



Annual wrap-up

2021



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A word from our CEO

2021 was an eventful year in cybersecurity, with cyberattacks doubling and the need for online security growing. In parallel with the transition to remote work, new security risks for companies were also developing. Therefore, the demand for innovative security solutions have increased. As a business, Surfshark is rapidly adapting to these changes.

Surfshark's goal has always been to support an open, free, and secure internet. However, in 2021, this became especially important. **To ensure we're aligned with our goal, Surfshark supports the work of non-profit organizations that help secure online freedom and transparency.** Our dream is for people to have complete control of their digital lives.

In 2021, we also saw a rise of interest in the importance of data privacy. While governments recognize the value of data privacy and are actively strengthening their data privacy laws, businesses are a bit reluctant. Customers' data is essential when building a responsible and transparent company. However, we see that privacy laws sometimes still remain unclear to businesses. Regarding our users' data privacy, **Surfshark strives to ensure the best level of privacy: we apply the standards of the European General Data Protection Regulation (EU GDPR), one of the strictest data protection regulations globally, to all of our users internationally.**

Since Surfshark is a fast-growing company, I understand that with fast growth comes the need for greater transparency. I know that more people are choosing to trust us. Yearly reports should become a regular practice in today's business, especially those that help protect people from online dangers. **This report is about Surfshark's technical, legal, educational, social initiatives, and work culture.**



Vytautas Kaziukonis
CEO

The journey so far

2018

2019

2020

2021

Starting our journey

What started as an idea finally became a reality – Surfshark was born. We launched our VPN browser extensions and apps on macOS, Windows, Linux, iOS, Android, Android TV & Fire TV, and went through our first independent audit by Cure53.

Launching new products

As our first year passed, we began to add more layers to our cybersecurity offering – Surfshark Alert & Search. We also kick-started our research activities by releasing the first Digital Quality of Life (DQL) index, which has been updated annually since then. Our hard work was noticed, and Surfshark was the one of the first VPN providers favored with the AV-Test Seal of Approval.

Earning the industry's trust

We boomed in promoting online safety and privacy. Not only did Surfshark move to a 100% RAM-only server network and introduce the WireGuard® protocol to our clients, but we also became a founding member of the VPN Trust Initiative.

Receiving international recognition

We continued to grow our cybersecurity suite, launching Surfshark Antivirus & Incogni. We also won the PCMag Editors Choice award and gained recognition as TechRadar's must-have Work from Home app. This year has also granted us another independent infrastructure audit by Cure53 and provided an opportunity to start upgrading our servers to 10Gbps.

Technical overview



TECHNICAL OVERVIEW

Becoming a fully-fledged cybersecurity suite in 2021

Surfshark One & Incogni

Surfshark One

is a single account with all our main products in one place – VPN, Antivirus, Search, and Alert. This bundle offers a subscription for all-over security from malware, tracking, data leaks, and privacy threats.

Surfshark Antivirus

is designed to protect your device from malware and advanced threats. It allows you to customize and schedule scans, exclude selected files from being scanned, and provides a notification showing when the virus database was updated.

Incogni

improves our clients' privacy by removing personal information from data brokers and the data market.



TECHNICAL OVERVIEW

Released features

Cookie pop-up blocker

Thanks to this feature, you won't ever have to deal with those unwanted cookie consent pop-ups again. Pop-ups are automatically declined when possible and accepted when needed to guarantee a seamless user experience

Browser extensions v3.0 (revamped from scratch)

Extensions for Chrome, Firefox, and Edge are now better than ever. Our team put a lot of effort into giving them a fresh new look with full functionality. They now include features that were previously available only on the apps, such as:

- Static IP
- MultiHop
- Ability to select favorite connection locations
- WebRTC leak prevention
- New dark mode
- Auto-connect on browser's launch

10 Gbps servers

Nobody wants to get stuck walking behind someone who is moving slowly. Hence, we upgraded our servers to 10Gbps to ensure all clients can browse side-by-side at fast speeds. Our team keeps upgrading the servers as the user base grows to prevent overload and consistently provide a stable connection with fast speeds.

macOS app v3.0

Our macOS app was not left behind. This year's implemented updates:

- New interface animations
- Handy settings menu
- An additional menu to change the connection protocol
- Support for Apple M1 devices



TECHNICAL OVERVIEW

Released features

Post-purchase campaign

Since real life is not a simulation game, we cannot always master a skill in a split second. With that in mind, we have launched a post-purchase onboarding campaign. It focuses on clients who might need a little extra help getting the most out of their VPN. We send a series of four emails to our users explaining the basics of our application, available features, and other VPN perks.

