

# 2025 Report

## Protection of minors on the Internet

Risks and need for action

# Dear readers,

The protection of children and adolescents in the digital world is currently a major public concern. While opinions may differ on whether banning social media is the right approach, the attention this issue is receiving is both appropriate and important. After all, there is no denying that action is needed: children and adolescents are confronted with hate and sexualized violence online, and they are bullied, harassed, and pressured.

Instead of implementing effective safeguards, providers are constantly creating new vulnerabilities and further expanding their manipulative business models. Developments are racing ahead, particularly in the field of artificial intelligence: Chatbots now serve as emotional sparring partners; the parasocial relationships associated with them distort reality and make it difficult to distinguish between what is artificial and what is real. New applications and functions are constantly becoming available, bringing with them new

dimensions of risk. Ensuring that adolescents can use digital spaces responsibly is a task for society as a whole. A key factor is age-appropriate access, which strikes a balance between protection and participation, even during particularly vulnerable stages of development. The responsibility for this clearly lies with the providers. If they finally take action, debates about usage bans may become unnecessary.



**Stefan Glaser**

Head of  
jugendschutz.net

# Our mission

jugendschutz.net is committed to ensuring that children and adolescents can use the internet as safely as possible. We act on a legal mandate. Our responsibilities are defined in the Interstate Treaty on the Protection of Minors in the Media (JMStV) and the Youth Protection Act (JuSchG).

## Identify risks

We research online platforms popular with children and young people to identify dangerous phenomena and trends early on. We share our findings with educational practitioners and the general public, as well as policymakers and regulatory authorities.

## Combat violations

We investigate reports of violations of child protection laws that reach us via our online complaints office or partner organizations. We notify providers of violations so they can quickly remedy the situation, and refer cases to the media supervisory authority.

## Evaluate Prevention

We examine digital services and evaluate precautionary measures to reduce risks. Our assessments provide regulators, youth policymakers, and providers with important information on structural deficits and areas for action.

Identify risks

# Threats and risks

jugendschutz.net examines the internet for risks to children and young people, focusing on popular social media services, messaging apps, video platforms, and games. Furthermore, jugendschutz.net continuously monitors new technological and content-related developments that could create or exacerbate risks. This also includes the effects of social or political crises

The focus of the 2025 work was on research and analysis of artificial intelligence, influencing, social commerce, political extremism, sexualized violence and self-endangerment.

## Topics at a glance

- [Risky interactions with character bots](#)
- [Butterflies.AI: When AI posts on social media](#)
- [Virtual influencers convey a false body image](#)
- [Glorification of eating disorders under #Skinnytok](#)
- [Advertising for dangerous substances and boosters](#)
- [Social commerce as a youth-oriented bait strategy](#)
- [Family influencing exploits children](#)
- [Misogyny as a gateway to extremism](#)
- [Discord: Hate and violence in youth-oriented chat rooms](#)
- [Snapchat “Spotlight”: Sexualization of children](#)

# Risky interactions with character bots

Character bots that interact with users via generative AI are increasingly resembling real companions – with customizable, fictional personalities, sometimes based on real-life models. They offer advice, coaching, or simulate relationships. However, research by jugendschutz.net also reveals problematic aspects: Young users may encounter inappropriate content on platforms like Character.AI, particularly in the context of sexualized violence. Causes include, among other things, incomplete filters and inadequate security settings. Chatbots describe sexual acts involving minors and can be set up as underage characters who act in a sexualized manner. Age restrictions that are easy to circumvent significantly increase the risk for children and young people.



Character bots communicate in a sexualized manner and interact across boundaries.

Read report [Character-Bots](#) and the article on [Character.AI](#).

