

Question 1. The incidence of content that is harmful to children on regulated services

1.a The quantity, prevalence or presence of specific kind(s) of PPC, PC or NDC on regulated services and the frequency with which children are encountering this content.

Emerging online communities associated with violence, exploitation and misogynistic harm

Research by the Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD) indicates several emerging online ecosystems expose children to multiple forms of harmful content simultaneously, spanning categories in Ofcom's Children's Risk Register, including PPC, PC and NDC.

ISD has identified several concerning threats, including nihilistic violence communities, mass shooter fandoms, and networks deliberately targeting children, such as the 764 network. In parallel, misogynistic content - amplified and normalised via larger social media influencer ecosystems - present a significant risk of immediate harm to women and girls, as well as boys and young men's mental health and as a potential driver of violent behaviour.

Harms in these communities rarely fall into a single category. They often combine violent content, abusive or hateful material, suicide and encouragement to self-harm, sexual exploitation and harassment, alongside other harmful behaviours. This creates a risk environment where children may encounter multiple types of harmful content at once. Whilst these communities are still relatively small, and may not be UK-specific, they can pose severe risks and produce serious real-world consequences to both participants and others in the UK.

Content found in these types of online spaces or communities typically includes both various forms of illegal content (e.g. terrorist content, illegal hate speech, non-consensual intimate imagery) and activity (e.g. grooming, sextortion, encouraging or assisting serious self-harm) with content that may be legal but included in the PCC and PC categories of the Children's Register of Risks, such as pornographic or self-harm content, or violent, abuse and hate or bullying content.

This combination of different types of content and activity can lead to serious offline harm for those engaging in these communities, or to others. In order to tackle these high-risk online communities, and the harms they encourage and facilitate, including offline violence, services must take a more holistic approach when children are exposed to multiple categories of illegal, PCC and PC content simultaneously.

Nihilistic violence communities

As an overarching label, ISD conceptualises these ecosystems in terms of [nihilistic violence communities](#), which promote targeted violence without a coherent political, ideological or religious objective. These groups are characterised by misanthropic or nihilistic worldviews and often centre on the aestheticisation and performative celebration of violence.

Content within these communities may include the encouragement of self-harm or suicide, animal abuse, interpersonal violence and mass casualty attacks, including school shootings. These dynamics frequently intersect with multiple categories of harmful content relevant to Ofcom’s Children’s Register of Risks, including violent content, bullying and abuse, and suicide or self-injury related material.

Related subcultures include “shooter fandoms”, which glorify perpetrators of mass violence. These communities frequently centre on perpetrators of high-profile attacks such as the Columbine school shooting, circulating memes, imagery and cultural references that romanticise mass killers. In some cases, young individuals have replicated the aesthetics associated with these attackers or drawn inspiration from them when developing violent plots.

One of a number of relevant cases in the UK include the [sentencing](#) of a 17-year-old boy planning a copy-cat attack inspired by the 2024 Southport stabbings. Referring to himself as an “axelcel”, the teenager said the “idea of violence” captivated him and he had watched “a load of Isis videos”.

True Crime Community (TCC)

The online fandom known as the [True Crime Community \(TCC\)](#) represents a specific nihilistic violent online network connected to acts of public violence internationally. TCC spaces are centred on an obsessive interest in mass killers and often develop subcultural identities around school shootings and mass violence.

Although primarily originating in the United States, the community’s influence is transnational. For example, the June 2025 school shooting in Graz, Austria, in which a 21-year-old forum member killed eleven students, highlighted the international reach of these online spaces. ISD analysts also identified several threats linked to TCC-associated individuals in Mexico, Australia and Romania during September 2025 alone.

These dynamics illustrate how online subcultures that glorify and aestheticise violence may create pathways towards real-world harm for young people.

764 Network

Children are also deliberately targeted by groups like [764](#) (and the wider ‘Com’ network), an online criminal ecosystem associated with the coercion and exploitation of minors. The group is known for using sextortion tactics to coerce children into producing child sexual abuse material (CSAM) and other abusive content.

Victims are often pressured into producing additional material involving self-harm, violence or animal abuse, illustrating the way in which multiple forms of harm can converge within a single online environment. More recently, elements of the network have also demonstrated

a shift toward real-world violence, reflecting broader patterns within nihilistic violence communities.

Between 2020 and 2025, authorities arrested 191 individuals linked to 764 or affiliated groups across 28 countries for offences including [sextortion](#), possession of CSAM and [violent attacks](#). While researchers do not have sufficient information to assess the number of British 764 members, the case of [Cameron Finnigan](#) demonstrates the presence of the network in the UK. In June 2025, police [recorded](#) a car vandalised with 764-related messages in York.

