


THE REAL EFFECT OF STATE AGE

VERIFICATION LAWS

A year after implementation began, minors can still easily access adult content.

What went wrong?

Since 2023, age-verification laws have gone into effect in more than twelve states. In that time, we've seen their real-world effect on web traffic and content consumption.



Virtually all consumers leave sites that require age-verification



VPN use has spiked



Traffic to overseas and pirate sites has exploded



Minors can still access adult content easily on search engines and social media

CONSUMERS FLED

MORE THAN

97%

of visitors refuse to age-verify on adult sites, leading to massive drops in visitors on legal sites¹



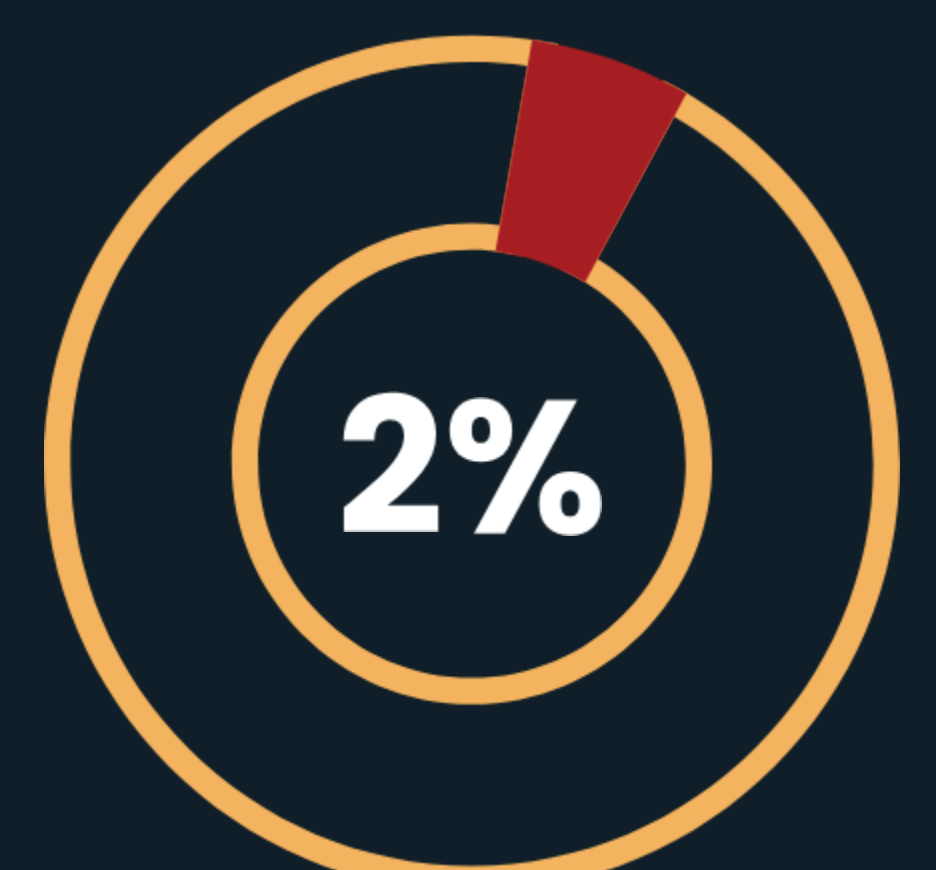
NON-COMPLIANT SITES EXPLODED

Traffic redirected to overseas sites and social media.



AGE VERIFICATION RELUCTANCE

In France, fewer than 2% of adult consumers were willing to age-verify to access an adult website, even with “double anonymous” protocols¹



Privacy, difficulty, and the easy availability of content on sites that don't age-verify



WHY DON'T CONSUMERS AGE VERIFY?

Data Security Risks

Uploading government ID or biometric data is tremendously risky. Many consumers worry that such information could be stolen and used for identity theft or to access other systems.



