

NSFW ON REDDIT

EXPERIENCES OF MODERATION

TABLE OF CONTENTS

• Introduction	3
• Methods	9
• Terminology	10
• Part 1: User Characteristics	11
◦ Demographics	12
◦ Reddit Use	13
◦ NSFW-Ness	13
◦ NSFW Marking	13
◦ Time on Reddit	14
◦ Frequency of Posts	14
• Part 2: Overall Moderation	15
◦ Forms of Moderation	16
◦ NSFW Moderation	16
◦ Change Over Time	17
◦ Moderation Communications	18
◦ Warnings	18
◦ Moderation Explanations	19
◦ Communication Clarity	19
◦ Sense of Violating TOS	20
◦ Moderation Fairness	20
◦ Impact on Traffic	21
◦ Impact on Business	22
◦ Impact on Site Use	25
◦ Moderation of SFW	26
◦ Political Environment	27
• Part 3: Subreddit Moderation	28
◦ Moderation in Subreddits	29
◦ Subreddit Communications	30
◦ Arbitrary and Whorephobic	31
◦ Extortion and Exploitation	34
• Part 4: Appeals	36
◦ Appeal Process	37
◦ Automation	40
• References	41
• Appendix A: Survey Questions	43

INTRODUCTION

In 2023 online platforms are well established as a part of everyday life, but the terms and policies they are governed by, and the moderation actions taken to enforce them, remain a topic of hot debate. Much focus is placed on how the content allowed to circulate on platforms may cause harm to users, with sexual or adult content routinely labeled the most concerning. What is less studied is the impact on users when content is removed, censored, or prevented from being posted on platforms – harms that, as this study indicates, are substantial, under-reported, and on the rise.

With the passage of the Allow States and Victims to Fight Online Sex Trafficking Act and the Stop Enabling Sex Traffickers Act (FOSTA/SESTA) in 2018, platforms are increasingly liable for user-posted content – but is liability a framework that empowers users and creates safety? Or does this liability harm precisely those marginalized groups that are the supposed beneficiaries of increased content moderation? We must study the impact these policies have on stakeholder groups and society at large, since we haven't yet fully reckoned with these actions (for example, the SAFE SEX Worker Study Act to follow up SESTA has not yet been passed). What studies do exist overwhelmingly report devastating outcomes for platform users [e.g. 1-5], yet the US government is looking to compound platform liability issues with additional internet legislation such as the Kids Online Safety Act (KOSA) and Eliminating Abusive and Rampant Neglect of Interactive Technologies (EARN IT).

The moderation of platform expression is not just governed by criminal law such as FOSTA/SESTA. The adult content guidelines of credit card networks Visa and Mastercard, Global Alliance for Responsible Media (GARM) advertising standards, and distribution/stack partner pressure such as that of the Apple App store have all contributed to tighter restrictions that have collectively pushed platforms to restrict adult content. As a result, the Terms of Service for most platforms prohibit sexually suggestive and explicit material, and target NSFW users more than other accounts, even when they diligently abide by these rules [6].

INTRODUCTION

Along with Twitter, Reddit is one of the only platforms that allows NSFW content and creators to comingle with “mainstream” social media users. Such heterogeneous spaces are critical for sex workers, sex educators, and other NSFW posters, both for promoting their businesses but also for participating in every aspect of what is an increasingly online life (such as being able to access and share information and participate in political organizing).

That is why we were especially disturbed when, in the summer of 2022, sex workers and adult content creators began reporting increased moderation of their content on Reddit without explanation [7]. There was no reason to expect a change in Reddit’s moderation practices, as they had not announced any major updates to their TOS or enforcement standards. That said, moderation on Reddit can be especially opaque, due to its uniquely bottom-up, distributed system. The site, with over 57 million unique daily users, has more than 100 thousand ‘subreddits’: topic-specific forums that are created and operated by end users themselves [8]. Aside from very few “official” communities with paid staff among the moderators, most subreddits are regulated by volunteer moderators who are responsible for making the subreddit rules, removing content that violates those rules, and responding to user appeals and questions, often with the help of automated moderation tools provided by Reddit (“Automoderator”). As a result, Reddit features a patchwork of official and volunteer moderation that can be confusing to users, because while there are site-wide terms of service, the additional rules specific to each subreddit can be very diverse and may be enforced in arbitrary ways.

We do not conclude that volunteer moderation is a bad thing – there is much to admire about a system that allows for the cultivation of specific community cultures through user moderation: this has enabled many sex workers to build promotional subreddits for their personal brand, as well as to run communities by sex workers for sex workers.

INTRODUCTION

However, this patchwork approach to moderation can create confusion and frustration. Between badly communicated volunteer moderation, and often completely uncommunicated official site moderation (like not being informed that you have been suspended or, that there is a way to appeal that decision, etc.), the lack of transparency is injurious, because content moderation decisions “have a substantial impact on public culture and the social and political lives of [platform] users” [9, p1].

This study was developed because, despite Reddit’s recent introduction of ‘transparency reports’ [10], we do not have comprehensive information regarding what seems to be a pattern of increasingly strict NSFW moderation on the platform. We can only point to a collection of developments, which illustrate that Reddit is removing or restricting adult content in a variety of ways:

- In 2019, Reddit made changes to prohibit NSFW ads, and disallowed ads or targeting on NSFW subreddits [11].
- In 2021, Reddit removed adult content from r/all, a feed of the most popular posts on Reddit [12].
- In 2021, Reddit also introduced an additional 'safe search' toggle to the search bar (in addition to users' account settings) that automatically defaults to SFW-only. To see NSFW content, the user must re-set the toggle search settings every time [13]. For the Reddit app on iOS, NSFW settings were also moved into the device settings without notice [14]
- In 2022, Reddit indicated that GARM advertising regulations may have something to do with an increasingly restrictive site, for example, introducing a detection tool to automatically tag content suspected of being NSFW [15].
- In 2023, Reddit removed NSFW content from their API, meaning this content will no longer be shown in any third party apps using the API [16]. A move related to API fees generated substantial protest from moderators who coordinated mass blackouts of their respective communities, and/or

INTRODUCTION

switched their communities to NSFW so that Reddit could not profit from ads on those subreddits. Many of these mods then found their accounts locked in retaliation [17,18].

- Previously, Reddit prohibited NSFW communities from direct image uploads. In 2023, Imgur, an image service that hosts much of the NSFW content posted to Reddit, stated they are banning all sexually explicit content [19]. While Reddit has announced they will now allow NSFW image uploads from desktops [20], Imgur's decision may lead to the disappearance of years worth of previously posted content, since many communities have been entirely reliant on Imgur for image posting.
- Users have also reported that Reddit is limiting NSFW content algorithmically so it is less suggested; that changes to spam-detection have seemingly been designed to catch more adult posters; and that they are experiencing increasing suspensions, disappearing communities, and content limitations, as well as reduced traffic, engagement, and income

The elimination of sexual content from the internet is a primary goal of several religious extremist organizations, and Reddit has been a consistent target. In particular, faith-based anti-sex work group NCOSE a.k.a. Morality in Media, has called for Reddit to ban NSFW content entirely, characterizing all sexual media as misogynist abuse [21, 22]. This organization is at the forefront of efforts to censor abortion information, LGBTQ resources, and online expressions of consensual sexuality, a project that has unfortunately been embraced by many across the political spectrum. This is concerning given Reddit has banned subreddits in the past – namely racist and misogynist communities – in response to media attention and political pressure [23]. Reddit has stated that, while pressure increases to do so, they will not ban NSFW content from the platform entirely [24]. We hope Reddit understands that groups like NCOSE are not acting in good faith or based on sound data, and that they keep this commitment to sexual expression on the platform. To these ends, we sought to measure the impact of NSFW content moderation on sex workers and other NSFW users on Reddit.

WHAT WE FOUND

As outlined above, while there is no single feature or TOS change to point towards, a variety of officially announced changes and observed site developments have increasingly restricted NSFW content on Reddit. All of these changes may intentionally be designed to work together to show less adult content to users, or it is possible they have been made separately from each other without much thought given as to their collective impact. The changes seemed to be implemented independently, without any indication that they represent an orchestrated site development.

Nevertheless, our study shows that these changes have added up to real limitations on the creators of otherwise popular content. As is detailed throughout this report, we found measurably negative impacts to people, including reduced engagement on the site, less traffic gained through the site, and substantial creator income loss.

We also found that users feel the site moderation is increasingly unfair, discriminatory, and poorly communicated. They felt that moderation is increasingly harsh towards consensual adult content creators (sometimes in bluntly nonsensical or error-prone ways), while also being less and less attractive or supportive to them: allowing stolen or non-consensual content, and even activity like extortion or doxxing by volunteer moderators.

Bluntly, these feature changes are pushing an important (and very popular) community of original content creators away from the site, even as the site continues to profit on the distribution of the content created by those very same individuals. The content often persists, even as the original creator's profiles are increasingly suspended and limited.

In previous case work with suspended users, it was found that many of these account suspensions were associated with spam prevention algorithms, and a significant number (both before and after the survey was run) were able to be recovered via an appeals process. Reddit has often reported that these accounts were disabled "by mistake".

WHAT WE FOUND

We're glad that we've been able to recover those profiles, but in almost all of those situations the user was never notified that they were restricted, not notified as to "why", not told that there was an appeals process, and usually not given an explanation, apology, or other respectful interaction after their account was re-enabled. Survey respondents noted these kinds of interactions contributed towards an overall feeling that they were not welcome or respected in the Reddit community. This disproportionate moderation has very material consequences. Our data show that constant moderation without adequate explanation leads to frustration on the part of users, who then use the site less, which is detrimental to their income.

