

## BRIEFING:

# **The link between Sexual Entertainment Venues (SEVs) and male violence against women**



### **Position summary**

*“Gender-based violence is violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately” (Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women)*

*“Violence against women and girls is rooted in gender-based discrimination, social norms that accept violence, and gender stereotypes that continue cycles of violence... prevention—addressing the structural causes, as well as the risk and protective factors, associated with violence—is pivotal to eliminating violence against women and girls completely.” (UN Women)<sup>1</sup>*

The link between sexual violence and men’s objectification of, feelings of entitlement towards and dominance over women is well-evidenced. While not all men who hold these attitudes towards women perpetrate sexual violence, all sexual violence begins with these attitudes.

Strip clubs are established to condone, reinforce, promote and make vast profits from attitudes that are the foundation for male violence against women. Women of Bristol have no chance of being social equals with men while our city gives the green light to the institutionalised sexism that is SEVs’ core business.

### **What we know about sexual harassment and sexual violence**

Male sexual violence and harassment against women remains commonplace across England and Wales and it starts at a young age. Recent government research finds:

- Girls are disproportionately affected by sexual harassment and violence: e.g. 90% of recorded offences of rape in 2018–19 of 13- to 15-year-olds were committed against girls
- In 2020-21 girls aged between 15 and 17 reported the highest annual rates of sexual abuse for young people and children aged 25 and younger,
- 79% of school girls surveyed by Ofsted had experienced sexual assault from boys in their school; 80% had experienced unwanted or inappropriate sexual comments and 64% had experience unwanted sexual touching.<sup>2</sup>
- Only 3% of young women (aged 16-25) report having never experienced sexual harassment<sup>3</sup>
- One in five women has experienced some form of sexual assault/violence since the age of 16; 85% of sexual assault and harassment cases are never reported to the police.<sup>4</sup>

*“Girls said that boys used terms such as ‘flat, curvy or sick’ to describe them and girls found this derogatory. In another, children and young people reported boys giving girls marks out of 10 based*

---

<sup>1</sup> UN Women: Focussing on Prevention: Ending Violence Against Women.

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/prevention> Accessed 14/06/21

<sup>2</sup> Ofsted (2021) *Review of sexual abuse in schools and colleges*:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-sexual-abuse-in-schools-and-colleges/review-of-sexual-abuse-in-schools-and-colleges#what-did-we-find-out-about-the-scale-and-nature-of-sexual-abuse-in-schools> Accessed 14/06/21

<sup>3</sup> UN Women UK (2021): <https://www.openaccessgovernment.org/97-of-women-in-the-uk/105940/> Accessed 14/06/21

<sup>4</sup> Ending Violence Against Women and Girls:

<https://www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk/about/data-on-violence-against-women-and-girls/> Accessed 14/06/21

on their physical appearance while they were travelling to and from school together.... **Girls in this school described routine name-calling, sexual comments and objectification.**" (Ofsted, 2021)

### **The link between abusive men's attitudes and violence against women and girls**

In a consultation with 10,000 men who had perpetrated abuse, 25% of whom admitted they had raped a woman, men were asked about their motivations to rape,<sup>5</sup> the top three reasons given were:

1. Entitlement: 70-80% believed they had the right to sex, regardless of their 'partner' consent
2. Entertainment-seeking - interpreting forced sexual access to women as fun, or
3. Interpreting forced sexual access to women as something to alleviate boredom.

In another study conducted in England with over a thousand young men aged 18-30, more than 25% (one in four) endorsed the opinion that "a real man" should have as many sexual partners as he can and would never say no to sex. More than half (55%) said that **this is what society communicates to them**. The young men who identified with these and other expressions of so-called "Man Box" masculinity were more likely to be depressed and to take part in risky behaviours. 54% of these young men reported having perpetrated sexual harassment against a woman or girl in the last month, compared with 9% of young men or boys who did not identify with the harmful "Man Box" stereotypes of masculinity.<sup>6</sup>

Some key findings from other research:

- Power (dominance) and sex are interconnected in the minds of those who are the most likely to sexually harass – by sexually harassing, men express their power.<sup>7</sup>
- Men who endorse hierarchical (unequal) relationships between the sexes are more likely to sexually harass women and are also more likely to choose to sexually harass women who they see as feminist more than women who they see as 'traditional'.<sup>8</sup>
- Men who have viewed the sexual objectification of women are more likely to misinterpret women's friendliness as being sexually motivated, and to assume that a woman protesting a date rape is not 'really' protesting, and that "no means yes".<sup>9</sup>
- Objectification of the other sex is associated with "severe psychological aggression and physical assault perpetration" in males, but not in females.<sup>10</sup>

### **The links between SEVs, men's harmful attitudes and sexual harassment of women**

Men who are sex buyers are significantly more likely (15%) than non-sex buyers (2%) to report that they would force a woman to have sex, or rape a woman, if they could get away with it. They also report having engaged in three times more sexually aggressive behaviour than men who were not

---

<sup>5</sup> Fulu, E., Warner, X., Miedema, S., Jewkes, R., Roselli, T. & Lang, J. (2013). *Why Do Some Men Use Violence Against Women and How Can We Prevent it. Quantitative Findings from the United Nations Multi-Country Study on Men and Violence in Asia and the Pacific*. Bangkok: UNDP, UNPF, United Nations Women and United Nations Volunteers.