# Butterflies.AI: When AI posts on social media

In 2025, jugendschutz.net investigated Butterflies.AI, an AI-driven social media service where users created AI characters that could independently post, comment, and chat. The investigation uncovered a significant amount of content unsuitable for minors – ranging from pornographic posts to positive portrayals of mass murderers such as Adolf Hitler or Osama bin Laden. Sexualized depictions of children were also present. Despite an age rating of 18+, there was no effective age verification. Preventive measures were inadequate, and violations were not consistently removed. The service has been inactive since March 2026. However, it is expected that the concept of independent AI characters will continue to play a role in future online services.



AI profiles operate independently on social media and are a gateway for risks.

Read article on [Butterflies.AI](#)

# Virtual influencers convey a false body image

Social media platforms like TikTok and Instagram are populated by virtual influencers. Their commercial profiles mimic the behavior of (real) influencers and tap into the consumption habits of young people. These AI models display unnaturally beautiful bodies, which – particularly due to the sheer volume of content – have a negative impact on children’s and young people’s body image. In the worst-case scenario, this can exacerbate eating disorders. Furthermore, the risk of exposure to pornographic content is increased. AI erotic models, in particular, direct their followers to risky services like Fanvue or X, where they share significantly more explicit content.



AI influencers set unattainable standards of perfection and negatively influence minors' self-image.

Read report [Virtuelle Influencer:innen](#)

# Glorification of eating disorders under #Skinnytok

Under the hashtag #Skinnytok, content idealizing extreme thinness spread on TikTok. The focus was not only on the thin body, but also on a so-called "Skinny Girl Mindset." This mindset promotes the idea that discipline and strict self-control are the keys to success and social recognition when it comes to weight loss. Slogans like "Skinny is an outfit" promote problematic attitudes toward food and contribute to trivializing eating disorders such as anorexia and bulimia. Particularly critical is the influence on young, impressionable users. They run the risk of basing their self-worth on weight, calorie intake, and physical appearance.



Extremely thin bodies are promoted as a beauty ideal and trigger harmful eating behavior.

[Read article #Skinnytok](#)

# Advertisement for dangerous substances and boosters

A trend on social media that remains risky involves posts that downplay the risks of and promote the use of psychoactive substances, stimulants, and painkillers. In addition to nitrous oxide, which remains a popular party drug, products marketed as harmless performance boosters are increasingly going viral. They are presented as alternatives to energy drinks and coffee, for example in the form of colorful candies and single-dose packets. These, too, can be dangerous for young people, causing cardiovascular strain, sleep disorders, and addiction. Since April 2026, minors have been prohibited from acquiring and possessing nitrous oxide; furthermore, sales via vending machines and online retail have been banned. However, many other substances remain easily accessible.



Content aimed at young people entices them to consume risky products.

Read [article](#) and [snippet](#) on nitrous oxide, [snippet](#) on nicotine pouches, [snippet](#) on stimulants, [snippet](#) on paracetamol

## Social commerce as a youth-oriented bait strategy

Minors are increasingly influenced by content creators and social commerce on social media. Advertising content is often indistinguishable from entertainment and generates strong consumer impulses through direct calls to action. With the launch of the TikTok Shop in 2025, creators, advertisers, and platforms have formed a community of interest with the goal of maximizing profits. Creators disseminate advertising messages, while the services provide the technical infrastructure for highly targeted outreach. Young users are thus drawn into a system that closely links and reinforces usage and purchase incentives. In such scenarios, the risk of shopping addiction and debt increases.



Content creators generate consumer pressure on social media.

Read report [Social Commerce](#)

# Children as Tools of Family Influencing

In family influencing (or “famfluencing”), parents share emotional and intimate moments of their children on social media platforms like Instagram or TikTok. While this generates significant attention, it often jeopardizes their children’s privacy and development. Validation from the community exacerbates the conflict between seeking recognition and safeguarding children’s well-being. Images of children online can be edited and manipulated, placed in a different context, and used for bullying purposes. The disclosure of personal data often allows for inferences to be drawn about a child’s name, place of residence, or school, making it possible for intruders to penetrate the child’s immediate environment.



Sharing private moments with your child in public carries many risks.

