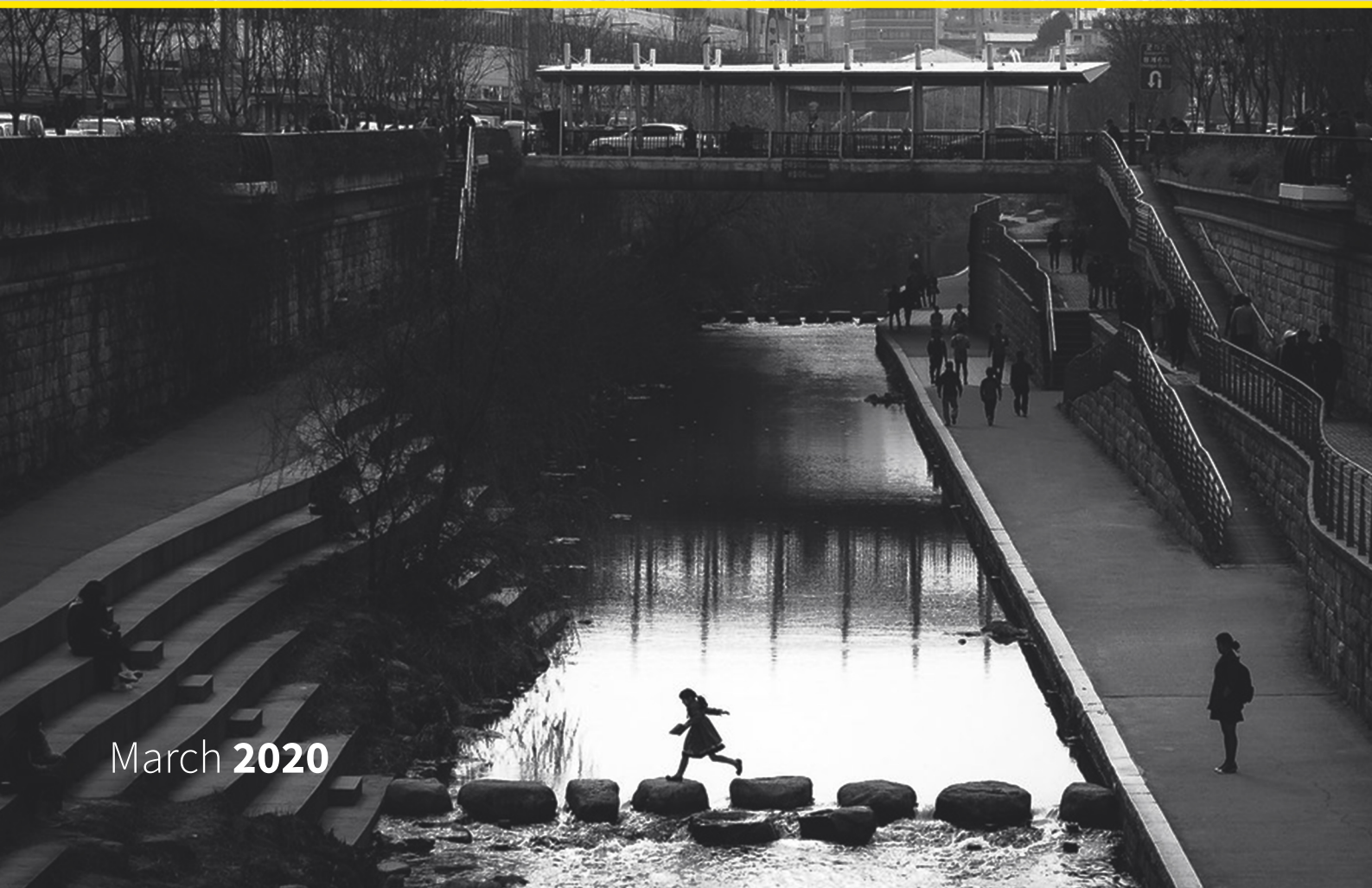




Misogyny, molka, and victims of domestic violence

A Moonshot Solutions report into online misogyny in South Korea



March 2020



Methodology and analysis

Misogyny in South Korea is a well-documented problem. Restrictive gender norms - rigidly expected and enforced - coupled with an excessive focus on physical appearance have created an environment in which the exploitation of women has become normal. While a series of high-profile scandals have recently generated media attention on this issue, sociologists and South Koreans alike have observed that these instances are symbolic of a broader concern for the country as a whole - namely, that its society is normalising the objectification of women as part of a wider, deeply embedded culture of misogyny.¹

The aim of this project is to explore how, and the extent to which, these misogynistic attitudes are expressed online. For this study, Moonshot Solutions gathered data from YouTube, Google and Naver - South Korea's most popular search engine.