In-app notification center

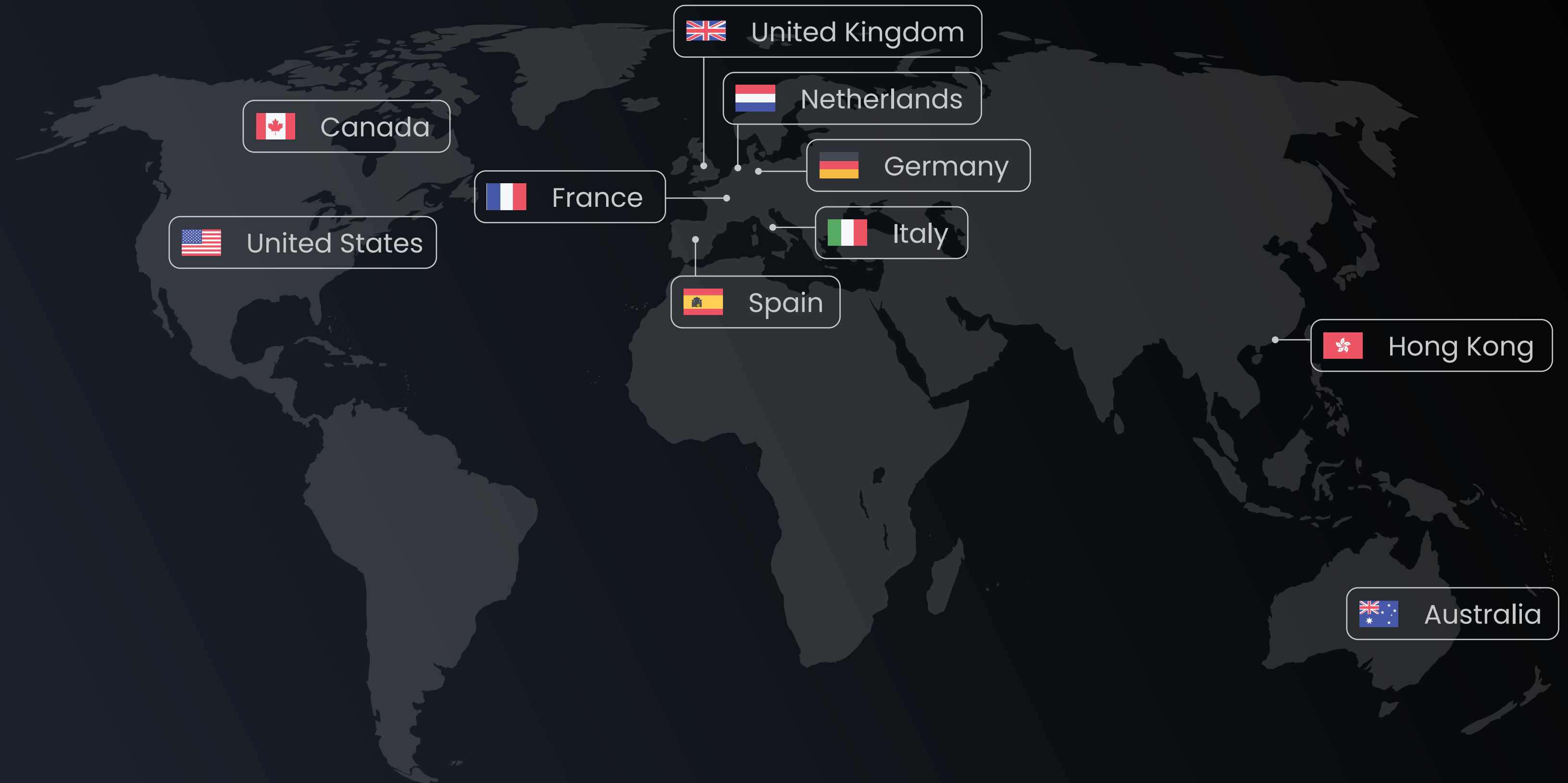
It goes without saying: communication is key. That is why we added a notification center in our app, allowing us to communicate with users directly. This way, we can notify users about any issues we are experiencing or update them on VPN availability. It also lets us share real-time security tips and special deals.

