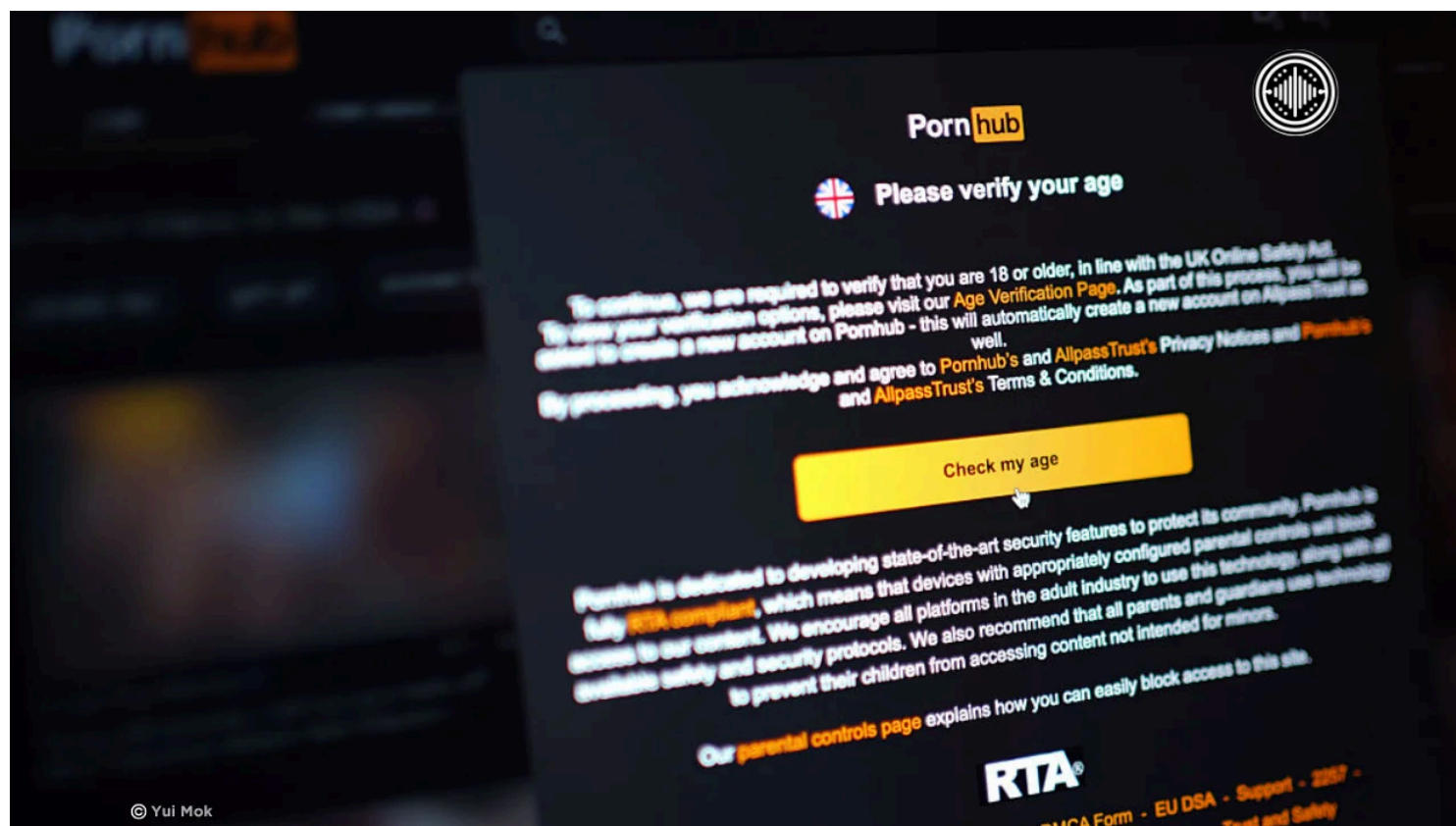


UK Investigates 34 Pornography Sites for Failing Age Verification Rules

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— Categories: Politics & Government



Ofcom is investigating 34 adult websites for potentially breaching the United Kingdom's new age verification requirements under the Online Safety Act, which came into effect on 25 July. The rules aim to prevent minors from accessing online pornography and impose tough penalties for non-compliance.

The investigation targets four companies: 8579 LLC, AVS Group Ltd., Kick Online Entertainment S.A., and Trendio Ltd., which operate the flagged websites. These sites were selected due to the risk they pose to children and their significant online traffic. The new regulations require all pornography platforms to introduce highly effective age verification systems, such as facial age estimation, credit card checks, or banking authentication, to confirm users are 18 or older.

Major services such as Pornhub have reportedly committed to following the rules. However, Ofcom is now pursuing enforcement action against others it suspects are failing to meet the standard. If violations are confirmed, the regulator may impose fines of up to £18 million or 10 percent of global revenue. In more severe cases, access to offending platforms may be blocked, and criminal charges could be brought against senior company executives.

Technology Secretary Peter Kyle criticised political opponents of the Online Safety Act, accusing them of playing politics with child protection. He defended the new framework, stating it balances public safety with adults' continued access to legal content.

While child protection charities have welcomed the rules, critics point to potential privacy concerns. Some warn that requiring users to upload sensitive identification could expose them to data breaches. Others highlight the ease with which the measures can be bypassed using virtual private networks (VPNs), fake IDs or artificial intelligence-generated images.

Since the law came into force, VPN usage in the UK has reportedly surged, suggesting many users are actively seeking to circumvent the

age checks. Despite this, Ofcom has said it will continue to review verification technologies and publish a report later this year assessing their effectiveness.

This marks the first major enforcement action since the Online Safety Act became law. It signals the government's intention to take a firm stance on regulating harmful online content, even as questions remain over the law's technical limitations and the privacy risks it may create for users.