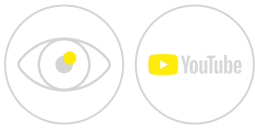
In total we identified and analysed 11 YouTube channels that have in whole or in part published misogynistic content aimed at a South Korean audience, which in total generated 111,258,840 views and 2,763,992 engagements from 730 uploads.² We also gathered over 300,000 searches relevant to misogyny across Google and Naver in order to fully understand the different ways misogyny manifests in both public and private online spaces.³



¹ <https://www.irinsider.org/east-asia-1/2019/3/31/sex-crimes-and-spycam-porn-embedded-misogyny-in-south-korea>

² Data over a three year period, from 13th September 2016 - 12 September 2019 inclusive.

³ Data gathered over a one month period, from 17th August - 16th September inclusive.



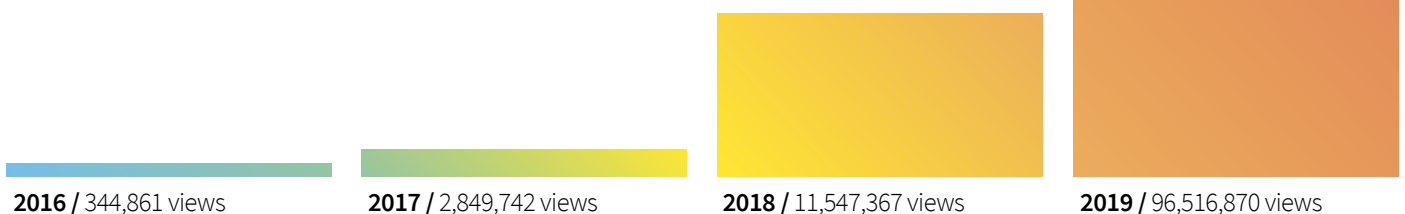
Public Misogyny on YouTube

In collaboration with a regional expert and using video intelligence software, Moonshot Solutions identified a set of YouTube channels that have in whole or in part published misogynistic content over the last three years. From these videos, two distinct themes emerge about misogyny on public-facing platforms in South Korea.

First, these attitudes have widespread popularity. At 111,258,840 views, these videos are popular. For example, the channel "수고요 Soo Go Yo" - with over 10 million views - advocates that the behavior of South Korean women makes it difficult for men to take them seriously. One video describes how women and men are built differently, therefore it's only right they have different roles in society. The most popular video has 2.9 million views and shows a clip from a talk show intended to highlight what the channel sees as the double standards of feminists in condemning the male sexualisation of children. Everyone on the panel agrees that it is wrong, but the video highlights what it believes to be an unfair focus on men with respect to the issue. As such, the video aims to belittle the scrutiny of men and, by extension, aims to undermine feminism as a whole.

These identified channels also reflect the range of ways in which misogyny is supported on YouTube. Some host videos that are clear in their misogyny; others are less overt, and embed their misogyny within and around harmless content. However, this only serves to normalise these opinions, which illustrates the layered and multi-dimensional way in which misogyny is spread, consumed and entrenched online in South Korea. With 2,763,992 engagements (additional user-initiated actions such as shares, likes or comments), these channels are clearly online spaces in which South Koreans actively and publicly participate.

Growth in number of views of videos on channels hosting misogynistic content

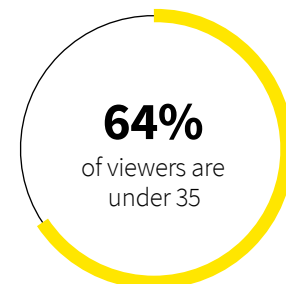
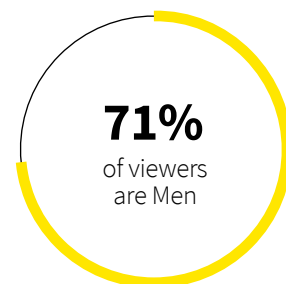




Second, there is demonstrable appetite for this content among new - and young - audiences. Of the 111,258,840 views generated by the videos from the channels, 87% of them were from 2019. 70% of the uploads were also from 2019, while the share of engagements for that year is 92% (only two of these channels were themselves created in 2019).

