



# SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF UK UNIVERSITY STUDENTS





## It's a Penalty Student Ambassador Programme

*This content in this booklet is taken from Module 1 of the Sexual Exploitation of UK University Students online course offered to Student Ambassadors.*

### The Course

The focus of this course is on the realities of sexual exploitation, sex trafficking and the sex industry and how this relates to you as a university student here in the UK.

This course is not judging or shaming, it is only about protecting students.

Evidence shows that **students**, younger women, women with unsecure employment conditions and certain minorities (ethnicity and sexuality) are more exposed to sexual harassment than other groups.

You can play a crucial role in understanding the risks of how students are particularly vulnerable and can become easily trapped in sexual exploitation, either by their own choice or against their will.

### Content Warning

This course contains material that is graphic and explicit, both in detail and in language. This may be triggering to some readers and so discretion is advised.

It is important to always seek help should you ever need to. There are Wellbeing Services on every University campus with trained staff to help talk through anything you wish. These services are there **for you** so never hesitate to use them if you need to.

## Survivor Stories

There are survivor quotes and stories throughout the course. The experiences and language shared are very distressing to read - but also honest. These are the voices of brave individuals who have chosen to speak up and shine a spotlight on a normally hidden world; it would be an injustice to censor in any way.



## How you can help change things...

You will find this course shocking and what you learn will stay with you. **The key is to become part of the answer.** Use the knowledge you receive, the insight you gain and the impact it has on you to forever challenge and advocate for change.

At the end of each module you will find a section titled, **How you can help change things...** and this is to provide you with a list of proactive choices that you can make to help directly influence and impact the world around you.



## Terminology and Definitions

Before we dive into this course we should take a few minutes to understand the legal definitions and the language of sex trafficking and exploitation.

Women represent **96%** of victims trafficked for sexual exploitation and so the languages throughout this course often refers to women as the victims and survivors and men as the buyers and traffickers. It is however worth keeping in mind that people of all genders are involved in trafficking.

## The importance of the language we use

Language has the power to drive social attitudes rather than simply expressing them.

One important example is how the recent change in language from 'prostitution' to 'sex work' is disliked by many women with lived experience of prostitution. Throughout this course, the term sex work or sex worker is not used and commercial sexual exploitation is.

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*There is no such thing as 'sex work.' It is really damaging to a survivor and all survivors worldwide to use this terminology.*

*You are implying that there is something about it that is regular work. If you keep the harms and damage of prostitution right up front, what you come out with is that it's not a job. 'Sex work' has nothing to do with work. It has everything to do with harm.*

**Autumn Burris, Founder and Director of Survivors for Solutions, California, USA**

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*The term 'sex work' is completely inaccurate... It is used to put a veil and disguise crimes against women, against women's lives. Because it is not work, it is not a choice you can make. It is not any kind of career. It is not a behavior. The term is a disguise they use to hide a crime.”*

**Beatriz Elena Rodríguez Rengifo, ASOMUPCAR, Colombia**

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*The term 'sex work' is offensive. The indignity and the abuse inflicted by the men who paid to violate me could never be considered 'work.'*

*Prostitution was not a 'choice'; prostitution chose me.*

**Bridget Perrier, SexTrade101, Canada**

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## Definitions

**Sex trafficking:** the action or practice of illegally transporting people from one country or area to another for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation is the most predominant form of global trafficking currently detected, accounting for **54%** of all forms of trafficking. **96%** of identified sex trafficked victims are women and girls; however, men and boys are also victims of different forms of trafficking.

**Sexual exploitation** is defined as an actual or attempted abuse of someone's position of vulnerability (such as a person depending on you for survival, food rations, school, books, transport or other services), differential power or trust, to obtain sexual favours, including but not only, by offering money or other social, economic or political advantages. It includes trafficking and prostitution.



**Sexual abuse** means the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions. It includes sexual slavery, pornography, child abuse and sexual assault.

**Prostitution:** The practice or occupation of engaging in sexual activity with someone for payment. Prostitution can be based on the street, in a brothel, hotel, or other premises, and can involve outcalls to the client's home or hotel room. Escorting, sugar dating, and accompanying men to sex parties is included in the definition of prostitution.

**Pornography:** this includes making and performing in pornography, webcamming, OnlyFans, and similar (although live streaming is not considered pornography under English law).

**Sexual entertainment:** this includes stripping, lap dancing, pole dancing, and sex phone lines.

**Rape:** the penetration of the vagina, anus or mouth of another person with a penis without consent

**Assault by penetration:** the penetration of the vagina or anus of another person with a part of their body or anything else without consent

**Sexual assault:** sexually touching another person without their consent

**Rape culture** - is a term used to define a culture where sexual abuse is condoned and normalised through societal attitudes, images and practices.



## Module 1: Students and the Sex Industry

For almost all students, university is their first time living away from home, and some even come all on their own from overseas. For this reason alone, students are already a particularly vulnerable group to exploitation. Add on top the new responsibility of handling their own finances, managing a new intense study workload and the pressures of the cost of living crisis, students can easily become exposed to corrupt individuals and criminal gangs waiting to exploit them.

Students across the UK are resorting to commercial sexual exploitation to make ends meet. The sex industry has rebranded prostitution and porn as Sugardating and OnlyFans and hundreds of thousands of young people are now being lured down these pathways of exploitation, unaware of what they are really getting into.

Wherever and whenever there is one person who has power over another, exploitation is a risk.



*The inviting welcome page of a Sugardating website*



## **SURVIVOR STORY - UNIVERSITY STUDENT**

*What if instead of working unpredictable hours that forced me to skip lectures, I could get the same amount of money for an hour in a hotel room? It sounds like a good deal to a teenager who needs quick cash.*

*'Prostitution' was being called 'sex work' and promoted as easy money. People were fighting to de-stigmatise it, chanting 'sex work is real work'. The university allowed the local strip club to hand out leaflets on campus. I was young and impressionable. I was dealing with complex trauma with little to no support from the university, despite my attempts to get help. I bought into the idea that I could earn 'easy money' selling myself to men, pay off my debts, succeed in my degree and afford to enjoy my life with my friends.*

