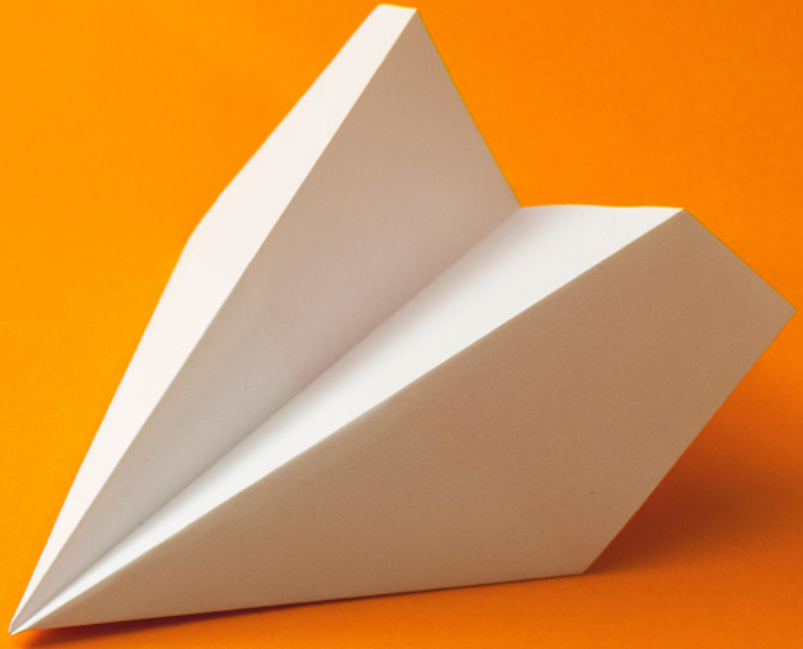




verifymy



Report

How to streamline age assurance using existing user data

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What is age assurance, and why is it important?

The UK's Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) defines age assurance as encompassing "a range of techniques for estimating or verifying the ages of children and users". The ICO's Children's Code Age Appropriate Application Standard further outlines expectations for online services likely to be accessed by children using age assurance.



Age assurance plays an important role in keeping children, and their personal information, safe online. It describes tools or approaches that help estimate or assess a child's age and therefore allows services to be tailored to their needs or access to be restricted, where required

Information Commissioner's Office (ICO)

Distinguishing between age verification and age estimation

Age assurance encompasses both age estimation and age verification methods. While age estimation typically infers or estimates age based on physical features or behavioural characteristics, age verification determines an individual's actual age. Age verification is often carried out by providing official documents (e.g. a passport or other form of ID) to confirm exactly how old someone is by comparing the birthdate on the document to the current date.

Technological advancements and the introduction of AI-driven techniques have meant that safety tech providers can now offer a range of highly accurate, privacy-preserving age assurance methods that protect user privacy, minimise friction, and ensure compliance with ever-evolving regulations.

While some methods require user interaction, such as uploading an image of an ID document or taking a short selfie video, other methods use existing user data. This data is often collected as part of the account creation process, such as an email address, or during the checkout process on online marketplaces, and can often be deployed in the background with no further user interaction required.

This report will discuss the benefits of using existing user data to streamline the age verification process, with a focus on email address age estimation - the quickest and easiest way to accurately determine the age of your users online.



Growing importance of age assurance in online safety and compliance with regulations

With the increasing prevalence of digital platforms and the diverse age groups they cater to, ensuring that users are appropriately aged for the services they access and the content they consume has become critical for both online safety and regulatory compliance. As governments worldwide introduce stricter laws to protect children and vulnerable individuals online, platforms are facing growing pressure to implement robust age assurance measures that prevent minors from accessing inappropriate content or services.

In this report, we delve into two of Europe's core age-related regulations and what they mean for online platforms.



