



# FACT SHEET

## The Digital Age and Radicalisation

The Covid 19 Pandemic has resulted in more of us spending even more time online. The internet has transformed the speed and ease with which information and ideas can be communicated and shared. Whilst this has been beneficial in many respects, it also provides an opportunity for those who wish to radicalise others.

The UK has seen a recent surge in extremist activity online, particularly Right Wing Extremism (RWE), in part as a result of uncertainty caused by Brexit, the Covid 19 Pandemic and corresponding economic pressures, and the Black Lives Matter movement.

All extremist groups have utilised the internet to target both children, young people, and adults and spread their message. Extremist messages can offer a sense of purpose, belonging and identity, which may be particularly appealing to individuals who are experiencing challenges in their lives.

A variety of extremist groups and individuals have sought to exploit this situation to promote their particular ideologies, spread disinformation, and recruit others to their cause. This has been made easier through the use of sites such as **4chan**, where users can post content anonymously and with little or no moderation, and which has therefore developed a reputation for extremist content. Other applications include **Gab**, which operates in a similar way to Twitter, as a social network where people can post information and ideas, but is subject to little moderation and therefore has gained a reputation for hosting extremist content. **Telegram** is a messaging service very similar to WhatsApp, with a high level of encryption where users can make calls and join secret channels. It too has gained a reputation for hosting and disseminating extremist content.

It is important to note that whilst none of the applications listed above may have been designed to host and promote extremist content, the way they operate has allowed those promoting extremist ideologies to move into and use these spaces with relative impunity. The risk they represent is that often this extremist content can sit alongside more innocuous and everyday content whereby users can easily and unintentionally be exposed to extremist material.

The message is that whilst the world wide web is an incredibly important and powerful tool for sharing ideas and information, it is important to remain vigilant to the risks of extremist content in its many forms and guises.

**To report extremist content online,  
please click this link: [https://  
www.gov.uk/report-terrorism](https://www.gov.uk/report-terrorism)**

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## Gaming and Radicalization: Case Study

According to research by Ofcom, young people in Britain are now more likely to go online through a games console than a desktop computer. Beyond the games themselves, gaming-affiliated platforms are massive and influential social networks. XBOX Live for example has 100 million estimated monthly users. As with social media platforms, the connectivity afforded by gaming platforms brings opportunities for those who wish to radicalise others. Research by the Institute of Strategic Dialogue indicates that gaming communities have played an important role in the formation of contemporary extreme-right culture in particular.

In September 2021, the BBC reported evidence of anti-Semitism, racism and homophobia on platforms including DLive and Odysee where users stream and chat about games such as Call of Duty and Minecraft. Researchers also found extremist 'roleplay' scenarios within games that let players create and share their own custom maps and environments. These included Nazi concentration camps. One Roblox driving game invited players to simulate the murder of people from ethnic minority backgrounds by running them over in a car.



There are estimated to be 2.81 billion gamers worldwide



A user-built concentration camp in Minecraft (Source: BBC News)

Sources: (Please Note: Hampshire County Council is not responsible for and does not necessarily endorse the content of any third party website).

[Extremism and Gaming Research Network | Royal United Services Institute \(rusi.org\)](#)

[Extremists using video-game chats to spread hate - BBC News](#)

[Extremists using online gaming and Covid conspiracies to recruit youngsters | Prevent strategy | The Guardian](#)

[Gaming and Extremism: Extremists Evade Mainstream Restrictions in Corners of Gaming World - ISD \(isdglobal.org\)](#)

[The Latest Frontier In Radicalization: Gaming – Centre for Analysis of the Radical Right \(radicalrightanalysis.com\)](#)



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