

Technical Report - Adult Users' Attitudes to Age Verification on Adult Sites

Preface

The Adult Users' Attitudes to Age Verification (AV) research was undertaken by Yonder Consulting on behalf of Ofcom. The main objectives of this study were to understand adult internet users' past experiences with AV methods online, and their attitudes towards these different methods in general as well as in the specific context of accessing pornographic content online.

The insights drawn from this research will inform relevant aspects of Ofcom's future work on AV under the Video-Sharing Platform (VSP) regime and help to guide Ofcom's engagement with adult VSPs regarding their AV measures. This research will also contribute to Ofcom's understanding of the wider context for AV on adult sites.

The research used a mixed-method approach consisting of a quantitative online survey and qualitative focus groups and in-depth interviews. Further information about the study is summarised in the sections below.

Summary of Approach

- This research was a mixed-method quantitative and qualitative study, conducted with a sample of UK adults aged 18+, to understand adult internet users' attitudes to AV on adult sites.
- Respondents for the quantitative phase of the research were recruited via Yonder's proprietary online panel 'YonderLive', which contains around 150,000 panellists from the UK. The gender breakdown of the sample was skewed towards men to reflect the main profile of X-rated adult site/app users. This targeted approach allowed us to better understand the attitudes towards AV by users of these sites.
- A total of 2,158 quantitative interviews were conducted between 22nd March to 10th April 2022.
- The qualitative phase of this research followed on from the quantitative element. For this stage, 4 x 90-minute in person focus groups were held in London and Manchester alongside 12 x 45-minute individual interviews, which were held online with participants recruited from across the UK.
- Qualitative research participants were recruited via a recontact sample from the AV quantitative survey, complemented with 'free-finding' methods. Individuals were selected based on their age, gender and self-reporting of having seen or not seen online pornographic content at any point in the past.

Quantitative Research

Introduction

Yonder Consulting surveyed 2,158 UK adults aged 18+ to understand adult internet users' past experiences with AV methods online and their attitudes towards these different methods, both in general and in the specific context of accessing pornographic content online.

Details of the sample design, research methodology, and weighting procedures for this study are outlined on the following pages. A note on statistical reliability is also included.

Sample Design

A sample of UK internet users aged 18-84 was provided by Yonder's proprietary online panel, [YonderLive](#), which is made up of 150,000 internet users across the UK.

Quotas

Interview quotas were applied so that the final sample was skewed towards men to reflect the main profile of X-rated adult site/app users. These quotas were sourced from data which established the real user profiles of adult sites.

Quotas were set on the following variables:

- Gender
- Age (18-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64, 64-74, 75-84)

The table below details the specific quotas that were used for this study:

Demographic group	Category	Quota
Gender	Male	74%
	Female	26%
Age	18-24	15%
	25-34	25%
	35-44	20%
	45-54	15%
	55-64	4%
	65-74	2%
	75-84	6%

Fieldwork

All interviews were conducted between 22nd March to 10th April 2022 using Yonder's online panel (YonderLive), closing fieldwork at 2,158 interviews.

Due to the highly sensitive nature of some of the research topics, respondents were allowed to opt out of questions relating specifically to experiences of pornographic content online. They were also forewarned of the sensitive nature of the research topic and asked to give their consent to participate,

in line with Market Research Society (MRS) guidelines. A total of 142 respondents opted to end the survey due to the sensitivity of the content.

Duplication checks took place to ensure that respondents could not complete the survey more than once. As well as duplication checks, Yonder carried out the following checks during and post fieldwork as standard:

- IP geo-locator checks to ensure the respondents are all based in the UK.
- Front and back-end quality control questions within the survey to ensure respondents are answering logically and consistently.
- 'Trap' questions within the survey to ensure respondents are paying attention and reading each code i.e. At random, respondents would be asked to select a specific code and those who did not choose the correct option would be removed from the data.
- Manual speeder check post-fieldwork to remove any respondents deemed to have proceeded through the questionnaire at an unreasonable pace.
- Manual flatlining checks post-fieldwork to check grid questions and ensure respondents aren't answering the same codes across an unreasonable range of grid / scale questions.
- Open end checks to ensure respondents are answering thoughtfully and not spamming answers.

Weighting

The data has not been weighted as the sample naturally fell in line with the demographic profile of X-rated adult site/app users, particularly the skew towards men.

Sample Representativeness

The following table shows the unweighted sample:

Demographic group	Unweighted counts	Unweighted %	Quota %
Male	1595	74%	74%
Female	553	26%	26%
18-24	218	10%	15%
25-34	429	20%	25%
35-44	455	21%	20%
45-54	370	17%	15%
55-64	321	15%	4%
65-74	249	12%	2%
75+	116	5%	6%
ABC1	1193	55%	N/A
C2DE	951	44%	N/A
White	1887	87%	N/A
MEG	250	12%	N/A

Significance Testing

Significance testing for the Adult Users' Attitudes to AV on Adult Sites research has consistently been applied at 95%.

The following was applied to published data tables:

- If unweighted bases are less than 10 for any total columns or cross-breaks for any of the tables, these have been removed.
- Added a note on the tables to explain that where data is not shown, this is because the base sizes were too small to allow reliable interpretation of the data.
- We include the following note to tables where relevant: "Data suppressed where unweighted base is lower than 10. ** very small base (under 30) ineligible for sig testing, * small base (under 50)".

Guide to Statistical Reliability

The variation between the sample results and the "true" values (the findings that would have been obtained if everyone had been interviewed) can be predicted from the sample sizes on which the results are based, and on the number of times that a particular answer is given. The confidence with which we can make this prediction is calculated at the 95% that is, the chances are 95 in 100 that the "true" values will fall within a specified range. This sample was unweighted so does not require the use of an Effective Sample Size.