Read report [Kindheit Online](#)

# Misogyny as a gateway to extremism

On TikTok, YouTube, or Instagram, young users are exposed to misogynistic content. Misogynistic influencers promote patriarchal role models and "real masculinity," while antifeminist influencers romanticize submissiveness as "true femininity." Women are belittled and reduced to sex objects, sometimes to the point of fantasies of violence and murder. Overall, misogynistic content can lead young people to reject social values such as equality and respectful treatment. Furthermore, it can increase their willingness to view and use physical violence. Antifeminism also provides a point of connection for extremist ideologies and acts as a gateway into such circles.



Minors are introduced to extremist ideologies through misogynistic content.

Read report [Antifeminism online](#) and the [article](#): "Serien-Hit Adolescence: Online-Phänomen Frauenhass und Incel-Webkultur".

# Discord: Hate and violence in youth-oriented chat rooms

Discord, a messaging service popular among young people, has become a hub for a great deal of far-right, misanthropic, and violence-glorifying content. This includes Nazi propaganda, hatred against minorities, and graphic videos of violence. This content is disseminated via user-run servers in the form of memes, short clips, or chat messages, often within seemingly harmless contexts. As a result, Discord hosts chat rooms characterized by contempt for humanity and violence. Whether disguised humorously or strategically, these chat rooms casually expose young people to such content and shape their worldview. Moderation is often inadequate, and reports do not lead to prompt removal, allowing content to remain visible for extended periods and thus spread further.



Young people are confronted with misanthropic content via Discord.

Read report [Hass- und Gewaltpropaganda auf Discord](#)

# Snapchat “Spotlight”: Sexualization of children

Snapchat's "Spotlight" feature displays short videos similar to TikTok or Instagram Reels. Since 2025, videos of very young children have been shared there despite age restrictions. Some are posted by parents, others by children themselves. The clips show them dancing, playing, or doing physical exercises, and they not only receive numerous views: They also receive sexual comments and carry the risk of abuse and misuse. This is exacerbated by the algorithm, which pushes similar content into the feed. Although, according to the terms of service, users in Germany are only allowed to post and comment starting at age 16, there is no effective age verification. The existing reporting options offer little protection for minors.



Clips of children can be sexually commented on, abused, and misused.

Read article [Snapchat “Spotlight”](#)

# Combat violations

# Handling violations

jjugendschutz.net examines and investigates violations of youth protection regulations online and works to ensure their prompt removal.

jugendschutz.net accepts reports of content that may violate the Interstate Treaty on the Protection of Minors in the Media (JMStV) through its [online complaints office](#). Furthermore, the office processes reports of digital sexualized violence with a German context submitted by partners of the Association of Internet Hotline Providers ([INHOPE](#)).

Since jugendschutz.net's processing of reports and violations depends both on the activities of external information providers and its own thematic priorities, the reported figures only allow limited conclusions about actual empirical overall developments.

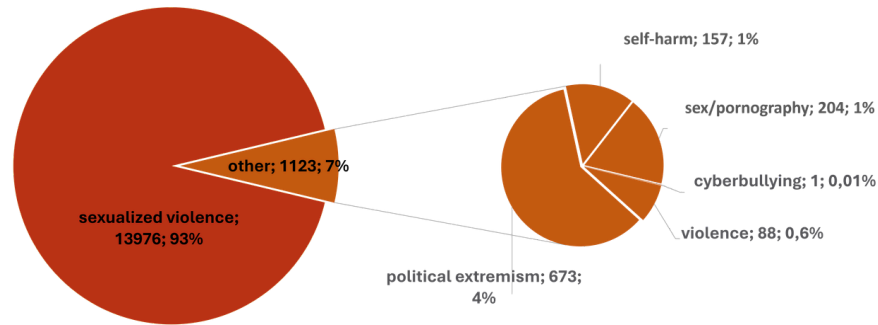
# Total registered violations

15.099

jugendschutz.net registered a total of 15,099 violations in 2025. This number remains high for the second year in a row (2024: 17,630; 2023: 7,645). This is due to the continued high volume of cases involving sexualized violence, which jugendschutz.net received via its online complaint platform and INHOPE.

