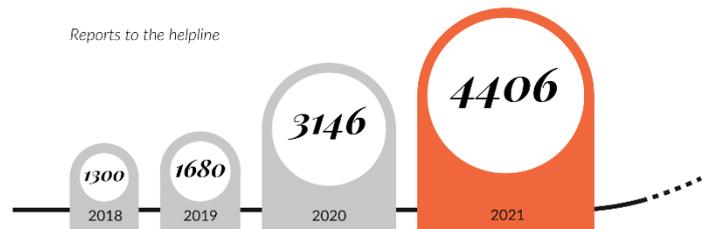
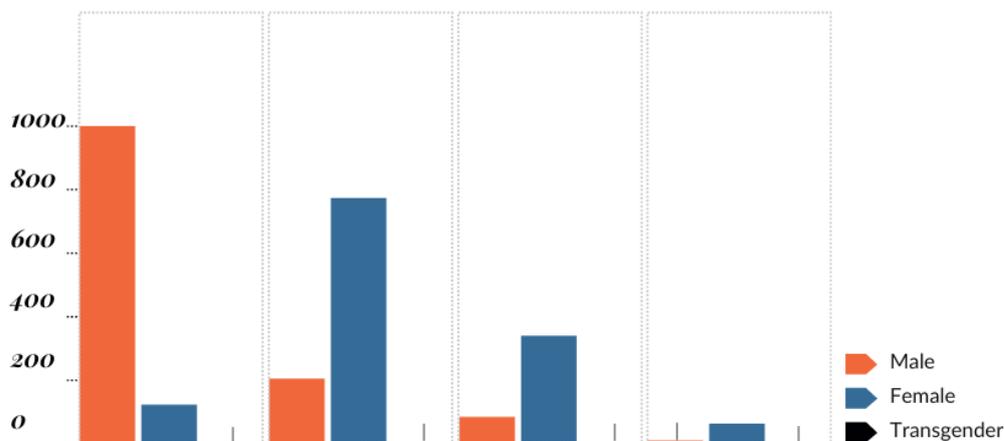


RPH cases and trends of 2021

Cases continue to rise at the Helpline, increasing by around 40% between 2020 and 2021 from 3146 to 4406. We have seen many of the same issues, but this year we have retroactively made data collection changes to better outline the trends/problems we felt need to be highlighted in 2021.



Primary issue type by gender



During 2021 we have continued to see an increase in most of our reported issue types. For “images shared” – where private sexual images have been disclosed – our cases have been reduced by 1% between 2020 and 2021 to just under 1000 cases. Intimate content being shared does continue to be a gendered issue, with reports to the Helpline being from female victims in around 75% of cases. This may seem shocking, but out of four main issues outlined by our data, three of them are gendered issues with females reported to be victims.

RPH remains to have reports of threats being made to share intimate content without monetary gain and voyeurism. The former has remained at a similar caseload to last year, accounting for around 10% of the overall cases for 2021 with it also being affected proportionally by females at 75%. The latter has a similar, low caseload, but due to the nature of voyeurism many of these crimes go undetected before content is shared, thus voyeurism may be seen as a “secondary issue” rather than an initially reported crime. Again, a gendered issue with females being six times more likely to be a victim of voyeurism than males.

Though it may seem like cases are similar to previous years RPH has seen a shift in their reported cases in 2021 in one category of crime. Unlike years previous years, where “images shared” was our most reported issue, in 2021, “sextortion” became the most reported – though both issues were incredibly close. Sextortion **doubled** between 2020 and 2021, making up around 25% of all our cases in 2021. Comparatively to other issues “sextortion” is an issue mainly affected by male victims, in around 90% [88%] of cases.