The table below illustrates the required ranges for different sample sizes and percentage results at the '95% confidence interval'.

Approximate sampling tolerances applicable to percentages at or near these levels

Unweighted sample size		10% or 90%	20% or 80%	30% or 70%	40% or 60%	50%
		±	±	±	±	±
TOTAL	2158	1.3%	1.7%	1.9%	2.1%	2.1%
Male	1595	1.5%	2.0%	2.2%	2.4%	2.5%
Female	553	2.5%	3.3%	3.8%	4.1%	4.2%
18-24	218	4.0%	5.3%	6.1%	6.5%	6.6%
25-34	429	2.8%	3.8%	4.3%	4.6%	4.7%
35-44	455	2.8%	3.7%	4.2%	4.5%	4.6%
45-54	370	3.1%	4.1%	4.7%	5.0%	5.1%
55-64	321	3.3%	4.4%	5.0%	5.4%	5.5%
65-74	249	3.7%	5.0%	5.7%	6.1%	6.2%
75+	116	5.5%	7.3%	8.3%	8.9%	9.1%
ABC1	1193	1.7%	2.3%	2.6%	2.8%	2.8%
C2DE	951	1.9%	2.5%	2.9%	3.1%	3.2%
White	1887	1.4%	1.8%	2.1%	2.2%	2.3%
MEG	250	3.7%	5.0%	5.7%	6.1%	6.2%

Seen pornography	1329	1.6%	2.2%	2.5%	2.6%	2.7%
Not seen pornography	639	2.3%	3.1%	3.6%	3.8%	3.9%
Accessed subscription site	138	5.0%	6.7%	7.6%	8.2%	8.3%

For example, if 30% or 70% of a sample of 2,158 gives a particular answer, the chances are 95 in 100 that the “true” value will fall within the range of +/- 1.9 percentage points from the sample results.

When results are compared between separate groups within a sample, different results may be obtained. The difference may be ‘real’, or it may occur by chance (because not everyone has been interviewed). To test if the difference is a real one – i.e. if it is ‘statistically significant’ – we again have to know the size of the samples, the percentages giving at a certain answer and the degree of confidence chosen. If we assume 95% confidence interval, the difference between two sample results must be greater than the values given in the table below to be significant.¹

Differences required for significant at or near these percentages

Sample sizes being compared	10% or 90%	20% or 80%	30% or 70%	40% or 60%	50%
	±	±	±	±	±
GENDER: Male v Female (1,595 v 553)	3.20%	4.00%	4.50%	4.80%	4.90%
AGE: Young (18-34) v Older (55+) (647 v 686)	3.40%	4.40%	5.00%	5.30%	5.40%
Seen pornography v Not seen pornography (1,329 v 639)	3.10%	3.90%	4.40%	4.70%	4.80%

¹ It is important to note that these numbers are estimates. Further testing should be carried out on individual examples to understand whether differences are significant.

NET definitions featured in the published tables

Certain subgroups within the sample were grouped together to aid analysis, and are featured alongside this report in the published data tables. The definitions of these so-called NETs are as follows:

Category	Question	NET	Definition
Seen adult content	Q10. Have you ever encountered or accessed pornographic content online?	Yes	Codes a-d at Q10
		No	Code f at Q10
Accessed subscription sites	Q10. Have you ever encountered or accessed pornographic content online?	Yes	Code b at Q10
Experience in AV	Q1. Have you ever had to prove your age online, for example, to set up online banking or purchase age-restricted products (e.g. alcohol or tobacco)?	Yes	Code a at Q1
		No	Code b at Q1
Willingness towards AV	Q6. In general, to what extent do you agree with the following statements? "I don't mind proving my age for certain online activities generally"	Willing	Strongly agree + agree at Q6 row a
		Neutral	Neutral at Q6 row a
		Unwilling	Strongly disagree + disagree at Q6 row a
Willingness towards AV on adult sites	Q12. Would you mind being asked to prove your age... "To access pornographic content on a dedicated pornographic site"	Willing	No, I wouldn't mind at Q12 row b
		Unwilling	Yes, I would mind at Q12 row b
		Prefer not to say	Prefer not to say/not applicable at Q12 row b
Expectation of AV	Q6. In general, to what extent do you agree with the following statements? "I expect to have to prove my age for certain online activities"	Expected	Strongly agree + agree at Q6 row b
		Neutral	Neutral at Q6 row b
		Unexpected	Strongly disagree + disagree at Q6 row b
Attitude towards AV	Q6. In general, to what extent do you agree with the following statements? "I think people should be required to prove their age for certain online activities"	Accepting	Strongly agree + agree at Q6 row c
		Neutral	Neutral at Q6 row c
		Unaccepting	Strongly disagree + disagree at Q6 row c
Attitude towards AV on adult sites		Accepting	'Yes' at Q11 row b
		Unaccepting	'No' at Q11 row b

Category	Question	NET	Definition
	Q11. In general, do you think internet users should be required to prove they are aged 18 or over when attempting to access pornographic content online: "On a dedicated pornographic site?"	Don't know	'Don't know' at Q11 row b
		Prefer not to say	'Prefer not to say' at Q11 row b
Most comfortable method	Q15 How would you feel about being asked to provide each of the following to prove your age to access pornographic content online? and Q16. How would you feel about being asked to provide each of the following to prove your age to access pornographic content online? We understand that you may not have experienced this personally, so please base your answers on what you think you might do.	Date of birth	Those whose score highest NET: Comfortable for 'Date of birth' out of all methods at Q15 or Q16
		Photo of passport or driving licence	Those whose score highest NET: Comfortable for 'Photo of passport or driving licence' out of all methods at Q15 or Q16
		Photo of yourself	Those whose score highest NET: Comfortable for 'Photo of yourself' out of all methods at Q15 or Q16
		Phone number	Those whose score highest NET: Comfortable for 'Phone number' out of all methods at Q15 or Q16
		Credit card details, when not paying for content	Those whose score highest NET: Comfortable for 'Credit card details, when not paying for content' out of all methods at Q15 or Q16
		Credit card details, when paying for content	Those whose score highest NET: Comfortable for 'Credit card details, when paying for content' out of all methods at Q15 or Q16

Qualitative Research

Introduction

Yonder conducted a combination of focus groups and in-depth interviews to explore attitudes to AV within the context of accessing pornography.