Men make up the majority of viewers at 71%. Viewership is also notably young, with 64% under the age of 35. To illustrate this point, Appendix 1 contains a transcript of one video that shows a young man's reaction to a survey designed to challenge restrictive gender stereotypes. The intensity of his opposition to the survey demonstrates how misogynistic opinions have found both a new audience and a new medium through which to reach new, internet-savvy audiences.

Top statistics



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Private Misogyny search data

To build a more complete picture of misogyny online in South Korea, Moonshot Solutions gathered anonymised search traffic data across both Google and Naver. Search traffic is unique in that it is non-performative - the user is not expecting it to be seen - and as such, it constitutes a unique insight into the private attitudes and desires of an audience.

On Naver, by far the most searched term is 'Yoon Ji Oh', generating a total of 250,400 searches over the last month. Yoon Ji Oh was a friend and confidant of Jang Ja-yeon - an actress who took her own life because of continuous sexual abuse and rape. Yoon Ji Oh is known for standing up for her friend and speaking out on this issue. The second highest set of terms, with 17,920 searches, were related to supporting and idolising Sung Jae-gi, a known misogynist and founder of the 'Man of Korea' group, who is known for publicly disparaging women and campaigning against policies such as female menstrual leave. In 2013, he took his own life while trying to raise awareness and funds for his organisation.⁴ It is interesting to note that these searches go beyond mere expressions of interest - they actively idolise him some time after his death by adding terms such as 'hero' and 'support' after his name.

Searches for information on the 'Burning Sun' scandal - where high-profile celebrities admitted to intentionally targeting, drugging and raping women on film and sharing the videos without their consent - were also popular, recording over 8000 searches collectively. That so many are searching for more information on a range of extreme cases related to sexual violence is likely due to people's curiosity about - and potentially respect for those involved in - this sensitive but very public subject.

The findings of this research also reveal a unique behaviour pattern regarding the nature of internet use in South Korea. Unlike most countries, Google is not the dominant search engine. In South Korea, it's Naver, and in this case at least, both platforms appear to have been used in different contexts. Naver is a 'safe' search engine - it actively filters sensitive queries and prohibits large numbers of keywords and websites from being accessed. Therefore, Naver may not be the search engine of choice for individuals searching for violent or misogynistic content. Many South Koreans resort to Google when they want to search or download sensitive files (including downloading illegal music, films or applications). It therefore makes sense that Naver is the search engine used to explore - free of explicit terms - curiosity about, or sympathy towards, public, high-profile figures related to misogyny.

Nonetheless, there is still an active appetite for more nefarious content on Naver. The terms 'Namcho' and 'ilbe.com' collectively generated over 2600 searches. Both refer to male-dominated ideas and spaces known for their hatred towards women.

