

Reference: 1968648

Information Requests

information.requests@ofcom.org.uk

28 March 2025

Freedom of Information request: Right to know request

Thank you for your request for information about Data on Online Platforms and Harmful Content Involving Youth.

We received this request on 28 February 2025 and we have considered your request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 ("the FOI Act").

Your request and our response

I would like to request information on the following:

1. Any reports or data Ofcom has compiled on harmful content related to online adult work, including the sexualisation of young individuals (aged 18-25).

We have interpreted the term "online adult work" in your request to mean pornography uploaded by content creators on adult websites.

Ofcom has published general information about UK internet users' access to pornography on page 50 of our Online Nation 2024 Report:

<https://www.ofcom.org.uk/siteassets/resources/documents/research-and-data/online-research/online-nation/2024/online-nation-2024-report.pdf?v=386238>

Previous reports can be found on this page: <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/media-use-and-attitudes/online-habits/online-nation/>

We have interpreted your request about "harmful content related to online adult work" to be about harm caused by, or to, content creators uploading pornography to adult websites. Ofcom has not compiled reports or data on this subject.

In order to try and provide information that might be relevant to the broader context of your request, we have included a link to our draft [Guidance on a safer life online for women and girls](#) which addresses issues of sexualisation and harassment, including misogyny and sexually explicit content: research from Durham University found that 12%, or one in every eight titles, of analysable

content on the landing pages of the top three user-to-user adult services in the UK described sexual activity that constituted sexual violence.¹²

The draft guidance also sets out steps service providers can take to address online gender-based harms, such as setting policies defining and prohibiting nonconsensual sexualisation.

2. If Ofcom has received any complaints about platforms facilitating or promoting content featuring underage-adjacent personas or otherwise problematic content.

Between 1 October 2023 and 11 March 2025 there were **318** complaints about online content made to Ofcom which contain the keywords “Hard core, Porn, Adult Content, Pornography, Nude, Sex”. These are parameters which were used to identify complaints relating to pornography or adult content.

In order to consider complaints that may relate to “under-age adjacent personas”, this data set was then further filtered using the following keywords, “barely legal, underage, teen, young, kid, under 18, twink, child”.

This returned **176** complaints, which were then reviewed for content and relevance to the request. As a result of this sense-checking exercise, **19** complaints were found to be relevant.

Please note that we are unable to provide further information about these complaints as we consider this information exempt from disclosure under section 44(1) of the FOI Act. Section 44(1) of the FOI Act provides that information is exempt from disclosure if its disclosure is prohibited by or under any enactment. The enactment that prohibits the disclosure of this information is section 393(1) of the Communications Act 2003 (“the Communications Act”). Under this section, we are prohibited from disclosing information with respect to a particular business that has been obtained in the exercise of our regulatory functions, unless that business consents or one of the statutory gateways under section 393(2) of the Communications Act is met, neither of which apply here. Section 44 of the FOI Act is an absolute exemption and therefore is not subject to the public interest test.

We have been unable to consider complaints relating to ‘otherwise problematic content’ as this phrase is not sufficiently defined to enable us to conduct the required searches.

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

Yours sincerely,

¹ For their study, the authors used the World Health Organisation definition of sexual violence, which is likely to include both extreme pornographic content and legal pornographic content. They focused on four broad categories of sexual violence: sexual activity between family members; aggression and assault; image-based sexual abuse and coercive and exploitative sexual activity. Source: Vera-Gray, F., McGlynn, C., Kureshi, I. and Butterby, K., 2021. [Sexual violence as a sexual script in mainstream online pornography](#), *The British Journal of Criminology*, 61 (5). [accessed 24 October 2024].

² Some of this content may meet the threshold for illegal content, including extreme pornography. Extreme pornography describes a category of illegal sexual material which includes content that depicts non-consensual behaviours, physical violence and threats to life. For more information, see the [Illegal Harms Register of Risks](#). [accessed 13 February 2025].

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) 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](#).