Four in-person 90-minute focus groups were held in London and Manchester with 6 participants within each session. 12 x 45-minute online in-depth interviews with participants recruited from across the UK were also conducted online via Zoom.

The focus group participants were recruited to explore differences in age and gender amongst individuals who self-identified as having accessed pornography.

The depth interviews were recruited both to explore differences in age and gender amongst individuals who self-identified as having accessed pornography and also the attitudes of individuals who were both supportive and less supportive of AV. To determine attitudes towards AV, participants were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements as part of the screening process.

Fieldwork was conducted between 22nd July and 16th August 2022.

Recruitment

Respondents were recruited through re-contacting survey respondents and free-find techniques.

At the end of the quantitative survey, respondents were asked whether they were interested in participating in a follow-up qualitative study. Details of consenting respondents were collected, and if they fitted certain criteria, they were invited to participate in the depth interviews. This data was managed and stored in line with GDPR commitments.

Free-find recruitment involved specialist qualitative recruiters using online, telephone and in-person methods to find participants that did not belong to a specific panel.

Participants were incentivised for their time and to thank you them for taking part in the study. Focus group participants were incentivised with £60 and depth interview participants £45.

See Appendix A for the full recruitment screener.

Final sample

The final sample achieved for the groups and depths:

Group sample achieved	Individual depth sample achieved
1 x Group of 18–34-year-old men who have accessed pornography	2 x IDIs with 55+ men who have accessed pornography
1 x Group of 18–34-year-old women who have accessed pornography	2 x IDIs with 55+ women/other genders who have accessed pornography
1 x Group of 35–55-year-old men who have accessed pornography	4 x IDIs with individuals who have not accessed online pornography who are supportive of AV
1 x Group of 35–55-year-old women who have accessed pornography	4 x IDIs with individuals who have not accessed online pornography who are less supportive of AV

See Appendix B for the full discussion guide for the focus groups and Appendix C for the individual depth interviews.

Appendix A

Recruitment Screener

Introduction for fresh sample: Good morning/afternoon, I am calling on behalf of Acumen Fieldwork about an interesting research study we are conducting about how to prove your age online. I will need to ask you for some personal information to see if you qualify for this market research, which will take around 5 minutes. If you qualify you will be asked to participate in either a group or 1:1 Zoom interview, which I will explain more about if you qualify. If you go on to be part of the research you will be incentivised for either £60 or £45 paid by BACS depending on what you take part in. Is this a good time to talk?

Yes – Continue

No – Offer alternative appointment or thanks and close

Introduction for recontact sample: Good morning/afternoon, I am calling on behalf of Acumen Fieldwork. I understand that you recently participated in an online survey conducted by Yonder on behalf of Ofcom to understand how you go online, the types of websites and apps you visit and how you prove your age online.

According to our records, we can see that you agreed to participate in a follow up depth interview to understand the reasons for your responses in more detail and to help us to understand further any concerns about using age verification online. If you qualify you will be asked to participate in either a group or 1:1 Zoom interview, which I will explain more about if you qualify. If you go on to be part of the research you will be incentivised for either £60 or £45 paid by BACS depending on what you take part in. We just need to run you through some of the questions which you answered in the survey again. Is this a good time to talk?

Yes – Continue

No – Offer alternative appointment or thanks and close

CONTINUE FOR ALL:

Q1. Acumen Fieldwork and their client Yonder Consulting may retain your personal details along with any other information relating to this research for a maximum of 12 months. Acumen Fieldwork and their authorised users only, which includes affiliate companies and third party authorised users, may use your personal information for the purposes set out in their privacy policy, available on their website www.acumenfieldwork.com. The uses include the verification of other market research projects you may have taken part in for Acumen Fieldwork to ensure that any participant's attendance does not exceed the levels recommended by the Market Research Society (MRS). Please confirm and acknowledge that you understand how your personal data will be used and that you have been referred to Acumen Fieldwork's privacy policy and have no objections to such use?

ENSURE THIS IS READ OUT IN FULL AND THAT PRIVACY POLICY AND CORRECT INVITE ARE SIGNPOSTED OR SENT OUT

Q2. Do you work in any of the following professions or occupations?

1. PR
2. Journalism / Publishing
3. Marketing / Market Research
4. Social media
5. Online safety technology
6. Other – please record

**IF CODE EITHER 1, 2, 3 OR 4 PLEASE THANK AND CLOSE
FOR CODE 5, PLEASE RECORD AND CONTINUE**

Q3. Market research sessions are audio and/or video recorded for reference and to analyse the findings of the session. Can you confirm that you understand and are happy with this?

1. Yes
2. No

PLEASE RECORD AND CONTINUE

Q4. Full name of participant taking part

PLEASE RECORD FULL NAME

Q5. How would you describe your gender?

1. Male
2. Female
3. Non-binary
4. Prefer to self-describe
5. Prefer not to say

RECRUIT TO QUOTA

Q6. What was your age at your last birthday?

