

Strip Clubs Create 'No Go Zones'

Women are, or feel, harassed and intimidated near strip clubs. This means clubs create 'no go' zones - areas women have to actively avoid. This happens whether or not the club is open. It is the very presence of the club that means women's movements are restricted. This has been shown by countless testimonies from women and through research. And it has been recognised for years as an effect of the industry. This is also a breach of equality law because strip clubs restrict the free movement of women. We outline this below.

Testimonies from Women

Women have been testifying for years that they are, and feel, harassed and intimidated outside clubs. These are just a few examples given as formal statements to the press or local councils:

2009: Tracy Earnshaw Cornwall ¹:

The atmosphere has changed. There is an air of menace. The men come out of these clubs, and shout things like: 'Why should I pay some slapper in there when I could have sex with you?' A lot of women take the long way home now. Because the centre of town is a no-go zone..

2017: Sheffield ²:

I do everything that I possibly can to avoid going near Spearmint Rhino. I am a frequent train traveller .. I often get back to late and feel unsafe walking .. to my bus stop because of the club's very close presence

2018 Cheltenham ³:

It creates an atmosphere like the whole town is one big drunken stag party from early evening onwards. It is not a welcoming place as a woman unless you're comfortable with a lot of harassment

Underage Girls, Minority & Vulnerable Groups

These can be some of the most badly effected groups. These are objections to Sheffield's Spearmint Rhino's 2016 Licensing ²:

Two disabled women objected stating how vulnerable they feel in the vicinity of Spearmint Rhino and once said she no longer uses the Showroom [local cinema) as a result of this club's presence

Objection 91 refers to a client who cannot allow her daughter to access a service for vulnerable women due to its proximity to this club

We recently took the decision not to host a party for LGBT History monthly, because we were worried about vulnerable audience members walking through town, past locations like Spearmint Rhino

The intimidation can be so bad that it has even led to women giving up their place of work ²:

I have given up my studio .. one of the contributing factors was Spearmint Rhino opposite .. Leaving the studio in the evening means running the gauntlet of men outside the club harassing women who are passing the club. This includes the bouncers from the club

.. the presence of Spearmint Rhino makes it unsafe for women

Research Confirms Harassment & No Go Zones

These testimonies have been collaborated by research ⁴

women describe feeling frightened, disempowered, violated, embarrassed, unsafe (particularly if men are around) and avoid certain streets at night where they know there is a lap dancing club.'

Sound familiar? The researchers go on to say:

Women's avoidance tactics include crossing the street so as not to walk past a SEV [strip club], avoiding certain streets altogether, and no longer using bus stops that are situated near lap dancing clubs, as their vicinity makes them feel vulnerable and unsafe

No Go Zones Formally Recognised

Strip clubs' creation of 'no go' zones was formally recognised over half a decade ago by the Royal Town Planning Institute and is cited here by a leading legal expert on strip club licensing, Philip Kolvin, QC ⁵:

Philip Kolvin 'Sex Licensing' The Institute of licensing (2010) p 87

" Evidence shows that in certain locations, lap-dancing and exotic dancing clubs **make women feel threatened or uncomfortable**"

The Mere Presence of Clubs Creates No Go Zones

It is the mere presence of clubs that means women have to avoid certain areas, regardless of whether the club is open:

women also reported **avoiding** certain streets and **feeling frightened** in the **day time**, when the clubs are closed. It is the **existence** of the clubs that **causes women to feel alienated in public space at all times**, and fearful of the threat of violence posed by the sexual objectification of women.

This is Discrimination

If a woman is fearful to use an area (whether or not that fear is justified), their freedom of movement has been restricted. They have been discriminated against and this is unlawful under equality law.

As licensing expert, Kolvin, states ⁵:

“If a woman, **whether objectively justified or not**, fears to use part of the town centre characterised by sex establishments, this may be argued to amount to **discrimination**, in that her access to the public infrastructure of the town is impaired in comparison to that of men. Where relevant these considerations ought **properly to be taken into account by authorities** at the decision-making stage, and possibly at the policy-making stage”

Find Out More

1 <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2009/mar/08/sex-industry-lap-dancing>

2 <https://zerooptionblog.wordpress.com/2017/04/14/zero-options-representation-at-the-spearmint-rhino-licence-renewal-hearing-11th-april-2017/ - more-524>

3 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-5507183/Church-leads-protests-pop-strip-clubs-Cheltenham.html>

4 Jackie Patiniotis & Kay Standing (2012) License to cause harm? Sex entertainment venues and women's sense of safety in inner city centres. Criminal Justice Matters 88:1, 10-12.

5 Philip Kolvin 'Sex Licensing' The Institute of licensing (2010) p 87