

“I feel physically safe but not politically safe”:

Understanding the Digital Threats and Safety Practices of OnlyFans Creators

Ananta Soneji, Vaughn Hamilton, Adam Doupé,
Allison McDonald, and Elissa M. Redmiles



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DISCLAIMER

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Sex Workers



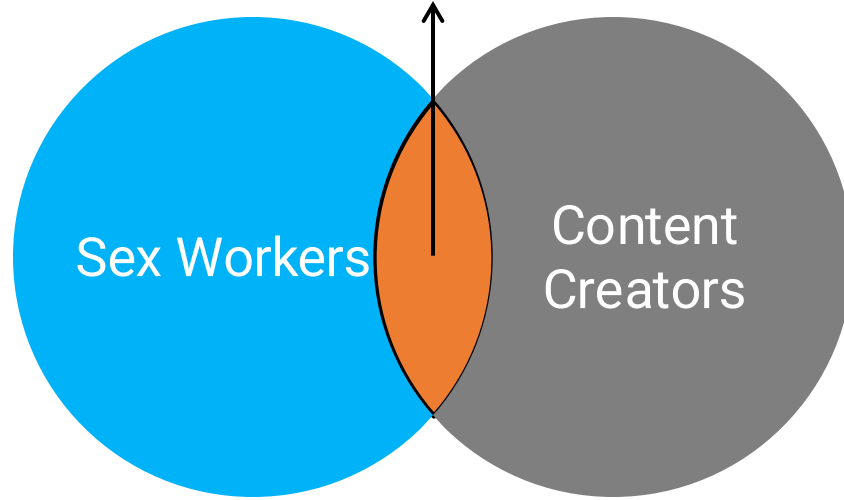
Sex Workers



Content
Creators

OnlyFans

Content Creators



Direct-to-consumer Model

Direct-to-consumer Model

Creators

Direct-to-consumer Model

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Direct-to-consumer Model

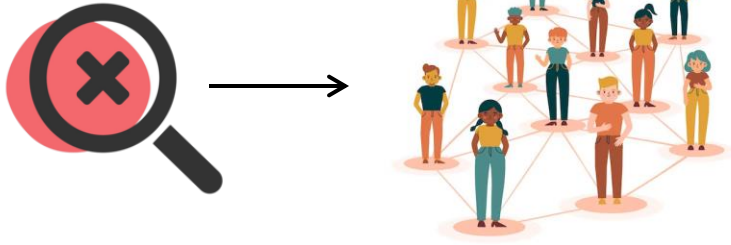


Mainstream penetration

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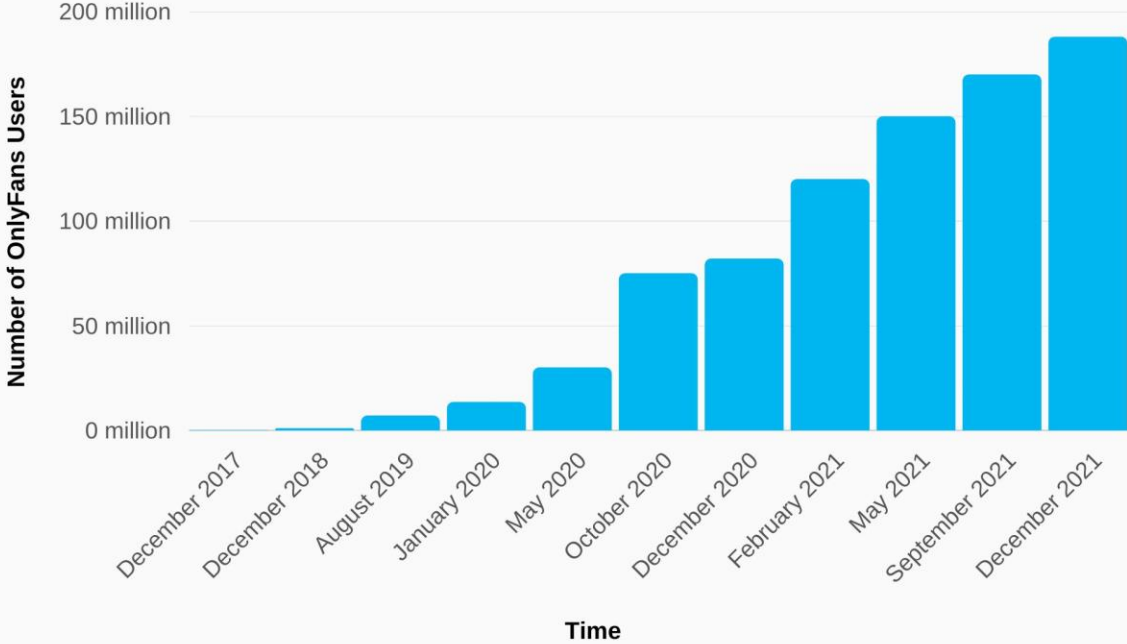
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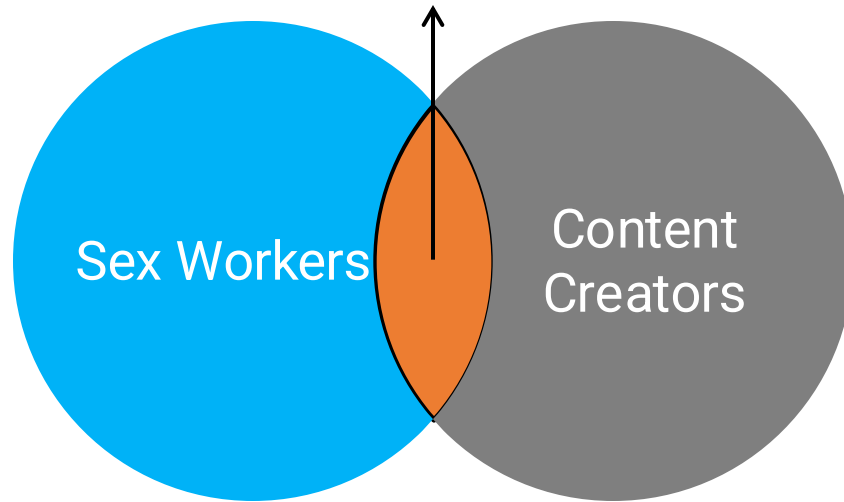