Based on these survey findings, in the broader context of NSFW moderation and censorship online, we make the following recommendations to Reddit:

- **Establish and consult with a stakeholder advisory council for marginalized groups on the platform, including sex workers.**
- **Secure an adult-friendly advertiser network to monetize NSFW subreddits properly, or simply allow adult creators on the site to advertise in related subreddits; this would both minimize spam and bring in revenue.**
- **Work towards a human rights standard for content moderation through partnerships with social justice and human rights groups, rather than solely political, technological, and financial institutions.**
- **Join with other adult-friendly social media sites like Twitter and OnlyFans, in conversation with trade associations like the Free Speech Coalition and initiatives such as Sex Positive Social Media, to shape adult content guidelines that prioritize user control and consent by allowing them to express what they want to express and see what they want to see, which includes the right to see explicit content if they wish.**

METHODS

A survey (Appendix A) was drafted by Lake and Webber and circulated online via Jotform from August 16 to November 23, 2022. This version included multiple sections and extensive details on all levels of site and subreddit moderation, and collected demographic information. Thirty-nine completed responses were recorded.

A shortened 10-question version of the survey focused on key site-wide concerns was reissued from March 1 to April 24, 2023. An additional 124 responses were recorded for a total of 163 respondents. These 10 questions are highlighted in the Appendix.

Statistics are rounded to the nearest decimal point, and often exceed 100% because many questions accepted multiple answers. Quotations are taken from optional open-ended questions and may be lightly modified for clarity.

We want to thank Ian O'Brien at PASS for lending us the survey software, and everyone who took the time to answer -- we appreciate you!

“Reddit deletes accounts for no reason ... Sex workers are treated as less than, even though we provide an astronomical amount of traffic and quality content to the subreddits.” - survey respondent



TERMINOLOGY

It can be confusing to talk about moderation on Reddit. There are several ways moderation can occur, and users have developed a variety of unique ways to discuss that moderation. This can include inconsistent, localized vocabularies.

When leaving comments in the open-ended questions, respondents referred to moderation and platform jargon in varying ways and not always consistent with the wording used in the survey questions. Terms like "shadowban", "banned", "deleted", "suspended"; or reference to volunteers or staff as "admins" or "mods", may therefore be inconsistent. For example, some people refer to an account suspension as "being deleted". Some people use "shadowbanned" to refer to a post being deleted while others use it to refer to a post being left up but limited from views. We've reported all quotes in respondents' own words, but the disparity among them demonstrates an educated frustration with confusing systems.

Some key terms include:

Community Moderators ("volunteer moderators", "mods"): Reddit users who help moderate individual communities, known as subreddits, but are not Reddit employees. Users become moderators by starting a community or being added by an existing user moderator. Within subreddits, volunteer "mods" have power to remove posts, ban users, enforce subreddit rules or shadowban activity, but they cannot restrict users' access to the whole site.

Administrators (Admins, Staff): Reddit employees who oversee the whole site. Admins have broad power to control user accounts across the site, but do not usually ban people from individual subreddits or handle subreddit-related rule violations - though violating rules of a subreddit can be grounds for a site-wide account limitation or moderation.

Moderation: For the purposes of this survey, "moderation" refers to any moderation from Community Moderators and Administrators. Questions about more specific instances will be noted as referring to one or the other.

PART 1:

USER CHARACTERISTICS

DEMOGRAPHICS



The majority of creators surveyed in the full study were women or trans identified. Most respondents also identified as lesbian, bisexual, gay, or queer. Respondents were also older than is often suggested in sex work reporting, with 82% of respondents aged 24-54, and 28% older than 35. The full demographics are:

- **Gender:** 56% cis women; 26% non-binary, trans, and/or gender queer; & 10% cis men (8% no answer)
- **Race:** 67% white; 18% multiple responses or mixed race; 5% South Asian/Middle Eastern, and 2.5% East Asian/ Pacific Islander (7.5% no answer)
- **Sexuality:** 62% lesbian, bisexual, gay, and/or queer; 23% straight; and 5% asexual (10% no answer)
- **Age:** 54% aged 24-34; 20% 35-44; 10% 18-24; and 8% 45-54 (8% no answer)

Several respondents pointed out how moderation targets and marginalizes certain populations:

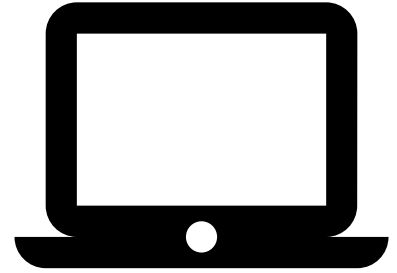
Posters who are not thin white women often face more discrimination and harassment on the site from mods and users.

The biggest subreddits are cis, white, and thin. I do not believe it is a reflection of the individual community members. I fully believe it is by mod design. It is well known that if you are black, fat, or trans, you will have a significantly harder--if not impossible--time getting your posts approved and being treated respectfully by community moderators.

REDDIT USE

Respondents use Reddit for multiple reasons:

- To promote their adult business - 62%
- As a fan of adult content - 31%
- To share their sexuality as an 'amateur' NSFW poster - 31%
- For political discussion and organizing - 10%
- General use of the site - 56%



NSFW-NESS

The majority of survey respondents use their accounts primarily for NSFW content. They described their accounts as:

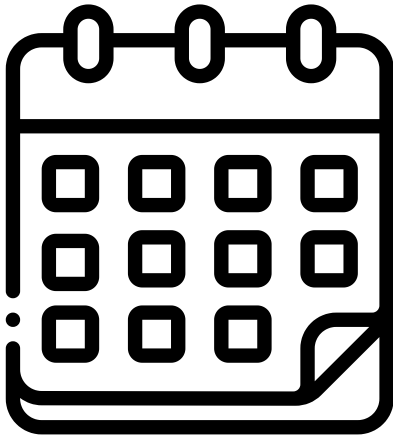
- Only NSFW - 27%
- Mostly NSFW - 38%
- Equally NSFW & SFW - 15%
- Rarely NSFW - 6%
- Only SFW - 2%
- Separate SFW & NSFW accounts - 11%



NSFW MARKING

Of those whose profiles were marked 'NSFW', 70% had done so themselves while 21% had their profiles marked by Reddit admins (9% were unsure who had marked their profile NSFW).





TIME ON REDDIT

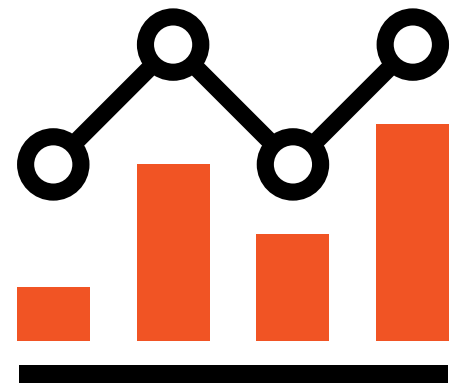
Respondents had been on Reddit:

- 10+ years - 18%
- 5-10 years - 18%
- 3-5 years - 13%
- 1-3 years - 46%
- Less than 1 year - 5%

FREQUENCY OF POSTS

Respondents post to Reddit:

- Less than once a week - 35%
- 2-6 posts a week - 27%
- 2-10 posts a day - 16%
- 1 post a week - 8%
- 10-20 posts a day - 3%
- 20+ posts a day - 3%
- 1 post a day - 3%
- (5% no answer)



For most (58%), this represents a decline in their use of the site, whereas 28% said they post the same amount as they did in the past and 16% now post more.

PART 2:

OVERALL MODERATION

FORMS OF MODERATION

As active users, it's normal to experience some moderation, and **83%** of respondents had experienced some form of moderation on Reddit.

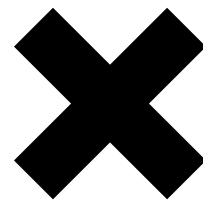
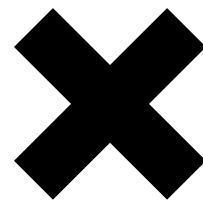
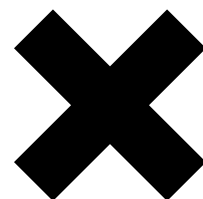
Of those, many had experienced more than one type of moderation:

- My posts don't seem to be getting attention - 64%
- My posts were removed/deleted - 7%
- My posts are not visible to other users when I am logged out - 25%
- My profile was limited (none of my posts show to others in any subreddit, or similar profile-wide restrictions) - 33%
- My profile was deleted (cannot log in or find it) - 15%
- My subreddit was restricted - 15%
- My subreddit was deleted - 12%
- I was suspended or banned from subreddits - 7%

NSFW MODERATION

Reddit allows posting of many different kinds of media and genres of content. Respondents reported that if their NSFW posts were moderated, it was usually:

