COUNTER TERRORISM POLICING
WEST MIDLANDS CTU

Online Vulnerabilities 2026

Less regulated and user regulated sites are indicated with !
Though these sites can be used for extremist purposes, they are also used legitimately.

Social Networking

These sites are known to facilitate radicalisation, communication with like-minded people and access to extreme content. Often the initial exposure to extremist content online will start on mainstream social media, before individuals are directed to niche, encrypted, less regulated sites. Farishta JAMI was convicted of engaging in conduct in preparation for terrorism and sentenced to life in prison. She had shared graphic and violent extremist material on social media, as well as participating in various group chats and joining pro-Islamic State groups and channels.

Video Streaming

Videos are a popular method of disseminating extremist propaganda. Short form content is popular with young impressionable people and an easy way to impart extremist views. Regulations on these platforms are often inconsistent or lacking, allowing extremist material to remain accessible. In 2024 Islamic State shared a number of videos on TikTok which circumvented restrictions. Footage included extremist figures and terrorists, and audio which included Jihadi Nasheeds that endorsed and encouraged violence.

Message Boards

These sites typically operate with few restrictions; this allows extremist content to remain easily accessible. This is appealing for extremists who aim to produce long-lasting propaganda. Individuals can post on these sites anonymously reducing the ability of law enforcement to attribute individuals to extremist comments or content. Christchurch attacker, Brenton TARRANT, disseminated and shared his manifesto on 4chan prior to committing his attack.

Gaming

Gaming and gaming adjacent platforms are becoming increasingly used for extremist purposes due to a lack of restrictions and challenges for attribution. Chat functions on gaming platforms allow for private communication and radicalisation to take place. Footage of terror attacks has been shared on gaming platforms. Payton GENDRON, the Buffalo shooter, attempted to livestream his attack on Twitch.

Private Messaging

This has become one of the most common ways for extremists to communicate and share their ideologies. Encrypted platforms give privacy and limited capacity for detection by law enforcement. Limited restrictions allow the dissemination of extremist content which can be passed between different people, even where this content is proscribed. Paul MARTIN, who held anti-government grievance narratives, was found guilty of encouraging terrorism. He posted on Telegram group 'The Resistance UK' regarding conspiracy theories relating to the COVID-19 vaccine and calling for use of crossbows and explosives.

Generative Artificial Intelligence (e.g. Chatbots)

Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) has been increasingly used by extremists and terrorists on an international scale. Extremist and terrorist use of this technology has included the creation of text, video and image content as well as the use of Chatbots. Chatbots are able to have a galvanising impact on people as they simulate conversation without connection to other extremists, as well as being able to automate the dissemination of terrorist material across a number of social platforms. Pro-Islamic State Chatbots have used AI to translate extremist content into English in order to make it more accessible as well as to generate new propaganda.