Widget in the Android app

The VPN status is within a hand's reach! A handy widget on our Android app lets you monitor the VPN connection without opening the application. It has an adjustable size and displays the connection status with the option to connect to the VPN straight from the home screen.

Stats & numbers

Here are the TOP 10 locations Surfshark VPN users were connecting to:



Product awards

Last year was full of major achievements that we're proud to share with you.



techradar
2021 WFH app must-have



PCMag
Editor's Choice



Trusted Reviews
Best VPN 2021



Cybersecurity Excellence Awards
Gold 2021



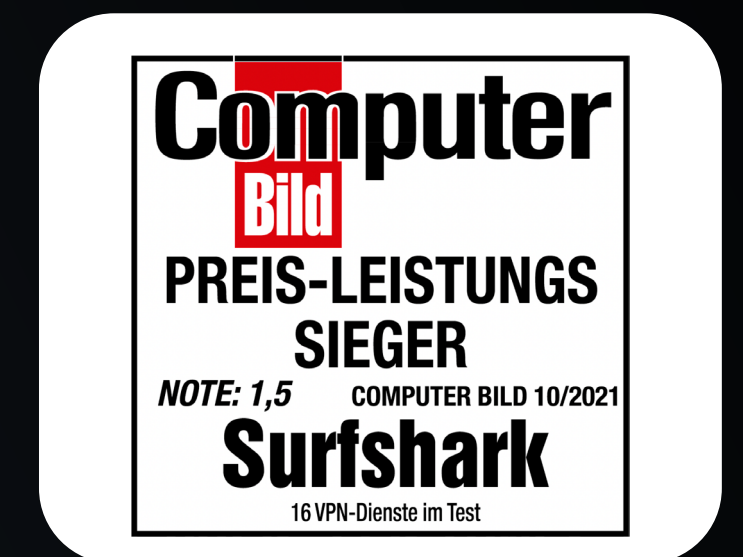
AV comparatives
Top 3 Fast VPN 2021



Globe Cyber Security Global Excellence Awards
Editor's Choice



PCWorld
Verified Product 2021



ComputerBild
Best Price-Quality-Ratio Product 2021



TECHNICAL OVERVIEW

Cure53 Audit

In April 2021, our servers passed an independent infrastructure audit by a Germany-based audit company called Cure53. The extensive research did not detect any serious issues, proving that our VPN service is robust and has a secure server infrastructure.

Cure53's report stated that Surfshark's server network relies on good defaults and that the company engineers demonstrated their dedication and skill in configuring constructs and cipher suites. This was the second time Cure53 ran an audit on Surfshark. You can read a summary of the Cure53 report [here](#).



Legal statement



Legal statement

At Surfshark, we put our clients' security and privacy first. This means that we follow the development of legal and data protection rules worldwide very closely and embed those in our products.

We implement privacy by design and default into products to stay in line with the best privacy practices.

We always apply the best privacy practices. We adhere to the requirements of EU GDPR and apply them to all our users on top of their location legislation, regardless of what jurisdiction they come from. This means that all of our users can exercise GDPR data subject rights, such as data erasure or data access, no matter where they are.

Surfshark takes data minimization seriously. This means that we collect the minimum amount of customers' personal data and regularly review the scope of data we collect to see if we can reduce it.



Legal statement

We have a no-logs policy, meaning that we don't track or log any of the activities that our users engage in while using Surfshark VPN. We believe that the privacy of our users is of utmost importance, that's why we always choose our users' privacy instead of doing business in jurisdictions that prevent us from protecting their privacy.

During the year 2021, we had around 4,400 data subject requests, including user requests to erase their data.

Understanding the importance of the rights that privacy laws give to users, we created Incogni – a service that helps our users get their personal data off the market.

We strive to leave little to no space for human errors, that's why we seek to automate as many processes as possible, including, for example, the process for exercising certain data subject rights.

The background consists of several overlapping circles in various shades of teal and blue, creating a layered, circular effect. The text is centered within the innermost, darkest circle.

