

# SUGARING & THE SEX TRADE

**“[Sugaring websites are] places where predators hide in plain site.”**  
- Brook Urick (Seeking.com Whistleblower)

Sugaring describes a business-like transaction most often between a sugar daddy—a wealthy older man—and a sugar baby—a young woman—where the latter’s ‘companionship’ is exchanged for cash. Marketed to sugar daddies as a legitimate way to find connection and to sugar babies as a lucrative and empowering financial opportunity, the truth is not so simple.

In reality, website’s like seeking.com know exactly what they’re selling: prostitution repackaged. While a privileged few profit, sugaring sites and ‘daddies’ target economically vulnerable young women to feed the demand for these transactional ‘relationships.’ The inherently unequal power dynamic between sugar daddies and babies is primed for traffickers and predators can exploit, often targeting young girls.

## PREYING ON VULNERABILITY

In 2020, the top occupation of sugar babies on *seeking.com* was listed as **STUDENT**, 2.48 million of whom are based in the US, and **A THIRD** of whom use that money specifically for **TUITION**.<sup>1</sup>

Seeking.com (formerly Seeking Arrangements) gave account advantages to sugar babies with an “.edu” email.

## PROSTITUTION REBRANDED

**“Sugar websites are the new frontier of exploitation because they blur the criminality of transaction.”<sup>2</sup>**

- Benjamin Gauen,  
Former prosecutor for King County in Seattle

Trafficking victims are being advertised on sugar dating websites by pimps. Some sugar daddies are unequivocally sex buyers, writing on buyer review forums publicly advertising how to prey on and exploit young, vulnerable women.<sup>3</sup>

1. McGrath, Matthew. 2020. “College Students Pay Tuition by Hooking up with Sugar Daddies, Mommas.” Fox Business, January 14. <https://www.foxbusiness.com/money/seeking-arrangements-sugaring-sugar-daddy-online-dating-college-tuition>

2. Tucker, John H. “The Unlikely Story of a Sex Trafficking Survivor and the Instagram Account That Saved Her Life.” Elle, August 4 2021. <https://www.elle.com/culture/a36898189/0086-0088-megan-s-account-august-2021/>

3. “The Bitter Truth About Sugaring: Deception and False Promises in Exploitation’s New Frontier.” Vimeo video, June 11, 2020. <https://vimeo.com/428260410>