

Reference: 2098500

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

27 November 2025

## Freedom of Information request: Right to know request

Thank you for your request for information about VPN/Internet Monitoring Tools.

We received this request on 31 October 2025 and we have considered your request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 ("the FOI Act").

### Your request and our response

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*Please provide information regarding the tools Ofcom use to determine peoples' use of the internet. Specifically, the tools that provided the data for the following claims as reported in the BBC;*

*"Ofcom told the BBC it believed the number of people using VPNs for general use reached 1.5 million daily in July, after the law came in, but has since decreased to around one million."*

*"According to Ofcom, visits to pornography sites in general in the UK have reduced by almost a third in the three months since 25 July."*

*Both quotes are from the following article, highlighting their public interest: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cqkz3m3re1zo>*

*Please provide the following:*

*The name of the third-party data provider (e.g., company or research firm) that supplied the underlying internet traffic or usage data used to generate these specific statistics.*

*The formal name of the research project, service, or data stream used as the primary source for the claims mentioned above.*

Our data sources were Apptopia, SimilarWeb and Ipsos Iris. The information regarding daily users of VPNs was obtained from Apptopia. The information regarding visits to adult websites was obtained from SimilarWeb and Ipsos Iris.

The analysis of data received from the above sources was conducted by Ofcom. There is not a formal name for the research project, service or data stream. This work falls under Ofcom's normal research

and supervisory work. The work was undertaken to analyse the impact of the introduction of age assurance online. This is foundational work to assessing compliance, the efficacy of age assurance and to understanding the impacts on users' safety online.

*The total expenditure (including VAT and support costs) incurred by Ofcom for all third-party software or data services used for internet traffic monitoring within its regulatory functions in the last three completed financial years (e.g., FY 2022/23, 2023/24, 2024/25).*

The aggregated cost for Ofcom's expenditure within the parameters of your request can be seen in the table below:

2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
£111,118.81	£97,834.26	£264,348.55

Please note the table above shows the total expenditure on third-party services for all work associated with internet traffic monitoring and is not attributable to a specific stream.

We hope this information is helpful.

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](#).