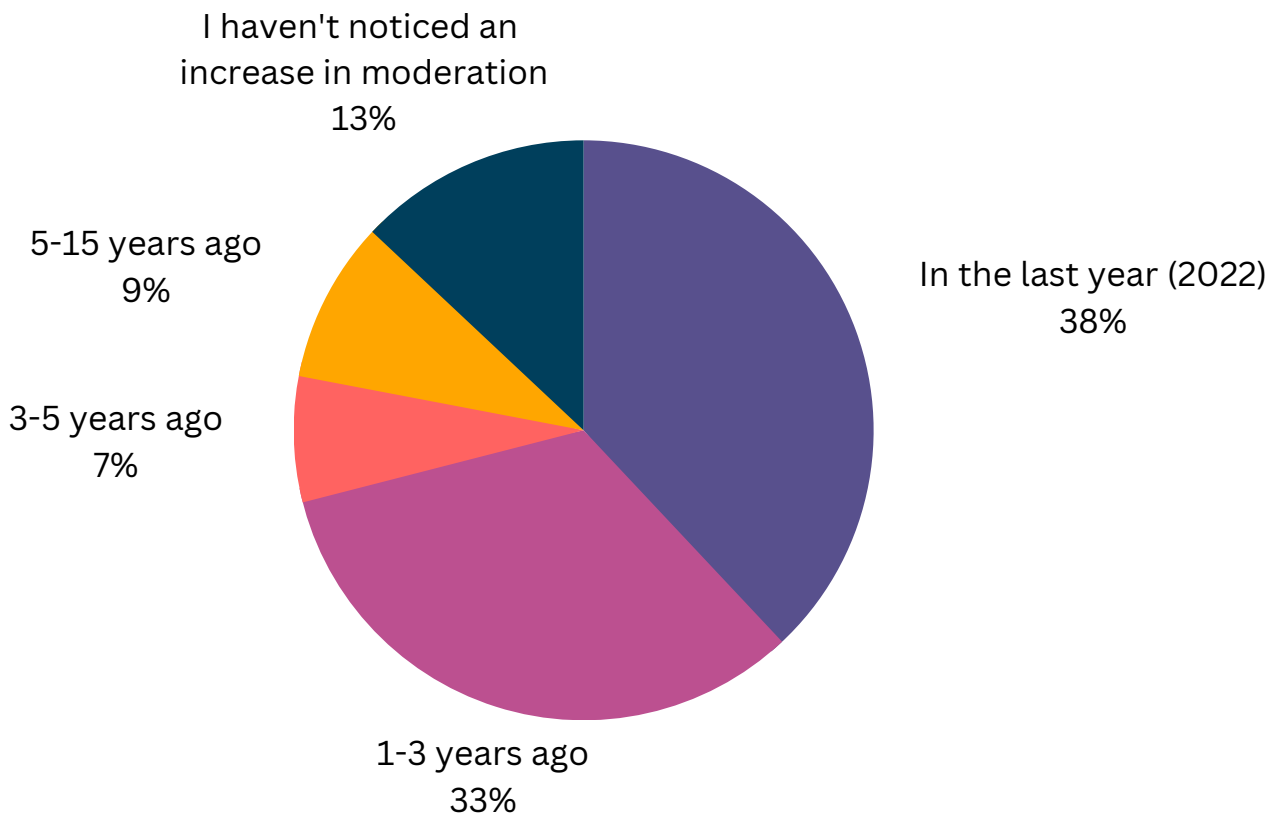
- Content featuring the poster - 64%
- Content mentioning the poster's sales platforms (like Only Fans) - 39%
- Direct link to sales platforms - 31%
- Content linking to outside sites (like Pornhub) - 14%
- Content mentioning in-person sexual services (like FSSW or escorting) - 19%
- Content mentioning in-person sex (like dating) - 14%



CHANGE OVER TIME

Knowing that moderation is a regular part of site functioning, we wanted to find out if respondents felt moderation had changed over time.

Most respondents told us they had seen an increase in moderation concerning NSFW content in the last year, with an overwhelming majority of respondents (70%) indicating moderation had increased within the last 3 years:

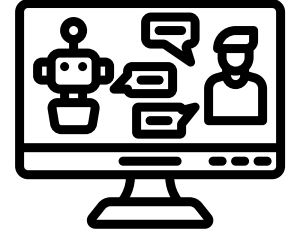


Specifically, many respondents (59%) reported they get fewer upvotes and less engagement on their posts than they used to. 56% said their posts are flagged and removed more now than in the past.

MODERATION COMMUNICATIONS

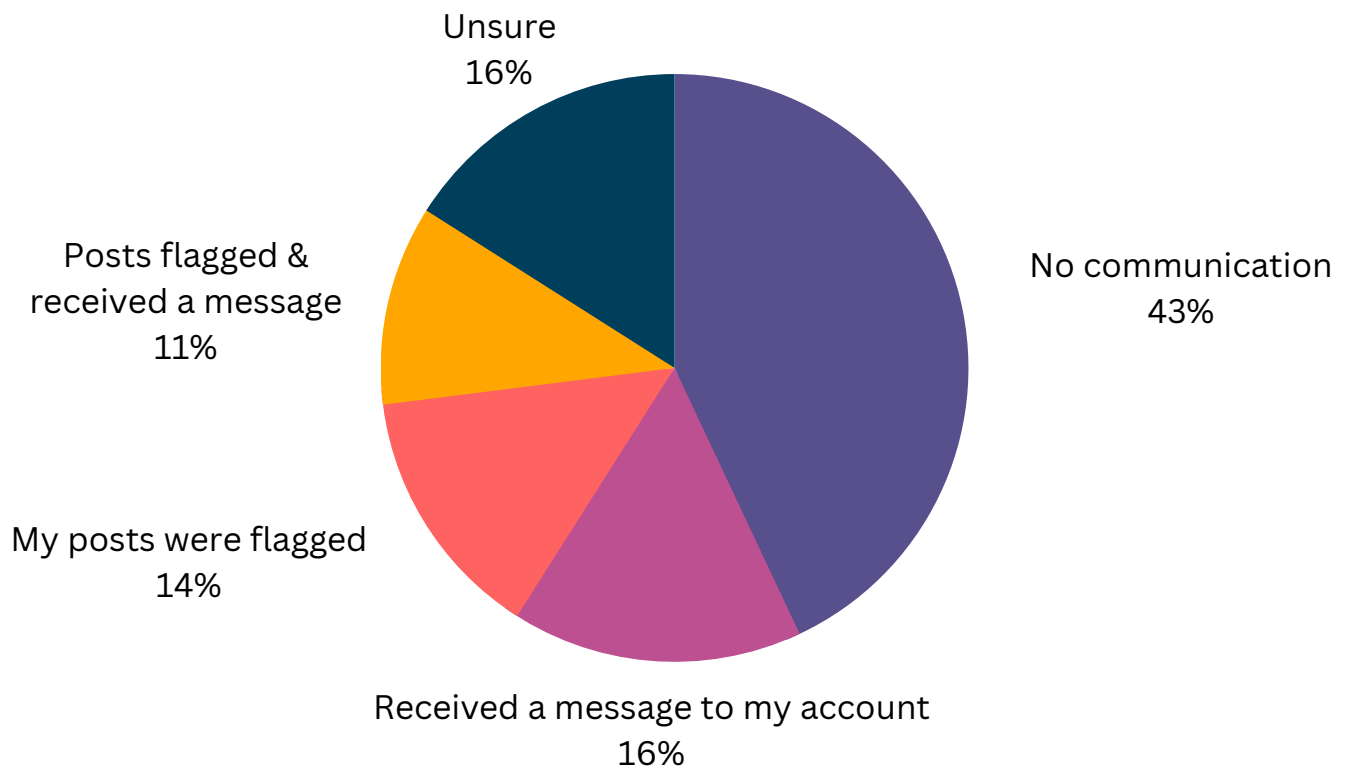
Reddit is a deeply complicated site with many ways for users to encounter moderation. Respondents received moderation communications in the following ways:

- Automated site message - 56%
- 'Automoderator' comment on post - 61%
- Direct report of post sent to messages - 33%
- Communication from community moderator - 44%
- Communication from Reddit admin - 22%
- An error message on post - 33%



WARNINGS

Of those who were moderated, some respondents received warnings beforehand, but nearly half of all users say they got no notifications:

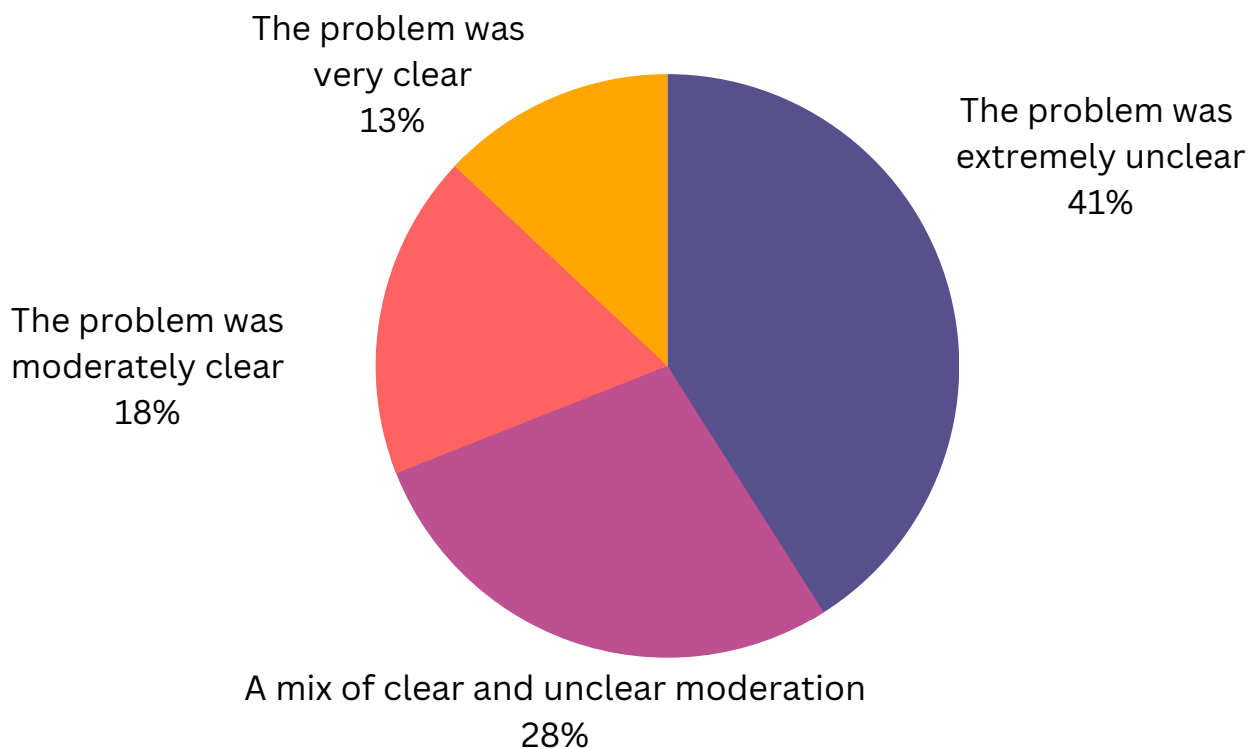


MODERATION EXPLANATIONS

Official website rules and volunteer moderated community rules can be confusing, contradictory, and inadequately or entirely undocumented. A majority of respondents (67%) did not feel that the moderation explanations they received accurately reflected their activity on the site. Almost all (79%) had had posts limited or removed without any indication or communication from any source.