Most violations still relate to the issue of sexualized violence.

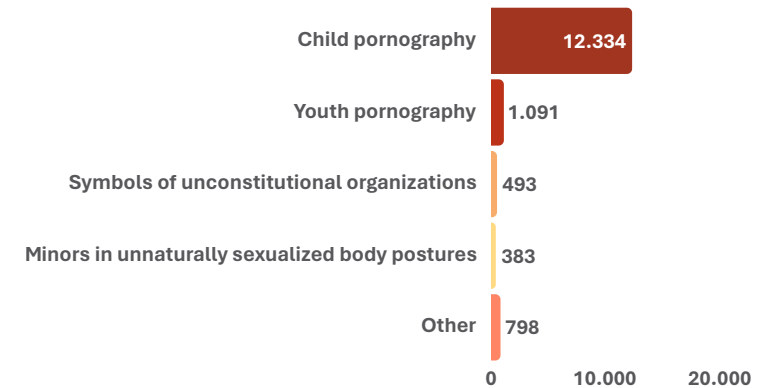
## Violations by topic



Sexualized violence accounted for 93% of the cases processed by jugendschutz.net (2024: 15,677/89%). Political extremism accounted for 4% of the cases (2024: 1,245/7.1%). Self-harm (2024: 148/0.8%), sex/pornography (2024: 354/2%), and violence (2024: 187/1%) each accounted for approximately one percent.

**Child abuse material is still the most frequent violation.**

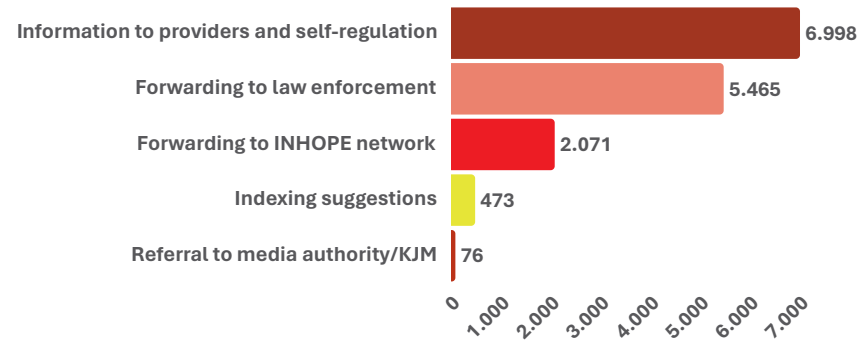
## Violations by type



96% (14,523) of all cases processed by jugendschutz.net were classified as absolutely inadmissible (2024: 96%). The majority of the content was child pornography (82%), followed by youth pornography (7%), symbols of unconstitutional organizations (3%), and depictions of minors in unnaturally sexualized poses (3%).

4% of all cases (576) involved content classified as harmful to minors (3.5%) or as detrimental to development or integrity (0.5%).

# Activities against violations



In 6,998 of the total 15,099 registered cases of violations, jugendschutz.net notified providers and self-regulatory bodies of the violations and demanded their removal. In 5,465 cases, which primarily involved so-called child or youth pornography with a suspected connection to Germany, jugendschutz.net immediately notified law enforcement authorities.

jugendschutz.net forwarded 2,071 cases involving sexualized violence with no apparent German investigative lead to partners in the INHOPE network.

jugendschutz.net referred 76 cases—most of which involved symbols of unconstitutional organizations—to the Commission for the Protection of Minors in the Media (KJM) and the state media authorities so that they could consider initiating regulatory proceedings.

In addition, jugendschutz.net forwarded a total of 473 cases for indexing to the KJM as well as directly to the Federal Agency for Child and Youth Protection in the Media (BzKJ). The goal is to ensure that the content is no longer accessible to minors.

