

# What Parents & Carers Need to Know about YUBO



Yubo is a social networking platform where users can chat and livestream with up to 10 friends at once. People can connect with others based on location, with a Tinder-style 'swiping' mechanism to accept or reject someone based on profile pictures. The app has more than 20 million users worldwide – but despite its popularity, Yubo has not been free from controversy. While the app claims to monitor inappropriate content, a newspaper investigation in early 2022 found young users being exposed to sexual harassment, racism, bullying and conversations with adult themes.

## WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

### FLIMSY AGE GATES

Yubo states it is only for over 13s, but there is no credible age-gate to prevent a younger child joining the platform. An undercover journalist investigating dangerous content reported spending 10 days posing as a 15-year-old on the app without any age verification. This flaw, and the fact that it's not essential for users to verify their identity during the sign up process, raises concerns over potential grooming.

### INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

Yubo has experienced problems with inappropriate content being displayed to children and teens. Although the app's developers claim to monitor profiles and messages for adult-themed or inappropriate material, a *Sunday Times* and an independent investigation found young users being exposed to sexual harassment, racism and bullying, with some chats referencing self-harm, suicide and drug use.

### LIVESTREAM RISKS

Users are able to launch live video streams which strangers can then view and interact with via real-time text chat. Not only is the thought of strangers watching children's livestreams extremely worrying (they could also use these as a means to establish the child's location by recognising their surroundings) but text chats might result in a young person disclosing personal information.



ON AIR

### BULLYING POTENTIAL

Yubo users 'swipe' to accept or decline the chance to talk with each other. These decisions are entirely based on someone's profile picture, raising the potential for children to be left with low self-esteem if declined repeatedly. Negative feedback about their appearance can seriously damage a child's emotional wellbeing, causing a loss of confidence in how they look or how interesting they are.

### EXTENSIVE ACCESS

Users of Yubo, no matter what their age, are given the option to grant access to their device's microphone if live streaming, and GPS during sign up. This means they are potentially revealing sensitive information, including their exact location. In addition, new users of the app are asked to provide personal details such as their name, date of birth and phone number, which – in the case of young people – represents a risk in the event of a hack or data breach.

### 'GATEWAY' EFFECT

Yubo's swiping system (right for 'yes'; left for 'no') works much like Tinder and various other dating apps. This could lead to children exploring similarly designed apps that aren't intended for a young audience. Users can also link their Yubo account to social media such as Snapchat and Instagram, making it easier for a stranger – or a predator – to track them down on various platforms.

## Advice for Parents & Carers

### EXPLORE THE APP

We encourage parents and carers to explore any app before allowing their children to download and use it in order to fully understand how the app is used, and what types of content and communication your child will be exposed to. We advise that you do the same with Yubo, allowing you to make a fully informed decision on whether you allow your child to use the app.

### STAY AWARE

It's important to stay attuned to how your child is using social media. If they only access Yubo in private, for example, you might question what they're potentially using it for. It's also important to watch for warning signs that they may be over-using the app: prioritising it over everyday routines like meals and homework, for instance, or showing signs of irritability and a lack of concentration.

### DISCUSS IN ADVANCE

If your child is absolutely determined to join Yubo (perhaps their friends all use the platform, for instance), then it's essential to talk to them about the dangers of this type of app before they install it. It's vital they understand not to disclose personal information to people they don't know, for example, and that they're warned about the type of mature content they may be exposed to.

### ALTER THE SETTINGS

After the recent controversies surrounding the app, Yubo's developers have increased its security controls. Users can now choose to block profiles, screen out nudity in live streams and keep their location private. There's also an option to report inappropriate content, so make sure your child knows that they can now flag up anything they find disturbing via the app's Safety Centre.

## Meet Our Expert

Carly Page is an experienced technology journalist with a track record of more than 10 years in the industry. Previously the editor of tech tabloid *The Inquirer*, Carly is now a freelance technology journalist, editor and consultant.



LOCATIONS



National Online Safety®

#WakeUpWednesday