Misogyny and the manosphere

Alongside – and often related to – nihilistic-violence ecosystems, [misogynistic online communities](#) represent a distinct but related area of concern. These dynamics are often associated with the “manosphere”, a loose network of online groups, influencers and forums centred on male grievance and identity.

While not inherently extremist, manosphere ecosystems frequently contain abusive or hateful narratives directed at women and girls, which may fall within the category of hate and abuse targeting sex as a protected characteristic. [Subcultures within these ecosystems - including incel communities](#) - have at times glorified or justified acts of violence carried out by perpetrators such as Elliot Rodger and Alek Minassian.

Although the UK has not recorded a confirmed case of misogynistic terrorism to date, misogynistic grievance has been linked to several serious acts of violence, including the 2021 Plymouth shooting and other incidents involving [gender-based targeting](#).

Research also suggests that [boys and young men may be particularly exposed to misogynistic narratives through online influencer ecosystems](#), and that such narratives permeate youth-oriented digital environments, particularly within influencer cultures and online communities that appeal to boys and young men. A recent multi-country study found that 63% of young men regularly engage with negative “men and masculinity” influencers, with engagement associated with higher levels of psychological distress and more negative attitudes towards women.

These online spaces can normalise sexual entitlement, foster hostility towards women, and propagate coercive relationship norms, while misogynistic grievance narratives frequently intersect with extremist recruitment and violent subcultures. Moreover, in some cases, misogynistic grievance narratives can function as entry points into broader extremist or [grievance-based ideologies](#), where hostility towards women is reframed as part of a wider set of societal grievances.

Cross-platform dynamics

Across these different online ecosystems, [harmful narratives are often amplified through memes, gaming aesthetics and other forms of online visual culture](#), which can lower barriers to engagement and present violent or hateful content as humour, entertainment or identity formation. These dynamics are particularly salient for younger users, who may encounter such content through recommendation systems, subcultural communities or influencer networks across different regulated services.

Together, these examples illustrate how emerging online communities can expose children to intersecting forms of harmful content across several PPC, PC and NDC categories, highlighting the importance of considering how harms combine and reinforce one another within digital ecosystems, even where individual categories may appear separately limited in prevalence.

1.b How demographic characteristics such as age, gender, race, sexual orientation and disability influence the likelihood that children will encounter specific kind(s) of PPC, PC or NDC.

Specific digital subcultures such as [incel forums, antifeminist spaces, conspiracist and extremist online communities have come to play an increasingly central role in radicalisation trajectories in the UK](#). These spaces often cultivate grievance narratives and offer a sense of identity and belonging, particularly for boys and young men experiencing social isolation or identity-related challenges.

Within these environments, users may be exposed to content promoting [hypermasculinity](#), including narratives that valorise dominance, financial success and physical appearance while discouraging emotional openness or help-seeking behaviours. Such narratives may overlap with several categories of harmful content, including abusive or hateful content, violent content and harmful relationship norms, while sometimes intersecting with other forms of harm such as encouragement of risky behaviour.

Children may be particularly vulnerable to these dynamics due to developmental factors including identity formation, thrill-seeking behaviour and the search for belonging. Recent trends suggest that [younger individuals in the UK are becoming increasingly involved in extremist or violence-supporting online ecosystems](#). Referrals of young people to the UK's Prevent programme have increased significantly in recent years, while minors now account for around one fifth of terrorism arrests, reflecting a notable rise compared with a decade ago. Since 2016, at least 55 minors in England and Wales have been convicted of terrorism offences, including offences related to collecting or disseminating terrorist information and preparing acts of terrorism.

Research indicates that children involved in extremist activity may [simultaneously occupy the roles of perpetrator and victim](#), reflecting the ways in which online communities can both recruit young users and encourage them to reproduce harmful behaviours.

Other vulnerability factors may also influence exposure to harmful online ecosystems. For example, analysis of terrorism cases involving minors in England and Wales since 2016 found that [31% had a formal neurodiversity or mental health diagnosis, rising to 45% among minors involved in extreme-right activity](#). While neurodiversity alone does not lead to radicalisation, trials and case studies have identified factors such as intense interests, social isolation and susceptibility to manipulation as potentially increasing vulnerability when combined with other social circumstances.

Similar dynamics can also be observed in non-ideological harmful ecosystems. For example, [members of the 764 network and related sextortion communities are often young and socially isolated individuals](#), motivated less by ideological beliefs than by participation in transgressive online subcultures that encourage performative violence and exploitation.

