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LSE GROUPS takes place during the final fortnight of the LSE Spring Term. Undergraduate students are placed in small groups; these are cross-year, interdisciplinary, and group members do not know one another in advance. Each group must then devise its own research question and carry out every stage of a small-scale research project, in less than two weeks.

LSE GROUPS is part of the LSE commitment to students learning through enquiry and developing the skills needed for knowledge creation.

The overall theme of LSE GROUPS 2025 was *Visions for the Future*

This paper was submitted on the final Thursday afternoon of the project. Students then presented their work at a conference, on the closing Friday.

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London School of Economics and Political Science

Deepfakes On Trial: A Mixed-methods Study of Student Perceptions and Regulatory Concerns about Non-consensual Deepfakes at the London School of Economics and Political Science

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Abstract

Despite the extensive academic discussion on borderless personal and legal repercussions of deepfakes, limited studies have explicitly investigated the youth's awareness about non-consensual deepfakes and perception of the need for stricter law enforcement. Our objective is to critically evaluate: a) perceptions of deepfakes, their risks and impacts; b) the awareness amongst LSE students of deepfake regulations; and c) LSE students' views on the need to criminalise deepfakes, all while accounting for the salience of gender and ethnicity. This study utilised a mixed-method approach to identify patterns within a survey and focus group. We gathered quantitative data that explores the LSE community's awareness, perception, and opinions on criminal justice around deepfake content. We then conducted one focus group, which allowed us to analyse the rationale behind the survey results. Based on the data, there are heightened concerns about non-consensual deepfakes among the LSE student community and strong support for formal recognition of deepfakes as illegal, coupled with the need for stricter regulatory frameworks. These findings may have future policy implications, resulting in the enactment of victim-centred laws and prevention of negative impacts caused by non-consensual deepfakes.

Keywords
non-consensual deepfakes, criminalisation, gender-based violence, students.

Introduction

The prevalence of deepfakes has been increasing in recent years (Celli, 2020), predicting that eight million will be shared in 2025 (Accelerated Capability Environment, 2025). However, the use of deepfake technology to create and disseminate non-consensual sexual content has been an issue of great concern as it facilitates sexual exploitation and abuse (BBC, 2021; Das, 2024).

Ethical concerns toward deepfakes include the matter of deception, malintent, and the deepfaked person's objection to how they are represented (Ruiter, 2021; Minnen et al., 2022). The UK Online Safety Act 2023 curbs online sexual abuse, but there have been calls for the criminalisation of non-consensual deepfake content and to treat it as an offence with distinct legal consequences (Bhuyian et al., 2025; Refuge UK, 2024).

This paper aims to examine perceptions of criminalisation of non-consensual deepfake content amongst LSE students. It uses a mixed-methods approach combining a survey and focus group to produce more nuanced insights that capture the rationales behind LSE students' opinions. We gauge the level of awareness of deepfakes and their potential impact. We also probe into LSE students' attitudes towards creating and disseminating non-consensual deepfakes, as well as any prominent concerns regarding their rights and protections. Another area of interest is students' views on whether existing regulations on deepfake creation and distribution are sufficient.

This study outlines the existing literature on perceptions of non-consensual deepfakes and the sufficiency of current legal frameworks. It then presents our methodology, including its ethics and limitations. Third, it analyses our findings, noting any prominent themes and trends, especially across gender. Finally, it concludes by making policy suggestions and providing further areas of inquiry.

Literature Review

1. Definition of deepfakes
Deepfake is not yet clearly defined. Belfer Centre for Science and International Affairs (2020) emphasise the purpose of deepfakes as deception and manipulation. Legally, the EU AI Act defines deepfakes as media content imitating real entities and falsely appearing authentic (Kira, 2024).

2. Perceptions of non-consensual deepfake

Public sentiment towards deepfake technology has been diverse. Kim and Banks (2024) revealed that men and women both reckon that synthetic pornography can be used in sex education without causing real harm. However, women face heightened psychological distress with the failure to feel protected by the law in cases of image-based sexual abuse or harassment (Chapman, 2024).

To understand public expectations regarding deepfake content issues, Sippy et al. (2024) scrutinised UK public perceptions of deepfake content. Above 90% of respondents of various ages and genders expressed fears about the child abuse material, increasing misinformation, and manipulation of public opinion. This study is limited because it does not explore the intersection between gender and other demographic factors in shaping the perception of deepfake content.

Narrowing the scope to students, Preu et al. (2022) revealed that college students in the UK are inept at distinguishing deepfake content from authentic images. While this study laid the groundwork for understanding students' behaviour toward online content, further development is needed to fill the literature gap in how UK college students perceive the criminalisation of deepfake content.

Students from Asia have shown higher awareness of deepfake content. For instance, over 89% of Bangladeshi students were aware of deepfake content, while 49% believed that authorities should protect people from deepfake crimes (Akter & Rhaman, 2024). Similarly, over 75% of Malaysian university students argued that it is misconduct to use others' faces without consent and that abuse of deepfake technology can undermine others' life stability (Kaur et al., 2023).

3. The insufficiency of current legal frameworks

Literature explored deepfake criminalisation, stressing the need for stronger victim protection in non-consensual intimate deepfake (NCIDs) cases. An analysis of 14,678 deepfake videos revealed a 550% increase in 2019-2023 (Celli, 2020), with 100% targeting women (Ajder et al, 2019).

However, the issue with sexual deepfakes is inadequately addressed and is mistreated as general cybercrime rather than AI-induced sexual violence (Bhuyian et al, 2025). NCIDs exemplify an infringement upon sexual privacy (Citron, 2019), further exacerbating image-based sexual abuse (Kira, 2024).

The diffusion phenomenon of the NCIDs alongside 'qualified optimism' notion suggests their proliferation will erode the epistemic distinctiveness of deepfakes and affect public perceptions, thereby reducing their harmful 'allure' (Viola and Voto, 2022).

The proposed International Covenant on AI-Generated Violence would serve as a safety gear, minimising legal vacuum and legislative gaps (Bhuyian et al, 2025). The UK's Online Safety Act 2023, praised as 'heralding an era of internet safety', was criticised for its vagueness regarding illegal content (Kira, 2024). In the US, the inadequacy of deepfake laws (Pahigian, 2017) was addressed by the federal 'The Take It Down' Act 2025, explicitly criminalising NCIDs (Vyas, 2025).

Australia's Deepfake Sexual Material Bill (AHRC, 2023) aims to bolster deepfake legislation and assist the current laws 'limping in march' against deepfakes (Celli, 2020). Similarly, New Zealand endorses 'proper punishment' by introducing new criminal provisions for deepfakes, recognising NCIDs as part of the 'criminal law realm' (Graham, 2024).

Notably, comparative analysis across the EU found that only six states with explicit criminal provisions for sexual deepfakes, while others miscategorise them as defamation or privacy violation (Yazuz, 2024). The promising efforts are highlighted by Article 5 of the EU Directive on Combating Violence Against Women, criminalising NCIDs.

Lastly, deepfakes raise ECHR-related human rights concerns (Moreno, 2024), with the 'gendered prevalence' necessitating the introduction of 'sexual digital forgeries'. This would reflect the harmful nature of the 'new voyeurism' (McGlynn & Toparlak, 2024), take a more victim-centred approach (Nasution et al., 2024) and strengthen the GDPR's Article 17 'Right to be forgotten' (Nguyen, 2021).

4. Contributions

Compared to existing literature, our research explores the extent to which LSE students demand appropriate regulations for the victims of deepfake technology, depending on gender and ethnicity. This is especially relevant to young people who are more vulnerable to the harms of deepfake technology, in addition to the fact that legal systems do not necessarily protect victims of non-consensual deepfakes. This research contributes to the lack of sufficient discussion on the discrepancy between public authority interventions and citizens' moral attitudes towards deepfakes.

Methodology

This study employs a multi-method approach consisting of an online survey and a focus group. Quantitative methods reveal patterns in how LSE students perceive the threat of non-consensual deepfake creation and dissemination. Simultaneously, the qualitative approach provides a deeper understanding of how students interpret legal and social information, influencing their opinions on regulation. All the procedures and analyses complied with the LSE Groups' code of ethics.

The online survey was structured into three sections. The first assessed the level of awareness among LSE students regarding the existence of deepfakes. The second section assessed students' perceptions of deepfake threats and their reaction to potential targeting. The third section assessed LSE students' legal awareness and support for regulating non-consensual deepfake content. Two questions were inspired by Sippy et al. (2024), whose article was about the public perception of deepfakes.

