Unwanted exposure to pornography & sexually explicit/suggestive products on Etsy

Cover Page: National Center on Sexual Exploitation’s Policy on Sharing Proof

**WARNING:** The material in this document may contain graphic text, blurred images, and survivor quotes that may trigger the viewer.

Why do we post proof in the first place?

NCOSE researchers have collected this proof as evidence of the material that is made, contained, and/or distributed by the corporations and institutions NCOSE is confronting.

Proof is shared with corporate executives, shareholders, and/or board members, as well as with policymakers, law enforcement, journalists, and the general public to **give witness to the sexual exploitation and abuse that is often rampant, yet sometimes hidden, on these platforms.**

Why do you blur out images, including faces, if they’re publicly available?

While we believe it is important to provide ample evidence of wrong-doing to support our claims and inspire change, we **also strongly believe that no one – neither adult, nor child – should be exposed to the type of material our researchers collect:** either for their own well-being, or out of respect for those being exploited. It is for this reason we pixelate/blur/block not only nudity or sexually graphic content, but also the faces of those being exploited.

We also want to limit access to this material (unfortunately, a luxury not afforded to children and adults using many of the platforms and products made by these companies). Therefore, we add several layers before someone can access the proof, and also don’t include all the proof that we have obtained. If someone feels they need to see more evidence to understand the extent of the problem or the type of exploitation that is happening, they may request it of NCOSE by writing to public@ncose.com.

Did you receive people’s permission to post?

Any personal testimony shared to NCOSE directly is posted only with the affected parties approval.

For material that is publicly available, we do not seek permission to post. However, we redact names and usernames of survivors from articles, social media, etc. even when publicly available. To read more about our commitment to ethical engagement with survivors, please go [here](#). We do not redact names or usernames of exploiters who have posted publicly.

Disclaimer: while we do collect information on those who request access to more proofs, that information will only be used for our own, internal analysis. It will not be distributed, shared, or posted publicly or with outside parties.
According to Etsy’s policies, pornography is prohibited and sexually explicit/suggestive images should not be included in the thumbnails for products, so as to prevent unwanted exposure. However, these policies are clearly very poorly enforced, as numerous Etsy users complain of unwanted exposure to pornography and sexually explicit/suggestive products.

Dec 17, 2021:

A donor shared with NCOSE how her grand-daughter was exposed to sexually explicit/suggestive products on Etsy, after looking at innocuous items.

The attached screenshot from her email:
In the following thread in the Etsy community, numerous users share similar experiences of being bombarded with unsolicited porn and sexually explicit products. Many complain there was no way to change their viewing preferences to get rid of it. Some aptly describe this experience as a form of sexual harassment.

Link: Pornography showing up in Our Picks For You - Welcome to the Etsy Community

Compiled by the National Center on Sexual Exploitation: www.endsexualexploitation.org.
Pornography showing up in “Our Picks For You” for me, and I don’t know why. I don’t search for porn. Some of it is pretty hard core. I thought that in Etsy’s policies the explicit pictures should not show up on the Thumbnail. I tried to email Etsy, but Etsy doesn’t provide a path for complaints of this nature. At another person’s suggestion I went the “reporting harassment” route, but had to send the complaint under harassing messages which really isn’t the problem—there was no place to send this complaint. I did get a very nice email back saying to clear my history, which I had already done. I did it again, but the porn multiplied and was even worse. I do like the “Our Picks for You” because it helps me research for my shop. I sell digital prints, and I like to search for ideas of art to create. “Our Picks for You” could help me find original ideas I hadn’t thought of if it weren’t peppered with porn. I don’t understand why a big company like Etsy can’t provide a function that helps you control your viewing preferences. Pinterest does. Facebook does. So I am resorting to reporting listing which requires me to click on it. I can only assume this triggers the algorithm to think I want to see porn. I just don’t understand why Etsy doesn’t have a remedy for this—I feel totally disrespected. I hope lots of users complain about this problem to Etsy, so they will take notice and be motivated to make a change.

