

Netsafe Scam Update January 2026

For the second January running, sextortion scams are on the rise, and Netsafe warns the increase in money lost is cause for serious concern.

In January 2026, Netsafe received 176 reports of sextortion - up from 142 reports in December 2025, an almost 24% increase. More concerningly, however, the amount of money lost to sextortion scams jumped from \$2,100 in December to a staggering \$6,000 in the first month of the year.

It comes after Netsafe issued a warning in 2025 after data showed sextortion threats jumped 68% in the first three months of the year when compared to 2024.

Netsafe Digital Harms Service Manager Alex Yi says sextortion is a serious crime with significant consequences. He urged people who have been affected to seek support.

“You are not alone. Support is available, and there are ways to take back control. The most important thing is to reach out for help – there are options to stop the harm.”

Sextortion scams are a type of blackmail when someone threatens to share a nude image or sexually explicit video of a person unless they pay them or provide more sexual content.

Anyone of any age can be affected by sextortion. The impact ranges from mild embarrassment and a sense of humiliation to extreme emotional harm. Help is available for anyone who is experiencing sextortion.

Yi says while most people connect with Netsafe early and do not pay the scammer, the rise in financial losses suggests there is a significant number of people who are paying. This encourages scammers to continue targeting people.

Yi says people who have been targeted should do three things: stop all contact, make their online accounts private and contact Netsafe early.

“Firstly, stop all contact with the scammer and never reply. Regardless of what they say or what they threaten, disengaging from them completely is the best first step.”

Yi explains sextortion scammers are financially motivated and work at scale, targeting many people at once and focusing on people who are responsive to their threats.

“The second step is to manage your digital footprint, make your accounts private and don’t share any unnecessary information. These scammers rely on using ‘friends lists’ to find the people whom they will threaten to share the content with, so keeping your connections private protects them as well as yourself.

“The third step is to let Netsafe know early. There is no shame in having been the target of this scam. It is common across the world. We speak to people every day

about sextortion. We can help guide you on what to do, what not to do, and help you protect yourself.”

How to Spot the Warning Signs

Sextortion often starts with a simple conversation. It can happen on social media, messaging apps, dating apps or online games. Here are some red flags:

- Moving platforms – You meet someone on one app, and they quickly encourage you to continue the conversation on another platform.
- Inconsistent profiles – Their photos or details don’t match up, or their language use seems unnatural.
- Sexualised conversations – They introduce sexual topics early, often pushing boundaries.
- Avoiding video calls – They may claim their camera or microphone isn’t working, avoiding showing their real identity.

What to Do If You Are Targeted

If someone is threatening you, remember: this is not your fault, and there is help available.

- Stop engaging immediately – Do not send any more images or money, even if they make threats.
- Save everything – Take screenshots and keep all messages. This evidence can help stop them.
- Block and report – Block their profile and report the content on the platform it was shared.
- Seek help – Contact Netsafe for confidential, judgment-free support. You don’t have to deal with this alone.
- Report to Police – Call 105 for non-emergencies or 111 if you feel at immediate risk.

For Parents and Caregivers: How to Support Your Child

Children and teens can be particularly vulnerable, but supporting them starts with talking about sharing nudes:

- Stay engaged – Know what platforms, apps, and games your young person is using and who they’re interacting with.
- Talk often – Make online safety a regular conversation. Let them know they can come to you for help.
- Check privacy settings – Turn off location sharing, set profiles to private, and set up family pairing functions.
- Be approachable – Fear of losing phone or internet access can stop kids from asking for help. Reassure them they won’t be punished for speaking up.

- Be non-judgmental – Feelings of shame can hold young people back from seeking help. It's important to show them they can come to you without facing judgment.
- Understand the long-term impact – Sextortion can be distressing and can have lasting effects. If your child is a victim of online exploitation, they need your support.

Report to Netsafe

If you need assistance or support Netsafe has got you covered.

Contact us by completing [an online report form](#), emailing us on help@netsafe.org.nz or texting on 4282.

We can offer support, including guiding you through any steps you may be able to take if you have been caught up in a sextortion scam, and advice on how to stay safe in future. We may be able to help with reporting profiles and content to the online platforms. [Here is how our process works.](#)

Our helpline is open from 9am – 6pm weekdays.

Our free number is 0508 638 723.

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About Netsafe

Netsafe is an independent non-profit organisation supporting people in Aotearoa to have safe and positive online experiences. We keep people of all ages safe online by providing free support, advice, and education. Visit netsafe.org.nz for free resources or to report incidents of online harm.