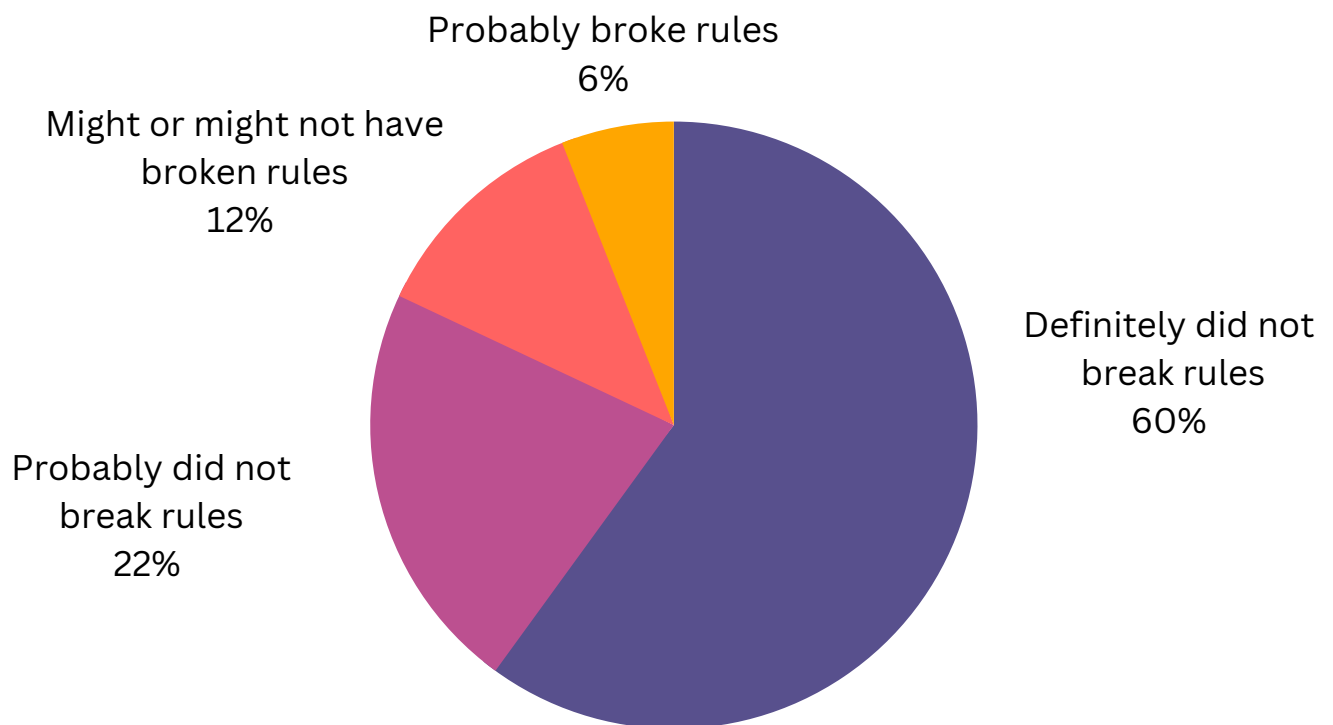
COMMUNICATION CLARITY

More than two thirds of respondents indicated at least some of the messaging they received about moderation was unclear, with almost half saying it was extremely unclear:



SENSE OF VIOLATING TOS

While it wasn't always possible to conclude if rules were violated or not, we asked if users felt they had violated the rules or terms of service. Most survey participants were sure they did not, with an overwhelming 82% total feeling they hadn't broken any rules or the TOS.

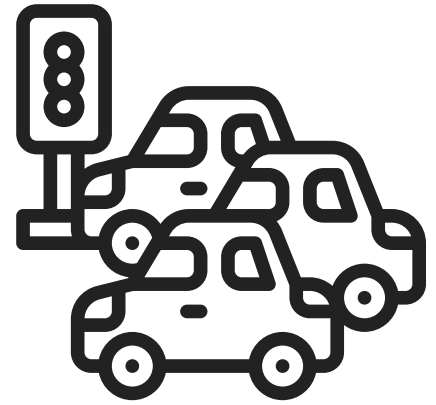


MODERATION FAIRNESS

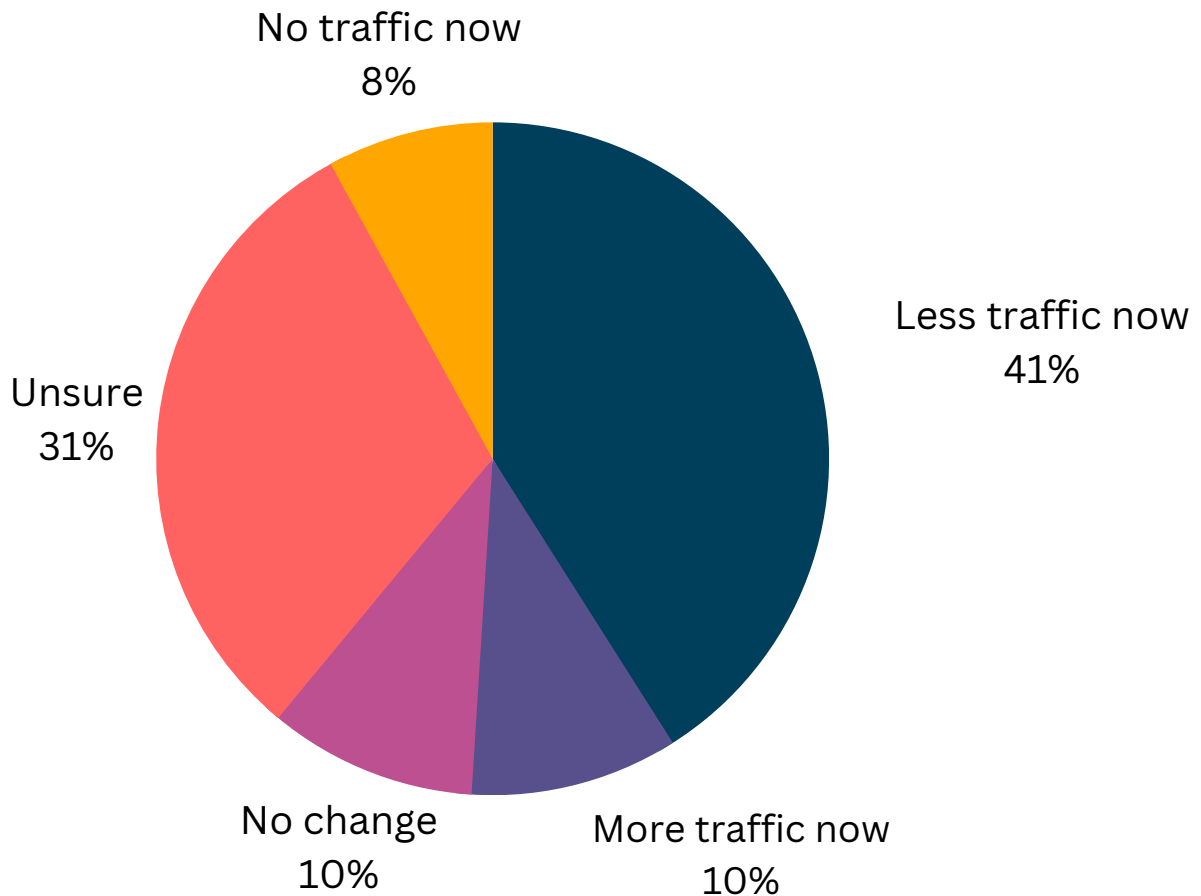


Moderation isn't just about having content taken down. Survey responses also indicate that hateful, threatening, nonconsensual, or pirated content has been allowed to continue on the site. Whether due to confusion, enforcement practices and explanations, or rules they felt were discriminatory, 76% of respondents felt that moderation on Reddit is "unfair", a sad indicator of user feeling about safety on the platform.

IMPACT ON TRAFFIC



Whether moderation feels fair is subjective, but some metrics like outgoing traffic are measurable. Importantly, many content creators use Reddit to drive traffic to their website or other payment-generating platforms. We asked respondents if they were getting more or less traffic from Reddit over time; nearly half (49%) told us they get less engagement through the platform now or no traffic at all:





IMPACT ON BUSINESS

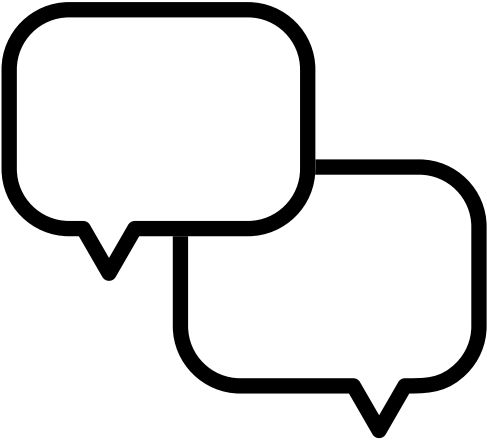
Less traffic translates into fewer sales. Among respondents who use Reddit to promote their adult business, 71% felt moderation of their account and posts had negatively impacted their earnings.

“I used to get a lot of traffic to my spicy links from Reddit and a decent amount of engagement on my posts. Now even during peak times when there are thousands of people online, **I barely get any interaction** and the "shadow-ban checker" says my account is not shadowbanned. This leads me to believe that individual mods are shadow-banning me in their communities.”

I am currently shadowbanned. This costs me money each day because this account is how I support myself.

“I do not have a large following, and Reddit is one of a very small number of places I can promote my OF content. **Without visibility** multiple places, especially somewhere like Reddit where I can get new eyes on my content more easily, **I cannot grow.**”

IMPACT ON BUSINESS CONT'D



“The intricate and unnecessary rules of the subreddits I try to use to promote make it incredibly time consuming and taxing to post ... I know consistently posting would ensure me more income but it's become such a slog to do so I mostly don't bother any more.”

The arbitrariness and lack of clarity creates a huge amount of extra work and unpredictability in my presence on the site, which leads to an unpredictability of income.

"Many subreddits are not letting me post just for... **watermarking** my content."

Sex workers are treated badly on Reddit. Everybody wants porn, but the minute we want to get paid for our work, our content is restricted. It's frankly gross.