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Safe search

Google

NAVER

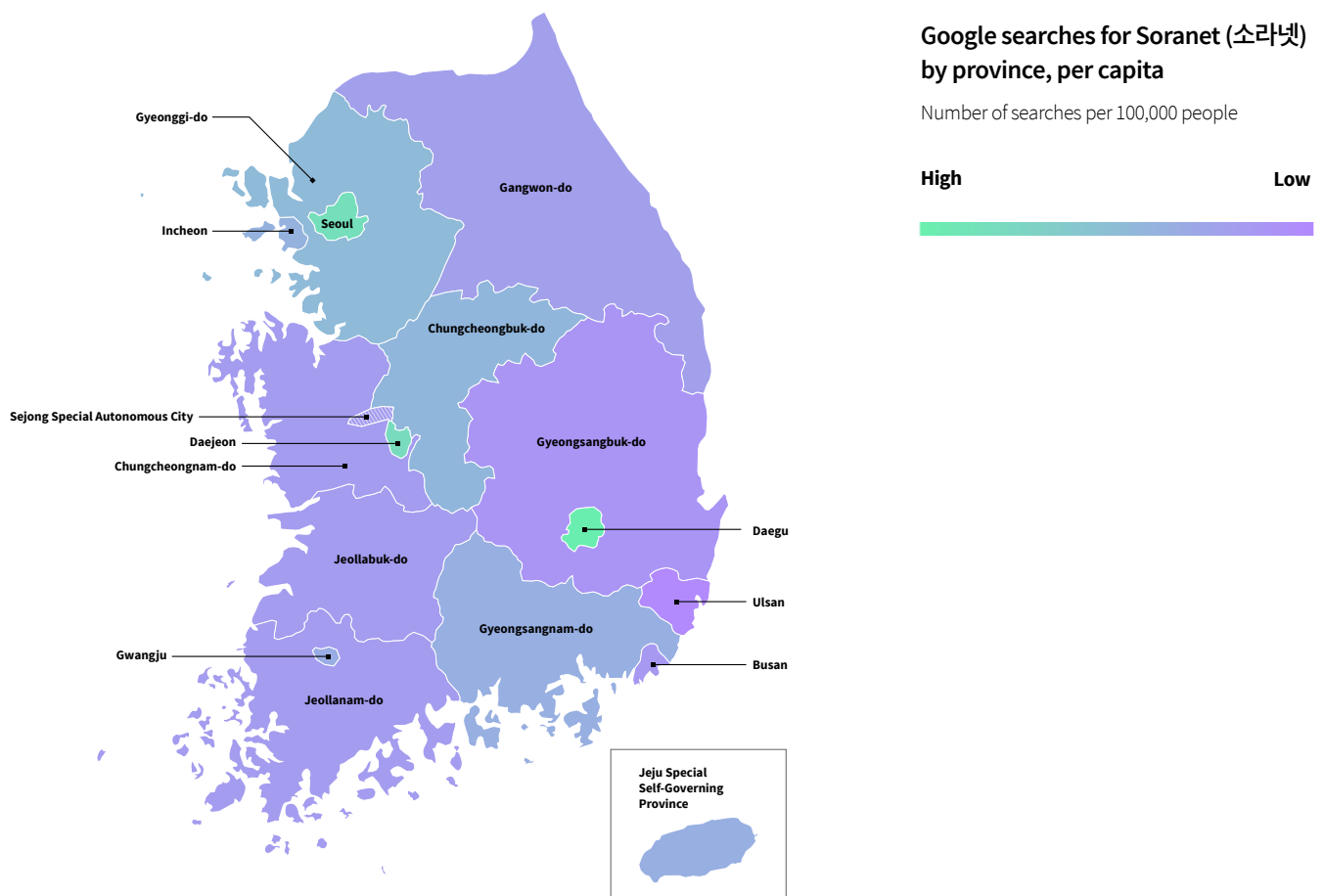


⁴http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_national/599060.html



On ilbe.com for example - the 24th most popular site in South Korea - posts have included discussions on how to rape children as young as six, and requests about how to find out if a woman is marriage material alongside a photo of a man holding a baseball bat.⁵ Likewise on Google - where more explicit searches are less restricted - there were almost 1700 searches for Soranet (소라넷), a pornography site shut down in 2016 for hosting thousands of nonconsensual spy-cam videos, often depicting women secretly being filmed in toilets and changing rooms. Known as 'molka' footage, the practice has become widespread in everyday life despite its designation as a criminal offence, and reflects the particular pervasiveness of female oppression in South Korea.⁶ Some of the women who have appeared in these videos are documented as having later taken their own lives. That there are searches for this content so long after its removal suggests a continued desire for this type of material regardless of the consequences.

While the majority of these Google searches per capita are clustered around metropolitan areas, the remaining volumes are largely consistent across provinces. Urban centres can be expected to yield high levels of search activity, but the fact that searches of this nature came from every province demonstrates that the desire to find extreme misogynistic content online is widespread.



Data for Sejong Special Autonomous City could not be disaggregated from data for Chungcheongnam-do.

⁵ <https://www.mic.com/articles/184477/inside-ilbe-how-south-koreas-angry-young-men-formed-a-powerful-new-alt-right-movement>

⁶ <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/07/07/south-korean-women-turn-thousands-protest-against-widespread/>



Private Searches for support for domestic violence

There are also significant volumes of searches from apparent victims of sexual violence across both platforms. The top search terms on Naver in this category include 'domestic violence help' (12,920), 'domestic violence helpline' (2,950) and 'violent husband' (960), alongside less common but more revealing searches like 'my boyfriend is violent but I love him' (130) and 'why can't I leave an emotionally abusive relationship' (30). Google searches include terms of a similar nature, but at a much smaller scale.