RECRUIT TO QUOTA

CLOSE IF UNDER 18

Q7. Please could you describe your ethnicity?

White	
English/ Welsh/ Scottish/ Northern Irish/ British	1
Irish	2
Gypsy, Traveller or Irish Traveller	3
Any other white background	4
Mixed/ Multiple Ethnic Groups	
White and Black Caribbean	5
White and Black African	6
White and Asian	7
Any other mixed/ multiple ethnic background	8
Asian & Asian British	
Indian	9
Pakistani	10
Bangladeshi	11
Chinese	12
Any other Asian background	13
Black & Black British	
Caribbean	14
African	15
Any other black/ African/ Caribbean background	16
Other Ethnic Group	
Arab	17
Any other ethnic background	18

Prefer not to say

19

RECRUIT A MIX AND MONITOR PLEASE RECRUIT A MAX OF 20 WHITE ETHNICITY PARTICIPANTS

Q8. Where in the UK are you based?

1. North West
2. North East
3. West Midlands
4. East Midlands
5. Yorkshire and the Humber
6. East of England
7. South East
8. South West
9. London
10. Scotland
11. Wales
12. Northern Ireland

RECRUIT A MIX OF LOCATIONS FOR ONLINE DEPTHS AND TO QUOTA FOR THE GROUPS

Q9. Have you had to prove your age online, for example, to set up online banking or purchase age-restricted products (e.g. alcohol or tobacco)?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Don't know

RECORD

Q10. Thinking about when you have had to prove your age online, what activities did you prove your age for?

Read out and record all that apply

1. To receive an age-related discount e.g., a youth or pensioner discount, an age restricted railcard
2. To purchase alcohol
3. To purchase tobacco
4. For online banking
5. To access financial services, e.g., insurance, a credit account
6. To apply for a job
7. For online gambling
8. For online dating
9. To access content streaming services
10. To access online pornography
11. Other (please specify)
12. Don't know
13. Prefer not to say

RECORD ALL THAT APPLY

Q11. Thinking about when you last had to prove your age online, what activity did you prove your age for?

Read out and record one that applies

1. To receive an age-related discount e.g., a youth or pensioner discount, an age restricted railcard
2. To purchase alcohol
3. To purchase tobacco
4. For online banking
5. To access financial services, e.g., insurance, a credit account

- 6. To apply for a job
- 7. For online gambling
- 8. For online dating
- 9. To access content streaming services
- 10. To access online pornography
- 11. Other (please specify)
- 12. Don't know
- 13. Prefer not to say

ALL TO CODE EITHER 2, 3, 7 OR 10

Q12. Thinking about when you last proved your age online in the past, how did you prove your age online?

Read out and record all that apply

- 1. Using identity documents e.g., passport, driving licence, ID card, birth certificate or similar
- 2. Using a credit card
- 3. Using a phone number
- 4. Using a photo or video of myself
- 5. By providing my date of birth only
- 6. By providing my name, address and date of birth
- 7. By providing online banking details
- 8. By proving my age to my mobile network provider
- 9. Other (please specify)
- 10. Don't know

RECORD AND RECRUIT A MIX

Q13. In general, to what extent do you agree with the following statements

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I don't mind proving my age for certain online activities generally					
I expect to have to prove my age for certain online activities					
I think people should be required to prove their age for certain online activities					

RECORD

IF CODE DISAGREE OR STRONGLY DISAGREE TO ANY OF THE STATEMENTS CAN BE RECRUITED TO NON-SUPPORTIVE DEPTHS OF AV

Q14. In general, how likely are you to agree to prove your age online for the following activities? Please answer on a scale of 1 – 5 where 5 is very likely to agree and 1 is not likely at all.

READ OUT AND RECORD

- 1. To receive an age-related discount e.g., a youth or pensioner discount, an age restricted railcard
- 2. To purchase alcohol or tobacco
- 3. For online banking
- 4. For online gambling
- 5. To access online pornography
- 6. To access online streaming services

RECORD AND RECRUIT A MIX

IF CODE NOT LIKELY (1) OR NOT LIKELY AT ALL (2) TO CODE 5, CAN BE RECRUITED TO LESS SUPPORTIVE IDI QUOTA

Q15. In general, how likely are you to agree to use the following methods to prove your age online? Please answer on a scale of 1 – 5 where 5 is very likely to agree and 1 is not likely at all.

1. Your date of birth
2. A copy of your passport/ driving licence
3. A photo or video of yourself
4. Your credit card details
5. Your phone number

RECORD AND RECRUIT A MIX

Q16. Which, if any, of the following would make you more or less likely to prove your age online?

READ OUT AND RECORD ALL THAT APPLY

1. Information about how your personal data will be processed, shared and stored
2. Assurance that your personal data will be deleted after the age check and not used for any other purpose
3. Information about how the age check system works
4. Information about why an age check is required
5. Information about how accurately/ reliably the age check system can verify your age
6. Being able to choose what method to use to prove your age
7. Being taken to a different, independent website to prove your age
8. Don't know
9. None of the above

RECORD

The questions in the following section ask about online age checks in the context of pornographic content. Please be assured that your confidentiality will be respected fully at all times and should you wish to, you have the right to withdraw and exit at any point in time.

Q17. Have you ever encountered or accessed pornographic content online?

1. Yes
2. No

RECORD AND RECRUIT TO QUOTA

CODE 1 = CONTINUE TO Q18

CODE 2 = CONTINUE TO Q19

Q18. Through which, if any of the following have you accessed pornographic content?