European Union

The Digital Services Act (DSA)

The European Union's Digital Services Act (DSA), fully enforced as of 2024, introduces stringent regulations to safeguard minors online. Under the DSA, online platforms accessible to minors are required to implement appropriate measures to ensure a high level of privacy, safety, and security for minors on their services. A key focus of the Act is the responsibility of platforms to mitigate risks and protect users—especially minors—from harmful and illegal content. One critical aspect of these protections is age assurance.

For instance, Article 28 of the DSA mandates that online platforms implement measures that ensure a high level of data protection and safety for minors. This translates to online platforms needing to develop systems to verify a user's age before granting access to age-restricted content, like pornography.

The Act explicitly states that it does not require proactive collection of additional personal data for age assurance, but it is clear that it is crucial for platforms to consider the age of each user to meet many of these new obligations, particularly if they already hold data for other purposes which can indicate age.



↳ Additionally, the DSA introduces a ban on targeted advertising to minors based on profiling that uses personal data, if platforms can establish with reasonable certainty that the recipient of the service is a minor.

Verifmy can assist services in confirming which users are adults, ensuring that those who have not demonstrated this are offered the additional protections the DSA requires for children. An example would be using an email address, which can be collected by a platform during account creation purposes and then be used to analyse and confirm with a high degree of confidence if the user is an adult.



United Kingdom

The Online Safety Act (OSA)

The UK's Online Safety Act (OSA) represents one of the most significant legislative changes in the digital landscape for over a decade. Expected to progressively be brought into force from early 2025, the Act will bring sweeping regulations designed to protect users—particularly children—from illegal or harmful online content. The Act will apply to social media platforms (widely defined as “user-to-user services”), search engines and pornographic websites.

Whilst regulator Ofcom is still in the process of establishing the specific requirements and detailed guidelines, the legislation includes a “Duty of Care” whereby platforms have an obligation to protect users, especially children, from harmful content. This includes implementing “highly effective age assurance” to prevent kids from being exposed to high-risk “primary priority harms” such as pornography, suicide, self-harm and diet pills content widely available on many social platforms.

Although the specifics of this requirement have yet to be fully defined, it is clear that basic or outdated age-check systems—such as a simple ‘yes/no’ checkbox or self-declared age—will not suffice, and “highly effective” age assurance will be required.

Come 2025, if you provide services that host harmful or age-inappropriate content and have users in the UK, then you must:

- Implement age verification or age estimation - or both - technology to ensure that minors cannot encounter illegal or harmful content.
- Ensure that said age verification or age estimation technologies implemented are deemed highly effective in correctly determining whether or not a user is a child.

Verifmy can supply “highly effective age assurance”, to prevent minors from seeing what is termed “Primary Priority Content”, as well as helping to estimate users’ ages to protect them from other “Priority Content”.

What constitutes highly effective age assurance?

The UK regulator has indicated that “highly effective” could include a variety of approaches, from document verification (such as using passports or driver’s licences) to age estimation technologies, which commonly depend on facial biometrics or user behaviour.

Unlike higher-risk activities, such as banking, online gambling or crypto, where compliant methods are often limited, the likes of social media platforms (or ‘user-to-user services’) and adult sites will be able to effectively deploy less intrusive yet still highly effective age estimation techniques under the Act, rather than rely solely on hard ID scans for users to prove their age - which have historically seen significant drop off rates.

Innovative, more recent methods are less disruptive to user journeys and, therefore, more likely to be willingly adopted by both platforms and their end users.



Verifymy offers a wide range of age estimation and age verification solutions.

Our latest innovative method uses just an email address to accurately determine the age of your users online. It’s not just an age assurance tool; it’s a game-changer in simplifying age check processes and ensuring age-appropriate experiences online. It can be deployed in the background with no user interaction required, eliminating the hassle of age verification for your entire user base and minimising any business disruption.