61%

of adult consumers fear their information won't be safe²

Privacy

Your browsing history is tremendously sensitive information, especially when it comes to sex. Consumers worry that visits to adult sites will be exposed and used against them.



76%

of adult consumers don't want to share information online²

Difficulty

The process of age-verification is nowhere near as simple as flashing an ID. The process is complicated and takes consumers around 5 minutes to complete.³ Over a third of adult consumers who refuse to age-verify say it's too much hassle.²



5min

Time required to verify ID online

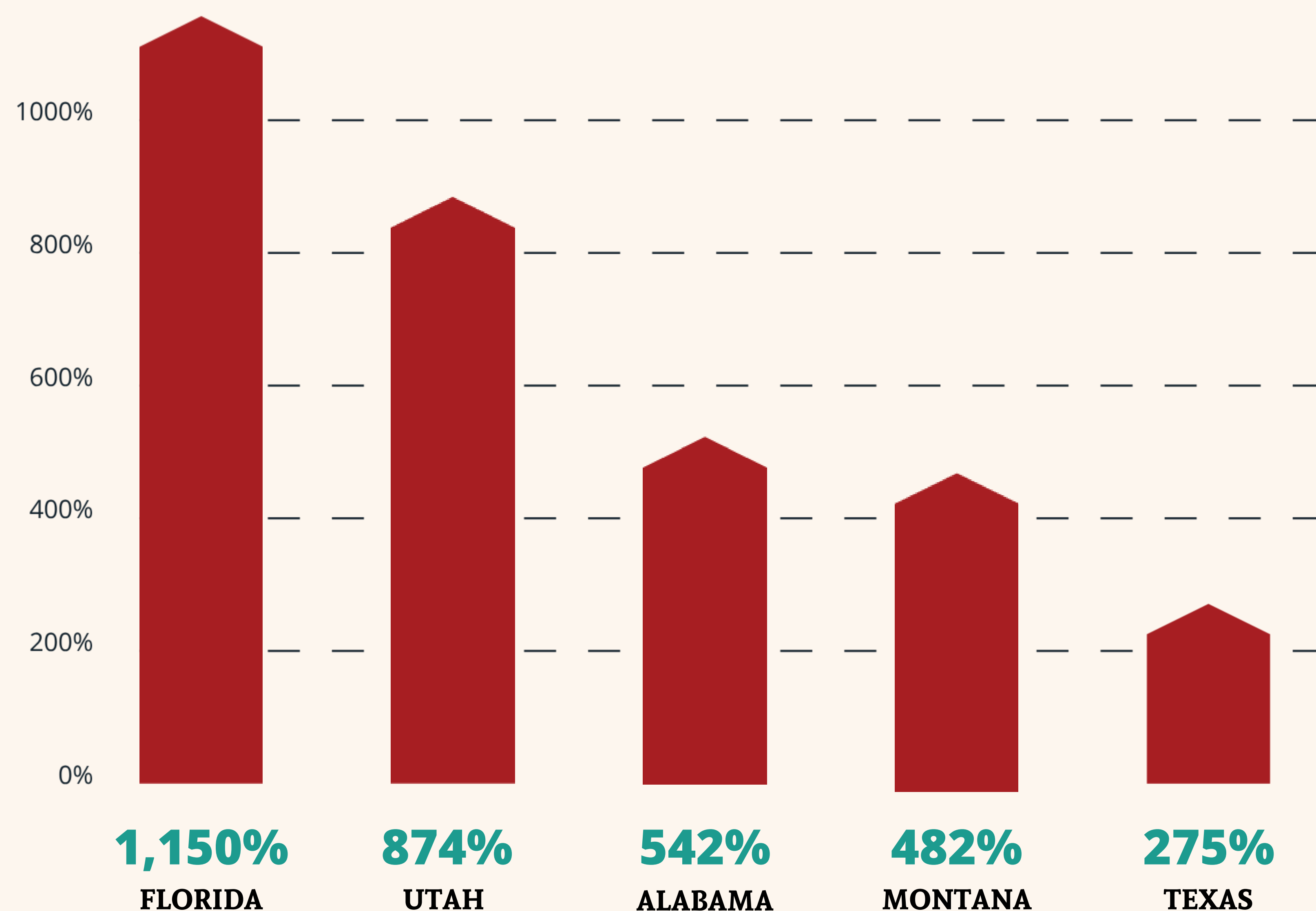
MORE THAN HALF OF CONSUMERS WHO REFUSE AV SAY THEY CAN EASILY FIND ADULT CONTENT ELSEWHERE²