Together, these [findings](#) suggest that age, gender and social vulnerability factors can shape children's exposure to harmful online communities, particularly where identity formation, belonging and grievance narratives intersect.

1.c The services or types of service where children are most likely to encounter specific kind(s) of PPC, PC or NDC.

Children may encounter harmful content across a wide range of online services and digital environments, including mainstream social media platforms, gaming platforms, messaging services and niche online forums.

ISD's monitoring of [nihilistic violence](#) communities suggests that these networks frequently operate across multiple platforms simultaneously, using each service for different purposes depending on its technical features and user base.

For example, networks linked to [the broader 'Com' ecosystem](#), including sextortion groups, often use large mainstream social media platforms such as X or Reddit to identify potential victims. Platforms with large user bases allow offenders to conduct profile and hashtag searches to identify vulnerable users, particularly younger individuals. Initial contact may then be established through direct messaging or other interaction features.

After establishing contact, perpetrators frequently attempt to move conversations to [private or encrypted messaging platforms](#), where grooming and exploitation can take place with fewer visibility constraints. Platforms such as Telegram and Discord have been identified in ethnographic monitoring as important environments for coordination, communication and the exchange of exploitative material.

[Gaming environments](#) may also function as points of contact between perpetrators and potential victims. Platforms such as Roblox, for example, have been used both to identify younger users and to facilitate grooming or inappropriate role-play interactions. More broadly, online gaming ecosystems - including platforms such as Steam, Discord, Twitch and

DLive - can provide social environments where individuals share content, build communities and sometimes normalise harmful ideas.

Other online subcultures operate across a similarly broad set of services. Members of the True Crime Community (TCC), which centres on fascination with mass killers and acts of public violence, can be found across multiple mainstream platforms. Research suggests that TCC-related content and communities are particularly visible on platforms including [Tumblr](#), [TikTok](#), [Discord](#), [Telegram](#) and [Pinterest](#), where platform features support the sharing of visual content, short-form commentary and fan communities.

Similarly, the 764 network and related communities operate across a constantly shifting range of platforms. These include messaging services such as Discord and Telegram, gaming environments such as [Roblox](#), and mainstream content-sharing platforms including [TikTok](#) and [SoundCloud](#). Such networks often distribute content across multiple services to reinforce group identity, share propaganda and attract new participants, including young users drawn to the communities' extreme aesthetics.

These examples illustrate how harmful online ecosystems frequently operate across interconnected services, rather than within a single platform, allowing harmful content and behaviours to move rapidly between online spaces.

Question 2. The severity of harm that UK children suffer, or may suffer, as a result of content that is harmful to children

2.a The impact that specific kind(s) of PPC, PC or NDC can have on a child's wellbeing, behaviours, or other physical or psychological outcomes. This might include evidence concerning cumulative exposure to specific kind(s) or combinations of PPC, PC or NDC.

Exposure to harmful online communities can have significant psychological, behavioural and social impacts on children, particularly where exposure involves multiple forms of harmful content across the PPC, PC and NDC categories.

Within some nihilistic violence ecosystems, such as those linked to the Com network, the distinction between victim and perpetrator can become blurred. Young people may initially be recruited or coerced into communities through grooming or exploitation and later pressured to participate in harmful acts themselves. As a result, [harms are sometimes carried out by individuals who are simultaneously victims of coercion and participants in abusive behaviour.](#)

In other communities, such as the TCC, some participants develop highly personalised identifications with perpetrators of violence. Behaviour can include adopting the aesthetics of attackers, producing fan art or expressing admiration for mass killers. In a small number of cases, [individuals have carried out violent acts either to emulate these figures or to gain recognition within the community.](#)

Broader online ecosystems centred on misogyny and hypermasculinity can also shape young people's wellbeing and attitudes. Research indicates that repeated exposure to negative "men and masculinity" influencer content can contribute to [psychological distress, harmful relationship expectations and regressive attitudes towards women](#). One multi-country study found that 63% of young men regularly engage with such content, with higher engagement associated with poorer wellbeing outcomes.

In addition, certain forms of exploitation linked to these ecosystems, including financial sextortion targeting boys, can have severe consequences for victims. Evidence suggests that victims may experience [shame, anxiety, suicidal ideation, social withdrawal and disruption to education, alongside financial losses](#).

Taken together, these findings indicate that harmful online ecosystems can produce both [direct harms \(such as exploitation, coercion and violence\)](#) and [indirect harms, including radicalisation processes, desensitisation to violence and the internalisation of harmful social norms](#). These impacts may be particularly acute where children are exposed to multiple forms of harmful content over time or across interconnected platforms, and we welcome Ofcom's recognition that "cumulative exposure to specific kind(s) or combinations of PPC, PC or NDC" may be of particular concern.