Victim vs perpetrator

		Perpetrator		
		Male	Female	Criminal gang
Victim	Male	4%	5%	41%
	Female	41%	4%	5%

Following on from this, as one may expect, due to the nature of “sextortion” being facilitated by overseas gangs, the suspected perpetrators in many of these male-affected cases are from criminal gangs. Conversely, male-perpetrated acts are outlined by most of the female victims that report to the Helpline. In the figure above, you can see that both of these outcomes are the same – for males, the suspected perpetrator is a criminal gang in 41% of the cases, and for females, it is male-perpetrated. This continues to add to the theory around non-consensual image sharing is predominately a female-affected issue, orchestrated by men. This is not to negate the fact that men are affected by this issue, but it is not something we see reported highly at the helpline.

RPH report 2021: the rise of sextortion

Presented by Zara Ward

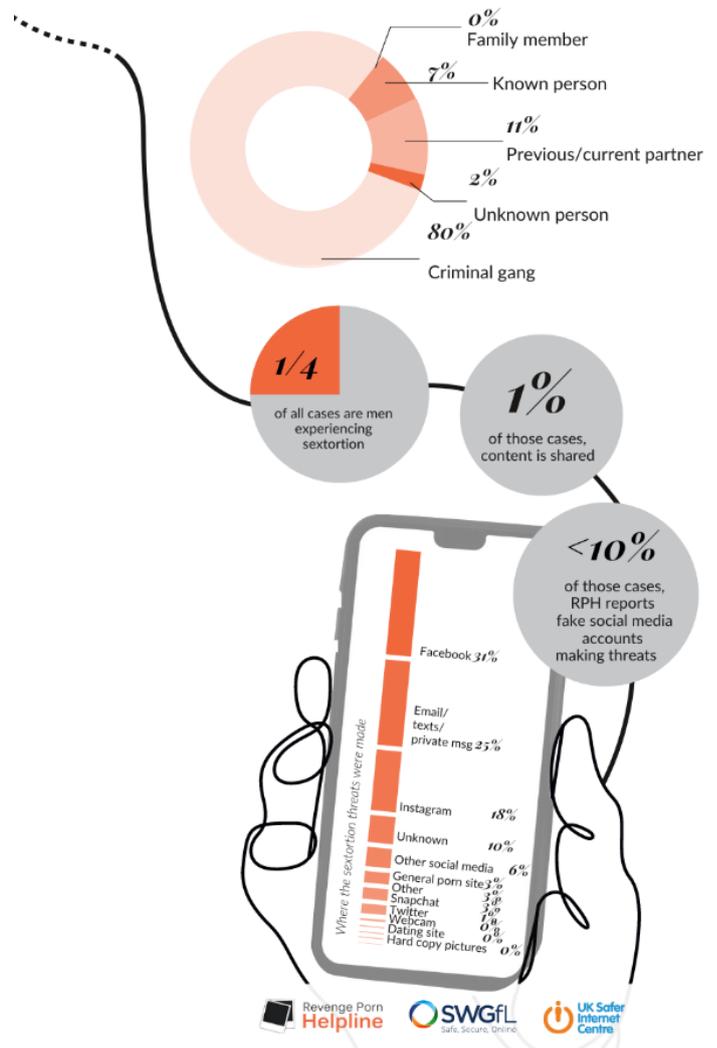
Sextortion: catfish for real money

Sextortion was our most reported issue in 2021 and saw a two-times increase in cases between 2020 and 2021. This is an issue commonly reported by males and occurs when a sexual relationship develops online, sexual images are exchanged, and/or sexual encounters occur within a video call. The victim is extorted for money and blackmailed by their intimate content, as during the interaction the scammers have taken details of followers, friends, and family lists and overall done a complete search on their target.

Sextortion (or webcam blackmail) is used by overseas scammers to make some quick cash, by threatening to share intimate content of the victim, usually to friends and family accompanied by derogatory terms. In many cases, these threats occur within private messages, with under 10% of total cases reporting social media cases for us to report. Platforms take this incredibly seriously and take action if threats are made. The platforms we see most reported are Facebook and Instagram accounting for around 50% of cases where threats are made.

The threats are very real, but the content is rarely released in only 1% of cases do we find that content is online to be reported.

You can find out more about sextortion on our website.



