

# Sex, politics and the media: UK more liberal than Finland?

 [blogs.lse.ac.uk/polis/2008/04/03/sex-politics-and-the-media-uk-more-liberal-than-finland/](https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/polis/2008/04/03/sex-politics-and-the-media-uk-more-liberal-than-finland/)

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The [news](#) that Ken Livingstone has three more children by two more women has not really made big waves here and his campaign for London Mayor seems largely unaffected. He's certainly not resigning. But Finland has just lost its Foreign Minister after a gossip magazine [revealed](#)  that he had sent suggestive texts to an exotic dancer (not his wife...) It reminds us that cultural norms on sex and politics vary wildly over time and from place to place.

It seems that [Ikka Kanerva's](#) mistake was also to lie about the affair but it was hardly the most salacious or immoral of adventures and it seems to have had no bearing on his ability to represent Finland on the world stage. The text messages are amusing rather than pornographic. In one he apparently asked "are you still looking after your garden" which is just about the most obscure sexual reference I have ever seen.

Here in the UK John Prescott's career was effectively ended after an [affair](#) but it was combined with a series of other political mistakes including an uncomfortably close relationship with an American to whom the government was trying to sell the Dome. The fact that Prescott was conducting his extramarital encounters on government property and with a civil servant also increased the sense that he was making the most of his political position.

But I like to think that we would not have been as harsh as the Finns. I think it is difficult to insist that the media should not report this kind of thing. How politicians lead their lives can be relevant to how they will allow us to lead ours. It pays for politicians to be open – although I am not sure I really wanted to hear about [Nick Clegg's](#) sex history.

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