OnlyFans Users Numbers



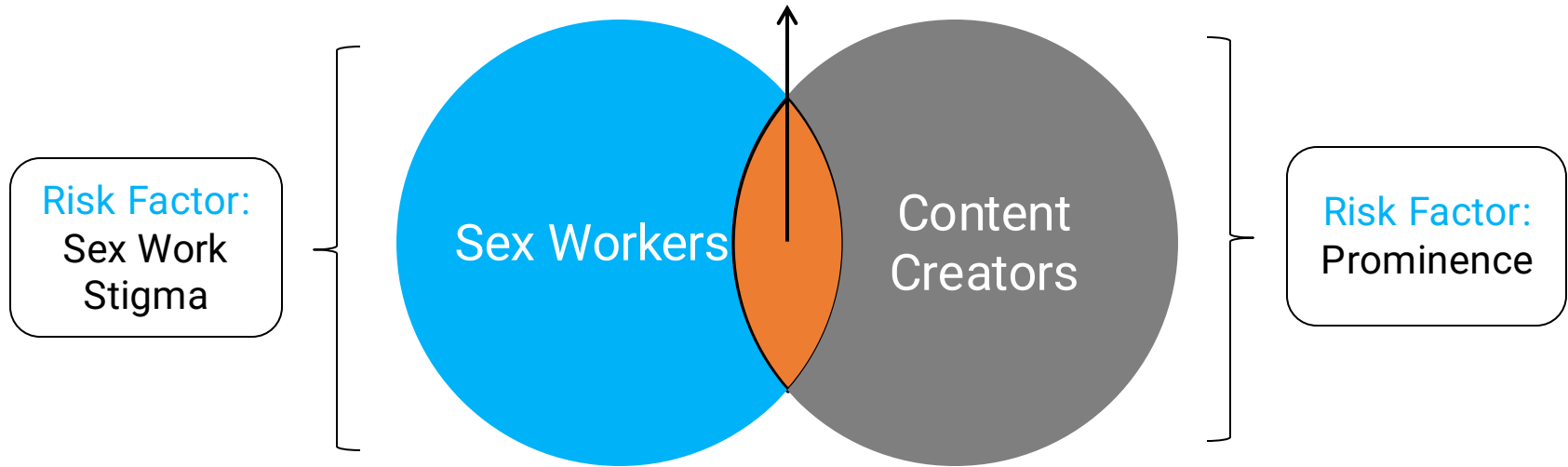
OnlyFans

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Content Creators



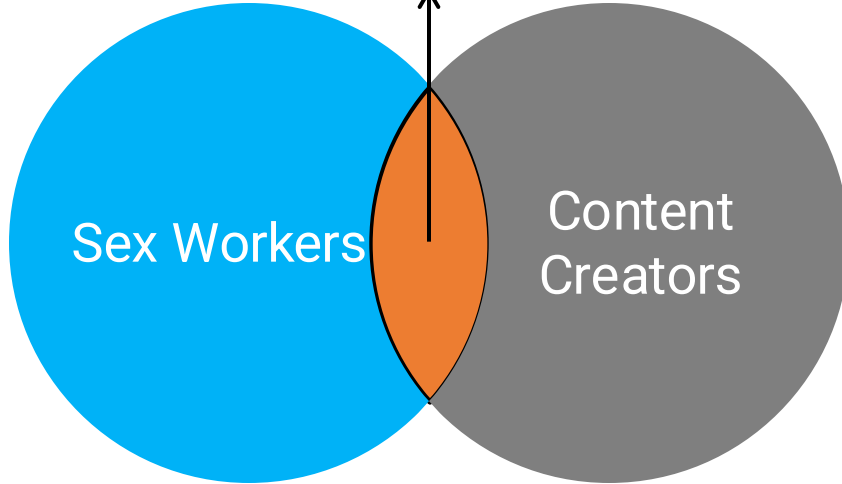
 OnlyFans

Content Creators



RISK

Risk Factor:
Sex Work
Stigma



Risk Factor:
Prominence

Understanding the **Digital Threats** and **Safety Practices** of **OnlyFans Creators**

Methodology

Methodology

43

OnlyFans creators

Methodology

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OnlyFans creators



Methodology

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OnlyFans creators



Onset of
Covid-19

Post Sexual
Content Ban

Methodology

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OnlyFans creators



Onset of
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Semi-structured
interview protocol

Methodology

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OnlyFans creators



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Thematic Analysis

Methodology

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OnlyFans creators



Semi-structured
interview protocol

Thematic Analysis

Cross-referenced with
online hate and
harassment framework [2]

[2] Thomas, Kurt, Devdatta Akhawe, Michael Bailey, Dan Boneh, Elie Bursztein, Sunny Consolvo, Nicola Dell et al. "Sok: Hate, harassment, and the changing landscape of online abuse." In *2021 IEEE Symposium on Security and Privacy (SP)*, pp. 247-267. IEEE, 2021.

2 Unique and 2 Common Risks

Platform Precarity

Platform Censorship

Toxic Content

Content Leakage



Common Risk: Toxic Content

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Takes Various Forms

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- Harassment and bullying

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Defense Mechanisms

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Defense Mechanisms

- Boundary setting with fans

Common Risk: Toxic Content

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“You are welcome to send requests
but... I have *every right to deny*
them.”

Common Risk: Toxic Content

Takes Various Forms

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- Online hate

Defense Mechanisms

- Boundary setting with fans
- Blocking fans

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“*The **only safe thing** OnlyFans offers is blocking.*”

-P9

Common Risk: Content Leakage

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Various Forms of Harms

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Various Forms of Harms