Research projects



RESEARCH PROJECTS

Shedding light on important subjects

Here at Surfshark, our angles of inquiry are based on various research projects we've done to address privacy and security concerns. **Our research is based on these major pillars: humanized cybersecurity, consumer data privacy, internet censorship and surveillance, and data breaches.**

We have successfully looked into issues including digital quality of life, social media censorship, and app privacy policies. To demonstrate the accuracy of our studies, we relied on trusted associations like the FBI, Europol, and NetBlocks.

One of our goals was to make cybersecurity matters understandable and approachable to everyone. We expressed the data in plain language and practical charts to achieve this goal.



RESEARCH PROJECTS

DQL'21

Our 2021 Digital Quality of Life Index evaluated the well-being of online users in 110 countries, covering 90% of the global population. This research aimed to provide a unique understanding of the overall digital quality of life. Using multiple angles, we considered not only the quality and affordability of the internet but also the development of cybersecurity, e-infrastructure, and e-government systems. As a result, we gained valuable insights, such as the fact that the worst internet access in the world is also one of the least affordable.

2021 Digital Quality of Life Index

Global research on the quality of a digital wellbeing in 110 countries (90% of the global population). This study indexes the countries by looking at five fundamental pillars that define the digital quality of life.

Explore ranking

Find a country profile

1st 0.8313 index	2nd 0.7608 index	3rd 0.7562 index	4th 0.7387 index	5th 0.7360 index	6th 0.7192 index	7th 0.7128 index	8th 0.7093 index	9th 0.7071 index	10th 0.7065 index	11th 0.7060 index	12th 0.6983 index	13th 0.6972 index	14th 0.6916 index	15th 0.6867 index
DK	KR	FI	IL	US	SG	FR	CH	DE	GB	NL	JP	SE	NO	LU

DQL index and 5 pillars ranking

Explore DQL or its pillars ranking by selecting one of the tabs

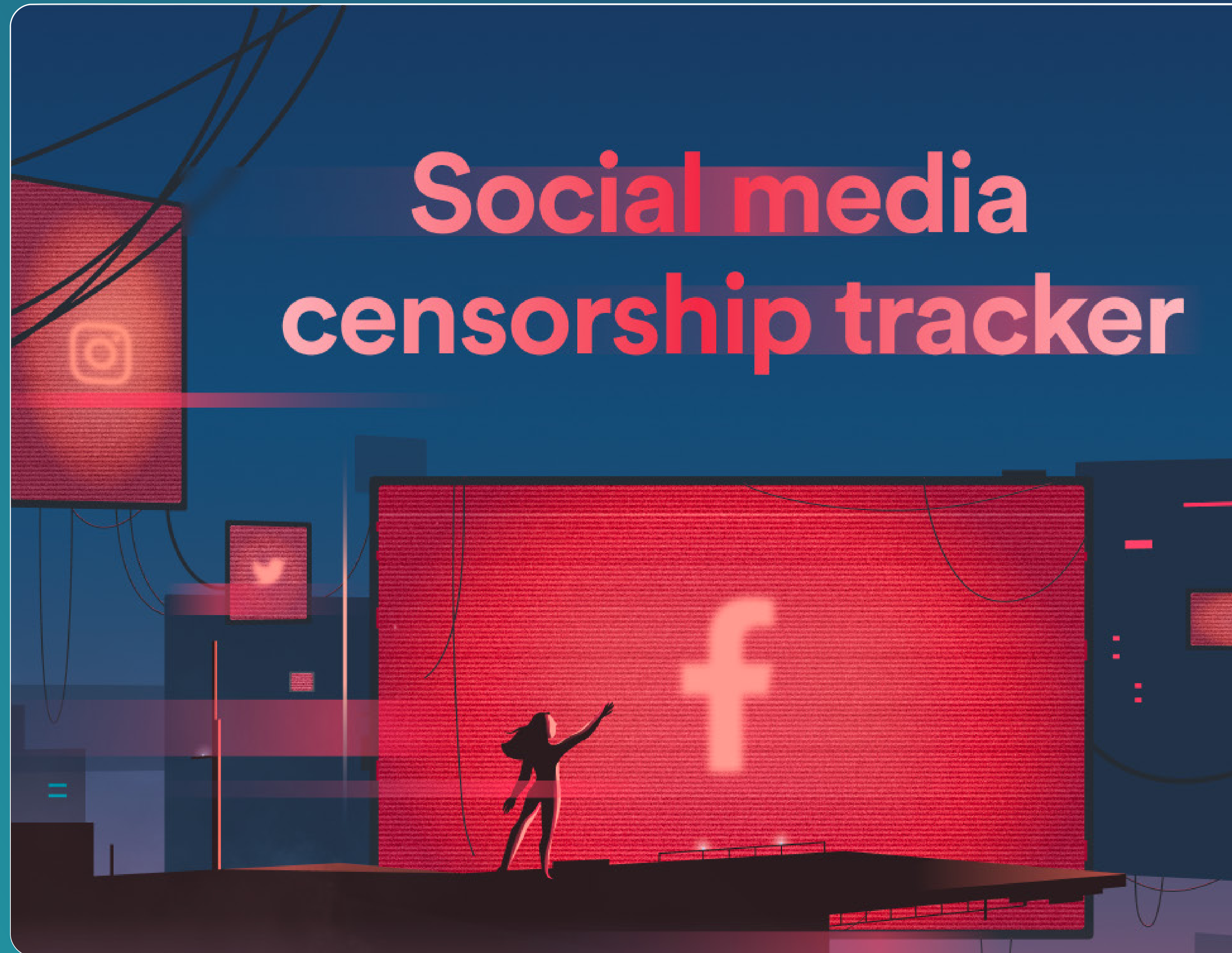
DQL index	Internet affordability	Internet quality	Electronic infrastructure
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DQL index is calculated by looking at the impact of five core pillars: internet affordability, internet quality, e-infrastructure, e-security, e-g