RECRUITER TO READ OUT

1. Yes, on a free-to-access pornographic site
2. Yes, on a subscription pornographic site (even if you did not pay to access content)
3. Yes, on social media
4. Yes, via a search engine
5. Yes, on other online platforms/ services (please specify)
6. None of the above

**RECORD ALL THAT APPLY
IF CODE 6, RECORD**

Q19. In general, do you think internet users should be required to prove they are aged 18 or over when attempting to access pornographic content online:

READ OUT

	Yes	No	Don't know	Prefer not to say
On social media?				
On a dedicated pornographic site?				
On a search engine?				

RECORD

Q20. Would you mind being asked to prove your age in the following scenarios?

READ OUT

	Yes, I would mind	No, I wouldn't mind	Prefer not to say/not applicable
To access pornographic content on social media_ such as Twitter, or Reddit			
To access pornographic content on a dedicated pornographic website such as Pornhub			

RECORD

Q21. What, if any, concerns would you have about having to prove your age in order to access pornographic content online? We understand that you may not have experienced this personally, so please base your answers on what you think you might be concerned about.

READ OUT AND RECORD ALL THAT APPLY

1. I'm not concerned about having to prove my age online
2. I don't own the required ID
3. I don't think the age check is accurate and/ or reliable
4. I'm worried my data will not be protected
5. I think children can easily get around the age check
6. I don't want to share my personal information online
7. Other (please specify)
8. Prefer not to say

RECORD

Q22. Thank you for answering these questions. We would like to invite you to take part in a 90-minute focus group / 45-minute interview conducted via Zoom on [Date] at [Location]. As a thank you for your time you will receive £60/45 incentive paid via BACS.

Other participants in the focus group will be of the same gender, similar age and have given similar answers as you have today. The discussion will focus on your thoughts and opinions on age verification and providing age verification to access pornographic content. There will be no discussion around consumption or viewing of pornographic content.

Would you be happy to take part on this basis?

1. Yes
2. No

**RECORD
IF CODE NO, ASK THEM IF THEY WOULD PREFER TO PARTICIPATE IN A 1:1 DEPTH INTERVIEW**

PLEASE ONLY ASK Q21 – 24 TO THOSE PARTICIPATING VIA ZOOM

Q23. To take part in this research, please can you confirm which technology devices you have access to

1. A laptop computer
2. A desktop computer
3. A tablet (e.g., iPad / Samsung Galaxy tablet)
4. None of the above

ALL MUST CODE 1, 2 or 3 IF CODE 4, PLEASE CONTINUE TO Q17

Q24. Does your device have speakers, camera and a microphone?

3. Yes
4. No

ALL MUST CODE YES, IF CODE NO PLEASE CONTINUE TO Q17

Q25. Do you have a fast and consistently reliable internet connection at home?

1. Yes
2. No

ALL MUST CODE YES AND CONTINUE TO Q18. IF CODE NO, ASK Q20

Q26. If you do not have reliable internet access or suitable technology, would you be happy to conduct the interview by telephone?

1. Yes
2. No

ALL MUST CODE YES

Q27. The research is being run by Yonder on behalf of their client, Ofcom, who may view your Zoom interview. By taking part in this, you agree to yourself and your comments being captured and viewed on video so it can be used in the research. Are you willing to participate on this basis?

1. Yes
2. No

**RECORD
IF CODE 2, PLEASE CONFIRM THEIR INTERVIEW WILL NOT BE VIEWED AND RECRUIT**

Appendix B

Discussion Guide for Focus Groups

Ofcom – Age Verification Focus Group Discussion Guide

90 minutes

Research Objectives:

The overall objective of this research is to explore the friction/barriers which exist during the AV process. Ofcom will use the findings to inform their engagement with VSPs as well as its work on AV for the Online Safety regime. The specific objectives of this research are to:

- Explore any differences in attitudes and expectations towards AV online vs offline
- Understand users' attitudes and reasons for and against using AV methods in general and in specific contexts online
- Unpick the factors that may encourage or deter people from using AV online

This document sets out the format for discussion but should not be considered a questionnaire and is by no means exhaustive in terms of the questions that may be asked in each session.

Questions may be asked in a different order to that recorded here and the moderator will exercise their own judgment when probing participants. The moderator will also seek to probe any responses on points of interest that may or may not have been anticipated.

Stimulus:

- Stimulus A: List of AV method screenshots (date of birth, photo ID, facial age estimation, photo ID and selfie photo, credit card, independent age verification providers, mobile network SIM verification)

1. Introduction (5 minutes)

- Introduce moderator and Yonder.
- Research is exploring attitudes to age verification in general and age verification within different contexts, such as gambling, purchasing alcohol / tobacco, pornography.
- There are no right or wrong answers and everything you say will be kept confidential and anonymous – none of your personal details will be used in reporting.
- You may have different views and opinions from other people in the group. We welcome a range of viewpoints and encourage discussion of these. Please be mindful of being respectful and sensitive to other who may disagree with you.
- Also have the right to withdraw at any point and not to answer anything you don't want to.
- Session will last 90 minutes. Ask group for permission to record, then start recording.