If the shop is not adhering to Etsy policies regarding mature listings, report them by clicking the “report this shop” button.

That could keep me pretty busy!!! They should pay me for being the pornography police! I do report, but then I am shown more and worse porn.

There are several women on Etsy’s board, as well as several prominent staff members like @FidosFlowers who seem to be really engaged in Etsy’s branding.

When these types of complaints pop up weekly, I wonder if the women of Etsy are aware of Etsy’s porn issue. Etsy is essentially our landlord. If our landlord was plastering unsolicited porn all over the windows and doors of our shop and passing out graphic images to customers browsing our shops, it would be considered sexual harassment at best.
"If our landlord was plastering unsolicited porn all over the windows and doors of our shop and passing out graphic images to customers browsing our shop, it would be considered sexual harassment at best." ...Oh but just go in the back door so you don't have to see it! Even though your customers will or it can appear right in your listings!

E-bay has banned the sale of adult products. I wonder how many of those sellers have moved to Etsy. I never used to see porn and adult items in "picks for you." This month, it seems like every other day I see graphic art and adult toys in the picks for you.
Post Crafter

by Post Crafter • 06-23-2021 12:28 PM
Think that's probably it.
I personally have no problem at all with adult items being sold on Etsy, but surely there could be a little button you can toggle on and off: 'Show adult products' and 'Don't show adult products'.
Those little knits haunted me for days!

The Post Crafter

by Post Crafter • 06-23-2021 12:22 PM
I honestly don't understand the 'Picks For You' section. I was searching for mother of the bride gifts and wedding favours (all traditional & tasteful ones!), then for the next week my 'Picks For You' section was full of graphic knitted men's parts... I really don't understand the connection!
I cleared my history and tried searching for dresses, earrings etc but these items stayed up there for a good week. Not what I wanted to see when I look at Etsy several times a day!

Conversation Maker

by Conversation Maker • 06-23-2021 12:25 PM
You don't understand the connection?
I'm telling you, it could be something as innocent as the word 'gift'. Someone tagged all their knitted dicks as 'gift' and why shouldn't they?
Etsy thinks you like gifts and shows you more gifts.
The following reddit threads contains similar complaints of unsolicited exposure to pornography and sexually explicit/suggestive products.

Link: Pornography on etsy. : Etsy (reddit.com)
Pornography on etsy.

Reposting without examples. Hopefully it has the same impact.

I recently bought a vinyl cutter and was directed to Etsy to purchase digital files to use for my projects. My main genre, I guess, would be nerd culture. Video games, star wars, etc. I was just browsing this morning on my phone and tapped the search field and one of the suggestions was "erotics shotz." My imagination went to shot glasses with suggestive sayings or maybe symbols. Mother’s Day is coming up, and my wife would have likely enjoyed a gag gift of that nature.

She would not, however, enjoy what I saw on that page. That garbage belongs on Hustler, not what I thought was a marketplace for creativity.

The worst part is I was able to access those uncensored listings without a login, which means there is 0 age verification.

I’m not one of those guys who is ashamed of sex, nor do I feel like anyone should be. However, these listings are blatantly pornography. If you search for the store "erotics shotz" you will see what I’m talking about.

Etsy’s own policy states that pornography is not allowed. However, this content is showing up not only when not logged in, but is being recommended to new users with no history of searching for such things. Of course, now that I've clicked on it it's going to be all over my recommendations.

I also, as an active member of multiple anti-exploitation and human trafficking awareness organizations, feel it's necessary to point out there is no mechanic on this website to verify that models are of age and consenting to the photos that are being sold. This is a federal requirement by all sites that serve pornography and nudity.
Yep that's full on hardcore porn. It seems to be just one shop with only one sale (nope sorry, 58 sales). Report them to Etsy. I already clicked on report.

It really has gotten out of control, and I think Etsy needs to have some serious default filters in place. I was looking for mugs the other day, so I typed in funny mothers day mugs. Porn and nude pictures came up on the first few pages. I wasn't shocked or upset, but more annoyed.