RPH report 2021: the rise of sextortion

Presented by Zara Ward

When intimate images are shared

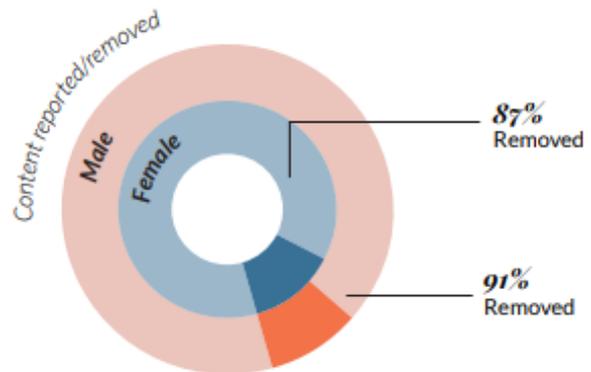
The Revenge Porn Helpline report content hosted anywhere; allowing clients to have practical support in taking control of their illegally shared content. In 2021, RPH reported over 27,000 pieces of content, and, as in previous years, there has been more content reported for women than men. RPH's success is persistent yearly with an approximately 90% success rate of removing content, though this is something we are content to work with industry contacts to improve on.

Average images per victim



over 80% of cases they suspect their perpetrator to be someone they know – with 60% of the reported perpetrator being a previous or current partner. Simply this means that in most cases where a woman is a victim, the act is perpetrated by someone they know personally, and most likely to be someone they have been romantically involved with.

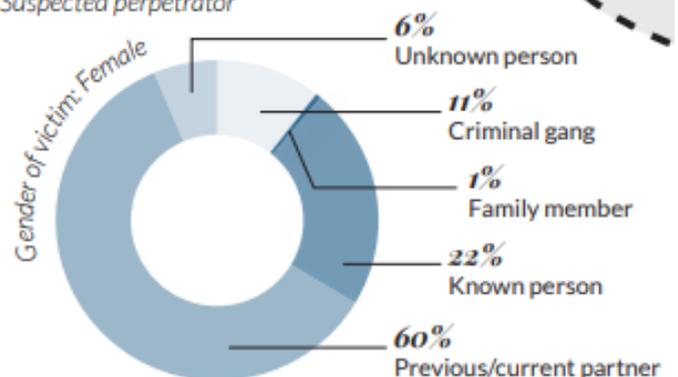
RPH is victim-focused and by design, we are reactive: content is shared and then we report it. Something we have not gained information on in our previous report is *how* the person was alerted to the content. We know people do indeed find out about their images being shared, but we know the delivery of this information can make a world of difference. For that reason, we retroactively looked into our cases for 2021 and asked this question: *how was the victim alerted to the content?*

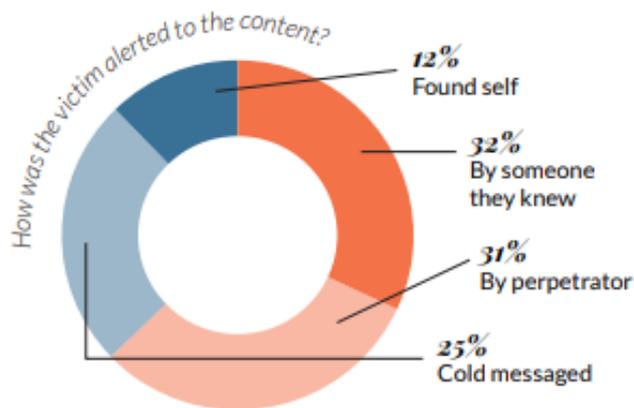


On average, per client, there is over 60 times more content of females reported than males - for females RPH report over 12 pieces of content per person, which can be on a range of platforms.

For female clients, those who are more likely to report intimate images shared, in

Suspected perpetrator





As shown by the graphic above, most clients who disclose their images have been shared are alerted to this by someone they know personally. This can be a friend, family member, or even a work colleague. In terms of *how* the content was shared, the “alerter” could have “stumbled across it”, had a message with the content or been shown by another person.