CONSUMERS USE VPNS TO GET AROUND LAWS

VPNs (Virtual Private Networks) are common, easy to use, and often free services that allow you to appear to a website that you are logging in from another country.



Quickly logging into a VPN allows you to bypass state restrictions

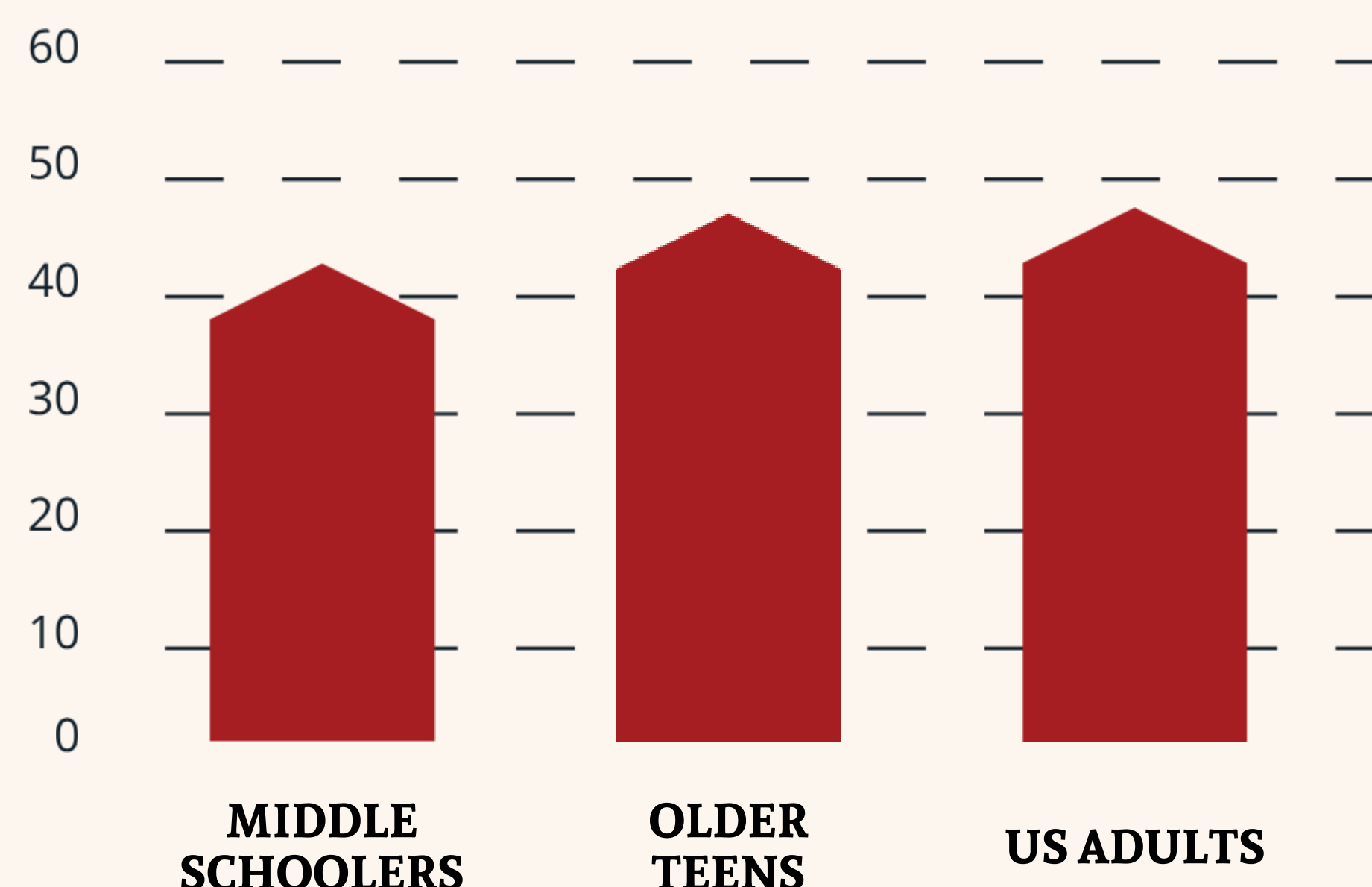


In states that have passed AV laws, VPN use has spiked...

As soon as laws went into effect in states like Texas and Florida, searches for VPNs exploded by as much as 1,100%⁴

VPN adoption was already widespread

More than 45% of older teens – and 41% of middle schoolers – were using VPNs even before the age-verification laws took effect. Adults use them at even higher rates.⁵