In 96 percent of the cases (14,520 out of 15,099), jugendschutz.net was able to achieve the removal of the violations through its activities.

 The majority of violations were quickly removed.

# Evaluate prevention

# Precautionary measures under scrutiny

To enable children and young people to participate online in an age-appropriate manner, platform operators are legally obligated to take appropriate precautionary measures. In Germany, the Youth Protection Act (JuSchG) sets out regulations for better protection of minors. Furthermore, the Digital Services Act (DSA) provides an EU-wide regulatory framework that obligates digital services to minimize systemic risks on their platforms.

jugendschutz.net examines precautionary measures, new features and functions in services that are particularly popular with minors. In 2025, the focus was on TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, Snapchat, WhatsApp, and Spotify.

## Areas at a glance

- TikTok: Risky shopping feature and digital wellbeing
- Instagram: Higher risk due to “Meta” AI and “Maps”
- YouTube: New purchase incentives, protection against endless shorts
- Snapchat: Risk feature Spotlight and Safety Hub
- WhatsApp: Increased risk due to community features
- Spotify: Illegal content and a lack of precautionary measures

# TikTok: Risky shopping feature and digital wellbeing

With the addition of a shopping feature, TikTok evolved into an online retailer by 2025. Influencers and companies market products through videos and livestreams, with simple payment processes encouraging impulse purchases, especially among young users. Safeguards for minors are effective only if the user's age is accurately reported.

New communication features, such as sharing images in private messages and comments, increase the risk of being exposed to risky content; jugendschutz.net, for example, identified pornography.

Improvements were seen in expanded reporting systems, including for AI-generated content such as deepfakes, as well as features for digital wellbeing and self-regulation of media use.



Simple payment processes in the TikTok shop can encourage adolescents to make purchases.

# Instagram: Higher risk due to “Meta AI” and “Maps”

Features like “Meta AI” and “AI Studio” on Instagram can lead to risky content, such as AI-generated images and characters. Despite filtering mechanisms, user-generated chatbots ignore the user’s age and recommend content such as gambling.

The “Instagram Maps” feature, which allows users to share posts and content with their location in real time, poses the risk of tracking their movements. When minors make contact with strangers, there is also a risk of physical assaults in the real world.

On the positive side: A filter now automatically blurs nude images in teen accounts, and live streaming has been disabled. Additionally, users are notified if others take a screenshot of their ephemeral messages.



Using "Instagram Maps" carries the risk of attacks by strangers.

## YouTube: New purchase incentives, protection against endless shorts

YouTube is introducing new features in live streaming designed to encourage spending: a leaderboard for users of paid Super Chats, stickers, or gifts motivates viewers to spend money on creators and connect with them. Although the terms of service state that these purchasing features are only available to users 18 and older, they are accessible to users as young as 16.

YouTube has improved guidance on self-regulation and media consumption. In full-screen mode, reminders about taking breaks and bedtime are more visible. Additionally, daily limits for the Shorts feed can restrict endless scrolling. Guidelines regarding harassment, online gambling, and violence have also been tightened.



New purchase incentives for live streaming; shorts feed can now be restricted.

# Snapchat: Risk feature Spotlight and Safety Hub

On Snapchat, the “Spotlight” feature allows even very young children to post videos despite the age restriction (16 and older), and these videos are often subject to sexualized comments. While there are numerous reporting options, they do not provide protection against abuse. New streak notifications in group chats—such as a flame emoji indicating high communication activity—also increase the pressure to use the app.

A positive development is the new Safety Hub for families, which provides information on features, content, and safety measures for teens, as well as the “Family Center” parental guidance tool. However, as of 2025, not all content was yet available in German.



New security hub for families, but dangerous "spotlight" feature for children.

# WhatsApp: Increased risk due to community features

On WhatsApp, new community features increase the risk: Since 2025, channels have always been public and are actively promoted, meaning there is no longer any privacy there. Even very young users run channels with a wide reach. The inherently private atmosphere of the messaging service tempts inexperienced users in particular to share personal content; at the same time, the risk of encountering inappropriate content increases.

