

ONLINE SEX WORK IS A TRANS RIGHTS ISSUE.

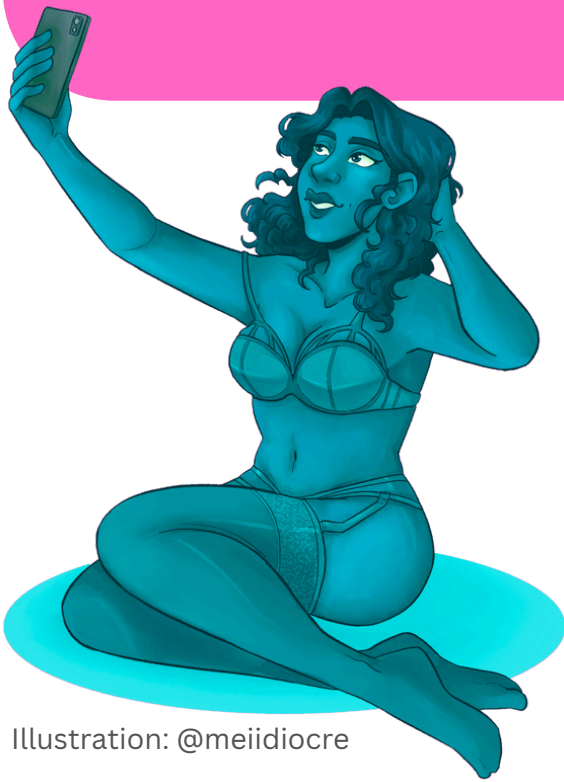


Illustration: @meidiocre

So how can LGBTQ advocates support online sex workers in the United States?

According to the 2015 US Trans Survey, 1 in 8 trans people had done sex work for income. Today, a growing number of trans people are doing *online* sex work, like sexual content creation or livestreaming.

“People sometimes [do sex work] not just because they’re trans, but because [of] disabilities, or for whatever reason they can’t work regular jobs with hours... On top of that, if you’re a person of color, or trans....even in the gig economy...there’s stigma, or they tip you poorly.”

– LGBTQ and sex work policy advocate

1. UNDERSTAND FOSTA-SESTA

FOSTA-SESTA is federal legislation, passed in 2018, aiming to “hold platforms accountable” for aiding sex trafficking. Platforms responded with strict restrictions on sexual content, regardless of who was making it.

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Instead of curtailing sex trafficking, these restrictions have unfairly targeted and severely impacted consensual and legal sex work.

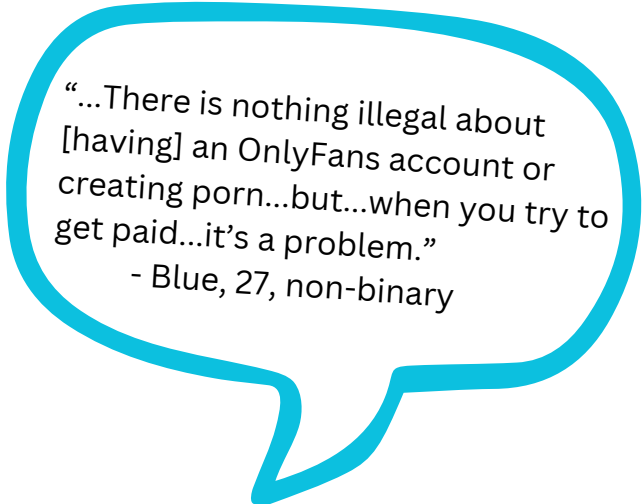
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AFTER FOSTA-SESTA...

Financial service restrictions

- Money transfer services have restricted transactions for legal sexual content. Online sex workers using these services risk having their earnings confiscated.
- Online sex workers can be paid through platforms like OnlyFans and ManyVids, but they take a large cut of earnings. This is in part because FOSTA-SESTA liability increases platforms' costs of doing business.



"...There is nothing illegal about [having] an OnlyFans account or creating porn...but...when you try to get paid...it's a problem."
- Blue, 27, non-binary

Social media restrictions

- Most online sex workers market their work on social media, following platform guidelines for nudity and sexual content.
- After FOSTA-SESTA, creators say their accounts have been arbitrarily banned or hidden, even if they haven't broken any guidelines.
- Often, an online sex worker's social media followers are their livelihood. Getting banned can decimate their business.

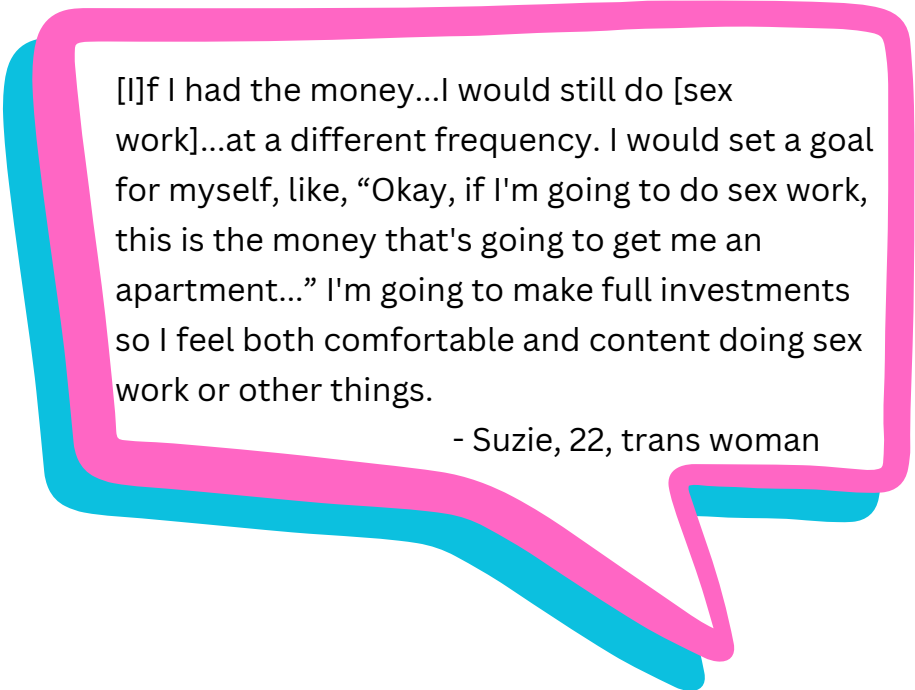
Financial and social media companies need to hear that sex workers matter, and overzealous restrictions aren't acceptable.

2. ADVOCATE FOR SAFETY NET PROGRAMS

When trans/nonbinary people depend on sex work to meet their basic needs, they can be pressured into harmful choices, like accepting disrespectful customers or changing their gender presentation for clients.

And sex workers rarely have access to job benefits like private health insurance.

A true social safety net—healthcare, housing, and basic income programs not tied to one's job—would allow trans/nonbinary people to do sex work safely and sustainably, or not at all, whichever is right for them.



[I]f I had the money...I would still do [sex work]...at a different frequency. I would set a goal for myself, like, "Okay, if I'm going to do sex work, this is the money that's going to get me an apartment..." I'm going to make full investments so I feel both comfortable and content doing sex work or other things.

- Suzie, 22, trans woman