Global	
+ Oceania	1 DK
+ Asia	2 KR
+ Africa	3 FI
+ Europe	4 IL
+ South America	5 US

Social media censorship tracker

Our Social Media Censorship Tracker is aimed at documenting the ever-increasing government-mandated social media shutdown cases. As social media is an excellent tool for raising awareness and organizing movements, it often comes under attack by regimes fearful of popular sentiment. The tracker also follows the cases of internet shutdowns – a blunt tool used by governments that can't be satisfied by merely curtailing access to social media.



Apps That Actually Respect Your Privacy

There are a lot of apps that respectably consider users' privacy. However, it is not a secret that many apps track users' data. **One of our major app research projects analyzed which apps collect user data – and for what reasons.** Uncovering the apps that actually respect your privacy helps people make an immediate, informed decision without having to read through reams of confusing terms and conditions.

ALTERNATIVE APPS



Uncovering the Apps That Actually Respect Your Privacy

Ever wonder how free apps make their money?

When you download a payment-free app from the Apple Store, the app creators have your attention AND your data, and some **sell** the latter on to advertisers or other data brokers. An Oxford University **study** found that the average app can transfer your data to 10 third-party companies, and companies can use data such as your habits, location, and the other apps on your phone, to draw a convincing profile of who you are.

With Apple unleashing its 'nutrition label'-style **Privacy Labels**, Surfshark has combed through the privacy policies of over 200 apps to find out which collect the most data and which collect the least.

See any of your favorites on the list?

Contents [hide]

1. Key Findings
2. Alternate Apps That Require Less Data
3. Which App Categories Demand the Most Data?
4. Privacy Tool: Find the Best App for Your Needs
5. The Most and Least Hungry Apps for Everything
6. Conclusion: Complex Considerations
7. Methodology and Sources

NGO partnerships & donations



NGO partnerships & donations

By partnering with non-governmental organizations, we can focus our resources on helping them achieve their goals and taking global action.



Surfshark is one of the founding members of the VPN Trust Initiative (VTI), which was established in 2020. It is an industry-led and member-driven consortium of VPN business leaders focused on improving digital safety for consumers by building understanding, strengthening trust, and mitigating risk for VPN users. **All members of the Initiative must follow the VTI principles, which focus on five key areas: security, privacy, advertising practices, disclosure and transparency, and social responsibility.** This ensures that the member companies are secure, trusted, and transparent to its users.