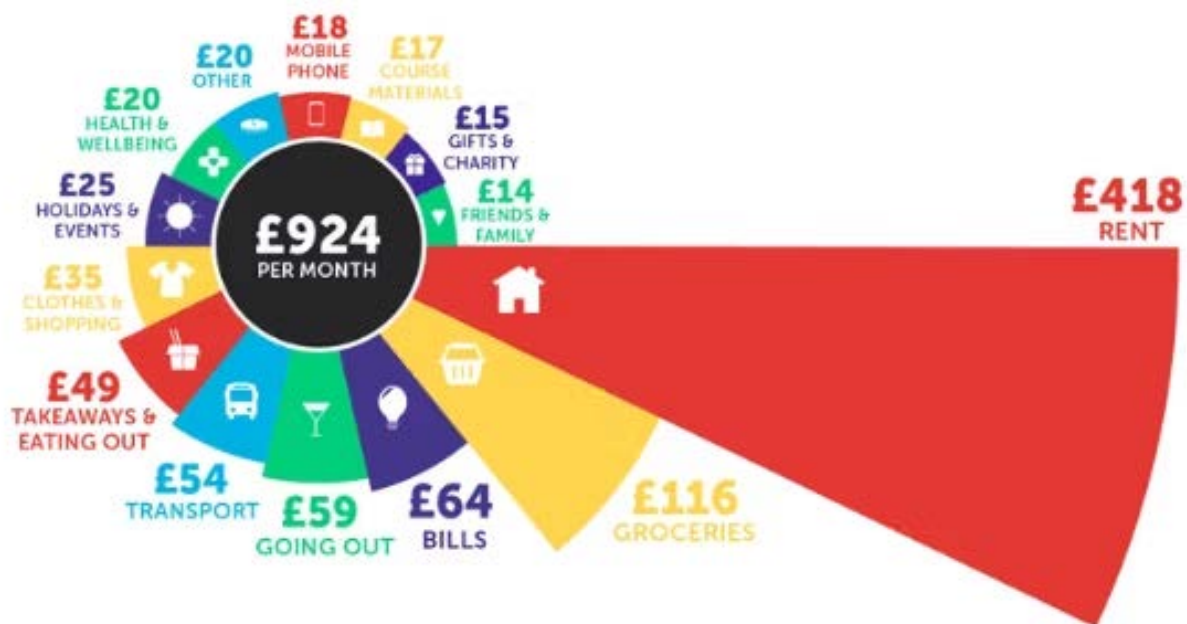
*I was sold a complete lie. It's not easy money. To the buyer, you are nothing more than an object for their consumption, not an actual human being with emotions. You are expected to just put up with whatever they want to do and say to you. The exchange of money makes them feel entitled to treat you however they like, with no regard for your feelings or consent. Not only that, but the buyers know very well how to push the price down as low as possible – they know that you're vulnerable and that you need the cash and they have no problem using that to their advantage.*

*I went into prostitution because I thought it was a short-term route to an easier life. In reality, all it did was further destroy my self-worth. It didn't pay off any of my debts. I just spiraled into a full-blown mental breakdown. I dropped out of university because I couldn't cope with the pressure.*



## The Price Tag of Student Life

The impact of the current cost of living crisis is having a devastating impact on students all over the country. Students now spend an average of £924 each month, with rent being by far the biggest monthly expense which accounts for about 45% of monthly living costs.



*This infographic highlights the average monthly costs of a UK university student in 2022*

The below findings are from the [Save the Student, Student Money Survey 2022](#):

- The average student's Maintenance Loan falls short of covering their living costs by **£439** every month. This is a big increase from 2021, when the shortfall between average Maintenance Loans and living costs had been £340.
- **One in 10** students in the survey has used a food bank in the last academic year. **82%** of students worry about making ends meet.
- **Four in five** have thought about dropping out of university at some point. This includes **52%** who have thought about dropping out due to money worries.