IMPACT ON BUSINESS CONT'D

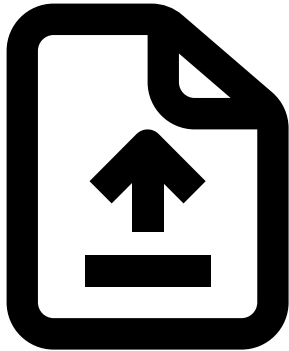
“My account got deleted for no reason and I lost all my followers.”

Getting my account banned --even momentarily-- results in a loss of income for me. Reddit is my primary source of income.

“I've been banned from subreddits for arbitrary and discriminatory rules. I've decided to leave subreddits after noticing discriminatory rules. Leaving or getting banned always causes my other posts to perform poorly too. **My income drops by about \$200 for the month anytime this happens** due to loss of promotion.”

“I was receiving a low-to-moderate amount of traffic as I began promoting my NSFW content via Reddit, and my account was banned within six months of using Reddit for promotion so **I've lost what minimal growth/outreach it provided me.**”

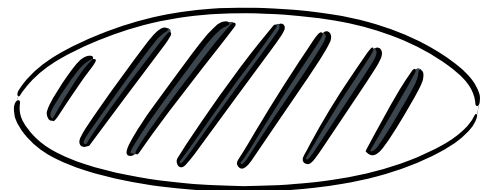
IMPACT ON SITE USE



Restrictions are placed on NSFW content, which impacted respondents' ability to use the site. For example, profiles and subreddits marked NSFW may not allow direct image uploads. 64% of respondents felt the inability to upload images made it harder to participate on the site.

When my profile was locked as NSFW for a few days, I couldn't post photos to my own profile at all, which made the site completely unusable... [It] means I can't do galleries, I can't really post from my phone, and it makes posting much harder overall.

Many view restrictions and moderation actions can work together to influence the usability of a site and whether it feels welcoming to communities. Overall, experiences with moderation led 68% of sex worker respondents to use the site less, indicating these changes could lead to a real long-term drain of users overall.



MODERATION OF SFW

Many respondents (34%) who also use their account for SFW posting had experienced moderation of SFW posts. The types of SFW posts or comments most likely to be moderated were:

- Sex worker politics - 77%
- LGBTQ+ topics - 38%
- Non-nude LGBTQ+ images (like selfies) - 38%
- Sex education - 31%



57% of participants felt that being marked NSFW impacted their ability to participate in SFW communities or political organizing on the site.

POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT



Several respondents linked their Reddit experience to broader sociopolitical shifts in the targeting of sex workers and online sexual content:

"I feel like Reddit is both coming down on NSFW content and creators yet still has an overflow of trolls, creeps, misogynists, incel-mentality users. It's very frustrating that so many users are apparently free and clear to say hateful, creepy, stalker-y, etc. things, but NSFW content creators are getting **pushed further to the margins**. The **crackdowns make me feel like it might be going the way of Tumblr**, which is just disappointing and frustrating."

"I've been a Reddit user since about 2010, and currently moderate three subreddits on my NSFW business account. So while I've noticed increased moderation from Reddit administration, I also see behind the scenes where it's clear that Reddit is responding both to **FOSTA-SESTA** *and* to automated content theft and spam.

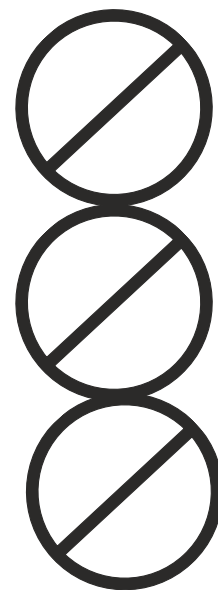
How I explain Reddit to people is that it's like an empire with the laws of the land, and each subreddit is a little kingdom with its own rules and potentially capricious leaders. The first layer of posting is being compliant with the laws of the land - not spamming, no vote manipulation, etc. And when it comes to each subreddit you need to carefully read the rules and pray a moderator doesn't find you personally offensive, because there is no recourse if they decide to ban you from their sub.

I have personally not had problems with the first layer because I use Reddit like a regular user would, but the **bigotry** I've experienced from moderators, with nothing and no one to appeal to, has heavily impacted my ability to use it for sex work."

PART 3:

SUBREDDIT MODERATION

MODERATION IN SUBREDDITS



Subreddits are topic-specific forums created, moderated, and managed by end-users. While volunteer subreddit moderators are responsible for enforcing a few site-wide rules, they may also create and apply their own community guidelines as they see fit, with or without explanation.

Most respondents had experienced moderation within subreddits from both community volunteer moderators and Reddit admins. Overall, the most common types of subreddit moderation were:

- Banned from the subreddit - 44%
- Posts removed with an automoderator message or comment - 25%
- Posts are not visible to others ("shadowban") - 19%

When asked specifically about their experiences being moderated by subreddit community volunteers, the rates of these forms of moderation were:

- Banned from the subreddit - 59%
- Able to repost within the rules - 32%
- Shadowbanned - 26%
- Informed it was a mistake, able to resume posting - 12%
- Limited for a period, then able to resume posting - 18%
- Experienced further site-wide moderation due to interaction with or reports from this community moderator - 21%

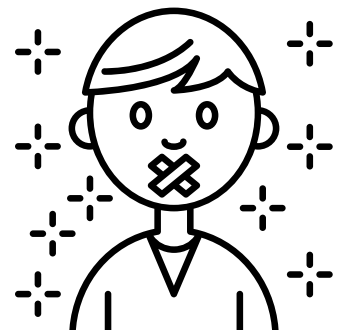
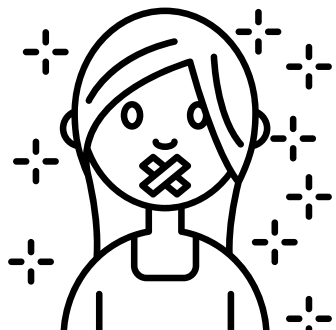
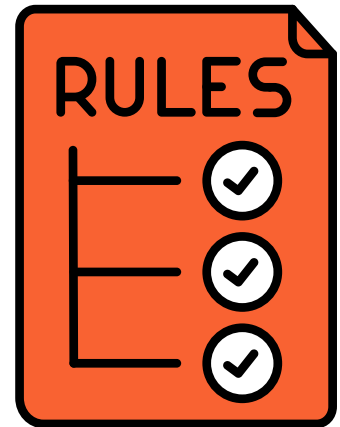
SUBREDDIT COMMUNICATIONS

When experiencing moderation within a subreddit, a huge majority (84%) indicated they had experienced an issue without any warning that their profile or posts were at risk of being moderated.

Often (54%), subreddit moderators gave no reason for their moderation choices. Respondents reported that when their posts were moderated with a reason given, they were told they had broken an individual subreddit rule (59%), were accused of spamming (18%), or told that their post was NSFW (15%)

But 67% of respondents did not feel that the moderation explanations they received from the community moderators accurately reflected their activity on the subreddit. 73% did not feel they had broken the rules of the subreddit.

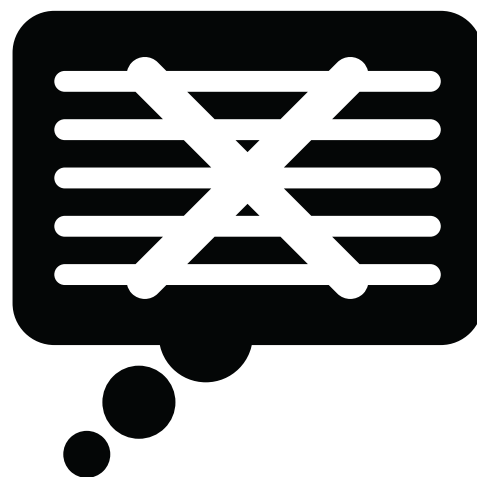
Overall, survey respondents felt volunteer moderators were not communicating clearly or administering posted rules fairly.



ARBITRARY & WHOREPHOBIC

46% of respondents felt that volunteer moderation on subreddits has gotten worse over time, namely that they enact **arbitrary and unclear rules**, fail to offer any communication or explanation, and display aggressive and **whorephobic** attitudes, even in NSFW communities:

"The attitude in NSFW communities is to idolize anonymous mods -- and the stolen porn they post -- but **demean and shame creators.**"



"I haven't had many issues with Reddit admins/rules, my primary issue has been moderators of individual subreddits who, especially after the rise of onlyfans in 2020, have gotten more **hostile to sex workers** over time."

"Some have gotten much more strict about both NSFW and "no self promo" rules **discriminating against professional creators** if we so much as have links in our own profile."

"They don't reply to messages and have way too much control. They make certain rules for certain users, always threaten bans, have **VERY unclear rules.**"

"Mods are extremely arbitrary about who they decide to ban. **If they think you're hot you can get away with anything.**"



"It's impossible to post. Some people violate rules and it's fine, others can do nothing wrong and get banned. Rules themselves can be **confusing and biased.**"

"I feel that in the last year volunteer run subreddits have become more **anti-seller, transphobic and have hunted down accounts to target them.** I have seen rules in some communities that explicitly say if they view your account and it's marked nsfw, they will have you banned, simply because you are a seller; not related to your post, even if you follow the rules. Many communities have rules for "females only, no dicks", I find this extremely transphobic and dangerous. I have called out mods for these rules and they won't budge. They say that their hands are tied. I have experienced moderation in communities where I followed all of the written rules, but then got an automatic bot response (comment on the post as to why it was removed & a message), and it was something stupid like "no emojis allowed" and nowhere in their rules does it ever mention emojis."

"Poorly explained rules, **arbitrary and unexplained bans,** and more unsolicited hateful comments from mods in messages."



"I've had posts taken down saying I was violating copyright even though they were of me and my content. I've also had my account suspended and deleted. They gave it back because I didn't break any rules. People can't search for my account. I've had mods from subreddits be down right **hateful** towards me, also had them remove posts saying they didn't follow guidelines then they **CHANGED** the guidelines to fit their narrative. I've been **banned** from so many subreddits."

