

# The Online Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking of Children

## Online Sugar Daddy – Sugar Mamma – Sugar Dating

### Abstract

- Sugar dating is defined as a business-like arrangement where a wealthier partner exchanges money and gifts for companionship from a younger partner, without necessarily including sex.
- “Sugar daddy”, "Sugar mamma", or "sugar dating" tactics are increasingly used as a facade for the online sexual exploitation and trafficking of children.
- Perpetrators pose as wealthy older individuals offering financial rewards or luxury lifestyles to lure minors into exploitative relationships.
- Social media and other online platforms elevate sugaring to a lifestyle by focusing only on the perks, which sanitizes its exploitative nature and connection to the commercial sex trade by omitting the power dynamics involved.

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for the



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## ONLINE CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF TEENAGERS – SUGAR DADDY

- "Sugar daddy" interactions involving teenagers on social media are a high-risk activity often linked to financial scams, grooming, and sexual exploitation.
- Despite being glamorized on social media platforms like TikTok and Instagram, these arrangements frequently target minors for predatory purposes.
- In the context of online child sexual exploitation (OCSE), the "sugar daddy" persona is a grooming and recruitment tactic where predators use financial incentives—such as cash, designer goods, or tuition—to manipulate and exploit minors.
- While often marketed as a lifestyle choice for adults, it is frequently used to mask child sex trafficking and the production of child sexual abuse material (CSAM).

## TACTICS USED BY "SUGAR DADDY, MAMMA" PREDATORS

Predators utilize specific strategies to lure and trap children:

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### TARGETING VULNERABILITY:

- Predators search for young people on social media (Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat) who appear to be in financial need or seeking attention.

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### GROOMING VIA "ALLOWANCE":

- They build rapport by promising regular payments, gifts, or paying for school tuition to establish dependency and a sense of "ownership".

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### PLATFORM PROLIFERATION:

- Beyond dedicated "sugar dating" sites, predators use mainstream social media like Instagram, Snapchat, and TikTok to find victims.

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### FINANCIAL ENTICEMENT:

- They offer large sums of money or expensive gifts to entice children into sending sexually explicit photos or videos.

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### ESCALATION TO SEXTORTION:

- Once a child sends an image, the predator may switch from "benevolent provider" to blackmailer, threatening to leak the content unless the child provides more material or meets in person.

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#### POSING AS PEERS:

- Some predators create fake accounts pretending to be of a similar age to gain initial trust before introducing the "sugar daddy" concept.

#### COMMON WARNING SIGNS FOR PARENTS

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#### UNEXPLAINED INCOME OR ITEMS:

- Your child has new, expensive clothes, electronics, or cash they cannot account for.
- Any stranger offering to send money or "be your sugar mamma or daddy" is a major warning sign.

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#### SECRETIVE ONLINE BEHAVIOR:

- Excessive privacy regarding their devices or using multiple apps like Snapchat that have disappearing message features.
- Encouraging the child to keep the financial arrangement a secret from parents or guardians.

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#### CHANGE IN SOCIAL CIRCLE:

- Your child starts mentioning an older "friend" or "mentor" who provides them with gifts.

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#### REQUESTS FOR BANK INFO:

- Scammers often ask for login details or bank information to "send an allowance," which they then use to drain accounts.

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#### ISOLATION TACTICS:

- Perpetrators may use "love bombing" or excessive attention to isolate the child from their real-life support network.

#### WHERE TO GET HELP AND REPORT

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If you or someone you know is being exploited, contact these authorities immediately:

In Canada:

- **Call 9-1-1: If you feel your loved one is in immediate danger.**
- **Call 9-8-8: Suicide Crisis Hotline – If you feel your loved one is contemplating suicide.**
- **[Cybertip.ca](https://www.cybertip.ca): Canada's national tip line for reporting online sexual abuse of children.**
- **[Kids Help Phone](https://www.kids-help-phoneline.ca): Call 1-800-668-6868 or text 686868 for confidential support.**

## TIKTOK VIDEOS REACHING GIRLS

- During the recorded police interview, the 14-year-old girl said she and a friend had signed up to the website Sugar Daddy Meet after seeing online videos encouraging young women to find a "sugar daddy".
- Entering words like "sugar daddy" and "sugar baby" into the search bar on TikTok reveals countless videos on the topic on the platform.
- Opening lines of the videos include "Where to meet a sugar daddy," "What no one tells you about making six figures as a sugar baby," and "When you find the perfect app where men will pay your rent just by messaging them for free".
- The video creators are self-titled "sugar babies" — young women who give their time and attention to one or several wealthy men in exchange for gifts or money.
- The content creators, who appear well-meaning, tell the camera that life as a rich man's "sugar baby" is glamorous and mutually beneficial, and often show off their luxurious lifestyles and expensive gifts.