**82%**   
 WORRY ABOUT  
 MAKING ENDS MEET



**31%**  
 SAY  
**GRADES**  
 SUFFER



**35%**  
 SAY  
**RELATIONSHIPS**  
 SUFFER



**38%**  
 SAY  
**SLEEP**  
 SUFFERS



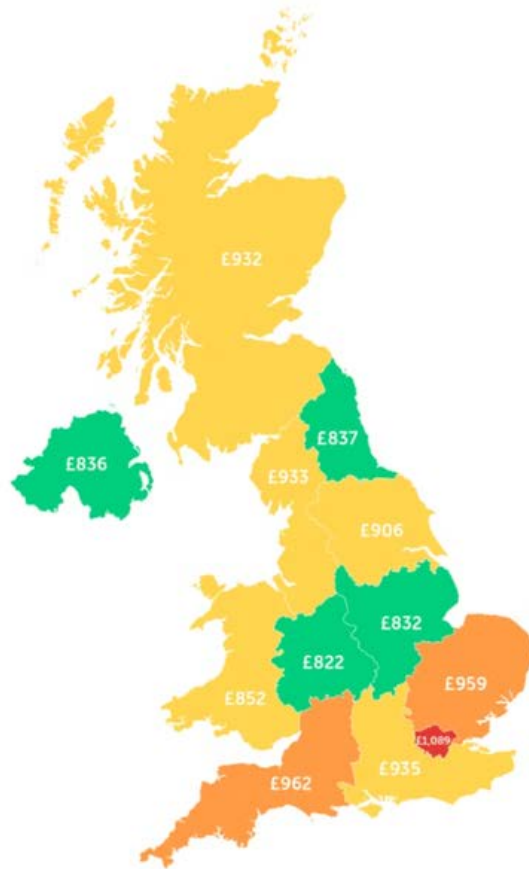
**47%**  
 SAY  
**DIET**  
 SUFFERS



**59%**  
 SAY  
**MENTAL HEALTH**  
 SUFFERS



**64%**  
 SAY  
**SOCIAL LIFE**  
 SUFFERS

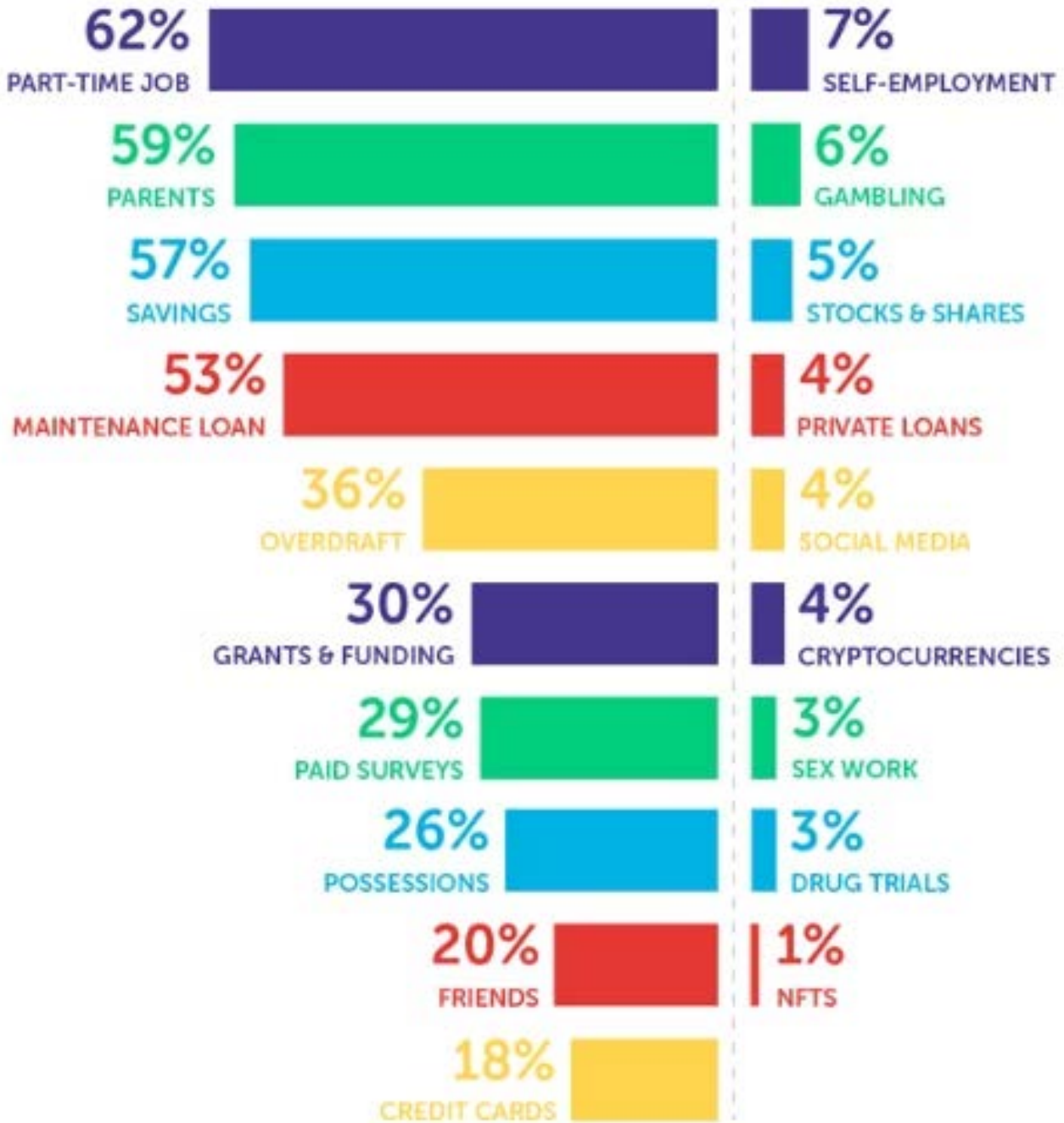


*The prices on each region of the UK map refer to the average monthly cost for a university student*

## The Price Tag of Student Life

In the 2021 survey, the three most common sources of money were from parents (66%), a part-time job (66%) and from a Maintenance Loan (65%) but all three of these figures have now dropped in the 2022 survey.

The most common source of money for students was a part-time job with an average earning of £422 per month. With the global sex industry promoting and actively marketing "sex work as a real work" and as empowering and an easy way to make a living, many are now turning to what is becoming in mainstream culture an acceptable form of a part-time job.