Our survey was distributed via WhatsApp and email. The sample was non-random, and we collected 101 responses through snowball recruitment. A copy of the survey questions is included in the appendix.

A focus group was conducted to obtain a more nuanced understanding of the LSE students' concerns and perceptions of deepfake regulation. Kahan (2001) identifies focus groups as an effective means to predict reactions to future policies. The focus group provides greater depth to the quantitative analysis. Six undergraduate students (three female, three male) were recruited from the LSE groups participants. The session lasted around 45 minutes and was conducted by a facilitator and an observer note taker. The questions were inspired by the survey. The discussion was not recorded to ensure participants felt comfortable sharing their experiences.

Limitations

Due to time and resource limitations, the survey used non-random sampling, reducing the representativeness of findings. The sample size was also relatively small and relied on snowball recruitment, which may have introduced selection bias, as participants could share similar viewpoints (Bryman, 2016). Thus, the findings may not represent the broader LSE student population.

Purposive sampling was used in the focus group to ensure diversity in gender, ethnicity, and degree type. However, the small size and subjective nature of focus group data limit external validity, especially when generalising beyond this context (Morgan, 1997).

Focus groups can be affected by group conformity and dominant voices, limiting the expression of minority opinions (Kitzinger, 1995). To reduce this, participants wrote their views on post-it notes, creating a visual mind map that guided discussion.

Both methods were likely influenced by social desirability bias, particularly given the sensitive topic of deepfakes and online sexual harm (Fisher, 1993). Participants may have underreported behaviours such as viewing or ignoring non-consensual content to avoid judgment.

Additionally, the positionality of the researchers as women, in the context of deepfakes disproportionately affecting women and marginalised groups, may have shaped participant responses—especially among men. Given that deepfakes often relate to gender-based violence, participants may have adjusted their answers to align with what they perceived as socially acceptable.

Findings and Analysis

1. Awareness

This study found a high level of awareness and exposure to deepfakes among LSE students. The survey showed that 87% of respondents were aware of deepfakes (Figure 1), and 73% had encountered them. Focus group participants echoed this, reporting their first exposure through social media, often as memes or videos of celebrities or politicians. Some students described humorous AI-generated content—like politicians playing video games—as their first point of contact, reflecting the growing normalisation of deepfakes in entertainment. When asked about the most common uses of deepfakes, students cited fake news (67%), deepfake pornography (60%), and political content (52%) as the top three. This indicates that humorous or entertainment content may introduce many to deepfakes. Notably, male respondents reported higher exposure (82.5%) than female respondents (66.67%). Additionally, 30% of women believed non-sexual deepfakes mostly target men, compared to only 15% of men, suggesting gendered differences in perceived exposure.
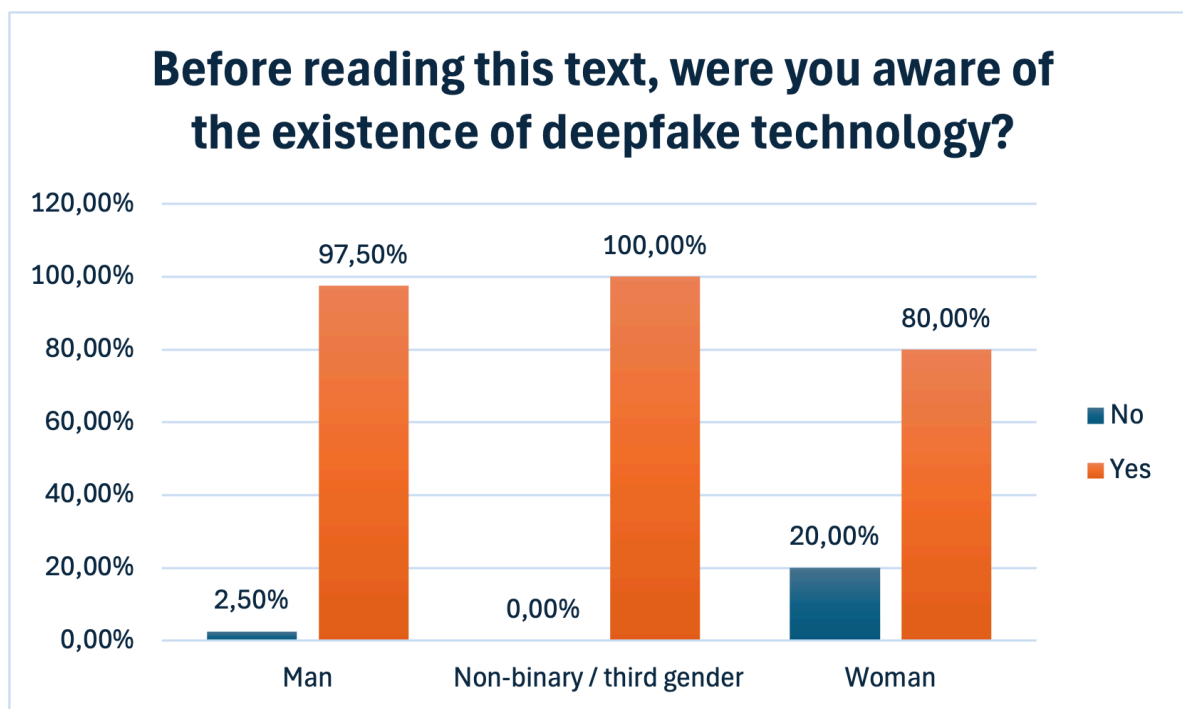
2. Perceptions of Harm and Personal Risk

A strong perception of harm was evident. 94% of respondents in the survey believed deepfakes have a somewhat or extremely negative impact (Figure 2). Yet, 20% would still consider creating one (Figure 3). This discrepancy could be attributed to cognitive dissonance. In online safety scenarios, individuals often alleviate the discomfort from the conflict between their beliefs and behaviours by downplaying risks (Betts et al., 2024). Thus, students might rationalise the creation of deepfakes by adopting attitudes such as: "Because the content is harmless, it does not have negative implications."
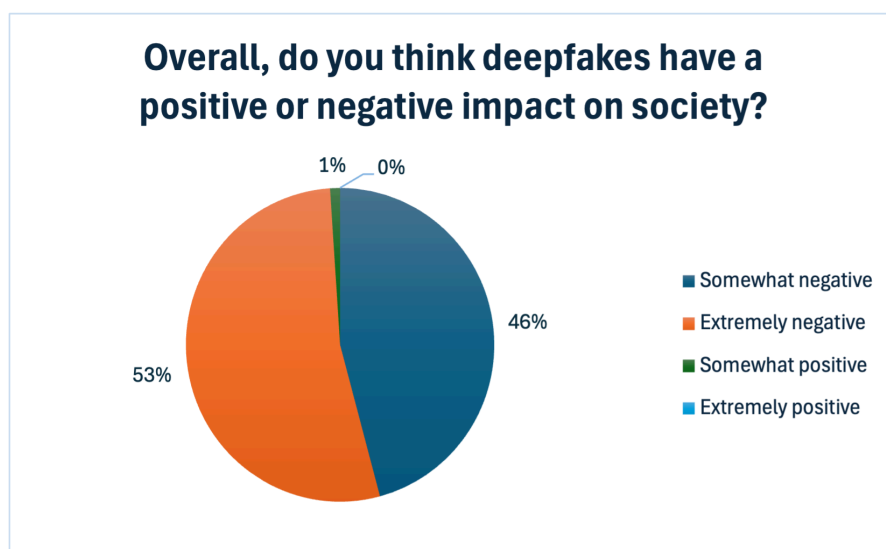
Figure 2: The perception of deepfake impact
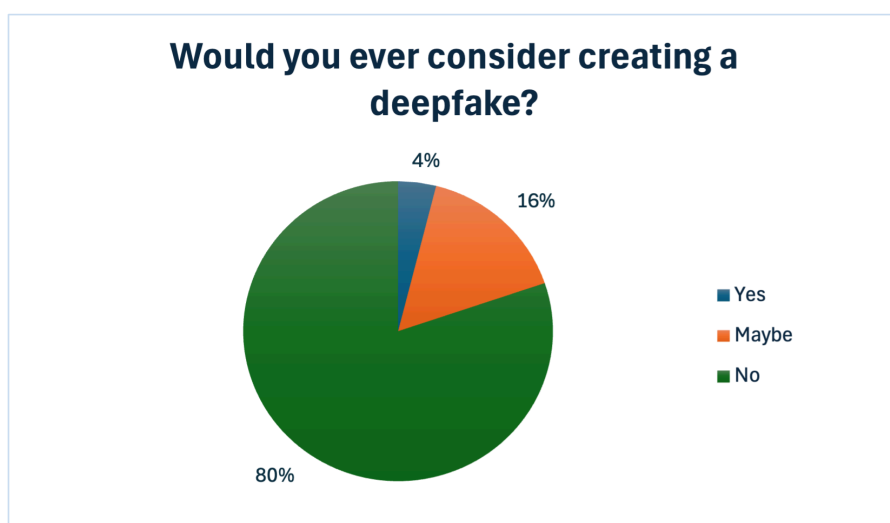
Figure 3: Responses on considering deepfake creation