2. Warm up (5 minutes)

- Name, age, hobbies / interests

3. General awareness and attitudes towards Age Verification (AV) (10 mins)

- When I say the word 'age verification' what comes to mind?
 - What does this mean to you?
 - *Moderator to briefly introduce a definition of AV (Age verification refers to the methods that can be used to establish a user's age online to the greatest degree of certainty practically achievable) and establish participants language and use / refer to this throughout (nb. For the purpose of the guide 'age verification' / 'AV' will be used in places)*
 - What about 'age check'? Does this mean something similar / different to you?
- How do you feel about age verification?
 - How do you feel about being asked to prove your age personally?
 - How do you feel about others being asked to prove their age?
- Do you think they are asked for age verification too much / too little? Explore.
 - Does this vary for online / offline age verification?
- Why do you think people are asked for AV? Explore perceptions.
 - Does these impact on your willingness to provide AV/not? Explore.
- What are some of the different scenarios you've been asked to prove your age in?
- What are some of the different ways you've been asked to prove your age?
 - Prompt if necessary – date of birth, face scanned, upload ID.
 - Are there types of AV you feel more / less comfortable with? Explore.
- What do you think happens when you provide AV?
 - Probe on perceptions of whether their data and information is stored or immediately discarded.
 - What are your concerns here?
- How do you feel about technology being used for AV? (e.g. Face scanners at supermarket checkouts; ID scanners etc)
 - Explore perceived pros / cons.

4. Deep dive into AV methods online (30 minutes)

Moderator to explain that we will now focus on the different types of age verification that you might be asked to provide whenever engaging with content which is for over 18s, for example purchasing alcohol / gambling etc.

Moderator to share Stimulus A – list of AV methods – and ask the group to rank the stimulus from most comfortable using to use to least comfortable using.

- Date of birth
- Face Scan
- Uploading a photograph of themselves
- Credit card
- Name, address, date of birth

Moderator to explore ranking:

- What is the most comfortable and why?
- What is the least comfortable and why?
 - What concerns do you have?
 - What, if anything, could be changed to make it more appealing?

Moderator to explore each AV approach in detail:

Date of birth

- What kind of barriers do you think this might present as a method of AV? Explore why.
- What kind of sites do you think this would be appropriate for?
- What kind of site(s) would you least like to be asked for this type of AV?
 - Explore site(s) and why.
 - What do you think you would do if you were asked?

Face Scan

- Have you ever heard of this as a method of AV?
- Is this a method you have ever used in either an online or offline setting?
 - How do you imagine the practicalities of this method would work?
 - How, if at all, does it feel different to having your ID scanned in person (e.g. to enter a nightclub)?
- What do you like /dislike about this method?
 - What are your concerns?
 - How could these be addressed?
 - Under what conditions would you use this? (e.g. convenience, more education, comms...)
- What do you think might happen with the scan after it is verified? Explore any reservations/concerns and why.
- Do you trust this approach?
- What kind of sites do you think this would be appropriate for / would they trust with this?
- What kind of site(s) would you least like to be asked for this type of AV?
 - Explore site(s) and why.
 - What do you think you would do if you were asked?
 - Explore why they lack trust in these sites.

ID document

- What do you like/dislike about this method?
 - What are your concerns?
 - What might reassure you about this method?
- Do you trust this approach?
- What kind of sites do you think this would be appropriate for/ would you trust with this?
- What kind of site(s) would you least like to be asked for this type of AV?
 - Explore site(s) and why.
 - What do you think you would do if you were asked?

- Explore why they lack trust in these sites.

Scanning their ID and their face

- What do you like/dislike about this method?
 - What are your concerns?
 - What might reassure you about this method?
 - Under what conditions would you use this? (e.g. convenience, more education, comms...)
- How do they feel about the combination of steps of scanning their ID and their face compared to just one or the other?
 - Explore benefits / concerns.
- What do you think might happen with the photograph after it is verified? Explore any reservations/concerns and why.
- Do you trust this approach? Why/why not?
 - For themselves vs. trusting other people using this?
- What kind of sites do you think this would be appropriate for / would you trust with this?
- What kind of site(s) would you least like to be asked for this type of AV?
 - Explore site(s) and why.
 - What do you think you would do if you were asked?
 - Explore why they lack trust in these sites.

Credit card

- Is this a method you have ever used in an online setting?
- How about in an 'offline' setting?
- What do you like/dislike about this method?
 - What are your concerns?
 - What might reassure you about this method?
 - Under what conditions would you use this? (e.g. convenience, more education, comms...)
- What do you think might happen with your details after verification? Explore any reservations/concerns and why.
- Would you prefer to provide details of your debit card instead of a credit card? Explore why/why not.
 - Explore how / if a debit card feels different to a credit card and why.
- Do you trust this approach?
- What kind of sites do you think this would be appropriate for / would you trust with this?
- What kind of site(s) would you least like to be asked for this type of AV?
 - Explore site(s) and why.
 - What do you think you would do if you were asked?
 - Explore why they lack trust in these sites.
- Would any of these methods have any impact upon whether you stayed on the site / left? Explore which ones and why

5. Attitudes to AV methods within the context of pornography (20 minutes)

- Explore ideal AV method for the following scenarios and why:
 - To enter a gambling site
 - To access pornography on sites such as Pornhub and OnlyFans
 - To purchase alcohol online

Moderator to explain that the final part of the discussion will focus upon Age Verification within the context of pornographic content. Moderator to reiterate that we are going to be focussing solely on the step before viewing pornography and they have the right to withdraw / not answer if they feel uncomfortable.

- Within the context of accessing pornography, how do you feel about Age Verification?
 - Explore differences to other restricted sites.
- What would be your preferred method of AV to access pornography – explore what and why.
- What method would you be least comfortable with? Explore what and why.
- What would you do if you were asked for AV in a method which you were not comfortable with?
 - Would you leave the site?
 - Provide AV but with reservations?
 - If you didn't want to provide that AV, would you look elsewhere until you found somewhere else (i.e. somewhere to access pornography that doesn't require AV)?
- How would you feel if a site offered you a choice of AV methods?
 - Would this have any impact upon whether you stayed on the site / left? Explore.
 - What if the options were for methods which you felt less comfortable with? (e.g. credit card / face scan)
- What significance does the site have on how you feel about different types of AV?
 - E.g. Do you trust sites like Pornhub more than a pornographic site you found via Google? Explore why / why not.