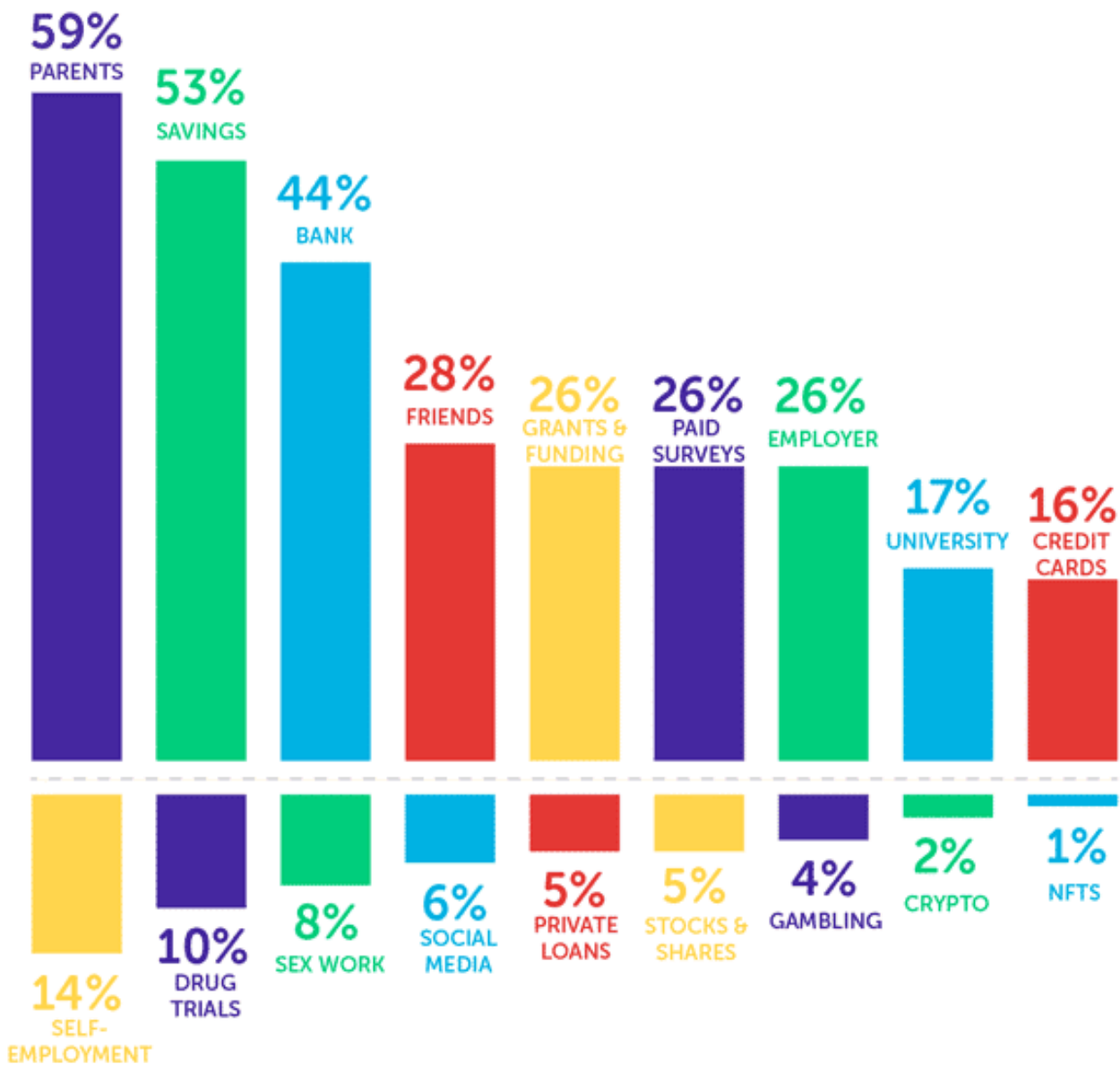


*This infographic states the different sources of money and the percentages of UK university relying on them*



## The Price Tag of Student Life

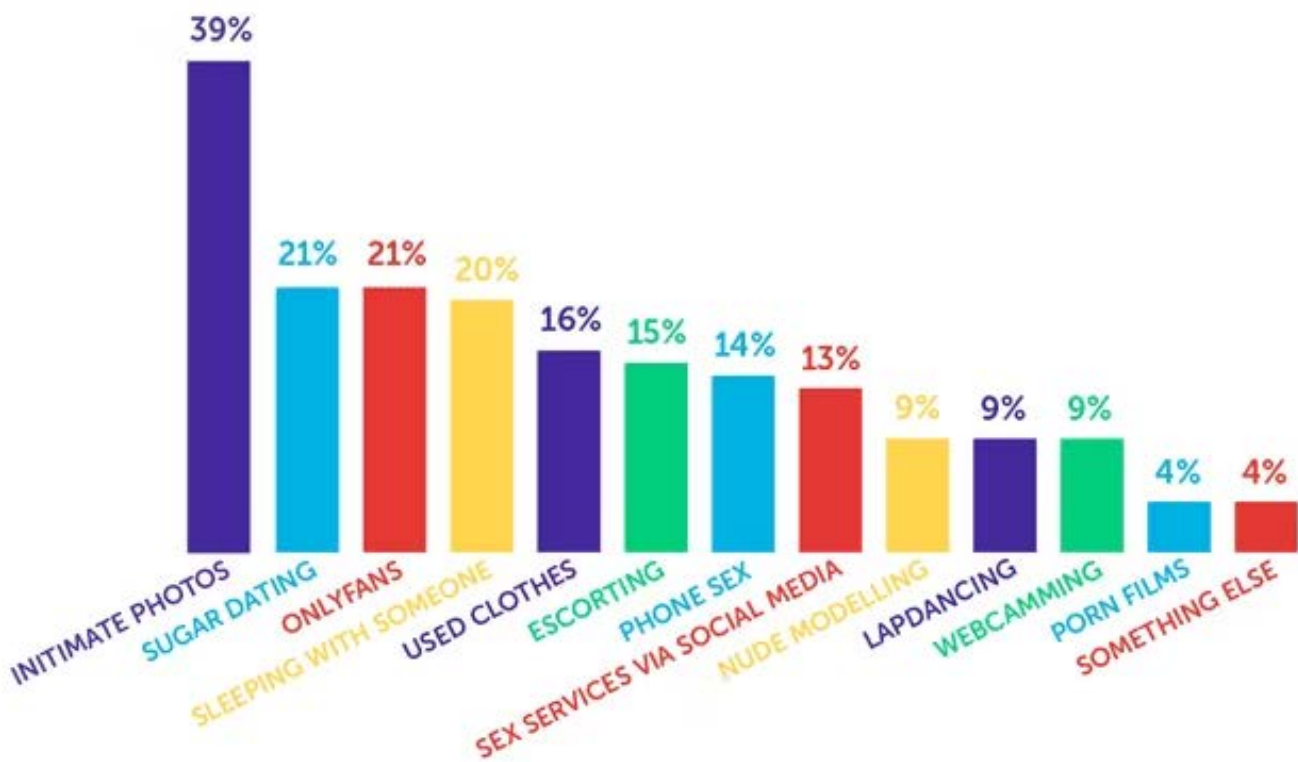
The below graph displays the answers from students on where they would turn to for money in an emergency and you can clearly see the jump to 8% of students who have admitted they would resort to the sex industry.



*This infographic states the different sources of money and the percentage of UK university students that would turn to it in an emergency*

## What types?

Among students in the survey who have entered into the sex industry, these are the types they have tried and you can see that, by far the most common type done by students in the survey is selling intimate photos.



*This infographic states the different types of sexual exploitation and the percentage of UK university students that have done them*



## What do the students themselves say?

The below comments are directly from the same students in the same survey.

*"It helps with the bills"*

*"[It] was a scam even though I know the person had money."*

*"I stopped doing it but before I earned quite a lot but it affected my mental health."*

*"I don't do it anymore but I hated it."*

*"I have not personally done sex work, but I understand why many girls have to consider it/do it and they should not be shamed."*

*"I haven't done sex work for money but I do plan to this year – I feel that I have exhausted everything else and the course I will be starting is too intensive for even a part-time job."*

*"It's degrading and depressing but I have to survive."*

*"I have considered sex work but unsure of a safe way to do so."*

*"It's degrading but it pays for my food."*

## OnlyFans: a Path of No Return

OnlyFans is a platform for paywalled content, almost entirely sexually explicit material. 'Creators' post exclusive content that only their paying 'fans' can access. It involves performing live acts to anonymised, potentially global audiences in front of a camera while remaining fully visible and identifiable yourself. You have to simulate pleasure, frequently perform acts you do not enjoy and which may even disgust you, while abandoning personal and health and safety boundaries in the pressure to remain competitive.

It is an incredibly popular new wave of pornography with the convincing illusion of freedom and control which has lured hundreds of thousands of young people down a potentially dangerous path of no return.

It has lowered the bar to entry into the world of commercial sexual exploitation - setting up as an OnlyFans content creator is only a small leap from running an Instagram account.



*An advertising image for OnlyFans showing a collection of profile pictures of 'creators'*

## The Illusion of Boundaries

The reality is that OnlyFans has over 500 million registered users and an average of 7000-8000 new content creators per day. It is not enough to go into the site, post explicit content, and expect to get paid millions. The direct pressure from the consumers to produce ever more explicit and dangerous material means that it can be hard to make much money unless you ditch your initial boundaries.