Focus group participants raised concerns about deepfakes being used for defamation, misinformation, or gender-based harassment. 72% of survey respondents feared their image could be used in a deepfake, with women especially concerned. Some female participants had removed their online photos to protect themselves, stating things like: "There are no pictures of me on the internet." Male participants cited general privacy concerns but did not express the same fear of victimisation.
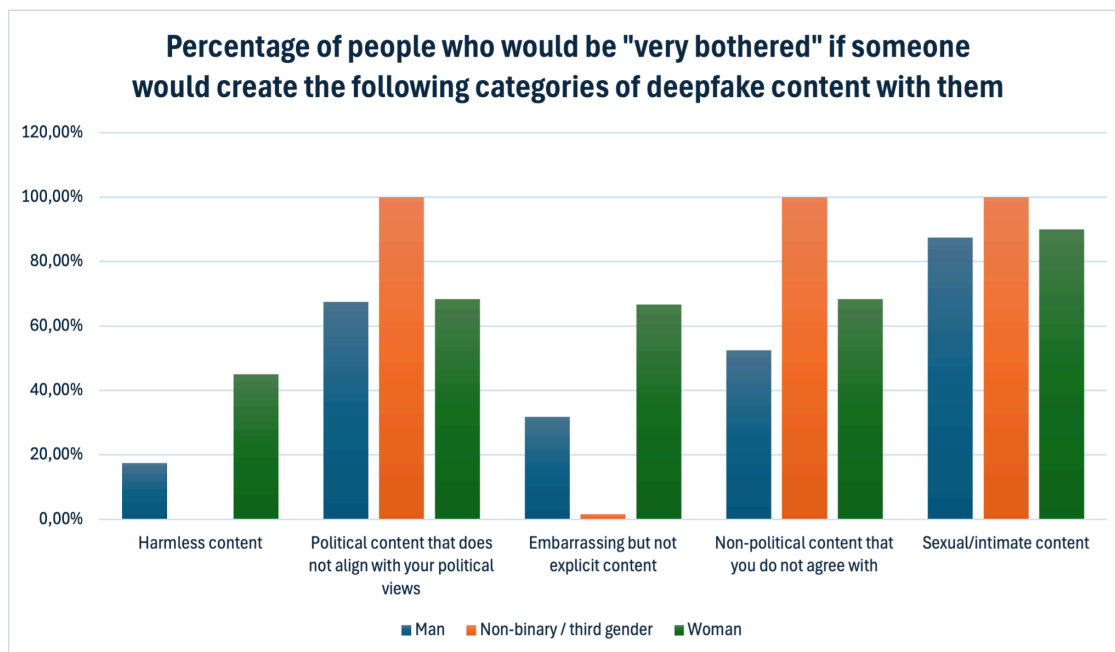

Figure 4: Concern about being targeted by deepfakes by gender

Women were consistently more disturbed by the idea of their image being used in humorous, embarrassing, or sexual deepfakes (Figure 5). This worry is well-founded, with focus group discussions highlighting that women are more often criticised, judged and harassed about their behaviour than men are (Eady and Rasmussen, 2024).

Additionally, 58% of women, compared to 25% of men, said they would be very worried about stalking or harassment from sexual deepfakes. In the focus group, women linked sexual deepfakes to broader cultural objectification, suggesting fears that online harassment could translate to real-world violations.
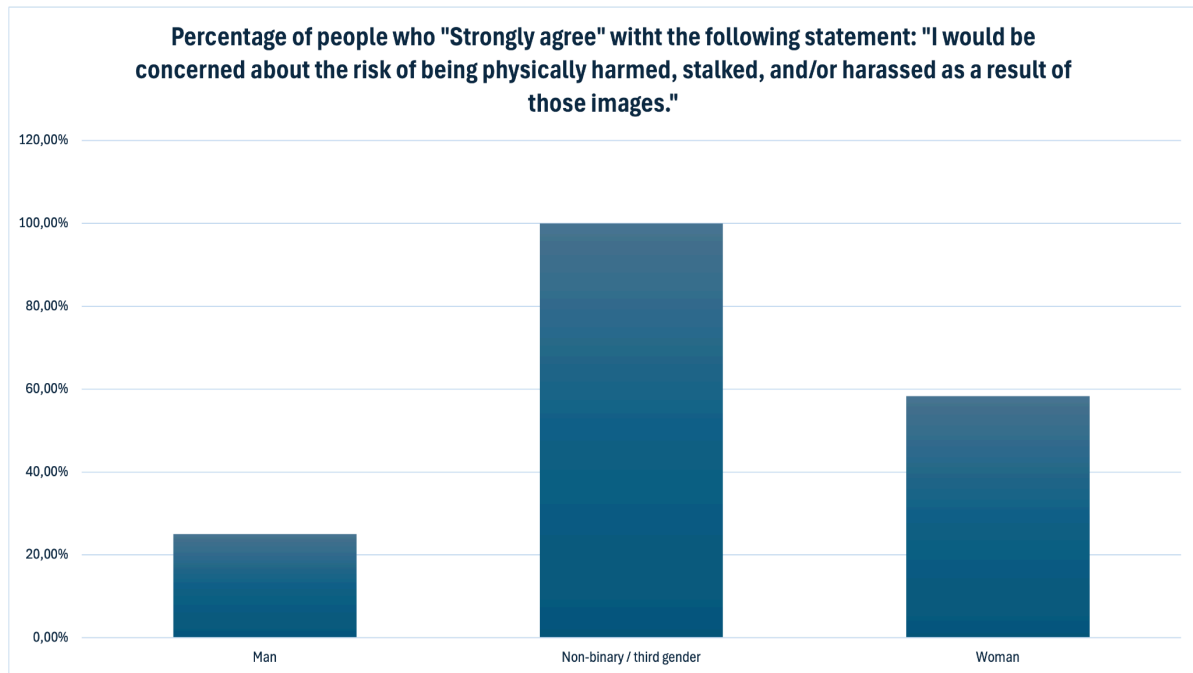
Percentage of people who "Strongly agree" witht the following statement: "I would be concerned about the risk of being physically harmed, stalked, and/or harassed as a result of those images."