Creating an account/One off visit

- Are there circumstances when you would feel more / less open to AV on a smaller / tube-style site?
 - E.g. If you were to create an account for subscription purposes versus visiting?
 - If you were asked for your AV at the point of creating an account as a one-off, how would you feel?
- Do you feel differently about how anonymous /secure your personal info is when creating an account? Explore.

Paid subscription

- If you were signing up for a paid subscription – would that impact how you feel about AV?
- Would you feel more/less comfortable using your credit card details for AV? Explore.

Independent verification

- How much impact would verification through an independent provider have? *Moderator to explain that some websites won't check your age themselves, but instead will use an external age verification providers to do this. Moderator to share stimulus with screenshots.*
 - Explore responses to stimulus of external AV providers.
 - Would it increase/decrease your trust / provide reassurance or not? Explore.
 - How would you feel if your were taken to a separate page, away from the main site? Explore pros/ cons.

[IF TIME ALLOWS, MODERATOR TO PROBE ON MNO]

Mobile Network Operator based AV

- For those that have accessed pornography, have you ever seen/used the Mobile Network Operator (MNO) based AV?
 - Explore context where it was seen.
- If you have seen it but not used it, why not? Explore.
- If you have used it, how did they find the experience?
 - How did it compare to other methods and why?

6. Reflections (10 minutes)

- Do you think AV is necessary in the first place for different kind of sites? Explore why / why not.
- What could be done to encourage users to / feel more comfortable with AV?
 - What kind of information would you want for reassurance?
- What could be done to address specific concerns people may have around data protection / anonymity e.g. if providing a picture / face scan for AV?
 - What are the key messages that should be communicated?
- To what extent are you motivated by the reason for AV (i.e. to protect under 18s from accessing explicit content)? Explore.
- Do you feel communication around AV should directly mention this as a key reason for AV? Explore why/why not.

7. Wrap up (5 minutes)

- Thank you all for your time and contributions.
- Moderator to inform that the research was on behalf of Ofcom and to reassure that all answers and participation is completely confidential and anonymous.
- Moderator to confirm incentive process.
- Moderator to provide leaflet with list of support services.

Appendix C

Discussion Guide for Individual Depth Interviews

Ofcom – Age Verification Depths Discussion Guide

45 minutes

Research Objectives:

The overall objective of this research is to explore the friction/barriers which exist during the AV process. Ofcom will use the findings to inform their engagement with VSPs as well as its work on AV for the Online Safety regime. The specific objectives of this research are to:

- Explore any differences in attitudes and expectations towards AV online vs offline
- Understand users' attitudes and reasons for and against using AV methods in general and in specific contexts online
- Unpick the factors that may encourage or deter people from using AV online

This document sets out the format for discussion but should not be considered a questionnaire and is by no means exhaustive in terms of the questions that may be asked in each session.

Questions may be asked in a different order to that recorded here and the moderator will exercise their own judgment when probing participants. The moderator will also seek to probe any responses on points of interest that may or may not have been anticipated.

Stimulus:

- Stimulus A: List of AV method screenshots (date of birth, photo ID, facial age estimation, photo ID and selfie photo, credit card, independent age verification providers, mobile network SIM verification)

1. Introduction (3 minutes)

- Introduce moderator and Yonder.
- Research is exploring attitudes to age verification in general and age verification within different contexts, such as pornography.
- There are no right or wrong answers and everything you say will be kept confidential and anonymous – none of your personal details will be used in reporting.
- Also have the right to withdraw at any point and not to answer anything you don't want to.
- Session will last 45 minutes. Ask participant for permission to record, then start recording.

2. Warm up (5 minutes)

- Name, age, hobbies / interests

3. General awareness and attitudes towards Age Verification (AV) (5 minutes)

- When I say the word 'age verification' what comes to mind?
 - What does this mean to you?
 - Moderator to briefly introduce a definition of AV (**Age verification refers to the methods that can be used to establish a user's age online to the greatest degree of certainty practically achievable**) and establish participants language and use / refer to this throughout (nb. for the purpose of the guide 'age verification' / 'AV' will be used in places).
 - What about 'age check'? Does this mean something similar / different to you?
- How do you feel about age verification?
 - How do you feel about being asked to prove your age?
 - How do you feel about others being asked to prove their age?
- Why do you think people are asked to prove their age? Explore perceptions.
- What are some of the different scenarios you've been asked to prove your age in (online or offline)?
- What do you think happens when you provide information to prove your age?
 - Probe on perceptions of whether their data and information is stored, shared, reused for other purposes or immediately discarded.
- How do you feel about technology being used for proving your age? (e.g. Face scanners at supermarket checkouts; ID scanners etc)
 - Explore perceived pros / cons.

4. Deep dive into AV methods online (10 minutes)

Moderator to explain that we will now focus on the different types of age verification that you might be asked to provide whenever engaging with content which is for over 18s, for example purchasing alcohol / gambling etc.

Moderator to share Stimulus A – list of AV methods

- Which method do you feel most comfortable with and why?
- Which method do you feel least comfortable with and why?
 - What concerns do you have?
 - What, if anything, could be changed to make it more appealing?

Moderator to explore each AV approach in detail and to randomise method for each interview but to always ensure ID and ID+photo are shown consecutively.

Date of birth

- Do you think this method would work to verify people's age? Why / why not?
- What kind of difficulties do you think this might present as a method of verifying someone's age? Explore why.
- What kind of sites do you think this would be appropriate for?
- What kind of site(s) would you least like to be asked for this type of method to verify your age?
 - Explore site(s) and why.