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*Every time I posted something, my followers would say, "That's good but it's not enough," I felt like I had to keep getting more extreme. I told myself that I was empowered and wanted to pretend that I was, but I felt horrible... I couldn't stop, because everyone was telling me I had to keep going. I was being forced - honestly, it felt like that.*

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**OnlyFans Creator**

Unlike other platforms and webcamming sites, OnlyFans also allows private messages between creators and fans. It is often reported that consumers attempt to meet their creators in private for sex, for sums that many are unlikely to feel able to refuse.

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*The consumer-driven nature of the porn industry dictates that performers are consistently pressurised into engaging in increasingly degrading and abusive acts, which are in turn normalised (and thus less stimulating and enticing for viewers), and only material that is even more violent and debasing will satisfy users.*

*Make no mistake, if performers do not acquiesce to these requests for increasingly degrading content, consumers will go elsewhere, leaving the (predominantly) women who relied on their subscription fees facing poverty, as well as emotional and psychological distress.*

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**Tom Farr, The Critic, A Pimp-Led Pyramid Scheme**





## Easy Money?

OnlyFans only pays creators 80% of the money they make. Social media and news headlines are flooded with success stories from the top 1% but 33% of the total revenue of the platform comes from that top 1%, with most accounts making an average of \$180 per month.

“

*After investing in equipment (e.g. a quality webcam, microphone, and lighting kit) and huge amounts of time, many creators realise they are making practically zilch.*

*Having taken their clothes off for random strangers on the internet, at this point some women might think about turning to 'full service' prostitution – which comes with an additional raft of dangers. However, this is against the OnlyFans rules and may see you thrown off the platform, losing your growing following, and being left with even fewer options.*

Nordic Model Now! Handbook for Universities

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## Reputation Risk

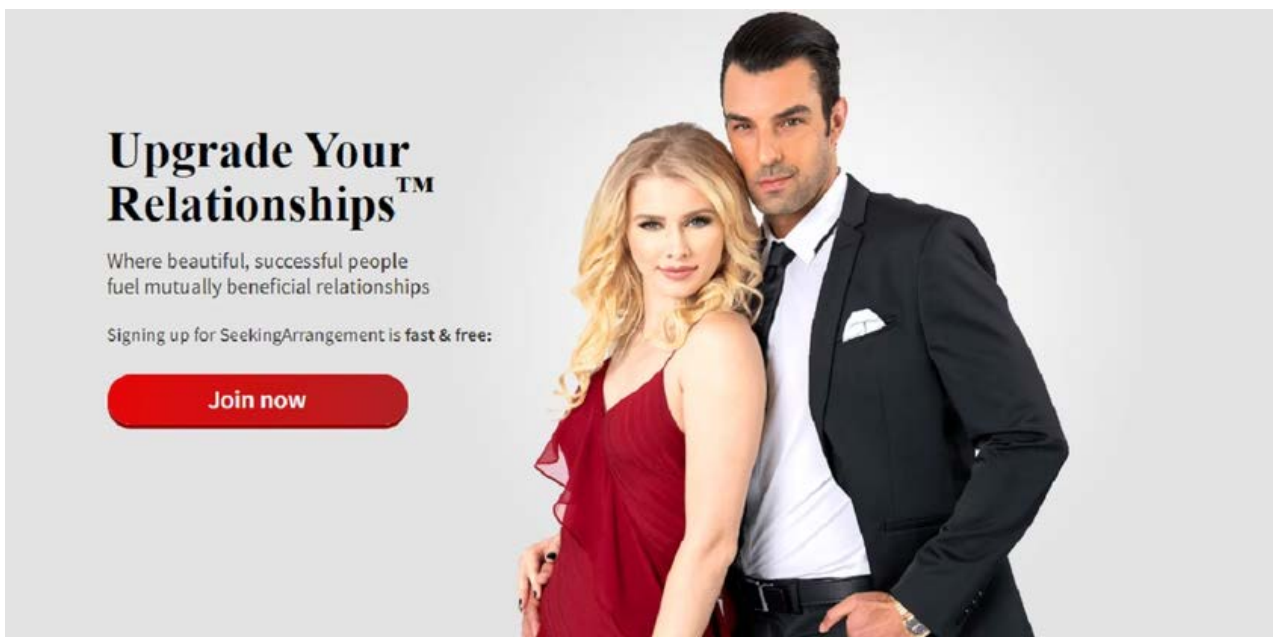
The trap of OnlyFans is that if you do decide to post explicit content of yourself, and it doesn't make you much money, you have already committed. Those images and footage of yourself are on the internet forever. Many feel they have no choice but to then continue, and push themselves even further than they had ever planned to.

Everyone knows that you have to be careful what you post online, that everyone has a digital footprint and that it is now standard for employers to vet applicants based on their online reputation. There is no way of preventing consumers recording your live streamed content or taking screenshots without your knowledge. It is generally assumed this is inevitable. They can then sell this themselves, upload it to porn sites, and use it to blackmail you – now or in the future. Anything and everything you post is open to future employers, colleagues, family and potential partners identifying you. OnlyFans also shows up on your bank statements, whether as a subscriber or creator, there is no discreetness.



## Sugardating = Prostitution

Sugardating is an arrangement where a younger person (the **'Sugar Baby'**) provides companionship and almost guaranteed sexual favours to an older person (the **'Sugar Daddy'**) in return for gifts or money.



*The homepage of a Sugardating website*

## The Girlfriend Experience

The Sugar Baby must serve the "the girlfriend experience". They have to feign interest, affection and sexual availability over hours, days, weeks and usually months. The Sugar Daddy is not just expecting sexual gratification, but the illusion of a love affair.

One student explained how "at the start, he would put on a record and we would drink wine". However, by the end of the relationship, she felt as if she was "just being used" and even went as far as to say "you feel like some sort of masturbatory aid".

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*Even just signing up to the site was a uniquely objectifying experience. You are putting a price on your self-worth and it felt like I had reduced myself to an online version of a mannequin, standing in a shop window for people to gawk at.”*

**Anonymous student**

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## The Sugar Daddies

Many men who use sugaring sites are not the “refined, exceptional, modern gentlemen” the site may suggest they are. These men inevitably hold a sense of entitlement and contempt for women, that is why he is reducing you to a commodity that he is paying for.