Secondary to that, another common alterer of content being shared is the suspected perpetrator themselves. This is something we thought we would see on the Helpline, as this crime has many ties towards elements of control and humiliation which is often orchestrated by the perpetrator, thus alerting the victim to content is another way of facilitating that.

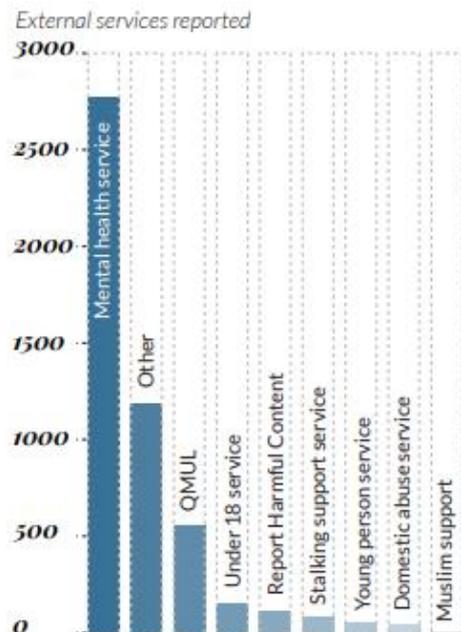
Chillingly making up 25% of cases where content is shared is the victim being “cold messaged”, and I use this term to describe messages on social media or even emails regarding their content. These are people who have not had communication before and have sought to share the details of this content. This effect is hugely distressing and the alerter is rarely doing this out of common decency, the messages are usually added with sexual advances and/or humiliation towards the victim.

The last method is the least common one, which is searching for yourself online, which is not surprising as many people choose not to do this. Searching for yourself – and this type of content – is extremely mentally draining.

RPH report 2021: the rise of sextortion

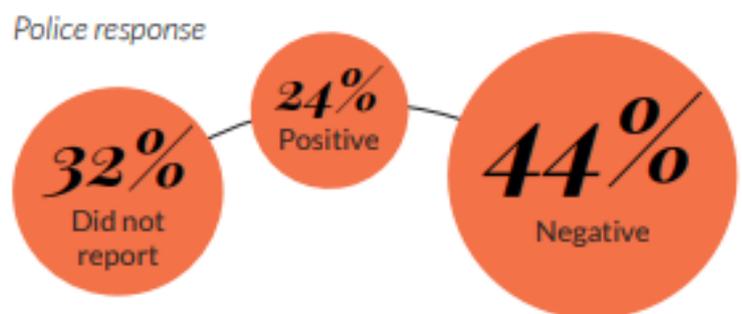
Presented by Zara Ward

Getting support beyond RPH



RPH is not an emotional support service; we can only provide practical support in reporting intimate image abuse and associated content. However, we understand that these crimes have an immense long-lasting impact on victims and so we always signpost to services that are more resources to provide emotional support. That is why in 2021 the commonly signposted service was mental health services. RPH has used this year to continue our reciprocal training, reaching out to services that support victims so we can provide the best signposting advice. With that, we still build strong working relationships with services such as “QMUL” – the SPITE project run by Queen Mary University in London” – and a legal advice helpline Rights of Women, which offer free legal support to women who need it.

Throughout 2021 responses from police forces remains mainly negative. It’s all too common to have victims outline that they have not been taken seriously, victim-blamed for sharing the content, or giving perpetrators time to facilitate deleting the content prior to seizing devices. Just a single testimonial from a client showcases the issues we find in police responses:



“I reported it to the police and they started an investigation...Despite finding he has sent them, they’ve closed the case 7 months after starting the investigation as there’s no proof this has caused me distress. I fled his home because he was abusive, there have been several reports made to the police, all of which they won’t do anything about. the police have also said, they didn’t force my ex or this other person to delete these photos, just suggested to do so, but I know what they’re like and they’ll keep them to cause further problems down the line.”

These crimes may happen online but they have real-world impacts on victims; they deserve to be better supported in criminal cases and treated with care. At the RPH this is something we can work on improving in the next year, working collaboratively with police forces nationally.