There were also almost 8,000 searches for more organised support across the search platforms. 'The Sunflower Center', an organisation that provides a range of support for victims of domestic violence, is often paired with local branch names or locations. This level of specificity and pre-existing knowledge suggests that it is not the first time those searching have been seeking support. When taken together, it is clear from these searches that, though often downplayed in society, there are significant numbers of search engine users currently self-identifying as victims by actively searching for help and support in matters of domestic and sexual violence.⁷

It is critical to note that, given the terms seeking support are greater in number than searches for sites espousing extreme misogyny, the root causes of sexual violence likely go beyond these online manifestations. Put another way, the appetite for 'molka' footage and other misogynistic content appears to be more of a symptom of a wider culture of objectification that justifies sexual violence, rather than the cause.

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⁷ <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20120507001291>

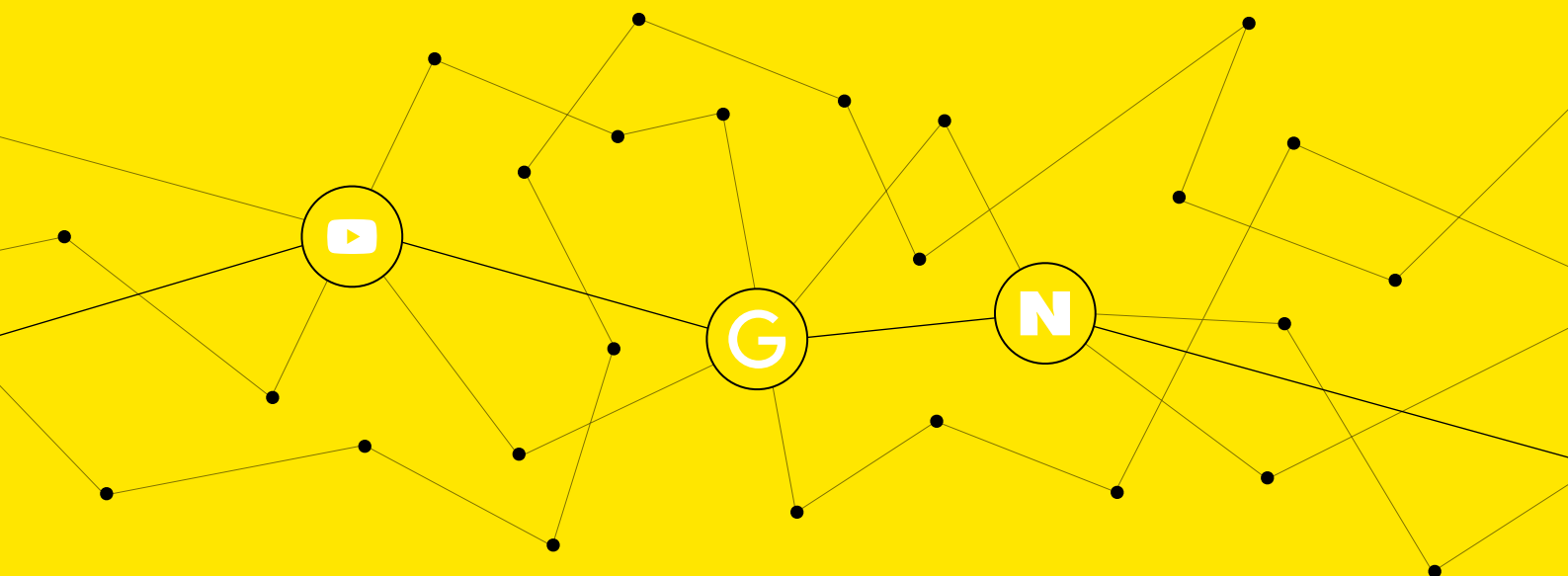


Conclusion

Online misogyny in South Korea is widespread, popular and harmful. Not only does it reflect the restrictive gender norms found offline, but its cultivation online has allowed those ideas to spread, entrench and multiply the negative consequences. The public-facing YouTube channels identified by Moonshot Solutions are serving to repackage existing misogynistic ideas into a format fit for online consumption. In the context of thriving internet use, these channels are proving incredibly popular, reaching new and young audiences online at an unprecedented scale.