Figure 5: Concern over deepfake-related harassment by gender

Survey results showed 90% of respondents would be "very bothered" if a sexual deepfake of them were made (Figure 6). Focus group participants described such experiences as emotionally violating. Female participants explicitly linked their fear to their gender. Although still personally vulnerable, men were less worried about the effects outside their private lives. Survey data revealed that women were more likely to strongly agree that deepfakes would damage their interpersonal relationships, job prospects, and reputation at LSE. One woman said she could convince her family that a deepfake was fake, but expressed anxieties about academic and professional credibility. 68% of women strongly agreed they would be concerned about job prospects compared to only 45% of men. Literature confirms this, showing women are more likely to be critiqued on non-performance-related factors in the workplace (Textio, 2024).
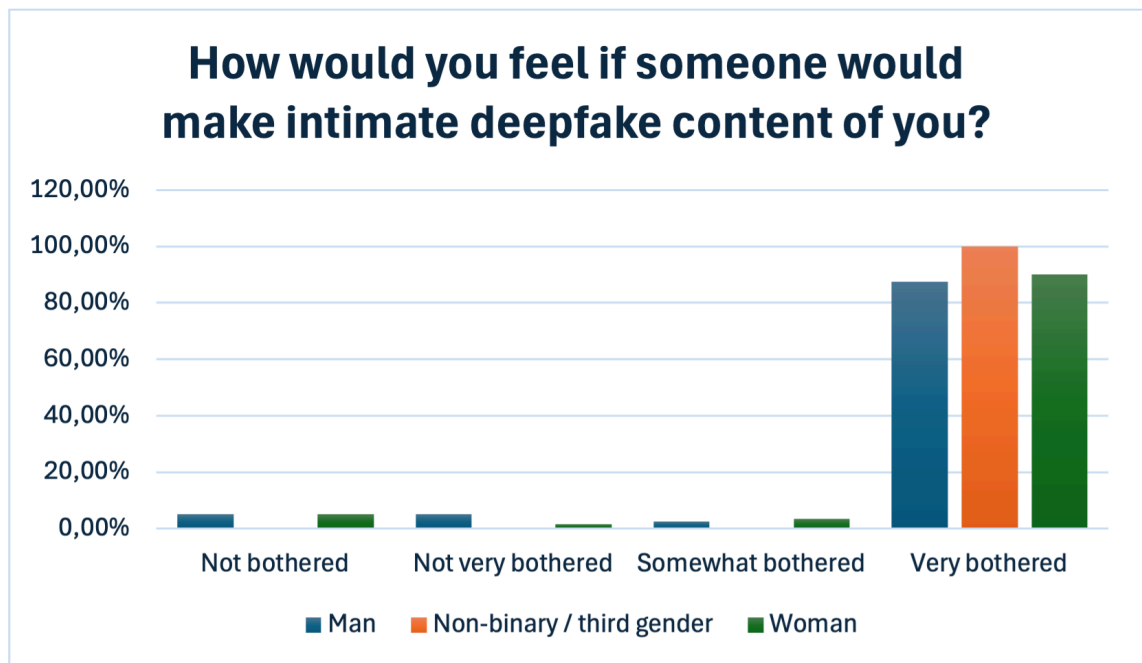
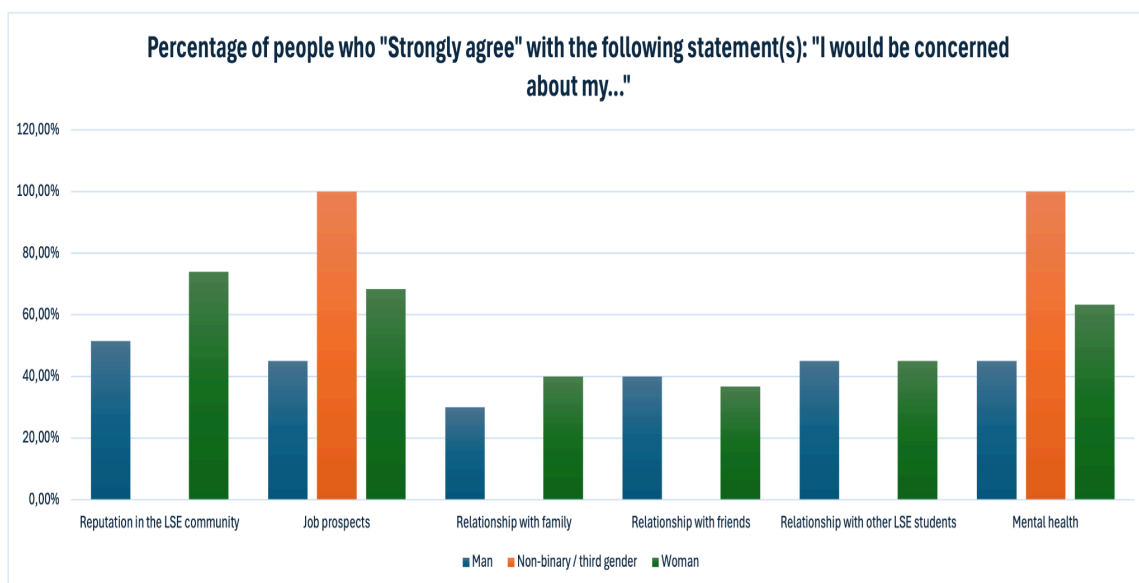*Figure 6: Reactions to sexual deepfake targeting across genders*

Figure 7: Reputational and relational deepfake concerns: strong agreement by gender

3. Ethnicity and Perceived Risk

Most ethnic groups showed similar levels of concern about their image being used in deepfakes. However, White students were the least concerned—only 58% expressed worry. This may reflect historically moderate consequences for White individuals

compared to marginalised groups (Lymperopoulou, 2024). Thus, perceived consequences of victimisation may differ across groups.
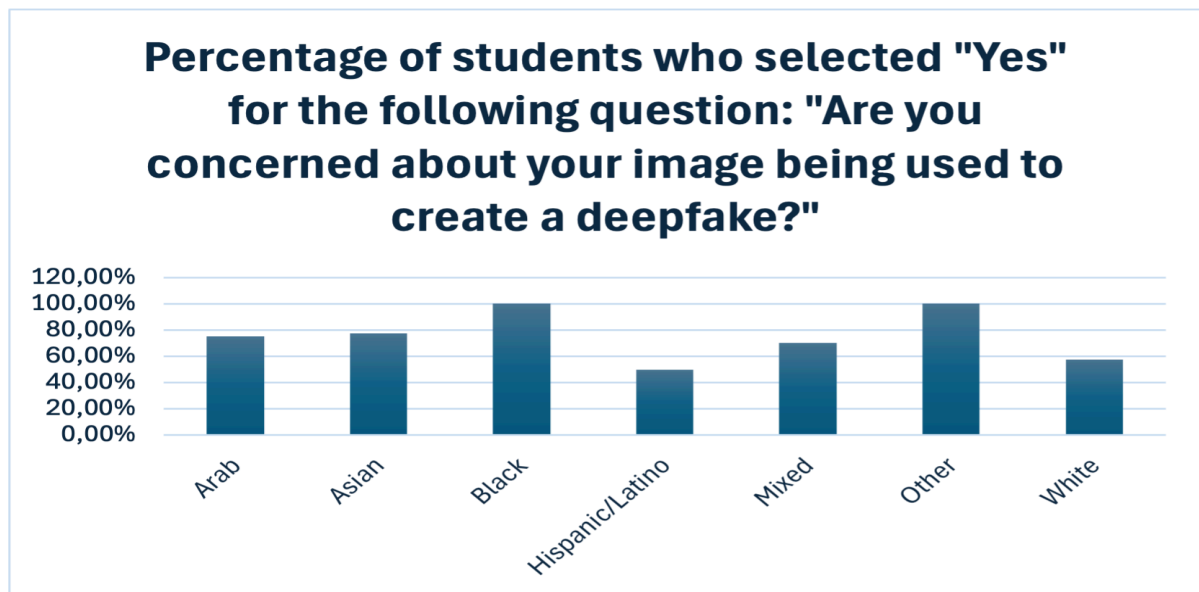
Figure 8: Concern about being targeted in a deepfake by ethnicity

4. Trust in Institutions and Platform Responsibility

Survey respondents showed low trust in institutions like the police. Nearly half were unlikely to report a sexual deepfake to law enforcement, preferring to report to online platforms instead (Figure 9). Focus group participants echoed this distrust, doubting police would take digital sexual abuse seriously. One participant stated: "They're not even good with other forms of abuse—how would this be different?" Female participants were particularly sceptical of police support.