Email address age estimation

- ✓ Highly accurate
- ✓ Frictionless and fast
- ✓ Inclusive and without bias
- ✓ Privacy-preserving
- ✓ Commercially viable
- ✓ Consistent across jurisdictions
- ✓ Certified

Our proprietary age assurance solution uses just an email address to quickly and accurately estimate a user's age. Built to incorporate data minimisation and privacy-by-design principles, this method is the quickest and easiest way to determine the age of users online. It will typically return a result in as little as 2-3 seconds and can be deployed independently or alongside our range of other highly-accurate age assurance techniques.

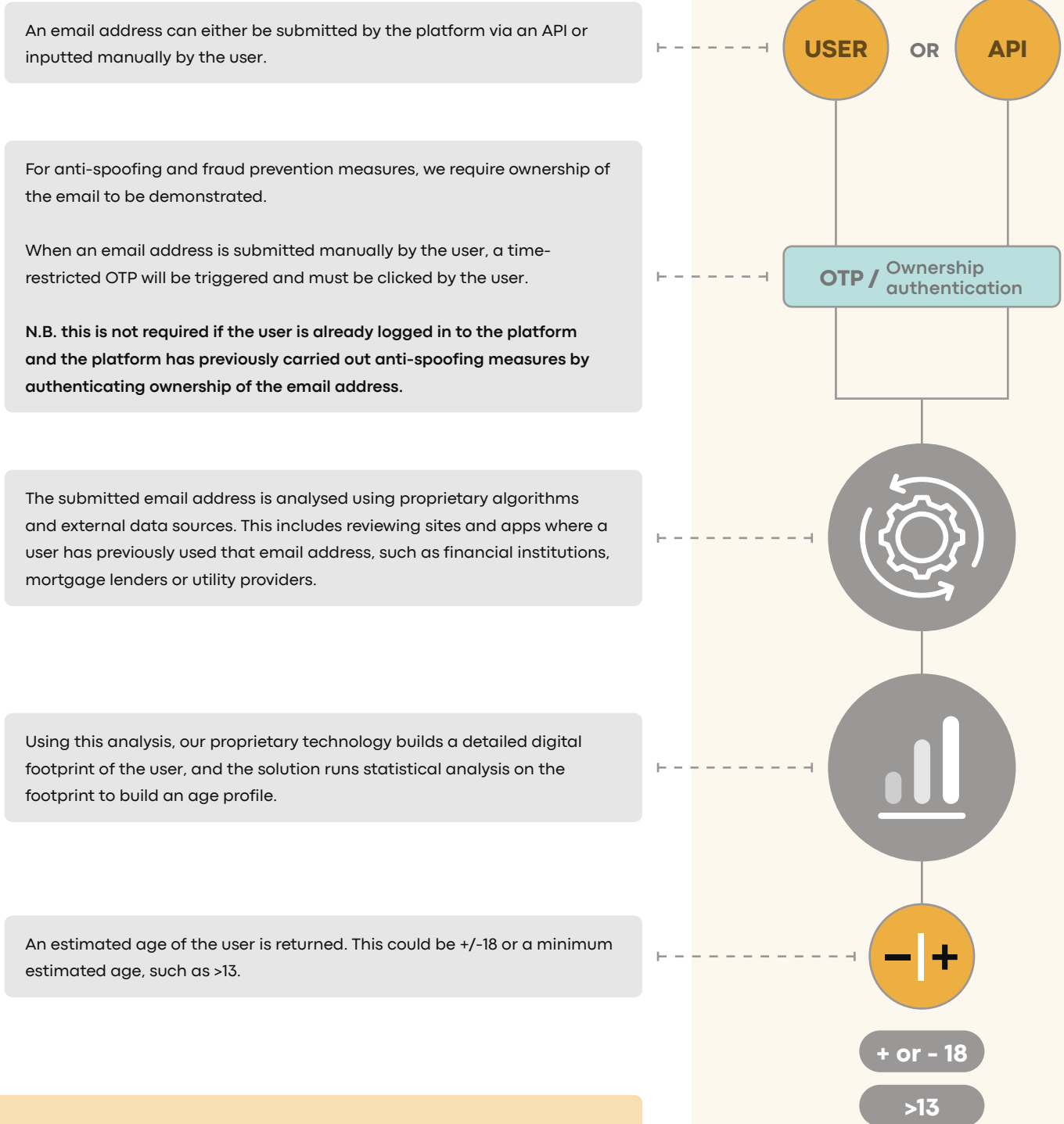
It is fully inclusive and can be used by anyone with an email address. It operates without any discernible bias and can be used by anyone irrespective of gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality or any other discriminatory trait. With most online users already having an email address, this method has close to 100% coverage across all web users, and, therefore, it can be highly effective at estimating the age of a large proportion of a website's user base with minimal or even zero disruption to a user journey.