- What do you think you would do if you were asked?

ID Document

- What do you like/dislike about this method?
 - What are your concerns?
 - What might reassure you about this method?
- What kind of sites do you think this would be appropriate for/ would you trust with this?
- What kind of site(s) would you least like to be asked for this type of method?
 - Explore site(s) and why.
 - What do you think you would do if you were asked?

Face Scan

- How do you think this method would work to verify your age?
 - Moderator to prompt with “This can also be described as ‘an estimation of age based on an uploaded selfie/photo/video’” and explore responses.
 - Does this differ from what you were expecting? Explore.
- Is this a method you have ever used in an online setting?
 - How do you imagine the practicalities of this method would work?
 - How, if at all, does it feel different to having your ID scanned in person (e.g. to enter a nightclub)?
- What do you like/dislike about this method?
 - What are your concerns?
 - How could these be addressed?
- What do you think might happen with the scan after it is verified? Explore any reservations/concerns and why.
- What kind of sites do you think this would be appropriate for / would you trust with this?
- What kind of site(s) would you least like to be asked for this type of AV?
 - Explore site(s) and why.
 - Explore why they lack trust in these sites.

Scanning their ID and then their face

- What do you like/dislike about this method?
 - What are your concerns?
 - What might reassure you about this method?
- How do they feel about the combination of steps of scanning their ID and their face compared to just one or the other?
 - Explore benefits / concerns.
- What do you think might happen with the scans after they are verified? Explore any reservations/concerns and why.
- What kind of sites do you think this would be appropriate for / would you trust with this?
- What kind of site(s) would you least like to be asked for this type of AV?

- Explore site(s) and why.
- What do you think you would do if you were asked?
- Explore why they lack trust in these sites.

Credit card

- Is this a method you have ever used in an online setting?
- What do you like/dislike about this method?
 - What are your concerns?
 - What might reassure you about this method?
- What do you think might happen with your details after verification? Explore any reservations/concerns and why.
- Would you prefer to provide details of your debit card instead of a credit card? Explore why/why not
 - Explore how / if a debit card feels different to a credit card and why.
- What kind of sites do you think this would be appropriate for / would you trust with this?
- What kind of site(s) would you least like to be asked for this type of AV?
 - Explore site(s) and why.
 - What do you think you would do if you were asked?
 - Explore why they lack trust in these sites.

5. Attitudes to AV methods within the context of pornography (15 minutes)

Moderator to explain that the final part of the discussion will focus upon Age Verification within the context of pornographic content. Moderator to reiterate that we are going to be focussing solely on the step before viewing pornography and you have the right to withdraw / not answer if you feel uncomfortable.

Moderator to emphasise to those who have not accessed pornography themselves that we are still very interested in their views and perspectives even if they do not have personal experience of accessing this kind of content. Their opinion based on what they anticipate/imagine it would be like are as valuable to us.

- Within the context of accessing pornography, how do you feel about Age Verification?
 - How important do you feel it is to use methods to verify users' ages in this context?
 - Do you feel accessing pornography sites merits different methods of verifying people's age than other sites or content?
- What would be your preferred method of proving your age to access pornography? Explore.
- What method would you be least comfortable with? Explore.
- What would you do if you were asked to verify your age in a method which you were not comfortable with?
- How would you feel if a site offered a choice of methods to verify your age?
- What significance would the specific site have on how you feel about different types of proving your age?

- E.g. Do you trust sites like Pornhub more than a pornographic site you found via Google? Explore.
- [If needed, Moderator to explain that Pornhub is a well-known popular pornographic site]

Creating an account/One off visit

- Are there circumstances when you feel more / less open to proving your age on a site like this?
 - E.g. If you had to create an account before being able to access content?
 - If you were asked to prove your age at the point of creating an account as a one-off, how would you feel?
- Do you feel differently about how anonymous /secure your personal info is when creating an account? Explore.

Paid subscription

- If you were signing up for a paid subscription, how, if at all, would that impact how you feel about proving your age?
- Would you feel more/less comfortable using your credit card details for proving your age? Explore.

Independent verification

Moderator to explain that some websites will not check your age themselves but will use an external provider to do this.

- How much impact would verification through an independent provider have? *Moderator to explain that some websites won't check your age themselves, but instead will use an external age verification providers to do this. Moderator to share stimulus with screenshots.*
 - Explore responses to stimulus of external AV providers.
 - Would it increase/decrease your trust / provide reassurance or not? Explore.
 - How would you feel if you were taken to a separate page, away from the VSP? Explore pros/cons.

[IF TIME ALLOWS, MODERATOR TO PROBE ON MNO]

Mobile Network Operator based AV

- For those that have accessed pornography, have you ever seen/used the Mobile Network Operator (MNO) based AV?
 - Explore context where it was seen.
- If you have seen it but not used it, why not? Explore.
- If you have used it, how did they find the experience?
 - How did it compare to other methods and why?

6. Reflections (5 minutes)

- What could be done to encourage users to provide their AV / feel more comfortable with AV?
 - What kind of information would you want for reassurance?

- What could be done to address specific concerns people may have around data protection / anonymity e.g. if providing a picture / face scan for AV?
 - What are the key messages that should be communicated?
- To what extent are you motivated by the reason for AV (i.e. to protect under 18s from accessing explicit content)? Explore.

7. Wrap up (2 minutes)

- Thank you all for your time and contributions.
- Moderator to inform that the research was on behalf of Ofcom and to reassure that all answers and participation is completely confidential and anonymous.
- Moderator to confirm incentive process.
- Moderator to provide leaflet with list of support services.