attractive professional alternative, especially for girls who meet the canons of beauty."*[60] The researchers concluded: *"The normalization of sexual objectification and commodification of intimacy reinforce sexist attitudes and perpetuate gender inequality."*

Survivors of sexual exploitation interviewed by the UK's Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner reported that *"subscription platforms acted as a gateway to normalising the sale of sexual access and lowering barriers that led to offline exploitation. They were encouraged to join these sites at school and university, offered discount codes for signing up, and told it would lead to a life of glamour and financial independence."*[61] One survivor said: *"If it hadn't have been glamorised... I would never have gone down that road."*[62]

"They were encouraged to join these sites at school and university, offered discount codes for signing up, and told it would lead to a life of glamour and financial independence."

Eleanor Lyons
Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner

PART 3

Preventing harm: Recommendations



Preventing harm: Recommendations

Introduction

Webcamming platforms are a prevalent form of commercial sexual exploitation in the UK. The live nature of webcamming, and the direct interactions that take place between the buyer and the performer, differentiate these online platforms from 'traditional' pornography sites.

This inquiry has found that the live, interactive nature of webcamming carries unique risks and harms to women who perform via these platforms – and to all women and girls. Those risks and harms are severe and wide-ranging.

The operation of webcamming platforms financially incentivises and rewards sexual exploitation and abuse. They cannot be made 'safe'.

The harms and risks embodied by webcamming platforms are unacceptable. Continuing to allow these exploitative operations is in direct conflict with the UK Government's stated commitment to halve violence against women and girls in a decade.[63] Urgent action from Government is needed to combat the serious harms and threats of the webcamming trade.

"There is no practical way for a platform to determine what is happening behind a camera or outside the frame. A woman may appear compliant while being abused, threatened, monitored, or controlled off-screen.

In my opinion, these platforms are fundamentally incapable of effectively safeguarding against trafficking and exploitation. [...] these platforms create legal cover and operational ease for traffickers, pimps, and abusers. They make exploitation easier to conceal and harder for law enforcement agencies to detect."

Michelle
Survivor of sexual exploitation

Legislation

1

2

Recommendation 1

Make it a criminal offence for online platforms to enable or profit from commercial live streaming of pornography and prostitution.

It is, by definition, impossible for webcamming platforms to pre-screen content that they are going to broadcast in advance. Any subsequent actions they may take in relation to illegal content broadcast on their platforms are after the fact; illegal activity will have already taken place, with all its attendant harms.

Additionally, this inquiry found that the live nature of webcamming, including real-time requests from buyers for particular sex acts, can place unacceptable coercive pressure on women to acquiesce to sexual acts that they do not want to participate in.

This offence should apply at the platform level, and relate to the commercial live streaming of pornographic performances by another person or persons, which includes the live streaming of prostitution.

Recommendation 2

Outlaw 'e-pimping'.

Make it a criminal offence for individuals to facilitate or profit from the live streaming of pornographic performances and/or prostitution of another person.

'E-pimping' refers to individuals who facilitate and profit from another person performing live-streamed pornography and/or prostitution. They are sometimes referred to as 'managers' or 'Onlyfans Managers'. E-pimping is sexual exploitation and abuse.

The law must remove the commercial incentive that currently exists to sexually exploit women – and hold those who perpetrate this exploitation to account.

3

Recommendation 3

Recognise 'e-pimping' as human trafficking under anti-trafficking legislation.

E-pimping is not sufficiently captured by current anti-trafficking legislation in the UK. For instance, in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, for an offence of human trafficking to have occurred, the victim of exploitation needs to have travelled. However, as the Home Affairs Committee highlighted in their inquiry on human trafficking in 2023: *"it is the exploitation - not the travel - which is the fundamental harm."*[64] In the case of webcamming, this form of sexual exploitation could only potentially constitute human trafficking if the victim travelled during the course of her exploitation. Yet in webcamming, victims do not need to be transported anywhere to be exploited: the sexual exploitation can take place at home and be traded and broadcast around the world.

Additionally, to constitute human trafficking for sexual exploitation under the Modern Slavery Act (2015), an offence under Part 1 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 must be committed. Facilitating and profiting from another person performing live-streamed sex acts is not one of these offences (unless it involves prostitution and the victim is subject to the offence of controlling or inciting prostitution for gain).

To be fit for purpose in the twenty-first century, the offence of human trafficking for sexual exploitation must apply to 'e-pimps': perpetrators who have enabled or profited from another person performing live-streamed sex acts (webcamming) regardless of whether the exploitation involved prostitution, and regardless of whether the victim travelled as part of the exploitation.

A revised definition of human trafficking for sexual exploitation, wherein travel is not a required component of the exploitation, would be consistent with international legal definitions of human trafficking. These include the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children (the Palermo Protocol), the European Convention on Action against Trafficking (ECAT), and EU Trafficking Directive 2011/36/EU. Furthermore, the Palermo Protocol, adopted by the United Nations in 2000, stipulates: *"Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation,".* [65]

4

Recommendation 4

Enable withdrawal of consent to the continued distribution of pre-recorded pornography.

