

Men have replaced women as the oppressed sex, according to ex-Loaded editor Martin Daubney. Last week [he argued in his column](#) in the *Telegraph* that men are now objectified more than women, but that men take their eye candy status in stride. Women, he says, fawn publicly over Channing Tatum's abs, but go to war over *The Sun's* Page 3. What hypocrites they are.

But Daubney has put his finger on something. There is indeed a culture of women openly "perving" on shirtless Jamie Dornan or Channing Tatum. Films and popular fiction that glorify the male body like 'Magic Mike' or *Fifty Shades of Grey* have led to a media frenzy. There are several blogs dedicated to things like spotting the bulge in Jon Hamm's trousers.

Yet a blog along the same vein dedicated to Kim Kardashian's bum would be considered sexist and borderline pornographic. A male TV presenter commenting on the air about Jennifer Lawrence's body parts would be sacked. Daubney is correct in pointing out that there is a double standard when it comes to objectification, but it's a necessary one in our vastly unequal society.

However, it's absurd to say that men are now *more* objectified than women because of a few films and shirtless photos. Men are not constantly catcalled on the street, told to smile, or stared at openly regardless of what they're wearing. They aren't 'slut-shamed' or the victims of revenge porn. They are not the oppressed ones in this story.

What Daubney doesn't understand is that men who see "objectification as taking power" are not "bigger than all this nonsense", as he argues. They just react to the attention in a different way because it doesn't carry the same implicit threat that the objectification of women does. The vast majority of sexual harassment or assault victims have always been women. Over 98 per cent of sex offenders in the UK are male, according to the *Criminal Justice Review*. As a woman, I'm constantly wary

when out late at night on my own. I highly doubt men feel as vulnerable in the same situation.

Yet some men have taken it upon themselves to start a 'men's rights movement' to protest their dire situation. The rise of 'meninism' and the #Meninist hashtag on Twitter is half satire of the in-your-face feminists bemoaning 'the patriarchy', and half misogynistic spew. While it's an extreme version of Daubney's argument, and not one he necessarily condones, it is a clear response to women voicing their opinions, desires and objections to objectification more openly.

The surprise success of the *Fifty Shades* series and 'Magic Mike' says much more about women's sexuality being tucked under the rug until now than it does about men being treated as objects. If anything, it's an expression of the increasingly open attitudes of our society towards sex, and the decreasing stigma of women associating themselves with overtly sexual behaviour.

The 2012 National Survey of Sexual Attitudes and Lifestyles, as published in *The Lancet*, found that "sexual lifestyles in Britain have changed substantially in the past 60 years, with changes in behaviour seeming greater in women than men". According to the decennial survey, women now have more sexual partners than ever before and are more experimental than they were 10 or 20 years ago.

Women are gaining more confidence and power, and that makes some men uncomfortable. But try as they might to shame us with accusations of hypocrisy, I'm not buying it.

Daubney's argument rests on the assumption that men and women live on equal terms – if men and the media are vilified for objectifying women, why should women be allowed to get away with doing the same to men? It's not fair. In a perfect world no one would be treated as an object, but as long as we live in an unequal society, women won't, and shouldn't, feel guilty about lusting after a little eye candy.