The Age Check Certification Scheme (ACCS) is a UKAS-accredited conformity assessment body and provides independent certification for online age assurance solutions. Our email address age estimation method is certified by the ACCS under **PAS 1296:2018 to EAL Level 3**, the highest possible level for age estimation.

How does it work?

Estimating a user's age using their email address is frictionless, privacy-preserving, and without discernible bias. But how does it work?



Incorporating data minimisation and privacy-by-design principles, we only collect the minimum data needed to successfully return an estimated age.

Zero friction age verification

The email address method can be deployed **entirely free from friction** in **'stealth'** mode (subject to there being a valid lawful basis for processing the user's data). For example, using data previously collected by a platform as part of an account creation process, without the need for any user interaction whatsoever.

Alternatively, it can be deployed in **'non-stealth'** as part of an 'age gate', where an end user can manually input their email address and authenticate it via a time-restricted One-Time Password (OTP) to demonstrate ownership of that particular email account.

Deploying the email address age estimation method can be beneficial for many online platforms, for example:



Online platforms can leverage existing email address data from their account creation process to run checks seamlessly in the background, with no further user interaction required.



Marketplaces can seamlessly integrate this method into the checkout process. By utilising customer order and account details to verify customers in the background during their checkout process without interrupting the user experience.

What are the benefits of email address age estimation?

For maximum success, online platforms looking to implement highly effective age assurance technology should follow the core principles of successful age verification. Let's break down what these principles mean and how email address age estimation can be practically implemented to streamline age verification:

Accurate

Age verification technology must be highly accurate, providing reliable assurance that users are of a certain age. Methods should be independently certified and deliver results with a high degree of accuracy.

Email address age estimation is highly accurate, as demonstrated by its ACCS EAL 3 certification, the highest possible level for age estimation methods.

ACCS testing resulted in a True Positive Rate of 84% - meaning for every 100 actual adults, the solution successfully determined that 84 were 18+ solely by using their email address. It is worth noting that the remaining 16% were not incorrectly estimated to be under 18 - we simply did not have enough information to estimate them to be 18+, so users in this instance would be prompted to verify their age by utilising another method.

The method is designed to be conservative with age estimation and will not return a positive result, e.g. 13+, 16+, 18+, if there is insufficient data to provide a clear picture. Whilst the solution can be applied to any age threshold, its primary use case has been to determine whether users are +/-18.

Frictionless and fast

Slow or cumbersome verification processes will drive users away, ultimately damaging conversion rates, so age checks need to be seamless and fast. Solutions that require minimal user input and provide near-instant results are critical for maintaining a smooth user experience.

Email address age estimation can be entirely frictionless. An email address can be submitted 'in stealth' directly by a platform via an API, or a user can input it manually.

If provided in stealth, checks can be performed seamlessly in the background without any further interaction required from the user, making the solution entirely free of friction. By implementing this way, businesses can undertake age estimation without any impact on the





user journey at all. Removing this friction avoids potential drops in conversion and, in turn, minimises business disruption.

Inclusive and without bias

Age verification should work for all users, irrespective of gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality or any other discriminatory trait.

