

**EMBARGOED 0600hrs on Thurs 26 May 2016**

## **Staggering scale of social media misogyny mapped in new Demos study**

A new Demos social media study has mapped the thousands of aggressive and abusive tweets being sent from UK Twitter accounts – by both men and women.

The study, which specifically monitored the use of the words ‘slut’ and ‘whore’ by UK Twitter users over a three-week period, found 6,500 unique users were targeted by 10,000 explicitly aggressive and misogynistic tweets.

Internationally, over 200,000 aggressive tweets using the same terms were sent to 80,000 people in the same three weeks.

Using sophisticated in-house technology, Demos built algorithms to separate tweets being used in explicitly aggressive ways, instances of self-identification, and those that were more conversational in tone or commenting on issues related to misogyny (ie. referring to ‘slut shaming’, ‘slut walks’).

The study builds on Demos’ previous research in 2014, which found that ‘slut’ and ‘whore’ dominate misogynistic language on Twitter, and that both male and female users are responsible for the abuse. In this 2016 research, 50 per cent of the propagators were found to be women.

Growing public concern and political recognition of the extent and impact of hate speech and abuse on social media, particularly faced by women, has given rise to the #ReclaimTheInternet movement, which campaigns to support female participation in social media.

The research will be presented on 26 May 2016 at the Parliamentary launch of the new cross-party ‘Reclaim the Internet’ campaign, hosted by Yvette Cooper MP, Maria Miller MP, Stella Creasy MP, Jo Swinson and Jess Phillips MP.

**Commenting on the findings, Alex Krasodomski-Jones, Researcher in the Centre for the Analysis of Social Media at Demos, said:**

“It is clear that just as the digital world has created new opportunities for public debate and social interaction, it has also built new battlegrounds for the worst aspects of human behaviour. This study provides a birds-eye snapshot of what is ultimately a very personal and often traumatic experience for women. While we have focused on Twitter, who are considerably more generous in sharing their data with researchers like us, it’s important to note that misogyny is prevalent across all social media, and we must make sure that the other big tech companies are also involved in discussions around education and developing solutions. This is less about policing the internet than it is a stark reminder that we are frequently not as good citizens online as we are offline.”

### **Notes to Editors:**

Demos conducts digital research through its Centre for the Analysis of Social Media (CASM), using its own in-house technology – Method 52, which is a Natural Language Processing tool. For this study, Demos collected and analysed 1.5 million tweets mentioning the words ‘slut’ and ‘whore’ over the period 23 April – 15 May 2016. These were then filtered using algorithms to differentiate between actively aggressive, conversational and self-identification uses.

Demos is an independent, cross-party think tank based in London, and a registered charitable organisation. Visit: [www.demos.co.uk](http://www.demos.co.uk)

In 2014, Demos released a report, Misogyny on Twitter, which pioneered research into abusive language against women on social media. The report can be accessed here: <http://www.demos.co.uk/project/misogyny-on-twitter/>

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