"The rules regarding moderating of NSFW content seem arbitrary, even with subreddits supposed geared toward adult content. There's rarely clear presentation of information regarding participation rules/regulations that make it difficult to enter or begin to engage with a subreddit space unless you have a direct connection to a mod who will clear your posts."

"There are also issues with subreddit moderators randomly banning accounts from subreddits for either having a link to a NSFW site, self-identifying as having NSFW content, or being perceived as such. **It's frustrating.**"

"I feel like the biggest issue with Reddit moderation is the **rampant whorephobia from power hungry moderators** who will share your nudes but won't let you share your own in many NSFW subreddits."

EXTORTION & EXPLOITATION

Several respondents specified it was subreddit moderators, not Reddit staff, who are the problem, mentioning disturbing trends of **extortion** of sensitive information or free content from creators, or using subreddits to selectively promote models that they manage:

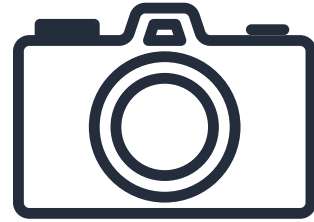
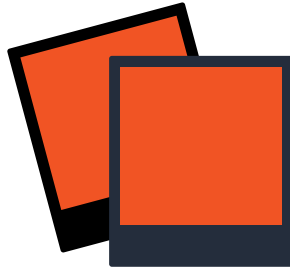
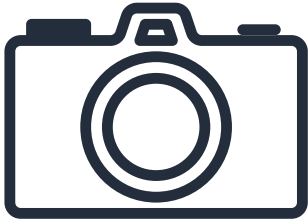


"Reddit staff is fantastic in my opinion, the individuals moderating specific subreddits are freeloading leeches who **demand free content** or will permanently ban you if they don't get exactly what they want."

"They have god complexes and **treat sex workers like they owe them nudes** to post or judge our pages too critically."

"Every subreddit, particularly NSFW ones, has different rules and some of them seem completely arbitrary. Many also have rules against posting in their subs if your account is used to promote OnlyFans or other monetized work (even if you aren't advertising directly in your post on their subreddit), which means they want people posting NSFW content for free entirely. I have heard of (but not personally experienced) moderators harassing and **extorting users for NSFW photos** to be able to participate in their subreddits."





"Moderators of subreddits will give bans for no reason. There is **preferential treatment** given to posters that they find attractive and often are 'trigger happy' to ban people they do not find attractive...

Many NSFW subreddit moderators, who usually happen to be male, require posters to 'verify' with the mods that they are real, even though having linked OnlyFans profiles makes this unnecessary. **Verification often involves sending free nudes** by holding a piece of paper with the date and subreddit name.

As OnlyFans grew, agencies [that only promote the people they manage] have become more popular; this has caused independent posters' posts to be downvoted and pushed off the hot page...

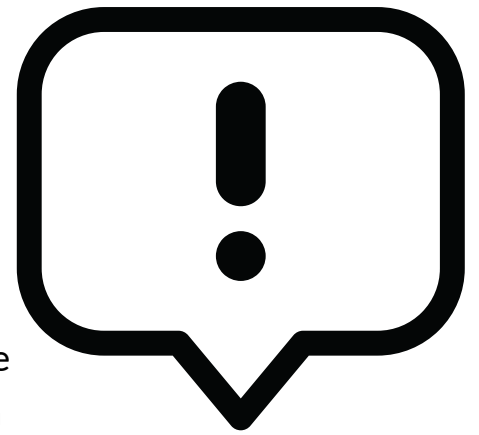
Many do not see the site worth promoting on and consider it dangerous due to the potential of being **doxxed**."

"I have many examples and proof of **mods of the top subreddits using Reddit for monetary gain and their own 'girls' profit**. This has been reported to Reddit multiple times, it seems there are admins also in support of this! It wont be long before NSFW Reddit is run by agencies and no longer a safe environment for NSFW posters."

PART 4:

APPEALS

APPEALS PROCESS



Reddit users can make an appeal to have moderation decisions reconsidered and reversed. There is a built-in appeals process for official site-wide moderation issues, like if your entire account has been suspended or unable to post, but this is not clearly indicated.

Many survey respondents had not heard of the ability to appeal. Overall, 42% of respondents had never submitted an appeal; 32% had tried to appeal once, and 26% had submitted multiple appeals. Users sometimes also “appeal” informally by responding to messages from admins or messaging admin accounts directly if they are still able to log in.

I honestly don't even know how to appeal my account ban, information on doing so was not relayed in any messages I received.

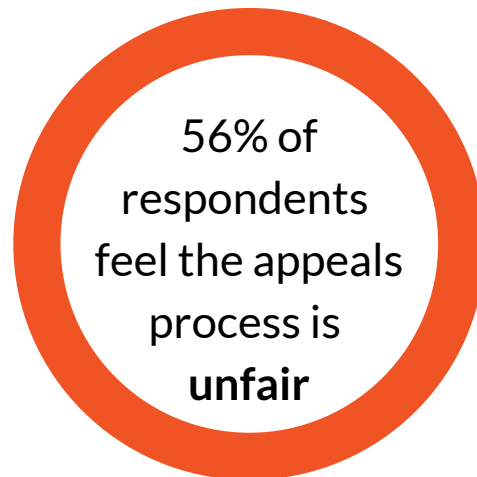
If users are banned from or have posts removed in a specific subreddit, they must appeal to the moderators of that subreddit; Reddit admin have a policy to not reverse subreddit-level decisions. Users are also able to message and discuss moderation within subreddits, enabling an informal appeals process that some have navigated successfully.

APPEALS PROCESS CONT'D

Confusingly to many users, it seems volunteer moderator actions can lead directly to administrative actions, like a spam-related suspension, but it is not always clear what kind of subreddit activity can trigger site-wide administration.

We found that when an account is placed in site-wide moderation, either by an automated process or Reddit staff, users are generally not notified of the ability to appeal this issue. When accounts are restored, there is often no explanation or a simple message that the account was taken down “by mistake”.

While some had their accounts reinstated (20%), 46-50% of those who submitted one or more appeals never received a response.



“I was permanently banned for repeated violations of the content policy, but I had never received a warning. It was **impossible to get hold of anyone** to discuss what I'd allegedly done.”

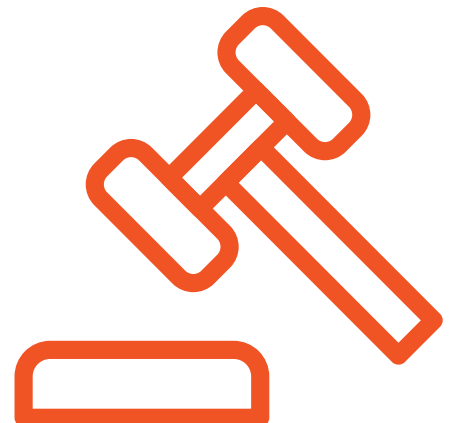


“My account was permanently suspended with **no explanation**. When I appealed, it was given back with no explanation.”

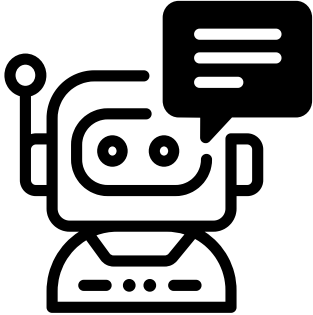
“I haven't attempted to appeal. I found it extremely shocking to have my IRL personal/business accounts killed, and I haven't had the nerve to contact them. When I do, it'll be to ask for clear communication on the issue. This experience has soured me on Reddit, and I want **nothing more to do with them**.”

"Losing my Reddit account was honestly pretty **devastating** since it can be a difficult platform to navigate at first and I put a lot of hard work into the 4 years I had the account. Previously I've had pretty good responsiveness with moderation over harassing user or messages. But when my account was permanently suspended, I had no concrete reason as to why and no previous violations I was aware of."

"In the span of an hour my account was **suspended for no reason** and I could not log in, and then reinstated with no explanation."



AUTOMATION



Respondents felt that automated flagging and moderation was to blame with some of their issues with the site, suggesting more human hands on moderation could improve their experiences:

"Reddit needs to have **actual PEOPLE** review their claims/deleted accounts and not just rely on robots to unfairly disable accounts."

"Most of the issue I have with Reddit's moderation is the feeling like at any moment **I could permanently be banned because a human wasn't behind the action.** SWs get harassed on a regular basis, and our content gets falsely reported to try to get us kicked off platforms. For example, someone reports a DDLG/MDLB dynamic between 2 consenting adults as underage participation. The automated mod sees "little girl/boy" and "nsfw" and gives the account a suspension. Enough of those and you're banned. There should be protection in place for this kind of **abuse of the report button.**"

"The **autoflagging of NSFW on every post** of mine site-wide when I posted one thing in a NSFW subreddit is unacceptable. I post both SFW and NSFW content, and I'm extremely diligent in flagging NSFW as appropriate, but this policy makes it harder to do both."