- Outing

Common Risk: Content Leakage

Various Forms of Harms

- Outing

“Engineering world *does not look too highly upon OnlyFans.*”

-P1

Common Risk: Content Leakage

Various Forms of Harms

- Outing
- Catfishing

Common Risk: Content Leakage

Various Forms of Harms

- Outing
- Catfishing
- Chargebacks

Common Risk: Content Leakage

Various Forms of Harms

- Outing
- Catfishing
- Chargebacks

“It would be nice if OnlyFans fixed that *loophole*.”

-P7

Common Risk: Content Leakage

Various Forms of Harms

- Outing
- Catfishing
- Chargebacks

Defense Mechanisms

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Common Risk: Content Leakage

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Defense Mechanisms

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- Internet presence monitoring
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- Limiting identifying information

“It is so easy to get people *who are creepy* and trying to find my *Facebook* account.”

-P13

Unique Risk: Platform Precarity

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OnlyFans announced
a policy change to
[ban sexual content](#)
on August 19, 2021

Unique Risk: Platform Precarity



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OnlyFans ban on sexually explicit content will endanger lives, say US sex workers

OnlyFans 'explicit' content ban conceals the fact: Sex work is work

Unique Risk: Platform Precarity



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OnlyFans Will Ban Pornography Starting in October, Citing Need to Comply With Financial Partners

OnlyFans CEO on why it banned adult content: 'the short answer is banks'

Unique Risk: Platform Precarity



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“*When you deplatform creators you take away their community and that’s violence.*”
-P11

Unique Risk: Platform Precarity



OnlyFans announced a policy change to [ban sexual content](#) on August 19, 2021

OnlyFans ditches sex work ban in abrupt reversal — but creators remain wary

Why OnlyFans Suddenly Reversed its Decision to Ban Sexual Content

Unique Risk: Platform Precarity



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OnlyFans ditches sex work ban in abrupt reversal — but creators remain wary

Why OnlyFans Suddenly Reversed its Decision to Ban Sexual Content

“*They [sex work platforms] just use sex workers and then will sell them out. I feel physically safe you know, but like not as politically safe as I did at first if that makes sense.*”