Unlike other major platforms, WhatsApp has so far taken no measures to protect minors. Isolated warning notices are no substitute for secure default settings or age-appropriate access.



Public channels open the floodgates to data misuse and dangerous content.

# Spotify: Illegal content and a lack of precautionary measures

jugendschutz.net identified numerous instances of inappropriate content and material relevant to the protection of minors on the music streaming service Spotify, including far-right music, lyrics about sexual violence against minors, and playlists containing messages of self-harm or suicide. Inappropriate user-generated content, such as anti-constitutional symbols and freely accessible pornographic images, was also found.

The service's precautionary measures are insufficient: The reporting system is difficult to use and ineffective. There is no standard filtering of explicit content. Age-appropriate use is only possible with parental supervision, and the corresponding tool requires an expensive subscription version of the service.



Spotify offers young users little protection from hate, violence, and sexualization.

# Reporting Systems Put to the Test

An easy-to-use and effective reporting system that provides rapid remedial action in the event of violations is particularly important for the protection of children and young people. For users, it is often the only way to alert platforms to potentially harmful content or contacts. This makes it all the more important that platforms review incoming reports promptly and consistently remove confirmed violations.

In 2025, jugendschutz.net conducted random tests of the reporting systems of Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, and Discord in the area of political extremism. In addition, the music streaming platform Spotify was reviewed in other subject areas. Due to consistently poor results over the years, test scenarios involving larger data sets were not conducted. In total, jugendschutz.net included 375 cases in the reporting tests.

## Results

Deletion rates for political extremism (Instagram, YouTube, TikTok and Discord)

- Special Spotify analysis

## Procedure

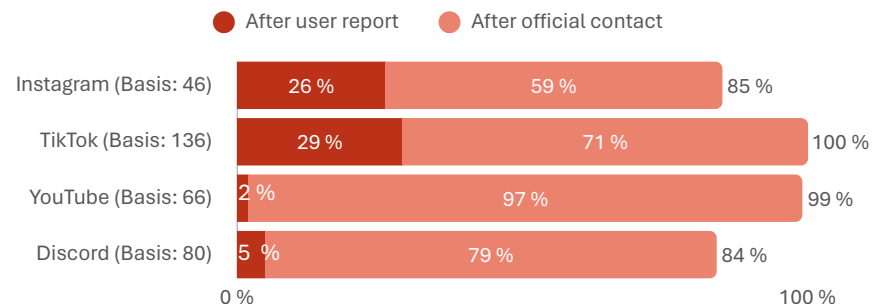
To review the reporting systems, jugendschutz.net uses a two-stage process:

In the first step of the reporting tests, violations are submitted as user reports. This means that jugendschutz.net is not identifiable as the sender.

If the reported content hasn't been deleted or blocked after seven days, jugendschutz.net officially requests its removal. Whether the service has taken action will be reviewed after another seven days.

# Deletion rates for political extremism

Results of Political Extremism

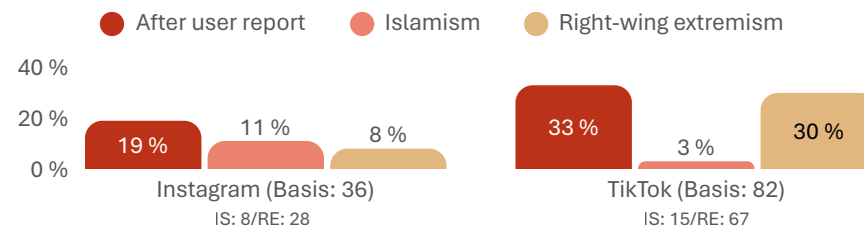


The results of the reporting tests on political extremism show an unchanged trend compared to previous years: The services continue to delete risky content significantly less often when users report it. However, they remove content reported to them by jugendschutz.net as an institution much more frequently. YouTube and Discord came in last in the test: The services removed only 2% and 1% of the content, respectively.