REFERENCES

- [1] Albert, K., Armbruster, E., Brundige, E., Denning, E., Kim, K., Lee, L., Ruff, L., Simon, K., & Yang, Y. (2021). Fosta in legal context. *Columbia Human Rights Law Review*, 52(3), 1084-1158.
- [2] Blunt, D. & Wolf, A. (2020). Erased: The impact of FOSTA-SESTA and the removal of Backpage. *Hacking//Hustling*.
<https://hackinghustling.org/erased-the-impact-of-fosta-sesta-2020/>
- [3] Bronstein, C. (2021). Deplatforming sexual speech in the age of FOSTA/SESTA. *Porn Studies*, 8(4), 367-380.
- [4] Government Accountability Office (2021, June). Sex trafficking: Online platforms and federal prosecutions.
<https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-21-385.pdf>
- [5] Musto, J., Fehrenbacher, A. E., Hoefinger, H., Mai, N., Macioti, P. G., Bennachie, C., Giametta, C., & D'adamo, K. (2021). Anti-trafficking in the time of FOSTA/SESTA: Networked moral gentrification and sexual humanitarian creep. *Social Sciences*, 10(2), 58.
- [6] Are, C., & Paasonen, S. (2021). Sex in the shadows of celebrity. *Porn Studies*, 8(4), 411-419.
- [7] Dickson, EJ (2022, August 17). Sex workers say Reddit is quietly banning them. *Rolling Stone*, <https://www.rollingstone.com/culture/culture-news/reddit-sex-workers-nsfw-content-1397079/>
- [8] Reddit (2023, accessed May 1). Reddit by the numbers. <https://www.redditinc.com/>
- [9] Jhaver, S., Bruckman, A., & Gilbert, E. (2019). Does transparency in moderation really matter? User behavior after content removal explanations on reddit. *Proceedings of the ACM on Human-Computer Interaction*, 3(CSCW), 1-27.
- [10] Dent, S. (2023, March 30). Reddit says it's banning more people than ever in big transparency push. *Engadget*, <https://www.engadget.com/reddit-says-its-banning-more-people-than-ever-in-big-transparency-push-090044914.html>
- [11] Reddit (2019, April 16). Update to NSFW advertising policy.
https://www.reddit.com/r/RedditforBusiness/comments/bdwlin/update_to_nsfw_advertising_policy/
- [12] Reddit (2021, Feb 11) Removing sexually explicit content from r/all.
https://www.reddit.com/r/changelog/comments/lhmvok/removing_sexually_explicit_content_from_rall/

REFERENCES

- [13] Reddit (2021, Sept 7) What's up with Reddit search, episode III: The front end awakens. https://www.reddit.com/r/changelog/comments/pjw2yl/comment/hc2j2do/?utm_source=reddit&utm_medium=web2x&context=3
- [14] Reddit (2021, Sept 23) Nsfw hidden [iOs] [2021.37.0]. https://www.reddit.com/r/redditmobile/comments/ptrtkq/nsfw_hidden_ios_2021370/
- [15] Reddit (2022, June 1) Mod Log Updates: Adding visibility into NSFW tagging, abuse removals, and appeals & approvals. https://www.reddit.com/r/modnews/comments/v2o33p/comment/ib1w9bo/?utm_source=reddit&utm_medium=web2x&context=3
- [16] Reddit (2023, April 18). Un update regarding Reddit's API – changes to how third party apps access NSFW content. https://www.reddit.com/r/reddit/comments/12qwagm/an_update_regarding_reddits_api/
- [17] Plunkett, L. (2023, June 20). Reddit is removing mods over NSFW protests. Kotaku. <https://kotaku.com/reddit-mods-steve-huffman-protest-nsfw-blackout-api-ios-1850558712>
- [18] Peters, J. (2023, June 20). Reddit removed moderators behind the latest protests before restoring a few of them. The Verge. <https://www.theverge.com/2023/6/20/23767848/reddit-blackout-api-protest-moderators-suspended-nsfw>
- [19] Hoover, A. (2023, April 20). Imgur just banned porn. Wired, <https://www.wired.com/story/imgur-bans-porn/>
- [20] Mehta, I. (2023, May 12). Reddit will allow users to upload NSFW images from desktop. TechCrunch. <https://techcrunch.com/2023/05/12/reddit-will-allow-users-to-upload-nsfw-images-from-desktop/>
- [21] Turner, G. (2023, April 27). NCOSE launches campaign to ban all adult content from Reddit. XBIZ, <https://www.xbiz.com/news/273326/ncose-launches-campaign-to-ban-all-adult-content-from-reddit>
- [22] Cole, S. & Maiberg, E. (2023, May 1). Anti-porn lobbyists pressure Reddit to shut down its NSFW communities. Vice, <https://www.vice.com/en/article/m7bvbv/anti-porn-lobbyists-pressure-reddit-to-shut-down-its-nsfw-communities>
- [23] Habib, H., Musa, M. B., Zaffar, F., & Nithyanand, R. (2019). To act or react: Investigating proactive strategies for online community moderation. arXiv preprint arXiv:1906.11932.
- [24] Cole, S. (2023, June 9). Reddit CEO says keeping explicit content on the site is a 'constant fight'. Vice, <https://www.vice.com/en/article/g5yydx/reddit-ceo-says-keeping-explicit-content-on-the-site-is-a-constant-fight>

APPENDIX A - SURVEY QUESTIONS

Reddit Moderation Survey

The goal of this survey is to understand how Reddit moderation is impacting people who use Reddit for NSFW content (or others impacted by being labeled NSFW). You will be asked questions about how you use Reddit and what kind of moderation you have experienced.

Your answers will help us document and demonstrate any suppression of NSFW content on Reddit. It should take about 8-12 minutes to complete.

You can leave the survey at any time, but any answers you have already submitted will be collected. Your answers are completely anonymous, though at the end you can give us information if you would like support in appealing moderation or recovering your account.

Even if you give us account information for support purposes, your answers will not be publicly reported with any identifying information attached.

This survey has been created by Ashley Lake (@ashleylatke), a sex worker peer organizer specializing in working platform and banking discrimination cases, and Dr. Valerie Webber (@publicpubics), board chair of PASS and a community health and sexuality researcher with experience working in porn. A previous report they did about Mastercard adult content moderation rules is available [here](#).

Terminology

Some notes about word usage on Reddit and in this survey: Reddit has two types of moderation, by volunteers who run communities and by employees who oversee the site.

“Community Moderators” are Reddit users who help moderate individual communities, known as Subreddits, but are not Reddit employees. Users become moderators by starting a community or being added by an existing user moderator. Within Subreddits, volunteer “mods” have power to remove posts, ban users, enforce subreddit rules or shadowban activity, but they cannot restrict users’ access to the whole site.

“Administrators”, “Admins”, or “Staff” are Reddit employees who oversee the whole site.

Admins have broad power to control user accounts across the site, but do not ban people from individual Subreddits or handle Subreddit-related rules violations - though violating rules of a Subreddit can be grounds for a site-wide account limitation or moderation.

For the purposes of this survey, “moderation” refers to any moderation from Admins and Community Moderators. Questions about more specific instances will be noted as referring to one or the other.

[NOTE: Questions that were used for the shortened version of the survey are **highlighted like this**]

APPENDIX A - SURVEY QUESTIONS

General Account and Timeline Questions

Please let us know some information about your general use of the site and the timeline of your account and related moderation.

When did you first join Reddit?

15-17 years ago (Reddit was founded in 2005)

10-15 years ago (2007 - 2012)

5-10 years ago (2012-2017)

3-5 years ago (2017-2019)

1-3 years ago (2019-2022)

In the last year (2022)

What did you join Reddit to do? Select all that apply.

As a fan of adult content, to share and discuss adult content with other fans

As an adult content creator to promote my business

As an “amateur” NSFW poster to share my sexuality

As an organizer / for political reasons

As a broad user of the site (no particular reason)

What is the current primary purpose of the account of yours that is experiencing moderation?

As a fan of adult content, to share and discuss adult content with other fans

As an adult content creator to promote my business

As an “amateur” NSFW poster to share my sexuality

As an organizer / for political reasons

As a broad user of the site (no particular reason)

N/A, I am not experiencing moderation

How NSFW is your account? (In this instance, we are defining “NSFW” based on a broad range of enforcement we have seen, to include all nudity, including drawings and photos, but not text. While Reddit Admin sometimes say “artistic nudity” is “not NSFW”, their enforcement does not match those statements.)

I only use it for NSFW content

I mostly use it for NSFW content

I rarely use it for NSFW content

I use my account about equally for SFW and NSFW content

I have separate accounts for SFW and NSFW content

I only use it for SFW content

Unsure if my content is considered NSFW

When you experience moderation on SFW posts or comments, what topics are those posts on?

Select all that apply.

N/A (I do not experience any moderation on my SFW posts)

N/A (I only post NSFW posts or I only experience moderation on NSFW posts)

LGBTQ topics

LGBTQ image posting (Selfies, etc.)

Sex worker political organizing

Sex Education

Other

APPENDIX A - SURVEY QUESTIONS

General Account and Timeline Questions

When you experience moderation on NSFW posts or comments, what topics are those posts on? Select all that apply.

Content featuring myself

Content featuring myself and others

Content featuring art I've created

Fan sharing of content others have created (like a picture of your favorite porn star, or a hentai image on topic of the subreddit)

Content linking outside sites to view (like Pornhub)

Content mentioning in-person sex (like dating)

Content mentioning in-person sexual services (full service sex work, escorting)

Content mentioning your sales platforms (like Onlyfans)

Direct links to sales platforms (like Onlyfans)

Other

Of those categories, is there one you feel is most likely to be removed or limited from view?

Content featuring myself

Content featuring myself and others

Content featuring art I've created

Fan sharing of content others have created (like a picture of your favorite porn star, or a hentai image on topic of the subreddit)

Content linking outside sites to view (like Pornhub)

Content mentioning in-person sex (like dating)

Content mentioning in-person sexual services (full service sex work, escorting)

Content mentioning your sales platforms (like Onlyfans)

Direct links to sales platforms (like Onlyfans)

I don't feel any one category is most targeted

Other

When did you first start experiencing rising issues with Reddit moderation?

15-17 years ago (Reddit was founded in 2005)

10-15 years ago (2007-2012)

5-10 years ago (2012-2017)

3-5 years ago (2017-2019)

1-3 years ago (2019-2022)

In the last year (2022)

I have not noticed rising issues with moderation

Have you experienced differences in how Reddit has worked for you over time?

Less upvotes/engagement on my posts now

More upvotes/engagement on my posts now

No difference over time

Unsure

APPENDIX A - SURVEY QUESTIONS

General Account and Timeline Questions

Have you experienced differences in how your posts are moderated over time?

My posts are flagged or removed more now than when I first joined

My posts are flagged or removed less than when I first joined

No difference over time

Unsure

If you get traffic through the site (like to your website or payment platforms) have you noticed more or less traffic through reddit over time?

Less traffic from Reddit now

More traffic from Reddit now

No traffic from Reddit now

No difference over time

Unsure

Reddit has been restricting some views (like r/all) from showing NSFW results. Did you notice a change in traffic or engagement since the r/all change in February 2021?