“

*Without a doubt, you are putting yourself in an extremely vulnerable position. There is a reason the men have chosen sugardating sites over dating sites and that is to have sex with younger girls.*

**Anonymous student**

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A reporter from the Bristol University Student Newspaper, Epigram, found that Sugar Daddies were impatient even over the website messaging service and put pressure on them to reply instantly. Some messages were entirely expectant of Sugar Babies to provide a service, rather than form a mutually beneficial relationship as advertised, with one reporter being told, "I'd expect you to travel to me... I believe the first meet should be about you showing me what you have to offer."



One student, who was signed up to a Sugardating website for three years, explained how they felt that being a student meant that Sugar Daddies were more likely to take advantage of them: "they know that you're hard done by and I think a lot of the time they push their luck because as students we are in a bracket of society that is less likely to say no".



#### **SURVIVOR STORY - SUGARDATING**

*He became more and more controlling. He would tell the waiter to take away my food before I'd finished, because he liked skinny girls. He said I had to take my nose ring out because it made me look working class. If I disagreed with his opinion he would lose his temper, call me stupid. He called it advice but it was really control because I wasn't allowed to question it.*

*He told me I had to have unprotected sex with him because he wanted it to feel like a real relationship, and not like being with a sex worker. The crazy thing is I actually felt guilty saying no, but I knew it was a step too far for me. We had a massive row and he turned on me. It was terrifying because I was completely reliant on him for everything - my apartment, my Masters degree, my future. He told me I wouldn't be able to survive without him, and I really believed it.*

David kicked Elise out of the hotel room, leaving the student stranded in France. She was forced to call her parents, and confess what had happened.

*This industry is painted as glamorous from the outside, but for a lot of girls the reality is a lot darker. When you're relying on someone for your rent, your income, your career, it leaves you so vulnerable to being controlled. That kind of money blinds you to the truth of the situation. But it's easy to lose sight of yourself. He took over my life, made me terrified of what would happen if I didn't follow his instructions. For a long time after our relationship ended I was in a really bad place, it destroyed my confidence. Exploitation is the only word for it."*

## The Sex for Rent Scandal

Landlords offering rooms in exchange, or even demand, for sexual activity from women (and sometimes men and non-binary people) who are struggling to pay their rent has become increasingly common in the UK. It is particularly high in university cities and towns where there are thousands of financially struggling students.

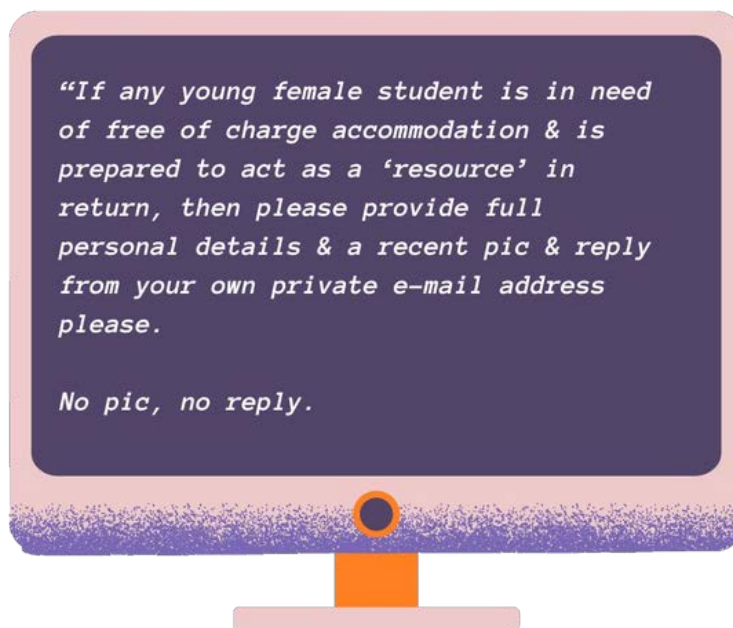
According to research by polling company YouGov, carried out on behalf of the housing charity Shelter, nearly 1 in 50 women in England have been propositioned for 'sex for rent' in the last five years. Research from Generation Rent and Mumsnet estimated that over 200,000 women could be victims of sex for rent across the UK.



*A photograph of a street in the UK with numerous To Let signs*

## The Adverts

As is a common tactic throughout the sex industry, adverts for these arrangements use euphemism and coded language. Rooms might be offered for free in return for “benefits” or keeping the landlord “company” – although some adverts are more explicit. The below are taken from real adverts:



## The Law

Sex for rent is already illegal and landlords can be prosecuted under the [Sexual Offences Act 2003](#) if they are found to be attempting to exploit tenants.

The first landlord to be convicted for sex for rent offences in England and Wales was jailed in May 2022. Christopher Cox, 53, was given a 12-month prison sentence after pleading guilty to a charge of **controlling prostitution for gain** and two charges of **inciting prostitution for gain**. Cox's advert said he was looking for a **“young girl 16-plus who is stuck at home and wants to get away or maybe you are homeless seeking a safe route out”** and the price of the room to **“cook, clean, do laundry and possibly more”**.

Sentencing Cox, the judge said the landlord's behaviour was a **“cynical attempt to take advantage by dangling a carrot to those who had little choice”**.



Rotherham, Yorkshire: Advertising for 'a girl who needs somewhere to stay rent-free', Andrew Bird, above, invited our reporter to share his one-bed council flat in Rotherham in exchange for daily sex, telling her in an email: 'I get to f\*\*\* you whenever I want.' When they met up in a pub, he claimed to be allergic to condoms and said: 'I like the idea that I could get you pregnant.' He added that weekends would be a break from their arrangement because he would be 'too tired' after weekly video games all-nighters



## What do I do if I have been offered this arrangement?

If a landlord has approached you with this arrangement, your university needs to know straight away so they can act and ensure they have no future dealings with students. Speak to your Student Union or Student Wellbeing Services department at your university immediately.

The landlord in question will most likely have asked others before you and will ask others after you if you do not break the chain and report them.

If you do not feel comfortable doing this alone, ask a friend to go with you. **You can talk to Coordinator Liz Lowther about the process and she will guide you every step of the way.**

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*There is a special place in hell for landlords who exploit students who have yet to learn about tenancy rights.*

Daisy Jones, Vice News

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## Sex for Grades

Sexism, sexual harassment and discrimination throughout global higher education systems are fuelling unhealthy power dynamics between female students and male lecturers and due to hierarchical organisations, a normalisation of gender-based violence, toxic academic masculinities and a culture of silence, this is now becoming a worrying trend.