Interestingly, while 46% of male respondents were very unlikely to report incidents to the police, twice as many women said they would be very likely to report (Figure 10). Literature suggests men may avoid reporting due to gender norms and rape myths, which frame sexual violence as a female-only issue (Depraetere et al., 2020).
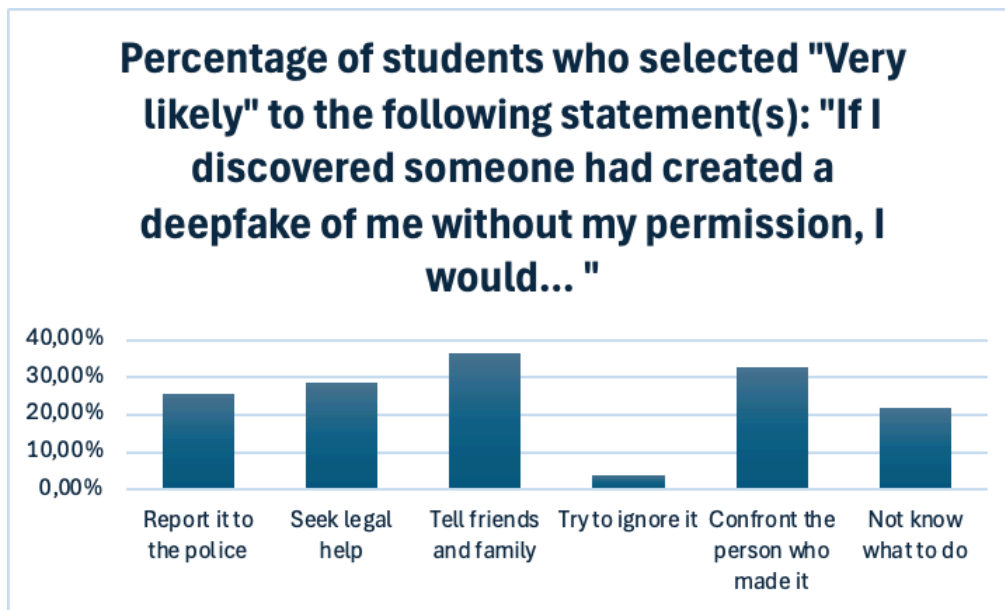
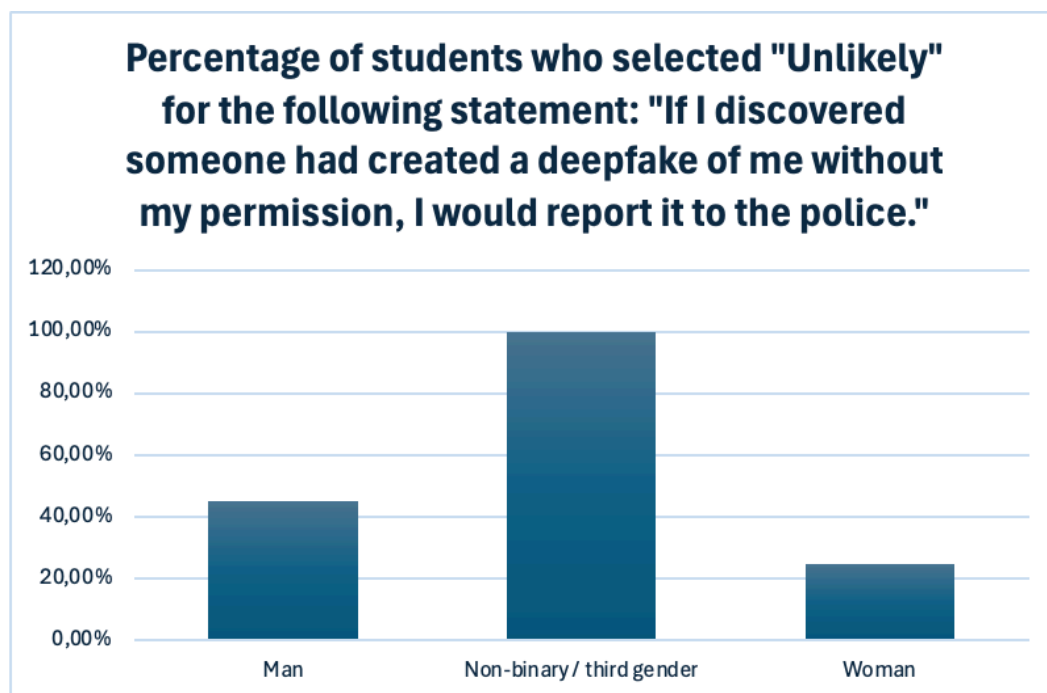*Figure 9: Responsive action as a result of being targeted in a deepfake*

Figure 10: Attitudes toward reporting deepfake targeting to police by gender

All participants agreed that social media plays a major role in the spread of deepfakes. 72% supported greater platform regulation, including automated detection and removal of sexual content. Women (65%) were more likely than men (31%) to report non-consensual deepfakes (Figure 11), possibly reflecting heightened sensitivity to sexual exploitation online.
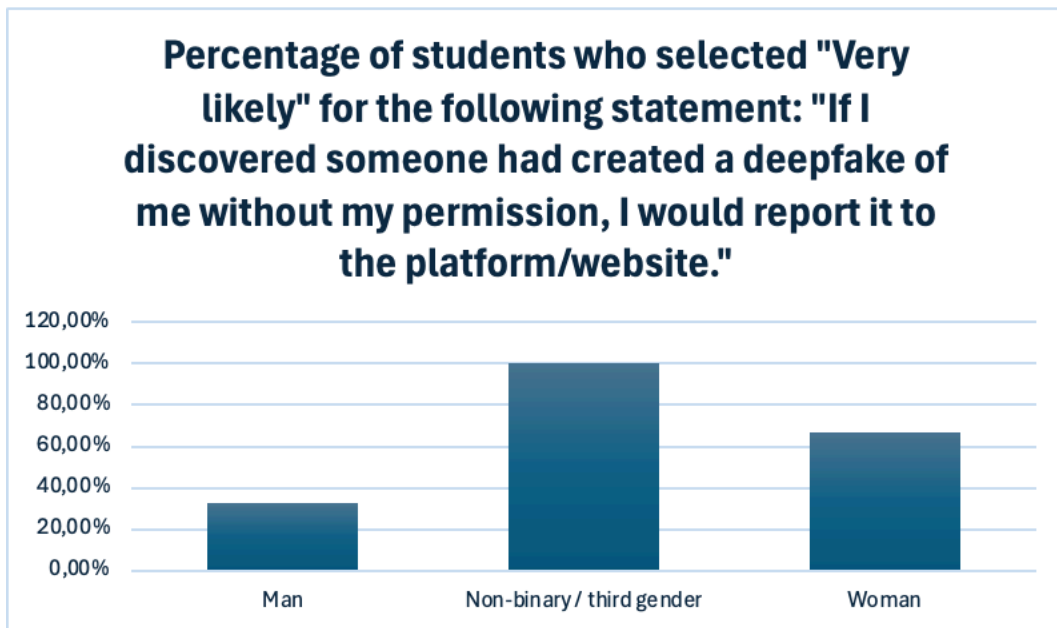
Figure 11: Attitudes toward reporting deepfake targeting to platform by gender

5. Confidence in Rights and Protections

Most respondents did not feel confident about their rights concerning deepfakes in the UK. Only 20% of women said they were familiar with their rights, compared to 35% of men–despite being disproportionately targeted as the subject of deepfakes. No focus group participants knew what to do if they found a deepfake of themselves. Many called for better education and public awareness, referencing successful campaigns on upskirting and revenge porn.
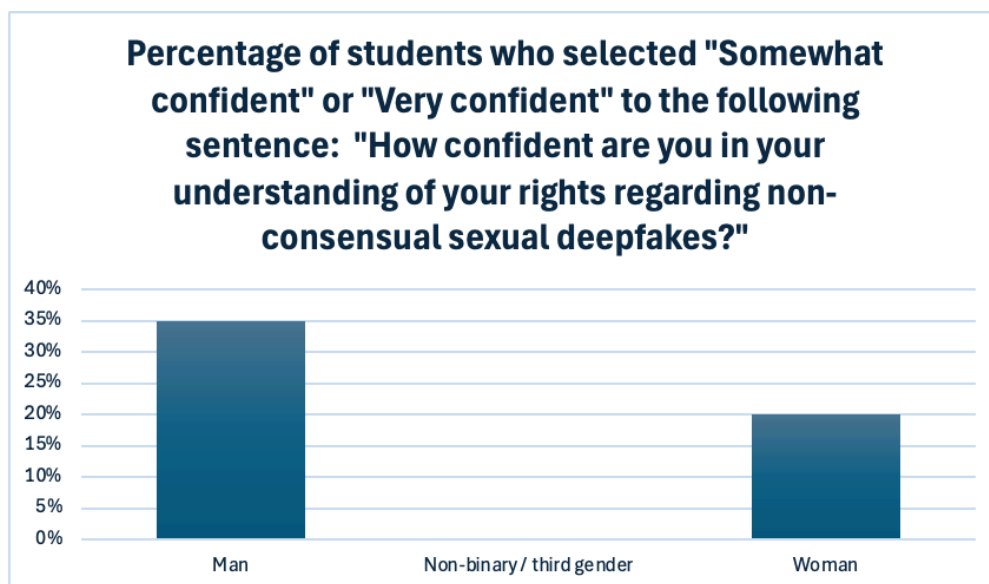