5% of the content reported by users. Instagram and TikTok removed 26% and 29% of the reported content, respectively.

Among the reports concerning extremism, symbols of unconstitutional organizations made up the lion's share. The low deletion rate is all the more incomprehensible given that these violations are rarely disputed and relatively easy to detect. Strikingly, Instagram performed even worse in this category. TikTok removed 30% of the reported far-right symbols, but only 3% of the Islamist ones.

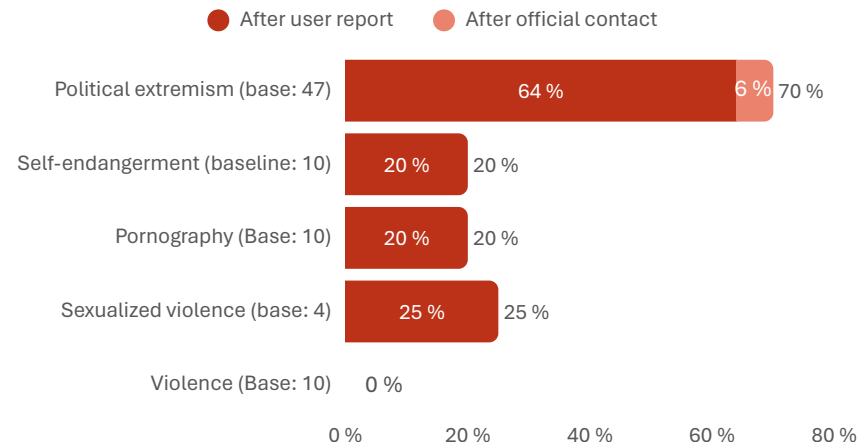
Deletion rates indicators on Instagram and TikTok



Services are not responding adequately to user reports.

# Special Spotify analysis

## Spotify results



jugendschutz.net conducted a targeted review of the popular music streaming service Spotify after discovering an increasing number of violations during their research. For the test, jugendschutz.net examined several risk areas. In addition to content related to political extremism, the organization reported content related to self-harm, pornography, sexualized violence, and violence.

The tests also revealed a flawed picture. While user reports concerning political extremism were deleted in 64% of cases, the service's responses in the other areas were considerably less frequent: For sexualized violence, the percentage of removed content was 25%. Spotify deleted only 20% of content related to self-harm and pornography, and completely ignored violent content.

Remarkably, the service barely reacted even when jugendschutz.net officially identified itself as an institution. With the exception of political extremism, no content was removed within seven days of reports submitted through this channel.

Even after official contact, Spotify only deletes a small amount of content.

# About jugendschutz.net

jugendschutz.net serves as the joint competence center of the federal government, the states, and state media authorities for the protection of children and young people on the internet. jugendschutz.net looks closely at dangers and risks in internet services specifically popular among young people. The centre works to ensure that violations of youth protection laws are removed and urges providers and operators to design their content in a way that allows children and young people to use the internet free of troubles. The German youth ministries founded jugendschutz.net in 1997. The tasks were laid down in the Interstate Treaty on the Protection of Minors (JMStV) in 2003. Since then jugendschutz.net has been organizationally linked to the Commission for the Protection of Minors in the Media (KJM).

In 2021, the Federal Government also assigned jugendschutz.net a statutory mandate in the Protection of Young Persons Act (JuSchG).

The work of jugendschutz.net is funded by the Supreme Youth Protection Authorities of the federal states, the state media authorities and the Federal Ministry for Education, Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth and the European Union. jugendschutz.net runs a hotline accepting reports about violations of youth media protection laws.

jugendschutz.net accepts reports of violations of youth media protection via its [Online complaints office](#).

# imprint

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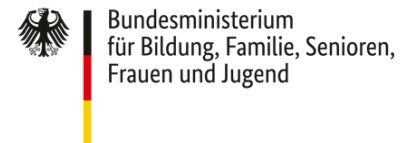
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