By supplementing these findings with an analysis of private online behavior, we are able to build a much fuller picture of the nature of online misogyny. Across Naver and Google, it is clear that there is widespread demand for information on individuals associated with extreme sexual violence. There is also an active desire to engage with and at times idolise the sites, individuals and footage responsible for advocating the objectification of women. It is in this way that a culture of sexual assault is being normalised and encouraged. Though the attitudes that have encouraged this culture still exist offline - whether restrictive values entrenched through a YouTube video, or footage of a woman in a changing room being shared without her consent - the negative effects are being perpetuated and reinforced online.

Yet the online spaces of Naver and Google are also places South Koreans go looking for help. In one month between August and September 2019, there were almost 29,000 searches reporting, or requesting help for coping with, sexual violence. These spaces therefore function as both facilitators of misogynistic content and as mechanisms by which local civil society organisations and other relevant actors can - and should - aim to reach people in need of support.

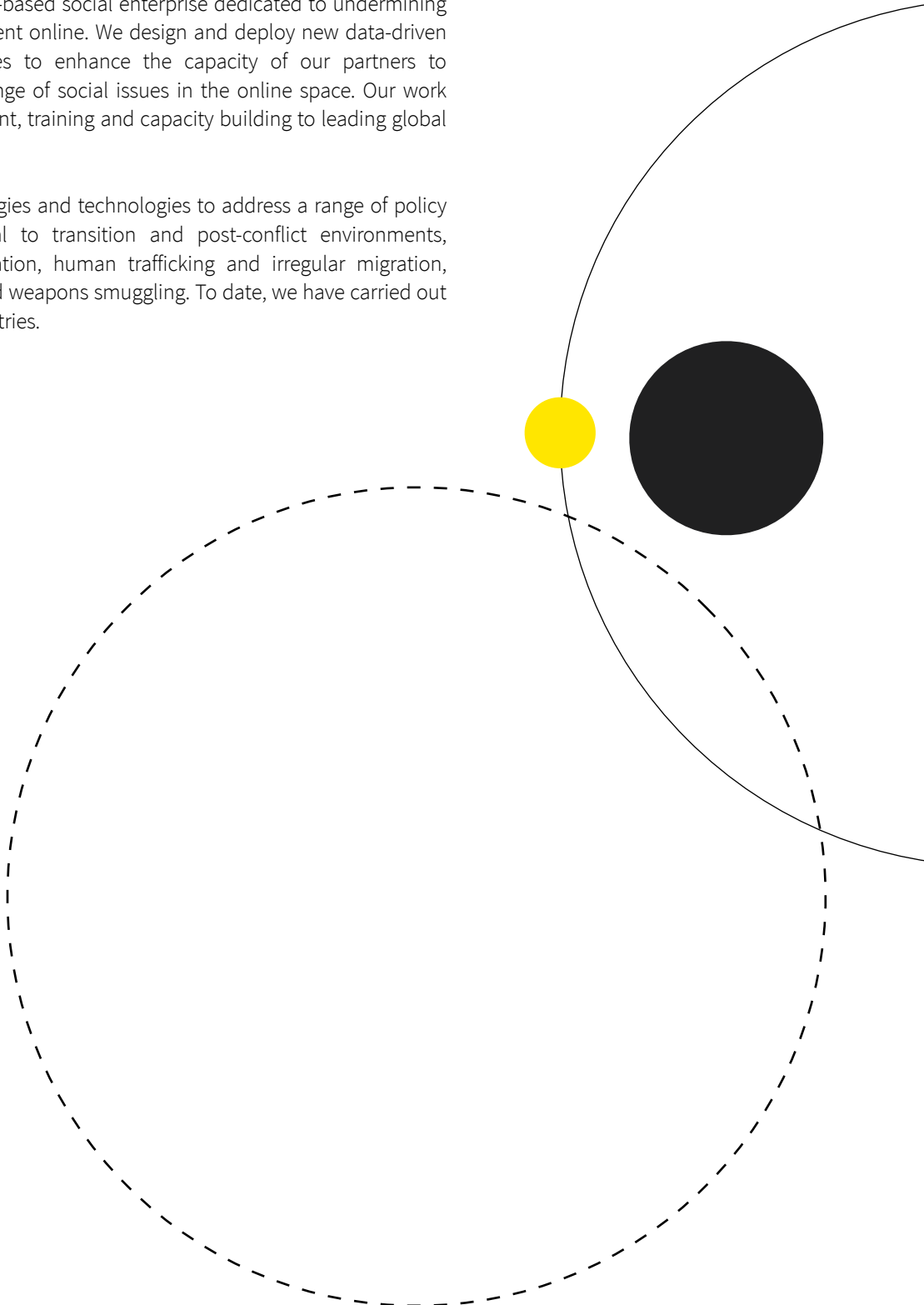




About **Moonshot Solutions**

Moonshot Solutions is a London-based social enterprise dedicated to undermining the proliferation of harmful content online. We design and deploy new data-driven methodologies and technologies to enhance the capacity of our partners to effectively respond to a wide range of social issues in the online space. Our work ranges from software development, training and capacity building to leading global counter-messaging campaigns.

We have applied our methodologies and technologies to address a range of policy areas, particularly those central to transition and post-conflict environments, including extremism, disinformation, human trafficking and irregular migration, gender-based violence (GBV), and weapons smuggling. To date, we have carried out our programming in over 30 countries.





Appendix 1

Transcript from response to survey encouraging South Koreans to question their attitudes to women

Q1

We have surpassed the male-female equality stage and now women have the upper hand.

His answer

True

Survey answer

False

His reaction

Why don't they write that we [South Korea] are number 1 amongst OECD Asian countries for sexual equality? Stupid WEF ranking!

Q2

It is a praise to say "You work hard/well as a woman!"

His answer

True

Survey answer

False

His reaction

*Even as a man I would think it is a praise, so just take it as a praise. [Reacts aggressively] Who the **** made this ***** survey? Just because you twist the words like that, we are "misogynists"?*

Q3

Making fun/jokes about women saying they are fat or ugly makes me feel uncomfortable.

His answer

True

Survey answer

True

His reaction

Making fun/jokes about women saying they are fat or ugly makes me feel uncomfortable.

Q4

