



Age Verification

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Age Verification (AV) also referred to as **Age Affirmation** (AA) is the process in where a business requires some form of identification to verify your age. This is usually done for more explicit or mature content. This practice has been widely spreading since the UK's Online Safety Act (OSA) has passed; requiring all individuals to verify themselves before accessing mature content. Certain ways of checking can include: checking for a valid credit card, facial age estimation tools, government issued id, bio-metric data, or account history behavior and so forth.

How it works [[edit](#) | [edit source](#)]

When accessing a platform or website that may contain content not suitable for all audiences may force you to register for the platform along with verifying your age by one of the methods mentioned previously. Sites that likely don't use any form of account system will probably have a popup instead requiring you to verify your age before even serving the content you were trying to access.

Why it is a problem [[edit](#) | [edit source](#)]

Privacy [[edit](#) | [edit source](#)]

Having companies easily able to identify you means they can track you more efficiently and sell that shared profile to other companies such as ad agencies that then start targeting you specifically.

Governments can also more easily track online movements and find out who you are. Saying something that may go against their own agenda may end up with a police raid and heavy interrogation and prison time.^[1]

Censorship [[edit](#) | [edit source](#)]

Certain topics such as LGBTQ+ political will likely be unfairly censored by the governing body or company that has a say on

Certain topics such as 18+ political will likely be unfairly censored by the governing body or company that has a say on what platform has the **potential** to be inappropriate for minors or other age groups.^{[2][3]}

Platforms that host this type of content may also be more proactive in deleting/hiding posts that may get them in trouble or fined by laws or policies by local governments leading to a more censored internet where opinions are streamlined to fit a set narrative or outlook.^[3]

Increased inequality and denial of service [\[edit | edit source \]](#)

Some stores, such as grocery stores, prohibit young people from viewing their web sites or using **loyalty cards**, which provide discounts and digital coupons. Age verification means that young people and families where the young person does the shopping pay more for essentials like food.^[4] Those who do not have ID, or do not chose to use it (for instance, those who fear domestic violence, or are members of a group subject to persecution) may also be locked out or have to pay more.

Storage of Private and Biometric Information by Age Verification Service Providers [\[edit | edit source \]](#)

A study commissioned by the Australian government found that age verification service providers accumulate a concerning amount of personal information, sometimes even biometric in nature, even when that was not necessary to provide the age verification service.^{[5][6]}

Driving users towards smaller and completely unregulated offerings [\[edit | edit source \]](#)

Big platforms can be regulated and forced to comply with applicable laws since they need to have infrastructure such as servers in all major markets. Only these will be affected by the age restriction requirement.

However, users who do not wish to compromise their privacy or who are not of age will then go looking towards smaller niche platforms, often in other regions not affected by the regulation or the darknet.^[7] With these offerings, there is little to no leverage with regards to removal of illegal content. Increased exposure to illegal content can then lead to both a strengthening of illegal content providers^[8] and significantly increased danger to minors, who may not yet be able to differentiate between legal and illegal content as well as an adult.^[9]

Increased Damage from Data Breaches [\[edit | edit source \]](#)

Platforms which implement age checks that require sensitive information such as a government-issued ID will likely be more of a target for cyber criminals.^[10] As more platforms comply with the age checks, it becomes more likely that a data breach on at least one of these platforms can reveal extremely sensitive information. In the case of a data breach, it can be catastrophic if users' sensitive information were exposed, which can likely result in identity theft.^[11]

Platforms already experience major losses and consumer distrust from data breaches that reveal information less sensitive than government-issued IDs or biometric data.^[7] A data breach involving information this sensitive will seriously damage a business, and the users even more so. As stated previously, users who foresee these privacy risks will turn away from platforms which implement the policy, and towards niche platforms.

Examples [\[edit | edit source \]](#)

- **YouTube's** Age verification and account estimation algorithm.
- **Spotify's** Age affirmation for MA rated songs and content.
- **Discord's** Age verification for accounts determining what eligible servers are available.

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