Figure 12: Confidence regarding understanding of rights by gender

Moreover, 68% of men and 38% of women felt only somewhat protected under current UK laws. Notably, 23% of women said they felt *not at all* protected, compared to just 7.5% of men. Focus group participants echoed these concerns, criticising UK policy as insufficient. Many believed the justice system not only fails to protect survivors but also retraumatises them, deterring future reports.
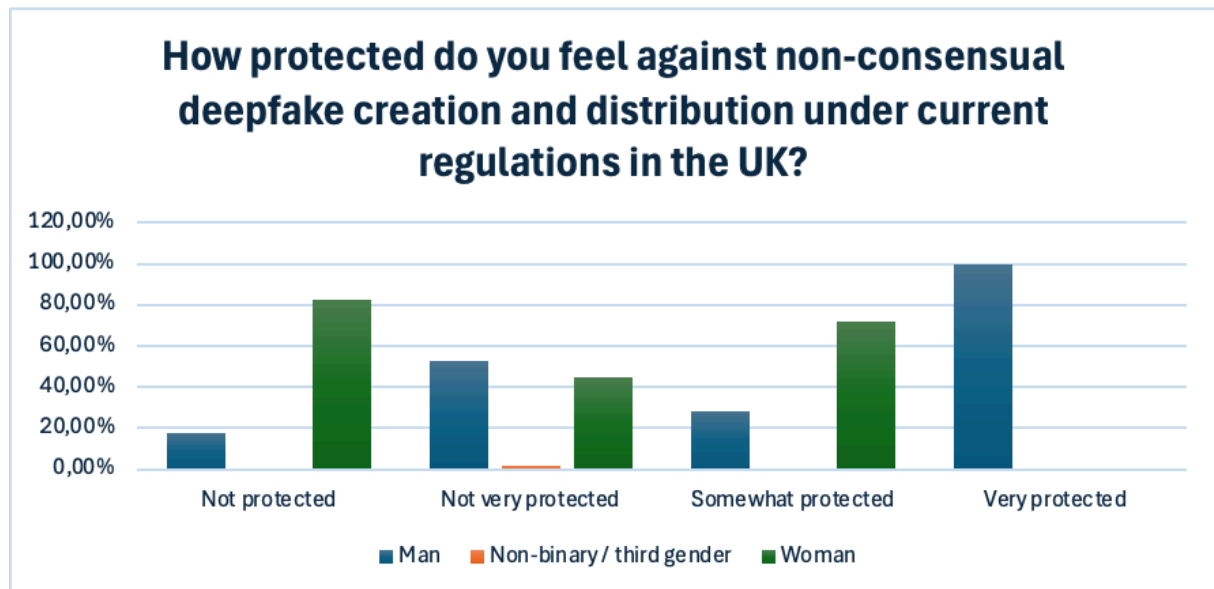

Figure 13: Perceptions regarding protection against deepfakes by gender

6. Attitudes Towards Criminalisation

When asked if creating sexual deepfakes should be illegal, 97% agreed. A majority (55%) supported prison sentences (Figure 14), and 97% also said sharing such content should be banned (Figure 15). However, only 44% supported criminal charges for distribution, and 21% were unsure of the appropriate punishment.
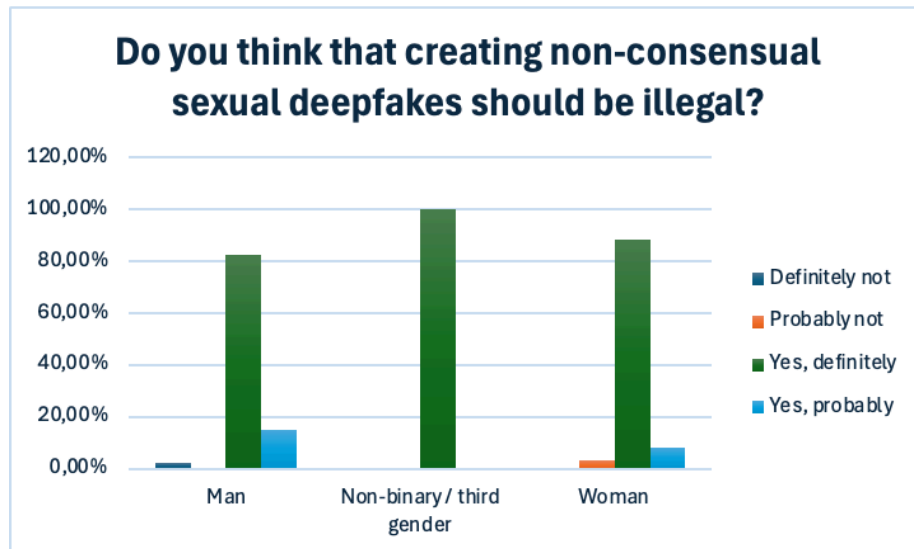

Figure 14: Opinions on the criminalisation of sexual deepfake content creation by gender
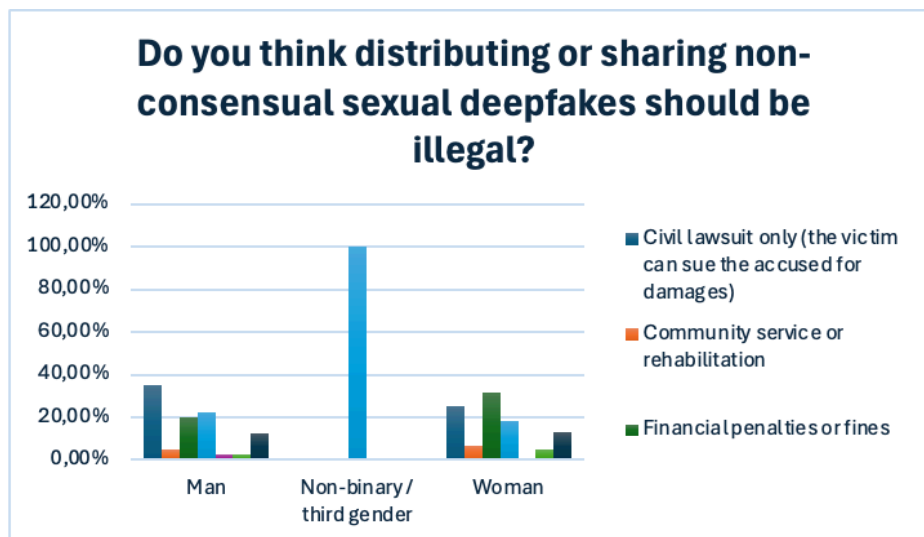

Figure 15: Opinions on the criminalisation of sexual deepfake content dissemination by gender

A clear gender divide emerged: women favoured stronger criminal penalties, while men were more likely to support civil or financial responses (Figure 16 & 17). 23% of men, compared to just 9% of women, preferred civil lawsuits; nearly 60% of women supported prison time, versus 46% of men. This suggests women are more likely to view online sexual violence as seriously as offline crimes and to push for criminal

accountability. While both male and female participants agreed that UK policy lags behind in addressing AI-related harm, women were more vocal about classifying sexual deepfakes as sexual offences.
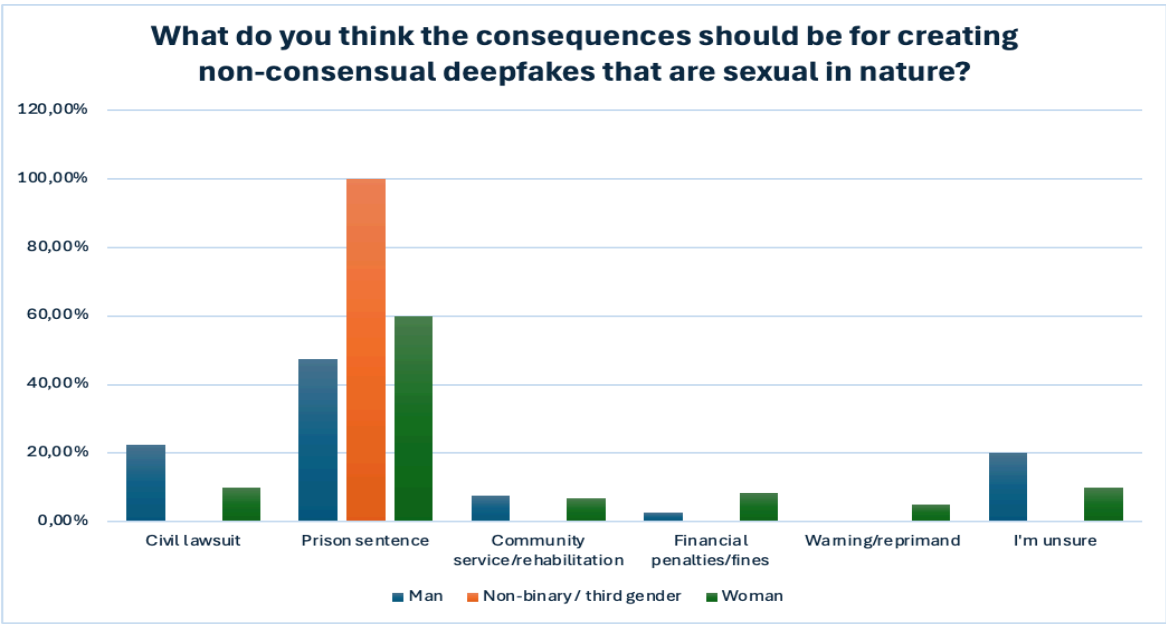