-P6

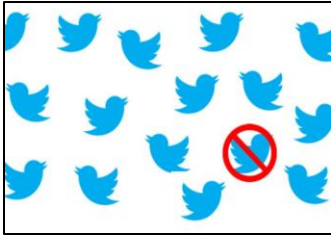
Unique Risk: Platform Censorship

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Cross-platform
Promotion Challenges

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Cross-platform
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Unique Risk: Platform Censorship

Cross-platform Promotion Challenges

- Content removal or blocking
- Deplatforming
- Shadowbanning

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Variances in Censorship

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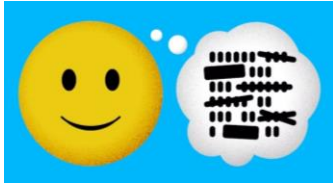
“*My risk of being censored is a lot lower as a male and as a white performer.*”

-P30

Defenses for Platform Risks

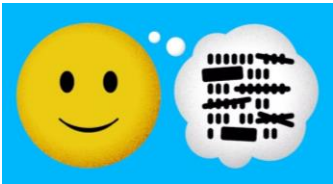
Defenses for Platform Risks

Self-censorship &
Algospeak



Defenses for Platform Risks

Self-censorship & Algospeak



Dead = 'Unalive'
Pandemic = 'Panini'
Lesbian = 'Le dollar bean'

To bypass Internet filters, people are creating a new vocabulary

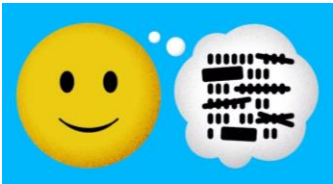
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Defenses for Platform Risks

Self-censorship & Algospeak



Platform Diversification

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The Washington Post

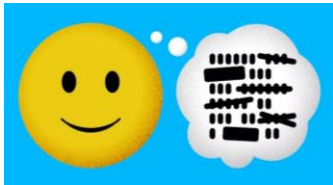
washingtonpost

This graphic features a hand holding a smartphone with a 'wp' logo. Below it, a list of words and their 'safe' alternatives is provided. A quote explains that these terms are used to bypass internet filters. The source is cited as The Washington Post.



Defenses for Platform Risks

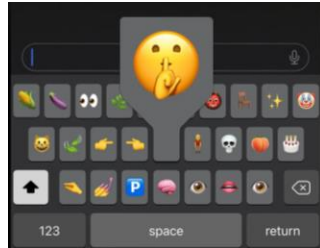
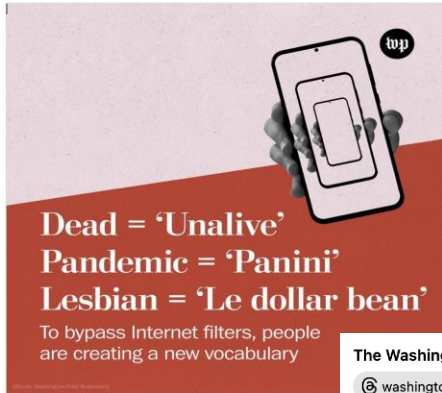
Self-censorship &
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Platform
Diversification

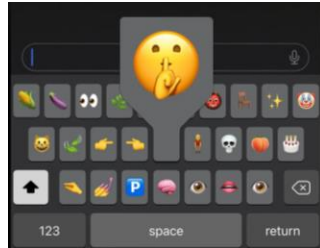
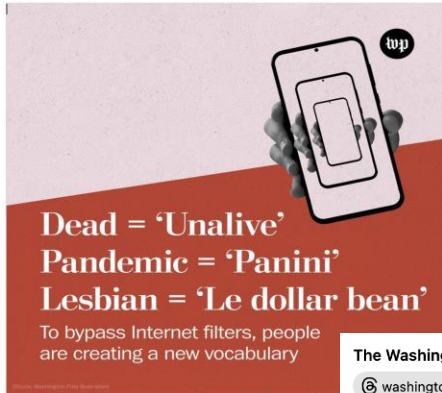
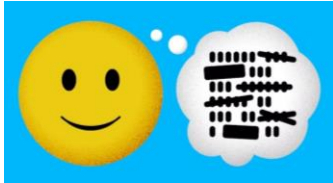
“I want to be diversified again, just in case something like that [sexual content ban] happens again.”

-P10



Defenses for Platform Risks

Self-censorship &
Algospeak



Platform
Diversification

“ I want to be diversified again, just in case something like that [sexual content ban] happens again.”

-P10

“ ...publish prohibited content to another [sex work] platform.”

-P12

Key Findings

- OnlyFans creators face significant challenges related to platform risks of precarity and biased censorship.

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Thank you!



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