Etsy does have mature requirements, and pages can be reported for mature listings, but this is onerous from an individual perspective.

For the sellers, the TOS for Etsy say that mature pictures or language is not allowed at all in the first thumbnail or the listing title and "mature" must be used in the tags.

Etsy doesn't have any filters, but you can try this filter:


Link: Todays Etsy, opinion : Etsy (reddit.com)
Todays Etsy, opinion

A selling/buying online platform that doesn't honor its own policies.

A vast online landfill of mostly made in China, fake originals, porn, resales, resale craft supplies found elsewhere, stenciled "art", soiled panties, smelly dirty socks, dildos, inflatable anus and vagina, fakes of every imaginable product, can food, brand name candy, ready made junk bought at wholesale with private label or passed as handmade, silk screen t shirts, mugs and everything silkscreened under the sun, dead baby rats, sex solicitation, and the Etsy "eclectic" listings goes on and on.

Community forums that are taken over by a group of rude know-it-alls who many times accuse, misinform, make false assumptions, harass, belittle, mock, insult and bully others whenever they feel like it. Most times the thread topic goes astray.

A vast wasteland where sellers are busy policing other sellers.

A vast wasteland of clueless buyers who many times fall victim to "original" "handmade" or even "vintage".

A company that doesn't care about honest small sellers.

A company that harasses sellers and buyers with in your face porn listings and unsolicited in your face porn images of every kind imaginable.

A company that doesn't seem to care or want to clean up the porn, the resellers, the fakes, and or China made off its platform.

and unfortunately the minority of small sellers with integrity and honesty are heading toward extinction from Etsy.
I expect it to change and evolve, but the abundance of porn and sex toys is beyond my comprehension.

Etsy gets a cut of everything. At the end of the day a buck is a buck. They're running a business and are only concerned with their own margins, just as every other seller is. They also seem to have a lack of competition. Shopify is definitely in their shadow, but has its own set of challenges to hurdle.

Once people realize these things it's less hard to wrap your head around it.

I mean hey, if you've got the materials, there's a lot of money in making silicone dildos in funky shapes. It's still handmade lol.

I really don't have an issue with the dildos, its when I search for pantie patterns for dolls and get dirty panties and nude crotch shots.

Yeah, I can see how searching for panty patterns could return some weird results. Could you start your search with "doll clothes pattern" and maybe tack on "underwear" if the results are too broad?

Yea, if you ever search up 3d printed stuff, half of it is porn... kinda shocked that Etsy doesn't care about this sort of stuff.

Link: Etsy suggests kinky things : Etsy (reddit.com)
Hello all,

I recently went to purchase a purple cuban link chain dog collar for my dog (we have a silver one now but her favorite color is purple lol) but Etsy misunderstood me and now I keep getting suggestions for kink kits! Is there any way to block the shops or the categories from coming up? I have tried clicking the things to make them go away but I think it just has made them come up more. Any help is appreciated!

Also if anyone is selling a purple cuban link chain dog collar, drop your shop name in the comments below, I am still looking! :)

Hi, I'm Harvard.

HarnessMeDesignsOUB 9m
HarnessMeDesigns.Com

Why Etsy doesn't have a SFW and NSFW filter is beyond me. I believe you can clear your cache, refresh the page to clear the cache, then search a bunch of wholesome things to correct the algorithm.

↑ 91  Reply  Share  Report  Save

Hi, I'm Harvard.

HarnessMeDesignsOUB 9m
HarnessMeDesigns.Com

Lol I sell lingerie as well - there's no nudity but I would prefer a NSFW filter as it would allow people to search strictly for my type of wear, rather than like a safety mask vs a kinky mask in your case or for me a safety harness vs a body harness.

Etsy feels so slow to implement some of the most basic stuff a website needs lol.

↑ 6  Reply  Share  Report  Save
Yeah I would love a filter because I searched for something, unintentionally got bdsm gear at first, and now I am getting VERY NSFW ads from etsy on Facebook which I periodically look at on breaks at work.