“Utah’s Porn Crackdown has a VPN Problem” – Washington Post

“Online Porn Restrictions are Leading to a VPN Boom”
– Popular Science

“There’s a Ridiculously Easy Way to Bypass Louisiana’s New Porn Law”
– Futurism

EASY ACCESS TO NON-COMPLIANT SITES

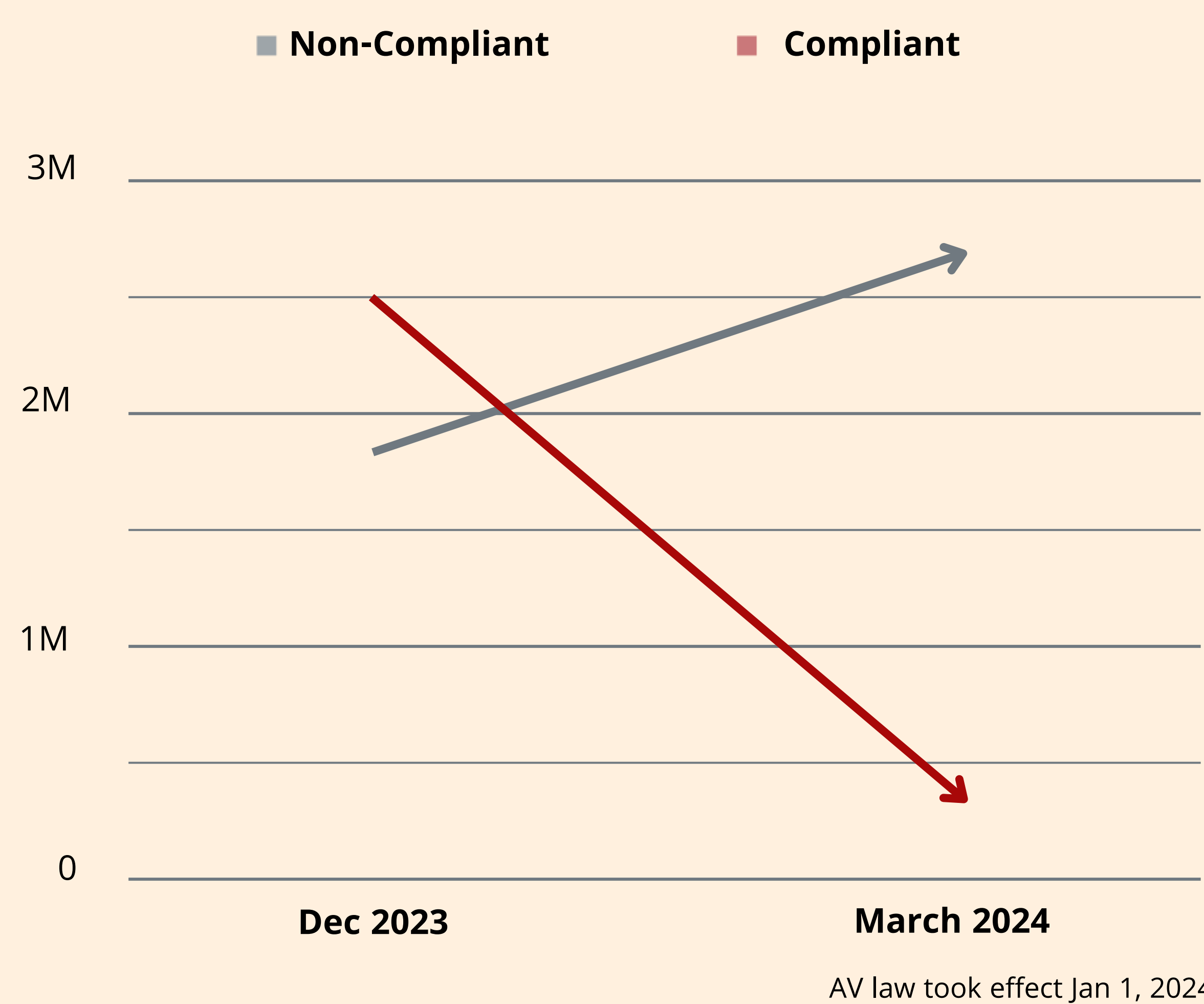
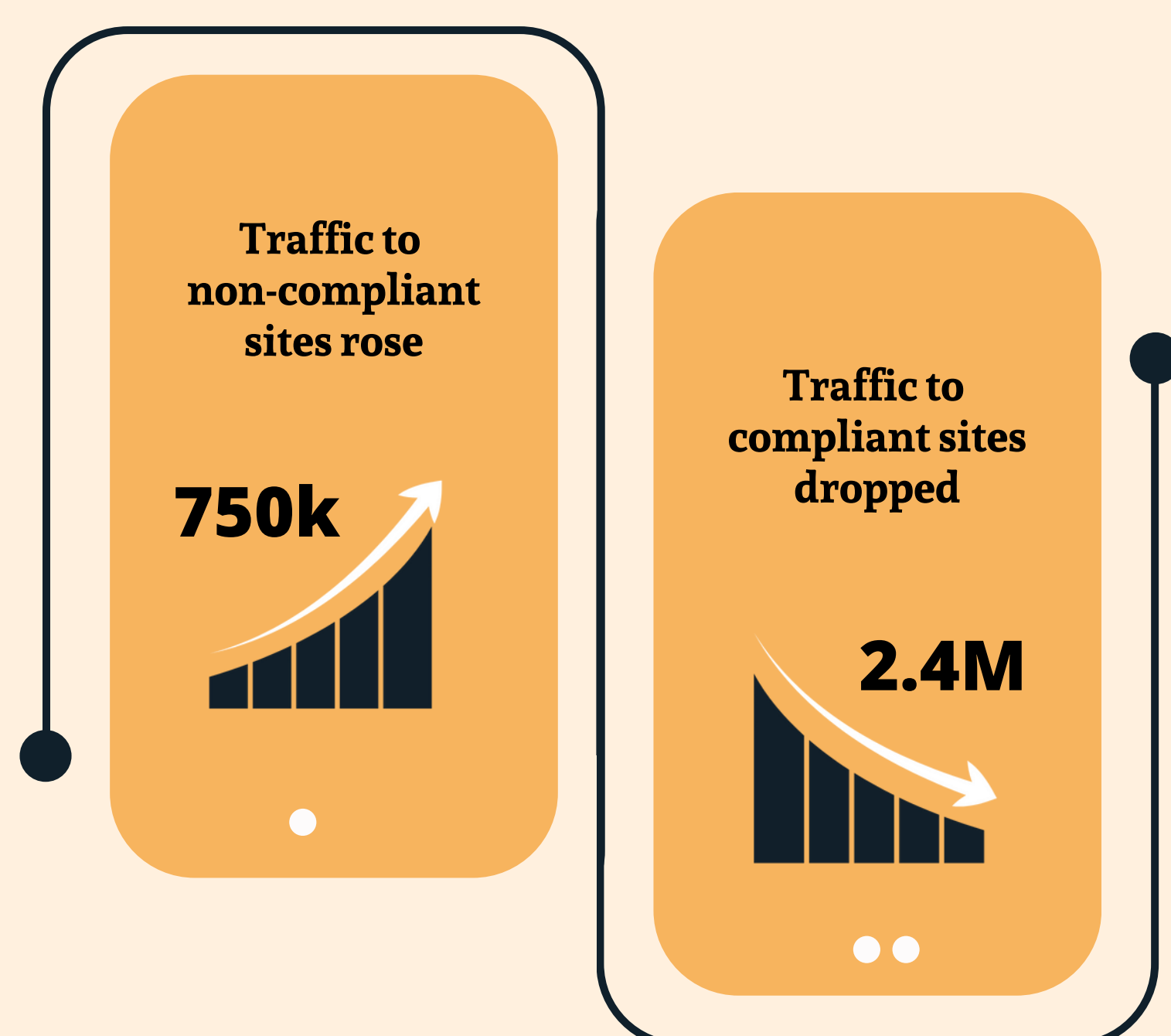
There are over 4 million sites worldwide featuring large amounts of adult content. Most are located outside the US and are not subject to US law.