Figure 16: Opinions on appropriate punishment for sexually explicit deepfakes creation by gender
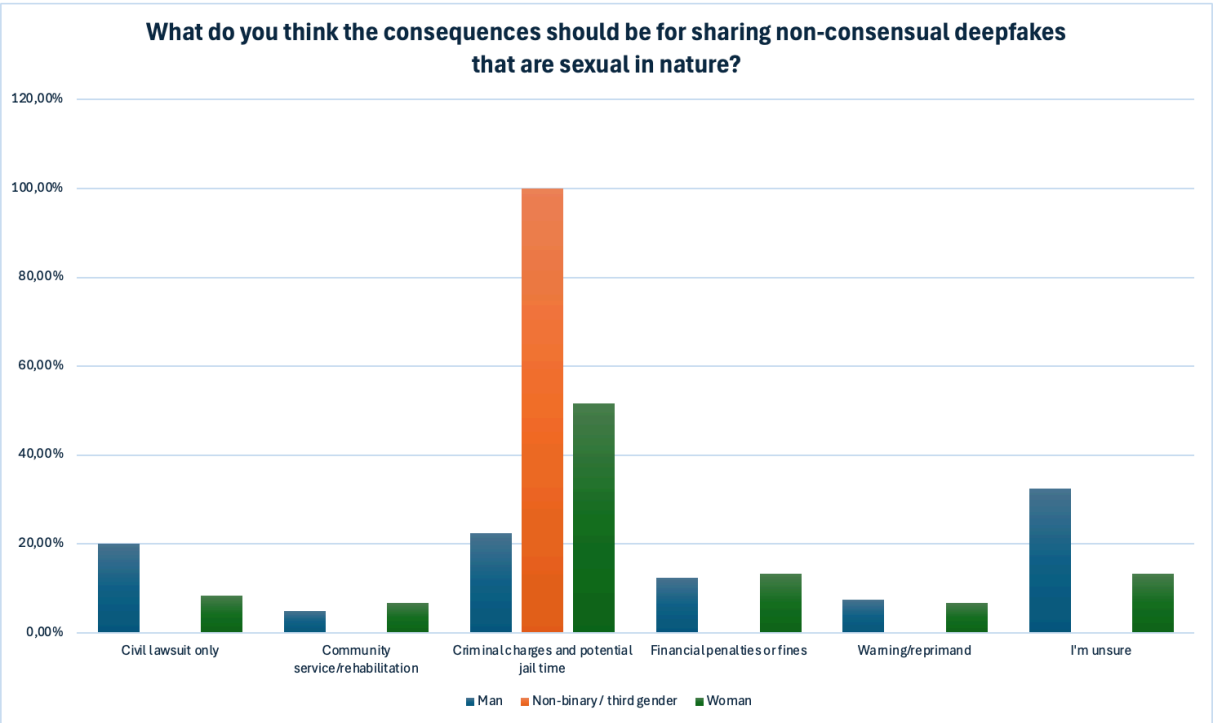

Figure 17: Opinions on the appropriate punishment for sexually explicit deepfake dissemination by gender

Conclusions

This research paper explored the attitudes of LSE students regarding the creation and dissemination of non-consensual deepfake content, focusing on perceived threat and the criminalisation of sexual deepfake content. Students recognise the harm produced by deepfakes. However, 20% of students would consider creating deepfakes. Further research could explore the motivation behind creation despite understanding its harmful impact. Additionally, further studies could investigate the dissonance between individuals' values and behaviours regarding the topic.

Women consistently report more concern about the potential consequences of deepfakes and prefer stronger criminal penalties, while men lean toward civil or financial responses. These findings suggest that media literacy efforts, platform moderation tools and legal frameworks need to be tailored to address the underlying social power dynamics that deepfakes exploit.

Ethnicity was not a significant factor in shaping attitudes. Most ethnic groups showed similar levels of concern about their image being used in deepfakes, except for white students, who were less concerned. However, further research needs to establish the salience of ethnicity in attitudes towards deepfake criminalisation.

Students agreed that creating and sharing sexual deepfakes should be criminalised. This finding stresses the need for victim-centred legal reform, including amendments to the existing criminal codes such as the UK's Non-Consensual Sexually Explicit Images and Videos (Offences) Bill.

At an institutional level, the findings show the necessity of LSE addressing deepfakes through awareness, accountability mechanisms, and intellectual discourse. Campaigns and accessible information can raise student awareness, while clear reporting procedures and policy guidelines prevent and appropriately penalise non-consensual deepfake use. Interdisciplinary ethics panels can foster multifaceted intellectual discussion.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Online Survey

Dear participant,
Thank you for taking the time to participate in this survey.

This study investigates how concerned LSE students are about the regulation and criminalisation of non-consensual deepfake content. It is part of a research project at the London School of Economics and Political Sciences, approved by the LSE Eden Centre, for LSE groups.

Data collection and privacy: We value your privacy. Your responses will remain completely anonymous and will only be used for the purposes of this research.

Disclaimer: This survey contains questions about deepfake technology, including non-consensual content, sexual deepfakes, and harassment-related scenarios. Some questions may be emotionally distressing or triggering.

What is your gender identity?

- ◯ Woman
- ◯ Man
- ◯ Non-binary / third gender
- ◯ Prefer not to say
- ◯ Other, prefer to self-describe

[   ]

What is your ethnicity?

- ◯ Asian or Asian British
- ◯ Black, Black British, Caribbean or African
- ◯ Mixed or Multiple Ethnic Groups
- ◯ White
- ◯ Arab
- ◯ Hispanic, Latino
- ◯ Other

What degree level are you?

- ◯ Undergraduate
- ◯ Masters
- ◯ PhD

→

According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, a deepfake is "an image or recording that has been convincingly altered and manipulated to misrepresent someone as doing or saying something that was not actually done or said".

Before reading this text, were you aware of the existence of deepfake technology?

○ Yes

○ No

To your knowledge, have you seen deepfakes?

○ Yes

○ No

○ Unsure

→

Have you ever created a deepfake?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No
- ◯ Prefer not to say

Would you ever consider creating a deepfake?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ Maybe
- ◯ No

→

Overall, do you think deepfakes have a positive or negative impact on society?

- ○ Extremely negative
- ○ Somewhat negative
- ○ Neither positive nor negative
- ○ Somewhat positive
- ○ Extremely positive

Are you concerned about your image being used to create a deepfake?

- ○ Yes
- ○ I am not sure
- ○ No

What do you think are the three most common types of deepfakes used?

- ☐ Scams and fraud (e.g., impersonating someone for financial gain)
- ☐ Advertising or marketing (e.g., AI-generated influencers or brand endorsements)
- ☐ Political deepfakes (e.g., fake speeches or manipulated public figures)
- ☐ Satirical or parody content
- ☐ Social media entertainment (e.g., face swaps, voiceovers, memes)
- ☐ Pornographic deepfakes involving celebrities or private individuals
- ☐ Fake news and misinformation (e.g., creating misleading or false reports)

Are you aware of non-consensual deepfakes being circulated in the LSE community?

- ○ No
- ○ Unsure
- ○ Yes

→

What type of deepfake was it?