Less engagement

More engagement

No change

Unsure

When you have content moderated, is it generally moderated across-site by a Reddit admin, or in a specific Reddit community according to the user-created rules?

Removed by volunteer community moderator

Removed or limited by Reddit administrator

About equally as likely

I'm not sure

What moderation issues have you had? Select all that apply.

My posts don't seem to be getting attention

My posts are not visible to other users or when I am logged out

My profile was limited (none of my posts show to other users in any subreddit, or similar profile-wide restrictions)

My profile was deleted (cannot log in or find it)

My subreddit was restricted

My subreddit was deleted

No, I have had no problems with moderation

Other

APPENDIX A - SURVEY QUESTIONS

General Account and Timeline Questions

How did you receive moderation communications? Select all that apply.

There was a direct report of my post(s) sent to my messages

I received a communication that seemed to be an automated site message

I received a communication from a Reddit community moderator

I received a communication from a Reddit admin

I saw a comment on my post from “automoderator”

I noticed an error on my posts (such as a red box with “This post was removed by Reddit’s spam filters” or similar message - as opposed to an automoderator comment below the post)

N/A, I have had no problems with moderation

Other

How clear was the moderation messaging you received?

The problem was very clear

The problem was moderately clear

The problem was extremely unclear/confusing

A mix of clear and unclear moderation

When you are moderated, have you noticed a difference in clarity and responsiveness between community moderators and site-wide administrators?

Yes - volunteer Subreddit moderators have been more clear and responsive

Yes - Reddit administrators have been more clear and responsive

Volunteer moderators and Reddit administrators are equally clear and responsive

Volunteer moderators and Reddit administrators are equally unclear and unresponsive

Have you ever had a post limited or removed without any indication (e.g. it just shows it as having no upvotes/downvotes or comments, but there was no error given?)

Yes

No

Unsure

Do you feel moderation on Reddit is fair or unfair?

Fair

Unfair

Unsure

Do you feel experiences with moderation have resulted in you participating less in the site?

Yes

No

Unsure

APPENDIX A - SURVEY QUESTIONS

General Account and Timeline Questions

How often do you post (a new post) on Reddit?

Less than once a week

1 post a week

2-6 posts a week

1 post a day

2-10 posts a day

10-20 posts a day

Over 20 posts a day

Do you currently post more or less than you used to on Reddit?

I post less

I post more

I post the same

How many different people use your Reddit account (like if you have an assistant or a collaborator)?

1 - just me

2

3

4

5+

Subreddit Participation Moderation Questions

The following questions concern your experience with moderation by volunteer user moderators that manage the user-run subreddit communities you participate in.

Please save answers about site-wide administration for that section, specified below.

Have you experienced moderation by volunteer community moderators?

Yes

No

Unsure

Do you feel volunteer community run subreddits have gotten worse with moderation or better with moderation over time?

Worse

Better

Mixed (some better, some worse)

Unsure

Why do you say that?

[Open text box]

Before you experienced moderation, did you receive any communication from the moderators of an individual subreddit, to warn you that your profile or posts were in danger of being moderated?

Yes

No

Unsure

APPENDIX A - SURVEY QUESTIONS

Subreddit Participation Moderation Questions

How were you moderated in communities?

Posts show to me but are not showing to others ("shadowban")

Posts removed with an automoderator message or comment

Ban from subreddit

Mods reported me to site admins, resulting in site-wide moderation

Other

What were you told the moderation issue was? Select all that apply.

Spam related

Posting NSFW content

Breaking an individual subreddit rule

No reason given

Other

Do you believe the moderation explanation you were given by the subreddit community moderators accurately reflected your activity in the community?

Definitely not

Probably not

Might or might not

Probably yes

Definitely yes

Did you feel you broke the rules of the subreddit?

Definitely not

Probably not

Might or might not

Probably yes

Definitely yes

After experiencing interaction with subreddit moderators, what was the final result? If this has happened multiple times, select all that apply.

I was informed the moderation was a mistake, and was able to resume posting

I was able to repost within the rules

I was limited from posting for a time, but then was able to participate within the rules

I remained limited or "shadowbanned", able to post but with no engagement

I was banned from the subreddit I did not participate due to deciding that the subreddit was not the right place for me to post

I experienced further site-wide moderation due to reports or moderator interaction in this subreddit

Other

Anything else you want to tell us about your experience posting in subreddits?

[Open text box]

APPENDIX A - SURVEY QUESTIONS

Subreddit Administration Moderation Questions

These questions concern communities that you moderate on reddit, either for broad topics or as a fan community for yourself.

[NOTE: responses to this section are not reported due to low response rate]

Do you own or help moderate a subreddit that is experiencing moderation from reddit staff?

Yes

No

What is the purpose of the subreddit? Select all that apply.

A fan community for myself or my brand

Sharing NSFW Images

Sharing SFW Images

Discussing sexuality

Finding and meeting new people in person ("dating")

Sex worker discussions (organizing, advice, networking)

Sex related politics

Sex Education

LGBTQ Issues

Other

How many moderators does the subreddit have?

Just me

Multiple moderators

When was the subreddit created? (Approximate month/year)

[Open text box]

What kind of moderation has the subreddit experienced? Select all that apply.

Removed

Limited in some way

Other

When your subreddit was moderated, was it at the same time that your personal profile was restricted, or did it seem unrelated?

Same time as my personal account

Separately from my personal account

Unsure / Mix

My subreddit was not moderated

Has your subreddit been marked as NSFW?

Yes - I marked it myself

Yes - Reddit marked it for me

No

Unsure

APPENDIX A - SURVEY QUESTIONS

Subreddit Administration Moderation Questions

Can you tell us more about what happened to your subreddit? Are there any other subreddit specific moderation issues you'd like to mention?

[Open text box]

Site-wide Moderation Questions

The following questions are about site-wide moderation from Reddit employees, known as “admins” or “staff”, like a site-wide ban, being marked as spam, or other limitations. Please respond about site-wide rules and not individual community rules or appeals.

Before you experienced moderation, did Reddit staff flag any of your individual posts or warn you that your profile or subreddit was in danger of being moderated?

Yes - flagged individual posts

Yes - sent me a message to my account

Yes - both flagged individual posts and sent me a message

Unsure

No - I haven't experienced this kind of moderation

No - I did not get any communications from Reddit

Do you believe the moderation explanation you were given accurately reflected your activity on the site?

Definitely not

Probably not

Might or might not

Probably yes

Definitely yes

Do you feel you broke the rules/TOS of the site?

Definitely not

Probably not

Might or might not

Probably yes

Definitely yes

Have you ever submitted an appeal?

Never

Yes, once

Yes, multiple times

If you submitted an appeal, how long did it take to get a response?

Same day

Within one week

Two to three weeks

Three to four weeks

Over one month

I did not receive a response

Other

APPENDIX A - SURVEY QUESTIONS

Site-wide Moderation Questions

If you have submitted multiple appeals, how long does it usually take to get a response?

Same day

Within one week

Two to three weeks

Three to four weeks

Over one month

I did not receive a response

Other

How did Reddit respond to your appeal(s)? If this has happened multiple times select all that apply.

Reinstated my account and told me the moderation was a mistake

Told me my account would not be reinstated

Reinstated my account with a warning to avoid the problematic behavior

Did not respond

Other

Do you feel the appeals process was fair or unfair?

Fair

Unfair

Unsure

Anything else you want to tell us about the appeals process?

[Open text box]

Did you contact anyone to help with account recovery? Select all that apply.

Sex worker organization

Lawyer/legal advice

Media/press

A sex worker friend

No I did not contact anyone

Other

Do you feel those outside sources helped you recover an account? What did they do that helped?

[Open text box]

Has your user profile been marked as NSFW?

Yes - I marked it myself

Yes - Reddit marked it for me

No

Unsure

If your profile was marked as NSFW, have you noticed a difference in your engagement?

Less engagement

More engagement

No change

Unsure

APPENDIX A - SURVEY QUESTIONS

Site-wide Moderation Questions

NSFW marked profiles and subreddits don't allow direct uploads of image content. Do you feel this has made it harder for you to use the site?

Yes, it's harder to participate in the site

No

Unsure

Do you feel being marked as NSFW has impacted your ability to participate in SFW communities or political organizing on the site?

Yes, it's harder to participate in the site

No

Unsure

If you use Reddit to promote your business, do you feel that moderation of your account, posts, and/or subreddits has had an impact on your earnings?

Yes

No

Unsure

If yes, please explain:

[Open text box]

Please tell us anything else you would like to about your experiences with Reddit moderation:

[Open text box]

Screenshots can be very helpful in recovering your individual account, helping others recover accounts, and tracking enforcement. If you wish to share screenshots of your moderation message exchanges, you can upload them here.

[Drag and drop files here]

Demographic Information

We want to see if some Reddit users are being targeted more intensely than others. Demographic information can help us do that.

Gender:

Trans woman

Cis woman

Trans man

Cis man

Non-binary/Gender queer

Another

APPENDIX A - SURVEY QUESTIONS

Demographic Information

Race:

Black

Latinx/Hispanic

South Asian/Middle Eastern

East Asian/Pacific Islander

Native American/Indigenous

white

Another

Sexuality:

Queer

Lesbian

Bisexual

Gay

Straight

Asexual

Another

Age:

18-24

25-34

35-44

45-54

55-64

65-74

75+

Optional Information for Requesting Support

This section is entirely optional. Only fill this section in if you would like us to get in touch with you to help you recover your account. None of this information will be shared or listed publicly in any reports. If you do not wish to provide this information, simply continue past the questions and hit "Submit".

Name

Email for follow-up

Social media links

What was or is your current reddit NSFW username?

Did you previously have any other usernames used for NSFW? List here

Please share your SFW alternative account usernames that you are OK having associated with your NSFW usernames.

Please list any subreddits you participate in or help moderate that you have seen removed or experiencing moderation.

If we have the resources, would you like a case worker to get in touch to try and help you through moderation you are currently experiencing?

Yes, please contact me / No, do not contact me

NSFW On Reddit: Experiences of Moderation

Ashley Lake & Valerie Webber

July 2023

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons

Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>