Nine out of ten of the world's countries have laws against sexual harassment in working life today, but almost six out of ten lack adequate laws against sexual harassment in higher education and schools (Tavares and Wodon [Citation2018](#)).

Underreporting and failing systems for case handling means there is an important need for basic knowledge about sexual harassment.



*A video still from the BBC Africa Eye documentary Sex for Grades: undercover inside Nigerian and Ghanaian universities*



## In the UK

A freedom of information request by The Guardian newspaper in 2017 highlighted 'epidemic levels' of sexual harassment in UK universities and the NUS (2018) reported **41%** of female students had experienced at least one instance of sexualised behaviour from male faculty/staff, with **1 in 8** reporting they had experienced being touched by a male member of staff in a way that made them feel uncomfortable.

In 2021, a university was made to pay a student £5,000 in compensation after a member of staff allegedly offered them 'higher grades in exchange for sexual activity'.

The Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) has released a number of complaints that students made over the past year, including course delivery concerns the impact of the coronavirus crisis, and sexual harassment allegations. The watchdog said that the unnamed student who told a member of the student wellbeing staff that their dissertation supervisor was sexually harassing them and offering higher grades in exchange for sexual activity. The staff member informed the student's academic department, which notified HR, and the student was allocated a new dissertation supervisor.

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*Evidence-based research confirms that sexual harassment in higher education can lead to depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, physical pain, unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases, increased alcohol use, impaired career opportunities and reduced job motivation.*

*Specific job-related factors often include absence, decreased job satisfaction, engagement and productivity, decreased self-confidence and self-image, and persons giving notice from their jobs.*

*Even observing or hearing about a colleague's exposure to sexual harassment can generate 'bystander stress' and also cause conflicts in the work team.*

**Fredrik Bondestam and Maja Lundqvist, Sexual harassment in higher education – a systematic review**

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## Stripping and Lap Dancing

Like all areas of the sex industry, stripping and lap dancing revolves around presenting and maintaining yourself as a sexual object for the benefit of strangers and accepting the kind of behaviour that would be considered sexual harassment anywhere else.



*A pole stage a typical strip club in the UK*

### Strip club as a workplace

Did you know that women who work in strip or lap dancing clubs in the UK have to pay 'house fees' to the club for each shift they work, with no guarantee that they will recoup all or any of it?

Clubs intentionally allocate more women than are needed each night so that they have to compete with each other for each private dance and typically, the women receive only about 20% of what the man pays for it. Shifts can also be cancelled and women dismissed for any or no reason leaving no job security whatsoever. Women can be 'fined' for a long list of infractions, such as missing her turn to pole dance, being late, wearing the wrong clothing, or breaking one of the many, often petty, rules.

If you don't make enough money one night to cover the house fees, the debt is held over so that if you make more the next night, the club deducts what you owe, and you may still go home with nothing. Women can find themselves trapped in a situation where they have to continue at the club in order to pay off their debt to the club and can never refuse a 'dance' regardless how obnoxious the client. These pressures lead some women to start 'full service' prostitution.



## **SURVIVOR STORY**

*Lap-dancing is about creating a situation whereby the men feel they are doing you a favour - that's the way the game is set up, so all the power is with the customer.*

*You pay 'rent' to the club just to be there and if you can persuade someone to buy a dance, you get £20 - about 20% of which the club takes. Then there are the fines - £10 if you miss your turn to pole dance, if you're late, you're wearing the wrong shoes or you break the rules. There are so many ways to make money from you.*

*You are constantly trying to make as much money as possible out of everybody, otherwise you are literally paying to be there.*

*The club management take on more women than are needed in a night so it really becomes dog eat dog. Quite often I made nothing. There were a lot of nights when I would have taken money out and come home with less.*

*The clubs maintain a veneer of no touching, but touching is more standard than not. If I had a boyfriend now and he said he was going to a lap-dancing club, I would consider it to be infidelity.*

*The fact is that if you break the rules, you make more money. If one dancer starts breaking the rules then the pressure is on others to do the same. Otherwise a bloke would think, Well, that dancer charged me £20 and stayed three feet away, but that one charged me just the same and she put her breasts in my mouth and sat on my crotch.*

*Once you've been there a while, you learn that certain things are profitable, and no contact is the first rule you learn to break. Eventually you start to wonder, what is the difference between me and a prostitute?*

Elena, ex-stripper



## A Heavy Cost

One body of research on strip clubs in the US found that all dancers had suffered verbal harassment and physical and sexual abuse while at work; all had been propositioned for prostitution; and three-quarters had been stalked by men associated with the club.

A report by the Lilith Project which looked at lap-dancing in Camden Town, north London, found that in the three years before and after the opening of four large lap-dancing clubs in the area, incidents of rape in Camden rose by 50%, while sexual assault rose by 57%.

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*Academic research has linked lap-dancing to trafficking, prostitution and an increase in male sexual violence against both the women who work in the clubs and those who live and work in their vicinity.*

*A recent conference in Ireland highlighted the use of lap-dance clubs by human traffickers as a tool for grooming women into prostitution; the clubs also normalise the idea of paying for sexual services.*

The Guardian, I was seen as an object, not a person

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## The Loverboy Tactic

Sex trafficking rarely begins with kidnapping by a stranger. Instead, sex traffickers groom their victims by using love – romantic love, friendship and familial love – to manipulate them into cooperating in their own exploitation.

Sex traffickers carefully and methodically work to gain their victims' trust, create a degree of dependence, and subtly promote the idea that selling sexual services is normal, acceptable and necessary. Ultimately, successful grooming results in vulnerable people cooperating in their own exploitation and abuse and believing they have made the choice to do so independently.

## The Grooming Stage

**Targeting the Victim** - traffickers look for people who have emotional or material needs that are not being met. Teenagers who lack confidence or young adults who post online about a bad break up are easy targets.

**Gaining Trust** - traffickers get to know their victims and use what they learn to make it appear they are the perfect match, the answer to their dreams, the person they can count on. They listen, provide support and bide their time.

**Meeting Needs** - once traffickers know what victims want or need, they give it to them – or at least dangle it in front of them – letting them taste what it feels like to be loved, or safe, or taken care of.

**Isolation** - as the relationship grows, the trafficker slowly cuts the victim off from friends and loved ones, strengthening the sense of dependence.

**Exploitation** - this could start slowly, with the victim asked to have sex for money “just this once” or “to help me out.” Over time it becomes normalised, so that the victim thinks they are making the decision on their own.