Question 3. Whether it is appropriate to make changes to the kinds of PPC and PC in the Act

3.c Any kind of PC would be more appropriately categorised as PPC.

Upgrade 'Violent content' to PPC.

ISD recommends upgrading 'violent content' from the PC category to the PPC category. This would ensure that 'content which encourages, promotes or provides instructions for an act of serious violence against a person' is treated with equal severity as 'Suicide and self-harm content' that 'encourages, promotes or provides instructions for suicide' or 'encourages, promotes or provides instructions for an act of deliberate self-injury'. Based on the evidence provided in our response, we would suggest that this would require services to treat content that encourages self-harm to an individual user in the same way as content that encourages users to commit violence against others.

Consider the role of aestheticised violence and "gamified" harmful content in the current definitions of 'Violent content'.

Ofcom should consider how harmful content is often embedded within online aesthetics, memes, and gaming culture, particularly in communities aimed at younger users. Emerging ecosystems that support extremism and violence frequently utilise memes, irony, and gaming motifs, aestheticising violence through visual culture while blending entertainment, humour, and identity formation. These tactics can lower psychological barriers to engagement with harmful narratives, particularly for younger audiences. These types of content may not necessarily 'depict[s] real or realistic serious violence' as currently defined in the PC category,

but can still play an important role in normalising and inciting serious offline violence in the types of online ecosystems and communities outlined in our response. As a result, services should also assess how design features, recommender systems, and trends in visual culture may inadvertently amplify such content.

3.f Evidence to support each kind of content being categorised as either PPC or PC.

Consider whether the current inclusion of ‘Hate and abuse’ under the PC category, including misogyny and various other forms of hate and abuse, is sufficient to address current trends in the prevalence and impact of such content on children.

Ofcom should reflect on whether misogynistic hate and abuse directed at women and girls, as well as other forms of hate and abuse, are currently under-categorised as significant factors contributing to harm within the Children’s Risk Register, and potentially act pre-cursors to even more severe forms of harm. [ISD research](#) shows how misogynistic ideologies permeate diverse extremist movements, serving both as standalone motivations for violence and pathways into broader extremist networks. Given the prevalence of misogynistic narratives in spaces frequented by boys and young men, as well as their potential harmful impacts, there is a case for treating such hate and abuse content with elevated priority under the PPC category.

Recognise cumulative and compound harms across PPC, PC and NDC categories

Ofcom should consider how harmful online ecosystems expose children to multiple categories of harmful content simultaneously, and ensure that services understand how these types of content can have cumulative effects and exacerbate risks to children. Evidence from emerging online subcultures, including nihilistic violence communities, sextortion networks, and misogynistic ecosystems, demonstrates that harmful content often transcends several PPC, PC, and NDC categories. For instance, a single online community may encompass violent content, encouragement of suicide or self-harm, abusive or hateful content, sexual exploitation or coercion, as well as bullying or harassment. These harms can reinforce one another and escalate risks, particularly for children who are navigating identity formation or social vulnerability.

Sources

Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD). (2026). *Beyond Extremism: Platform Responses to Online Subcultures of Nihilistic Violence*. Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD). <https://gnet-research.org/2026/02/17/beyond-extremism-platform-responses-to-online-subcultures-of-nihilistic-violence/>

Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD). (2025). *Emerging Extremism-Related Threats in the UK: Implications for Policy Responses*. Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD). <https://www.isdglobal.org/publication/emerging-extremism-related-threats-in-the-uk-implications-for-policy-responses/>

Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD). (2025). *From sextortion to violence: The threat of the 764 network in the US*. Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD). <https://www.isdglobal.org/digital-dispatch/from-sextortion-to-violence-the-evolving-threat-of-the-764-network-in-the-us/>

Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD). (2025). *Memetic violence: How the True Crime Community generates its own killers*. Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD). <https://www.isdglobal.org/digital-dispatch/how-the-true-crime-community-generates-its-own-killers/>

Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD). (2025). *Squaring the circle on men's health, online harms and gender-based violence*. Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD). <https://www.isdglobal.org/digital-dispatch/squaring-the-circle-on-mens-health-online-harms-and-gender-based-violence/>

Manzi, Z., Schwertheim, H., Venkataramakrishnan, S., & von Bredow, C. (2025). *Fostering Healthy Masculinities: Building Resilience Against Online Misogyny*. Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD). <https://www.isdglobal.org/publication/fostering-healthy-masculinities-building-resilience-against-online-misogyny/>