

Reference: 02058748

Information Requests  
[information.requests@ofcom.org.uk](mailto:information.requests@ofcom.org.uk)

28 August 2025

## Freedom of Information request: Right to know request

Thank you for your request for information about differences in the volume and nature of complaints received about older people compared to younger people.

We received this request on 4 August 2025 and we have considered your request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 ("the FOI Act").

### Your request

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*"I am writing to request information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. We are conducting research into perceptions of ageism in media and republican attitudes, and we would like to understand whether there are differences in the volume or nature of complaints made to Ofcom relating to older people versus younger people engaging in similar behaviours.*

*Specifically, we are seeking any available data you hold on complaints received over the past five years (or the most recent period available) relating to:*

*1. Older individuals (e.g., aged 50+) engaging in behaviours that may be perceived as "inappropriate" or unconventional - such as:*

- \* Wearing revealing clothing*
- \* Participating in naturism or nudity*
- \* Displaying romantic or sexual interest (e.g. dating shows)*
- \* Using irreverent, sexual, or provocative language*
- \* Displaying high levels of body confidence or physical intimacy*

*2. The same types of behaviours as above, but involving younger individuals (e.g., under 35s).*

*3. If possible, please provide any breakdowns by:*

- \* Age category (e.g. younger adults vs older adults)*
- \* Gender (e.g., older women vs older men)*
- \* Nature of complaint (e.g., 'offensive', 'inappropriate', 'uncomfortable to watch', etc.)*
- \* Outcome of the complaint (e.g. upheld, dismissed, investigated further)*

*We understand that not all complaints may include age or gender details explicitly, but any data you are able to provide, whether qualitative, quantitative, or anecdotal summaries, would be extremely helpful in exploring potential double standards in societal attitudes toward ageing, especially in media portrayals."*

## Our response

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By way of background, Ofcom publishes decisions about complaints we have received in the [Broadcast and On Demand Bulletin](#) (“the Bulletin”) every fortnight on our website. The Bulletin covers a range of cases, including those which Ofcom has escalated for full investigation, those which Ofcom has decided not to pursue because they did not raise issues warranting investigation, and those which fall outside Ofcom’s remit.

We log all complaints we receive on our complaints database, and they are categorised by which rules in [Ofcom Broadcasting Code](#) may have been breached.

Turning to your request, we do have a category for “Age discrimination” complaints, and complaints from 2020 onwards which have been categorised as such can be viewed using the ‘Issue’ filter in [the Bulletin](#) from 2020 onwards. However, this complaint category is intended for complaints where the protected characteristic of age is the subject of the complaint, such as discriminatory treatment on the basis of age, rather than the scenarios which you have outlined.

There is no specific category used for the types of complaints that you have referenced in your request. Complaints that may relate to the scenarios you mentioned could be logged under a range of categories depending on exactly how a complaint is presented, for example “Generally accepted standards”, “Nudity”, “Sexual material”, or the previously mentioned “Age discrimination”. These categories are used for a wide range of complaint topics.

Given that we do not hold searchable information in the format of your request and would need to look at each complaint on a case-by-case basis, with volumes comprising tens of thousands of complaints a year, this would take us over the permitted timescales for FOI requests. Under Section 12 of the FOI Act, Ofcom is not obliged to comply with this request for information as we estimate that the cost of complying with this request would exceed the ‘appropriate limit’. The appropriate limit is set out in the Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2004 (‘the Regulations’), and is, for Ofcom, £450. The Regulations provide that costs are to be estimated at a rate of £25 per person per hour, which equates to 18 hours of time. That sum is intended to cover the estimated costs involved in determining whether Ofcom holds the information requested, identifying, locating, retrieving and extracting the information from any document containing it. Ofcom estimates that it would take at least 18 hours to search for and retrieve the information.

You can consider submitting a narrower request, for example by requesting information regarding a specific category of complaint (e.g. complaints regarding age discrimination). Should you narrow the request we will consider it under the FOI Act.

We hope this information is helpful. If you have any further queries, then please send them to [information.requests@ofcom.org.uk](mailto:information.requests@ofcom.org.uk) – quoting the reference number above in any future communications.

Yours sincerely,

Information Requests

**Request an internal review**

If you are unhappy with the response you have received to your request for information, or think that your request was refused without a reason valid under the law, you may ask for an internal review. If you do, it will be subject to an independent review within Ofcom. We will either uphold the original decision, or reverse or modify it.

If you would like to ask us to carry out an internal review, you should get in touch within two months of the date of this letter. There is no statutory deadline for us to complete our internal review, and the time it takes will depend on the complexity of the request. But we will try to complete the review within 20 working days (or no more than 40 working days in exceptional cases) and keep you informed of our progress. Please email the Information Requests team ([information.requests@ofcom.org.uk](mailto:information.requests@ofcom.org.uk)) to request an internal review.

**Taking it further**

If you are unhappy with the outcome of our internal review, then you have the right to [complain to the Information Commissioner's Office](#).