## Andrew Tate - the self-proclaimed Loverboy

We can't discuss sex trafficking or the loverboy method without talking about the popular and notorious figure of Andrew Tate.

Tate has 6.8 million Twitter followers. In his videos he says women belong in the home, are a man's property and only dates women aged 18–19 because he can “make an imprint” on them. He openly talks about hitting and choking women and stopping them from going out.

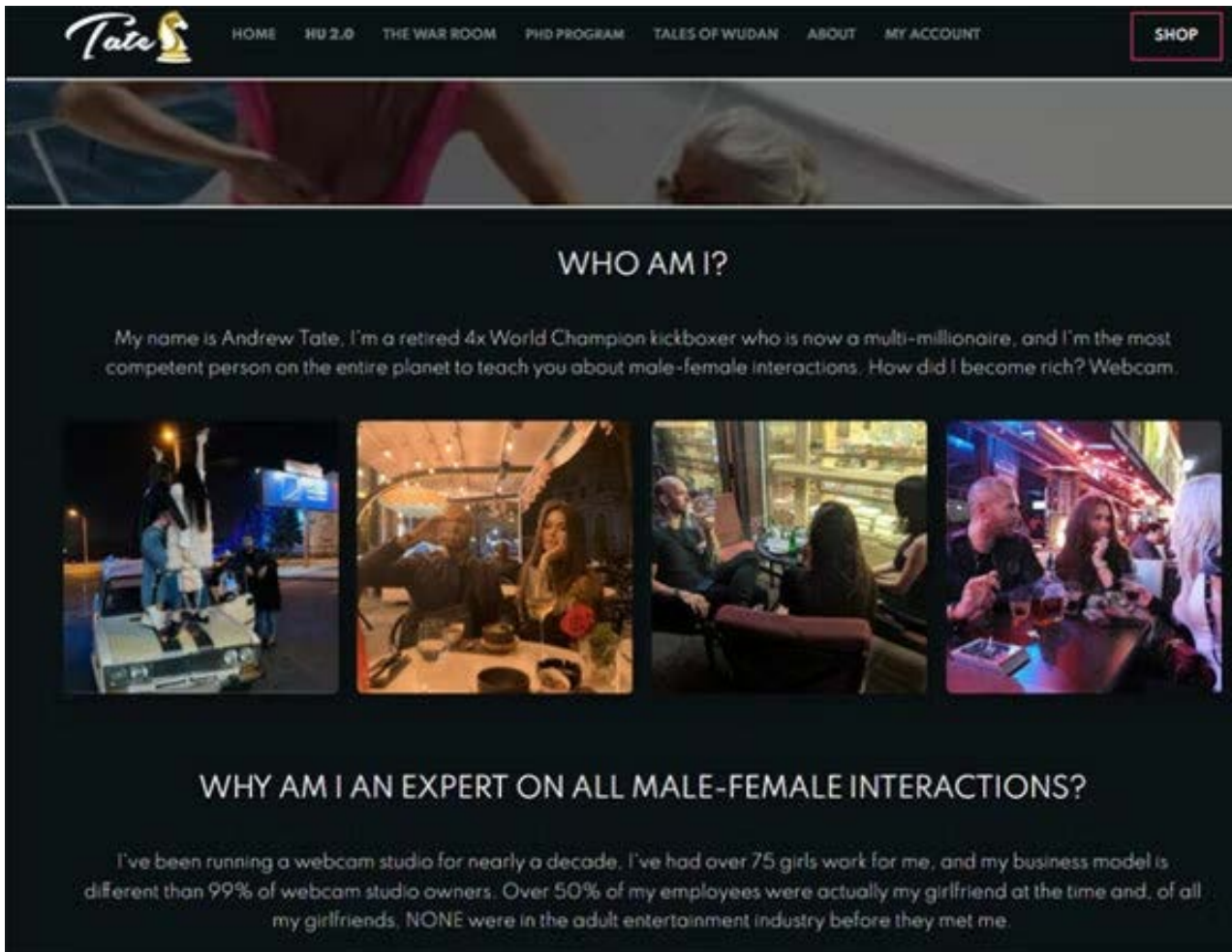


*Andrew Tate, on the left in the video that led to the investigators locating him, and on the right being arrested*

He was arrested as part of a human-trafficking investigation in Romania in 2023 and investigators said the operation employed the "loverboy method" to extract money from victims. Tate and his gang sexually exploited them, subjected them to physical violence, actually tattooed some them with 'Property of Tate' and all with the aim to produce porn for his online business.



On Tate's own website, which no longer exists but screenshots of which have been widely shared, you can read for yourself him boasting about controlling 75 female webcam models and that 50% of his employees were his girlfriend at one time and **"none were in the adult entertainment industry before they met me."**



He then goes into actual detail about his role in sex trafficking and it fits the loverboy tactic exactly.

"MY JOB WAS TO GET WOMEN TO FALL IN LOVE WITH ME.

Literally, that was my job. My job was to meet a girl, go on a few dates, sleep with her, test if she's quality, get her to fall in love with me to where she'd do anything I say, and then get her on webcam so we could become rich together. Whether you agree or disagree with what I did with their loyalty, submission, and love for me doesn't matter. You cannot reject the results, and the results are simple. My girlfriends would do more for me than 99.9% of men's wives would do for them."



## Vulnerability of LGBT+ People

While exploitation affects all demographics, traffickers frequently target individuals who lack strong support networks, are facing financial strains, may have experienced violence in the past, or who are marginalised by society. Tragically, and sadly a lot of these factors point to young individuals who identify as LGBT+.

LGBT+ youth have always faced higher rates of discrimination, economic instability and even violence than their non LGBT+ peers and when faced with fewer resources, employment opportunities or social support, those who run away from home must find ways to meet their basic needs.

## Fear of reaching out

It is difficult to reach out for assistance when you are concerned providers are not LGBT+ friendly and fear you will be either mistreated or not believed because of your gender identity or sexual orientation. Appallingly, over half (59%) of LGBT+ young people surveyed have faced some form of discrimination or harassment while accessing services.





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Charity No. 1161848

**Matt Humberstone (he/him)**  
Student Ambassador Programme Manager  
[matt.humberstone@itsapenalty.org](mailto:matt.humberstone@itsapenalty.org)

**Liz Lowther (she/her)**  
Student Ambassador Programme Coordinator  
[liz.lowther@itsapenalty.org](mailto:liz.lowther@itsapenalty.org)