<sup>6</sup> Heilman, B., Barker, J. & Harrison, A. (2017). *The Man Box: A Study on Being a Young Man in the US, UK and Mexico*. Washington, DC and London: Promundo-US and Unilever.

<https://promundoglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/TheManBox-Full-EN-Final-29.03.2017-POSTPRINT.v3-web.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Maass, A., Cadinu, M., Galdi, S. (2013). *Motivations and consequences of sexual harassment*. In M.K. Ryan and N.R. Branscombe (eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Gender and Psychology, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage* (pp. 341-358). DOI: 10.4135/9781446269930.n21.

<sup>8</sup> Maass, Cadinu & Galdi (2013) Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Milburn, M., Mather, R., & Conad, S. (2000). The effects of viewing R-rated movie scenes that objectify women on perceptions of date rape. *Sex Roles, 43* (9-10), 645-664.

<sup>10</sup> Johnson, S. M., Murphy, M. J., & Gidycz, C. A. (2017). Reliability and validity of the sexual experiences survey- short forms victimization and perpetration. *Violence and Victims, 32*(1), 78-92.

sex buyers.<sup>11</sup> The “key characteristics” that men who buy sex and men who commit acts of sexual violence share include: “a preference for impersonal sex” and “a hostile masculine self-identification.”<sup>12</sup>

Men classed as “misogynistic” because of their self-reported hostility and violence towards women and their endorsement of rigidly traditional notions of masculinity are far more likely than members of any other group (including ‘sex-focused’ men) to have paid for sexual services including stripping, peepshows and lap-dances.<sup>13</sup>

Anthropological research into the culture of strip clubs notes: “A man can feel manly and dominant when he pays for a dance, without having to try to relate to a woman and risk failure”.<sup>14</sup> Further research into men’s reasons for buying sex suggest that through the purchase of sexual encounters “men obtain confirmation that women exist for the purpose of pleasing men”. Men emphasised their pleasure in asserting their dominance over women. Participants said: “It’s a power thing really – being able to get a woman to give you sexual services by handing over money”.<sup>15</sup>

“The strip club elicits and requires direct expressions of male domination and control over women”.<sup>16</sup> SEVs reproduce and promote the financial and social inequality between women and reproduce and promote the prevailing cultural assumption that women’s bodies are objects to which men are entitled to have access.

“Images of women and ‘entertainment’ which demean and degrade women portraying them as sexual objects plays a part in ‘normalising’ sexual violence and contributes to male abuse of women being acceptable, tolerated, condoned and excused. Such entertainment runs counter to explicit commitments by a range of private, public and voluntary agencies to promoting women’s equality.” (Glasgow City Council)<sup>17</sup>

The most effective way to bring down the prevalence of men’s violence against women is to focus on **community-level prevention**: that is, to change the cultural conditions and social signals which are facilitating men’s belief that they are entitled to harass, abuse and violate women.<sup>18</sup> This is the role of public bodies. Along with education, campaigns and awareness-raising, this must include closing strip clubs, which are established to profit from the causes of harm in our communities.

---

<sup>11</sup> Farley, M., Golding, J.M., Schuckman Matthews, E., Malamuth, N.M. & Jarrett, L. (2015). Comparing sex buyers with men who do not buy sex: New data on prostitution and trafficking. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 32(23), 1-25.

<sup>12</sup> Farley et al (2015), Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Casey, E.A., Masters, N.T., Beadnell, B., Wells, E.A., Morrison, D.M. & Hoppe, M.J. (2016). A Latent Class Analysis of Heterosexual Young Men’s Masculinities. *Archives of sexual behaviour*, 45(5), 1039-1050. DOI 10.1007/s10508-015-0616-z

<sup>14</sup> Hanna, J.L. (2005). Exotic dance adult entertainment: a guide for planners and policy makers. *Journal of Planning Literature*, 20(2), 116-134. DOI: 10.1177/0885412205277071, p124.

<sup>15</sup> Farley, M., Macleod, J., Anderson, L. & Golding, J.M. (2011). Attitudes and Social Characteristics of Men who Buy Sex in Scotland. *Psychological Trauma*, 3(4), 369-383, p.370.

<sup>16</sup> Prewitt, T. J. 1989. “Like a Virgin: The Semiotics of Illusion in Erotic Performance.” cited in Holsopple, K. (1998) “*Strip Clubs According to Strippers: Exposing Workplace Sexual Violence*” Freedom & Justice Center for Prostitution Resources.

<sup>17</sup> Glasgow City Council report on the need for review of licensing legislation in the light of concerns re table dancing <http://www.glasgow.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/0D19236F-808A-4467-96F7-6A9508C1F312/0/legtablic2.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> See Dills, J., Jones, K. & Brown, P. (2019). *Continuing the Dialogue: Learning from the Past and Looking to the Future of Intimate Partner Violence and Sexual Violence Prevention*. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, CDC. [Graphic] See also Hester, M., & Lilley, S.J. (2014) *Preventing violence against women: Article 12 of the Istanbul Convention*. Council of Europe, Strasbourg; Jewkes, R., Flood, M., & Lang, J. (2015). *From work with men and boys to changes of social norms and reduction of inequities in gender relations: a conceptual shift in prevention of violence against women and girls*. The Lancet, 385, (Issue 9977), 1580 – 1589; Fulu et al. (2013) Ibid.