Email address age estimation is fully accessible and widely available. It can be used by anyone with an active email address and it works without any discernible bias. Online users are typically very familiar with sharing their email address in everyday online interactions - for example, when creating an account to purchase items or accessing content online. Coupled with close to 100% coverage amongst web users, the method is highly accessible.

Privacy-preserving

Protecting user privacy is paramount. Effective age verification should be privacy-focused and work to verify ages without retaining identifiable information.

Email address age estimation is privacy-preserving and is designed with privacy-by-design and principles of data minimisation as a priority and ensuring compliance with data protection laws.

The solution is highly effective and designed to protect users' identities completely. Therefore, it doesn't generate any information on who a user is; only a yes/no response to determine whether they meet a minimum age threshold, such as 18, or a minimum estimated age.

Consistent across jurisdictions

It's important that age verification solutions are scalable and consistent across jurisdictions, ensuring that platforms can simply deploy a single product and remain compliant with both global and local laws.

Email address age estimation can help businesses comply with global legislative requirements, such as the Online Safety Act (UK), Digital Services Act (EU), various pieces of state legislation across the US and numerous other domestic and international laws related to the sale of age-restricted products such as alcohol and tobacco.

Commercially viable

Email address age estimation is cost-effective and minimises the risk of conversion loss. It can help maintain high conversion rates by creating a frictionless experience, while also removing the chances of fines relating to non-compliance.

Case studies

Email address age estimation is used by some of the world's biggest adult and tech platforms and has been embraced by over 400 adult businesses since its launch.

At a glance: Age verification for the adult sector

Age verification in the adult sector is critical to ensure legal compliance with ever-evolving regulations and to safeguard minors from inappropriate content, all while protecting the privacy of adults wishing to view adult content.

In the past, adult sites have relied solely on the likes of hard ID scans for users to prove their age and comply with local regulations - but this has not been without issues, with many businesses seeing significant drops in traffic as a result. This dramatic impact has understandably placed all business owners in a difficult situation.

Where regulation forces age verification, a low-friction option is vital to support the industry - and email address age estimation is solving this issue of friction and drop-off rates for adult sites.

Gamma Entertainment have deployed email address age estimation and as a result, have seen significant increases in their conversion rates.



Implementing Verifymy's exclusive email address age estimation solution has increased our conversions by 40%.

The team at Verifymy truly understands the importance of protecting conversions and the overall user experience.

By utilizing their proprietary technology, we can remain compliant without negatively impacting our revenue. It was a simple decision for us.

Charles Rousseau, COO - GAMMA Entertainment



At Verifymy, we take pride in our unwavering commitment to balancing child protection with safeguarding our clients' brand and reputation and firmly believe that age verification shouldn't cost you business.

Conclusion

Online platforms must strike a balance between the level of data required for an age check and the user's expectations and tolerance for friction. Innovative age estimation techniques that utilise existing user data, such as using email address, are becoming increasingly important for businesses as they offer a less intrusive yet highly effective way to determine a user's age.

Built to preserve privacy and incorporate data minimisation and privacy-by-design principles, email address age estimation is the quickest and easiest way to determine the age of your users online. It's not just a verification tool; it's a game-changer in simplifying age verification processes and ensuring age-appropriate experiences online. It can be deployed in the background with no user interaction required, eliminating the hassle of age verification for your entire user base and minimising any business disruption.



Get in touch to understand how Verifymy can help streamline your age verification process.

[Get in touch](#)



About Verifymy

Our mission is to provide frictionless, trustworthy solutions for online platforms to maintain their integrity, protect their reputation and safeguard their users.

Age assurance

An age assurance solution for any online product, service or business, featuring the widest range of age verification and age estimation methods to ensure the highest pass rates possible with minimal business disruption.

Identity verification Content moderation

A complete end-to-end identity verification and content moderation solution to prevent uploaders from publishing illegal content on user-generated content platforms, ensuring a safe, trustworthy, and compliant online experience for everyone.



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