Overseas Sites Are Replacing Compliant Sites

Case Study: North Carolina

When states implement age-verification, traffic simply diverts from compliant sites to overseas and non-compliant sites. Such sites are easily accessible via the top search results on Google.⁶

The graph shows traffic to several large websites – two sites that complied and lost traffic and two sites that ignored the law grew.⁷



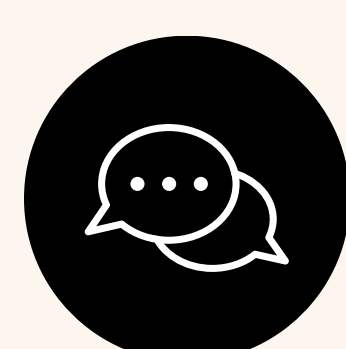
In North Carolina, large compliant sites lost 64% of their visitors while traffic to non-compliant sites surged by 33%.⁷

Where do users go?



Social Media

Teens commonly access adult content on **Snapchat, Instagram, TikTok, Reddit, and Twitter.**⁸



Messaging

Young people are exposed to sexually explicit content on **Discord, Whatsapp and Telegram** channels.⁹



Search

More than half of minors find porn on search engines where they can view unlimited images and videos without ever visiting an adult site.¹⁰



Non-US Sites

There are an estimated **4 million** adult sites worldwide, most located outside the US and beyond the jurisdiction of US law.¹¹

AGE VERIFICATION LAWS ARE NOT WORKING

While it may be slightly more difficult to access adult content on a few specific sites, minors' access to adult content in general has not been meaningfully impacted.

More effective **solutions**

Content Filters

The device-based filters on your phone or tablet automatically block millions of adult sites no matter where they are located. These filters are free, easy to use, and come pre-installed on nearly every internet-enabled device.

Internet Blocks

Internet service providers offer opt-in plans that allow all internet access to be filtered for minors, no matter what device they use.

Browser Controls

Google Chrome and other browsers allow parents to activate a safe search mode that can block adult content as well as limit search results.

Device-Based Age-Verification

Device-based age-verification does not require consumers to expose their personal identity or browsing habits to age-verification companies or governments and cannot be circumvented using simple workarounds such as VPNs.

While nothing is perfect, there are much more effective ways to keep kids from accessing adult content. But we need to educate parents — fewer than 2/5 turn them on.¹²



Citations

<https://www.freespeechcoalition.com/appendix-about-age-verification-data>