The husband should help around the house as this is normal.

His answer

True

Survey answer

False

His reaction

Just one question: isn't it also a man's job to earn money for the family? You say "my/our job" but isn't it our job to earn money then? We haven't seen campaigns saying "let's go find an hourly job and earn money for the family", so what is the fuss? It's normal to do all the housework if you don't go out and earn money.

Q5

Issues such as sexual discrimination and sexual violence can be handled after we tackle more important social issues first.

His answer

True

Survey answer

False

His reaction

You [feminists] are the ones that said "more important social issues" and now you come up with this BS like "think about others" and "might be important to certain people"! You wrote "more important social issues!"

Q6

Words such as "김치녀"(Kimchi Girl), "김여사"(Mrs Kim), "보슬아치"(WOMAD) represent the characteristics/attributes of women very well.

His answer

False

Survey answer

False

His reaction

Don't even understand why they put this question. You [the website's answer to this question suggests that it wouldn't be fair to call Korean men "insects"] are the ones labelling Korean men as 한남 [disgusting] and generalising all men into one category. Are they crazy? Do they need an IQ test?

**Q7**

I can't be a misogynist because I like women.

His answer

True

Survey answer

False

His reaction

Of course. Don't twist words to benefit your cause! You are the one that is using the terminology wrong.

Q8

It doesn't happen when I am with people who are stronger than me but when I am with weaker people, I get angry more easily.

His answer

False

Survey answer

False

His reaction

*Idiot! This is to do with your opinions, thoughts and prejudice on this process. F***ing sensitivity!*

Q9

Of course it's good if and when more people say proudly that they are feminists.

His answer

True

Survey answer

True

His reaction

Yes! This is because there is no such concept! You feminists have set the scene from the start and mis-educated people. If you say that you are a feminist and act the way you preach being fair and equal - fine. But saying that you are a Feminist but you act in the opposite way - no! In general, we should not be doing things that year 4 students do not find appropriate.

Q10

I think that it is acceptable that men, even if they are among female company, can talk dirty or inappropriate things about women.

His answer

True

Survey answer

False

His reaction

Men and women both do the same. What is wrong with casual/light dirty talk? What about all the soft porn books that women have? All the rumours are started by women about men. That's sexual assault!

Q11

The victim also has some form of responsibility if they get raped if they wear racy clothes, drink alcohol and stay out till late.

His answer

False

Survey answer

False

His reaction

Do you leave your home front door open when you are not there? It is wrong that a burglar robs your place so I am going to leave my door open. Nobody says/thinks this. Be careful!