Do you think sexual deepfakes are more often used to target:

- ○ Male
- ○ Female
- ○ Non-binary / third gender
- ○ Not sure

Do you think non-sexual deepfakes are more often used to target:

- ○ Male
- ○ Female
- ○ Non-binary / third gender
- ○ Not sure

→

Rate the following scenarios relating to the usage of deepfake content:

	I strongly disagree	I somewhat disagree	I somewhat agree	I strongly agree
I would be concerned if I saw a deepfake video depicting public figures or authority figures endorsing extremist ideologies.	○	○	○	○
I would be concerned if I encountered a deepfake video presented as legitimate news footage.	○	○	○	○
I would be concerned if I encountered a deepfake video that falsely depicted a private individual in compromising or harmful situations.	○	○	○	○
I would be concerned if I encountered a deepfake video that exploited or sexually objectified women or girls without their consent.	○	○	○	○

(This question is optional.) How would you react if you discovered someone had created a deepfake of you that was:

	Very bothered	Somewhat bothered	Not very bothered	Not bothered at all
Non-political content that you do not agree with	○	○	○	○
Political content that does not align with your political views	○	○	○	○
Sexual/intimate content	○	○	○	○
Embarrassing but not explicit content	○	○	○	○
Harmless/humorous content	○	○	○	○

(This question is optional.) If I discovered someone had created a deepfake of me without my permission, I would...

	Very unlikely	Unlikely	Likely	Very likely
...report it to the platform/website.	○	○	○	○
...report it to the police.	○	○	○	○
...seek legal help.	○	○	○	○
...tell friends and family.	○	○	○	○
...try to ignore it.	○	○	○	○
...confront the person who made it.	○	○	○	○
...not know what to do.	○	○	○	○

(This question is optional.) Imagine someone used publicly available photos from your social media to create realistic but fake intimate images of you without your consent. These images are then shared online. How much do you agree or disagree with the following sentences?

	I strongly disagree	I somewhat disagree	I somewhat agree	I strongly agree
I would be concerned about how it would affect my mental health.	○	○	○	○
I would be concerned about how it would affect the relationship with other LSE students.	○	○	○	○
I would be concerned about how it would affect the relationship with my friends.	○	○	○	○
I would be concerned about how it would affect the relationship with my family.	○	○	○	○
I would be concerned about how it would affect my job prospects.	○	○	○	○
I would be concerned that it would negatively impact my reputation within the LSE community.	○	○	○	○
I would be concerned about the risk of being physically harmed, stalked, and/or harassed as a result of those images.	○	○	○	○

→

Are you aware of any laws or legislation in the UK that address deepfakes or non-consensual intimate imagery?

○ Yes, I'm aware of specific laws

○ I think there might be some laws, but I'm not sure of the details

○ No, I'm not aware of any laws

○ I'm unsure

How confident are you in your understanding of your rights regarding non-consensual sexual deepfakes?

○ Very confident

○ Somewhat confident

○ Somewhat not confident

○ Not confident

How protected do you feel against non-consensual deepfake creation and distribution under current regulations in the UK?

○ Very protected

○ Somewhat protected

○ Not very protected

○ Not protected

Do you think *distributing* or *sharing* non-consensual sexual deepfakes should be illegal?

- ○ Yes, definitely
- ○ Yes, probably
- ○ Probably not
- ○ Definitely not

Do you think that *creating* non-consensual sexual deepfakes should be illegal?

- ○ Yes, definitely
- ○ Yes, probably
- ○ Probably not
- ○ Definitely not

What responsibility should platforms have regarding non-consensual intimate deepfakes?

- ○ No responsibility--users should self-regulate
- ○ Automatically detect and remove them
- ○ Remove them when reported by users
- ○ Remove them when ordered by law enforcement
- ○ I'm not sure

What do you think the consequences should be for sharing non-consensual deepfakes that are NOT sexual in nature (e.g., putting someone's face in embarrassing or false scenarios)?

○ Warning or reprimand such as being banned from using AI tools

○ Prison sentence

○ No legal consequences needed

○ Civil lawsuit only (the victim can sue the accused for damages)

○ Financial penalties or fines

○ I'm unsure

○ Community service or rehabilitation

What do you think the consequences should be for creating non-consensual deepfakes that are sexual in nature?

○ Community service or rehabilitation

○ Civil lawsuit only (the victim can sue the accused for damages)

○ Financial penalties or fines

○ Prison sentence

○ Warning or reprimand such as being banned from using AI tools

○ No legal consequences needed

○ I'm unsure

What do you think the consequences should be for *sharing* non-consensual deepfakes that are *sexual* in nature

○ No legal consequences needed

○ Civil lawsuit only (the victim can sue the accused for damages)

○ Community service or rehabilitation

○ Warning or reprimand such as being banned from using AI tools

○ Im unsure

○ Financial penalties or fines

○ Criminal charges and potential jail time

→

Appendix B: Focus Group Script

Dear participant,

Thank you for joining today's focus group. We appreciate your time and willingness to contribute to this important discussion.

The study explores how concerned LSE students are about the regulation and criminalisation of non-consensual deepfake content.

Your privacy is important to us. This focus group is not being recorded, and your contributions will remain completely anonymous. Notes will be taken, but no names or identifying information will be included in any reporting or publications.

We kindly ask that you do not share what others say outside of this room, in order to protect each participant's confidentiality.

Please be aware that this session includes discussions about deepfake technology, including non-consensual content, sexual deepfakes, and harassment-related scenarios. Some topics may be emotionally distressing or triggering.

Your participation is completely voluntary. You are free to leave the session at any time, and you may choose not to answer any question. If you decide to withdraw, your input will not be used.

The session will last approximately 60 minutes.

By continuing with this session, you confirm that:

- You have understood the information provided,

- You agree to participate voluntarily,

- And you consent to your anonymised contributions being used for research purposes.

If you have any concerns at any point, please feel free to let the facilitator know.

Focus Group Questions:

Awareness
1. What do you know about deepfakes
    a. When did you first hear about deepfakes

     b. What have you heard about deepfakes, and from where?

     c. Where do you come across deepfakes and in what context?

     d. What kind of deepfakes do you come across the most?

2. Where have you come across deepfakes, and where do you feel are the most common platforms to come across deepfakes
3. Why do you think people create and/or disseminate deepfakes?
4. How would you tell if something is a deepfake? Can you tell
5. Have you noticed a surge in the distribution of deepfakes nowadays?
6. If yes, which type of deepfake content have you come across?
   - Humorous or entertainment, eg TikTok, Social Media
   - Humorous Political eg presidents playing video games
   - Political misinformation
   - Sexual or intimate images
   - Sexual or intimate videos

What percentage of sexual content online do you think is deepfakes?

Perception
7. When you think about deepfakes, what concerns, if any, come to mind?
8. How would you feel if someone created a deepfake of you without your permission?
9. Do you think deepfakes affect men and women differently? How so?
   a. Why do you think it is predominately women who are affected by deepfakes
10. What specific risks might women and girls face from deepfake technology that others might not?
11. Have you heard about deepfakes being used to create non-consensual intimate imagery?
    a. What are your thoughts on this?
    b. Should this be considered gender based violence
12. Is there a difference in your reaction to non-consensual sexual imagery of celebrities/public figures and of ordinary people?
    a. Does one evoke a bigger reaction than the other? How?
13. Do you think this type of image manipulation could lead to other forms of harassment or real-world harm for women?
    a. In which ways are these different to online content based sexual abuse (revenge porn)
    b. Do they think one kind causes more harm than others? How?
14. What do you think are the uses of deepfake content and its implications?
15. Do you think there's a moral difference between generating non-consensual deepfake imagery for personal use and for distribution purposes?

Legality and criminal justice

16. Should creating non-consensual sexual deepfakes be illegal? What about sharing them?
17. What would you do if you came across sexual deepfakes:
    a. Of a celebrity
    b. Of your friend
    c. Of yourself?
18. How likely would you be to report a sexual deepfake?
19. Do you think the police would help you pursue justice?
20. Should sexual non-consensual deepfakes be considered sexual exploitation?
21. What role should platforms play in preventing or removing this content?
22. Are you aware of any existing laws in the UK that address deepfakes or similar issues?
23. What would appropriate punishments look like for this type of abuse?
24. What punishment is suitable for those who consume and/or create deepfakes?