Nobody should have pornography of them distributed against their will, in any context. Individuals who have previously had webcamming performances or other pornography of them recorded must be able to withdraw their consent to its continued distribution and monetisation by online platforms – including webcamming sites.

The Crime and Policing Act 2026 allows the UK Government to require all pornography platforms accessed from the UK to enable individuals who feature in pornographic content on their site to withdraw their consent to its continued publication – at any time, for any reason.[66] That provision must be enacted to its fullest without delay.

Regardless of the context in which it was produced, the ongoing distribution of a recording in which a person performs sex acts can have profound, wide-ranging implications for that person. Where content continues to be published and monetised against a person's will, it can cause serious harms, impacting on every aspect of a person's life – socially, psychologically and financially. It must, therefore, be up to the persons who feature in pre-recorded pornographic material whether or not that content continues to be published.

Regulation and enforcement

5

Recommendation 5

Law enforcement and organisations with designated regulatory powers and functions must be able to access all content hosted and streamed by pornography platforms for investigative and enforcement purposes.

At present, subscription-based 'fan' sites and paywalled performance spaces on webcamming platforms prevent anyone not paying to watch the activity – including law enforcement and regulators – from being able to establish whether laws relating to pornography and sexual exploitation are being upheld. Interpol, an inter-governmental policing organisation, highlights one of the consequences: *"The paywalled architecture of subscription sites and their coded language, enables traffickers to evade detection, while jurisdictional fragmentation and evidentiary challenges hinder law enforcement responses."* [67]

Stuart (2022) further observes: *"Creating a paywall places a barrier between a performer's chat room, the wider internet, and possible legislation. The spaces beyond paywalls represent smooth spaces for the hosting sites because they are beyond the gaze of legislation."* [68]

The high harm risk of platforms hosting pornography means that law enforcement and regulators must have full visibility over the content they host and distribute. As detailed in recommendation 1 of this report, the live streaming of pornography should be prohibited, due to the associated risks of serious harms and inability of platforms and regulators to pre-screen what is streamed. However, where pre-recorded pornographic content continues to be distributed by platforms, it must not be shielded from law enforcement and regulators.

6

Recommendation 6

Enforcement against the distribution of illegal pornographic content, including via webcamming platforms, must be strengthened via improved monitoring, training and leadership.

The National Police Chiefs' Council told this inquiry: *"There is no national crime recording category for webcamming, adult sexual exploitation via online-only platforms, or webcamming-enabled sexual exploitation. [...] criminal justice outcomes and safeguarding interventions linked to webcamming cannot be measured reliably at national level. This represents a significant evidence gap for both policing and policymakers."*

Similarly, Police Scotland told the inquiry: *"Police Scotland do not have the facility to search for crimes specific to webcamming without reviewing individually every crime recorded by Police Scotland under the various relevant legislation which could be applicable."*

The National Police Chiefs' Council further acknowledged: *"Identification and investigation of webcamming related exploitation or harm are likely to be impacted by a lack of training and specialist knowledge in this area."*

A previous inquiry into the pornography trade conducted by Baroness Bertin found that with respect to enforcing existing legislation against illegal pornography, *"There is a lack of a standardised approach across the criminal justice system, based in a reactive, low priority policing approach, continuing through to prosecution."*[69]

Webcamming and other pornography platforms are high risk, high harm sites. The prevention of the sexual exploitation and abuse of women via these platforms must be a priority for Government, as part of its wider strategy to combat violence against women and girls. This prioritisation must be reflected at all levels of the criminal justice system, with training provided to investigators and prosecutors on the nature of online sexual exploitation, and criminal justice interventions and outcomes monitored at every stage.

Support

7

Recommendation 7

Support and exiting services should be provided to individuals exploited in the webcamming trade.

Survivors and support services shared with this inquiry the immense harms that can be experienced by women exploited through the webcamming trade, including psychological and physical harms.

The CEO of CEASE (Centre to End All Sexual Exploitation), Naomi Miles, also highlighted that for some women exploited in the webcamming trade: *"it's very difficult to walk away."*

Similarly, the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, Eleanor Lyons, reported to the inquiry: *"there was direct coercion, control and exploitation happening on these camming sites; that survivors were [performing for] hours and hours, nights and nights, cameras on you, thousands of disgusting guys asking you whatever. You're just tired, you don't want to do it. But it's that sense of relentlessness that comes on those camming sites. That means it's very hard for the women to escape, to take a chance to step away."*

As such, governments of the UK should ensure the provision of specialist support and exiting services for individuals who have experienced online and offline sexual exploitation, regardless of their present immigration status and access to public funds.

"Like all forms of sexual exploitation, they cannot be made safe through regulation. The harm is not incidental to the system, it is the system."

Amanda J Quick
Survived through experience of sexual exploitation

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Only Exploitation

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