## NOT JUST A ONE-OFF

- Former police officer Susan Mclean presents cyber safety talks at Australian schools, and said monetised arrangements were reported to her at least once a fortnight.
- "Young girls are impressionable. Young girls want money. They want a glamorous lifestyle. They don't see the harm in it," she said.
- "It tends to be one person in a social group, then they encourage others to join as well."
- She believes content on TikTok has "absolutely" played a role in enticing young girls into sugar dating.
- "It's monetised, for every view, every like, every share, the content creator is making money," she said.
- "It's normalised and glamorised online — you don't really see headlines about problems; you don't really have anyone talking to young people about the potential risk and harm."
- "A lot of people do not understand that it's targeted advertising."
- "They are being preyed upon."

## 'NOT THE EXPERIENCE I HAD'

- The news of the cases involving the underage girls didn't surprise Ellie, a former sugar baby in Australia who asked to stay anonymous due to the stigma associated with sugar dating.
- She tried sugar dating about two years ago, thinking it would assist her financially as she struggled with cost-of-living pressures.
- Ellie said her experience started off as it was pictured online, but it quickly took a turn for the worse when the men became possessive and bombarded her with messages when she tried to end the arrangement.
- "I was concerned that he was going to show up at my house ... because he knew where I lived, and I was really concerned that he was just going to start showing up," she said.

- Ellie said the online content did not warn its young audience of the "dark and dangerous" side of the lifestyle.
- "They're children, so they can be manipulated into thinking that abusive behaviour, whether that's mental or physical, sexual abuse is okay.
- "I hate that they're glamorising it, because it's not the experience that I had."

## **PUSH FOR AGE VERIFICATION**

- Ms. Mclean said adult platforms needed to be inaccessible to children.
- What we need to be looking at is making sure that young people cannot sign up to these adult, R-rated platforms in the first place," she said.
- Ms. Mclean said online platforms must also be held to account for facilitating the exploitation of children.
- "We need robust laws and enforcement — if someone under 18 is on [adult platforms], that is illegal.
- "We need robust age verification in place so that people cannot access adult content on the internet."

## **SWEETENING THE DEAL: THE GLAMORIZATION OF SUGAR DATING ON SOCIAL MEDIA**

Posted: March 4, 2024

- <https://cseinstitute.org/student-blog-series-sweetening-the-deal-the-glamorization-of-sugar-dating-on-social-media/>

## **SUMMARY**

- TikTok algorithms often promote videos sensationalizing sugar daddy relationships, portraying them as glamorous arrangements where companionship is exchanged for money, gifts, and vacations.
- The reality of sugar dating is often less glamorous and involves an increased risk of exploitation for vulnerable individuals.
- Sugar dating is defined as a business-like arrangement where a wealthier partner exchanges money and gifts for companionship from a younger partner, without necessarily including sex.
- Similar to prostitution, sugar dating involves an imbalance of power, with wealthy, older individuals pursuing economically vulnerable young women.
- Websites like Seeking.com have allegedly targeted college and high school girls by offering free upgrades to those with .edu email addresses, leading to students being a significant demographic of sugar babies.
- Many students use funds from sugar dating relationships to cover tuition costs.

- Social media platforms elevate sugaring to a lifestyle by focusing only on the perks, which sanitizes its exploitative nature and connection to the commercial sex trade by omitting the power dynamics involved.

## SUGAR DADDY SCAMS

- "Sugar daddy" interactions involving teenagers on social media are a high-risk activity often linked to financial scams, grooming, and sexual exploitation.
- Despite being glamorized on platforms like TikTok and Instagram, these arrangements frequently target minors for predatory purposes.

## COMMON RISKS AND SCAMS

- Scammers often use fake profiles with stolen or AI-generated photos to appear wealthy and appealing to young users.
- The Overpayment/Check Scam: A "sugar daddy" sends a large digital check and asks the teen to return a small portion to a "friend" or "child". The original check later bounces, leaving the teen responsible for the lost funds, and the scammer may gain access to their bank account.
- Sextortion: Predators promise money in exchange for intimate photos or videos. Once they receive them, they threaten to leak the images to family and friends unless the teen pays them.
- Bank Account Draining: Scammers may ask for "verification" fees or banking details to send an allowance, which they then use to steal all the money in the account.

## PLATFORMS AND TRENDS

### INSTAGRAM & TIKTOK:

- These platforms are primary hubs for glamorizing the "sugar baby" lifestyle. Content often focuses on the "perks" of expensive gifts and dates, failing to mention the risks of sexual work or exploitation.

### SNAPCHAT:

- Due to its disappearing messages, it is frequently used by predators to build rapport and solicit images or financial information away from parental oversight.

## WARNING SIGNS

### UNSOLICITED DMS:

- Strangers offering a "weekly allowance" for just talking or being a "companion".

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#### PRESSURE FOR PII:

- Requests for bank login details, addresses, or photos.

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#### REFUSAL TO VIDEO CALL:

- Authentic wealthy individuals rarely seek minors on social media for financial mentorship; scammers almost always refuse to verify their identity via video.