

ONLYFANS AND ONLINE SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

IMPACT ON VULNERABLE GROUPS AND POLICY RECOMMANDATIONS

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OnlyFans presents itself as a social network that allows diverse content creators to monetise their posts. In reality, **98% of its content** is sexually explicit. The platform has become a **breeding ground for the sexual exploitation of vulnerable groups**.

Targeted recruitment

Recruitment of minors increasingly takes place via social media platforms, where individuals posing as “recruiters” target girls in situations of economic or emotional vulnerability and redirect them towards subscription-based platforms such as OnlyFans (Centre Hubertine Auclert, La prostitution des mineures en Seine-Saint-Denis, 2020).

Perpetrators groom adolescents through promises of money, attention and improved living conditions, then maintain control through psychological pressure, isolation, debt and coercion.

*The Centre Hubertine Auclert, created in 2009, is the regional resource centre of the Île-de-France Region dedicated to advancing equality between women and men and combating sexist and sexual violence.

Glamorised visibility v. hidden risks

OnlyFans' communication campaigns, relayed by influencers and the media, **trivialise early sexualisation**. Hashtags such as #OnlyFansBabe or #SideHustle (for "extra income") associate the platform with a desirable lifestyle, obscuring the reality of exploitation.

This masks the risks associated with OnlyFans, which extend far beyond the initial act of publication. Once content is uploaded, it can be copied, recorded and redistributed without the creator’s knowledge or consent. **Leaks are not marginal incidents but a structural feature of a model based on digital circulation and subscriber capture**. In practice, **creators lose effective control over their images**, which can resurface on pirate websites or encrypted messaging groups.



Predatory Incentives and Profit Extraction

OnlyFans encourages a **pyramid scheme** where creators receive a percentage of the income of new recruits they bring in. This system **turns some users into active recruiters**. Testimonies collected by French organisation Collectif Féministe Contre le Viol show that **teenage girls aged 15 to 17** are approached by friends or influencers touting the merits of OnlyFans.

*Collectif Féministe Contre le Viol ("feminist collective against rape") is an organisation founded in 1985 that combats rape and sexual violence, notably through victim support services and the national rape crisis helpline.

The platform takes a fixed share of each transaction, generating millions of euros per year from illegal content (filmed rapes, trafficking, child sexual abuse materials).

Uncontrolled access to minors

Although OnlyFans formally prohibits access to users under 18, **age-verification mechanisms remain largely ineffective in practice.** Access to content is therefore easily circumvented by minors.

In 2023, a report by the Ligue des droits de l'Homme documented Telegram groups where minors shared "tutorials" on how to harass female OnlyFans creators, including publishing their home addresses through doxxing.

*The Ligue des droits de l'Homme ("human rights league") is an independent French human rights organisation founded in 1898, dedicated to the defence of civil liberties and fundamental rights.

Testimonies collected by Osez le Féminisme further illustrate the impact of this exposure on adolescents' intimate relationships. High school girls participating in the organisation's sexuality education sessions report increasing pressure to replicate practices viewed on OnlyFans, including acts involving sexual violence. These accounts raise serious concerns about the normalisation of violent sexual practices among minors.

*Osez le Féminisme ("dare to be feminist") is a French feminist organisation fouded in 2009, advocating working at national and European levels to combat sexual violence and online exploitation.

Recommendations

- **Strengthen age and identity verification obligations under the Digital Services Act:** Under the Digital Services Act, Very Large Online Platforms should be required to implement robust age and identity verification systems for access to pornographic content, in line with the principle of risk mitigation for minors (Article 34 and 35). Verification mechanisms must be effective, privacy-compliant and subject to independent audit.

- **Ensure effective notice-and-action and timely removal of illegal content:** In accordance with Articles 16 and 20 of the Digital Services Act, platforms must act expeditiously to remove illegal content, including sexual exploitation material and non consensual intimate images. The European Commission and national Digital Services Coordinators should clarify that systematic failure to remove manifestly illegal content within a short and reasonable timeframe may trigger significant administrative fines under Article 52.

- **Prohibit referral and monetisation schemes facilitating exploitation of minors:** The Commission should assess, under the systemic risk framework of the Digital Services Act, whether referral systems that financially incentivise recruitment expose minors to sexual exploitation. Where such risks are identified, mitigation measures should include the prohibition of monetisation features that encourage recruitment of underage users.

- **Integrate online sexual exploitation prevention into EU child protection strategies:** The prevention of risks linked to subscription-based platforms offering sexually explicit content should be incorporated into the implementation of the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child and relevant education and digital literacy programmes funded by the EU, including through guidance to Member States.

- **Establish an EU-wide support mechanism for victims of image-based abuse**, building on the Directive 2024/1385 on combating violence against women and domestic violence.

- **Enhance cross-border investigations into trafficking and online sexual exploitation:** Reinforce cooperation with Europol to identify and dismantle accounts linked to trafficking networks operating via subscription-based platforms, building on Member State initiatives such as Italy's 2023 Operation Dark Web.
- **Clarify criminal liability for third parties promoting sexual exploitation of minors:** Member States should ensure that individuals who knowingly promote or facilitate the sexual exploitation of minors through online platforms can be prosecuted under existing EU criminal law frameworks, including Directive 2011/93/EU on combating the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children.



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