Access Now defends and extends the digital rights of users at risk around the world. By combining direct technical support, comprehensive policy engagement, global advocacy, grassroots grantmaking, legal interventions, and convenings such as RightsCon, they fight for human rights in the digital age.



NGO partnerships & donations

By partnering with non-governmental organizations, we can focus our resources on helping them achieve their goals and taking global action.



Founded in 2011, Fight for the Future is a small group of activists, engineers, technologists, and artists who run hard-hitting campaigns that fight for a future where **technology is a force for the community, openness, and collective power—not oppression.**



The leading nonprofit defending digital privacy, free speech, and innovation. Founded in 1990, EFF champions **user privacy, free expression, and innovation through impact litigation, policy analysis, grassroots activism, and technology development.**



The Internet Society is a global nonprofit empowering people to keep the internet a force for good: open, globally-connected, secure, and trustworthy. **The internet is and must remain a place of possibility and opportunity.**

The people behind Surfshark

Surfshark wouldn't be what it is today without its most valuable asset – people. In our company's three-year run since 2018, we have gathered over 200+ specialists that are always looking for ways to improve. Our employees spent a total of 747 learning hours, which is equal to 93 full work days, to improve their soft and hard skills. This year, our efforts were noticed, and we've made it to MeetFrank's 2021 top employers list.

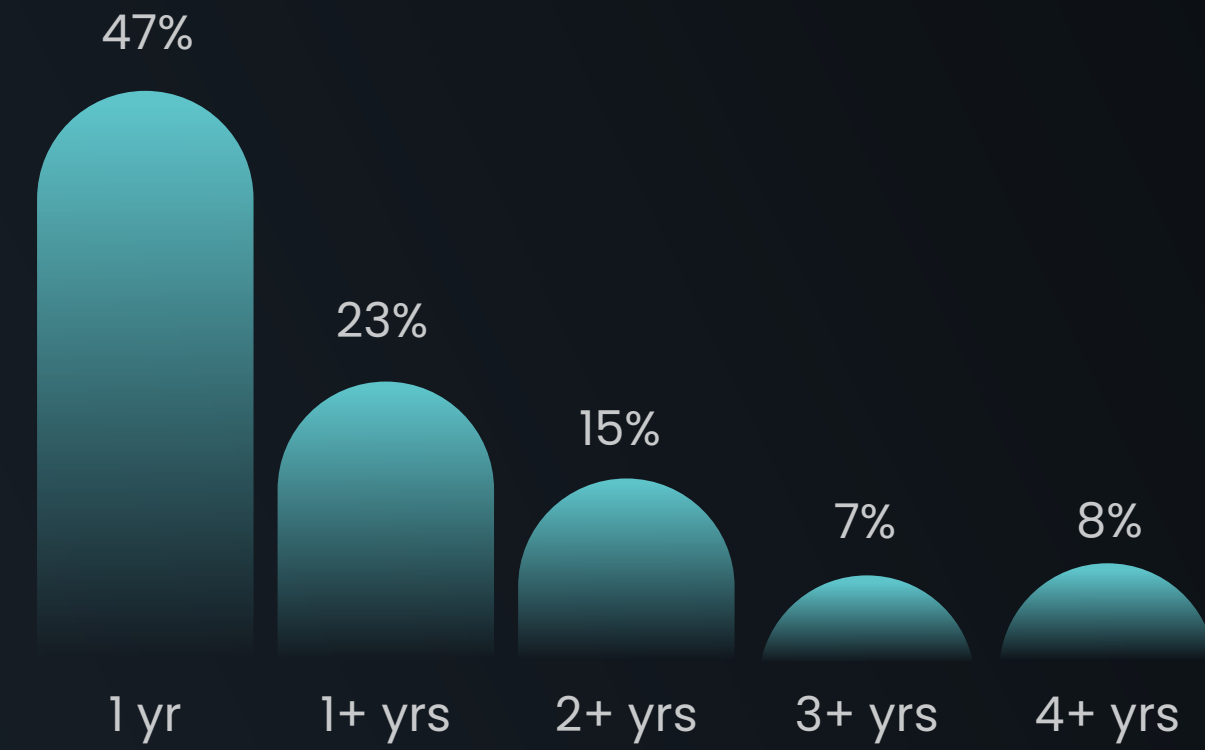




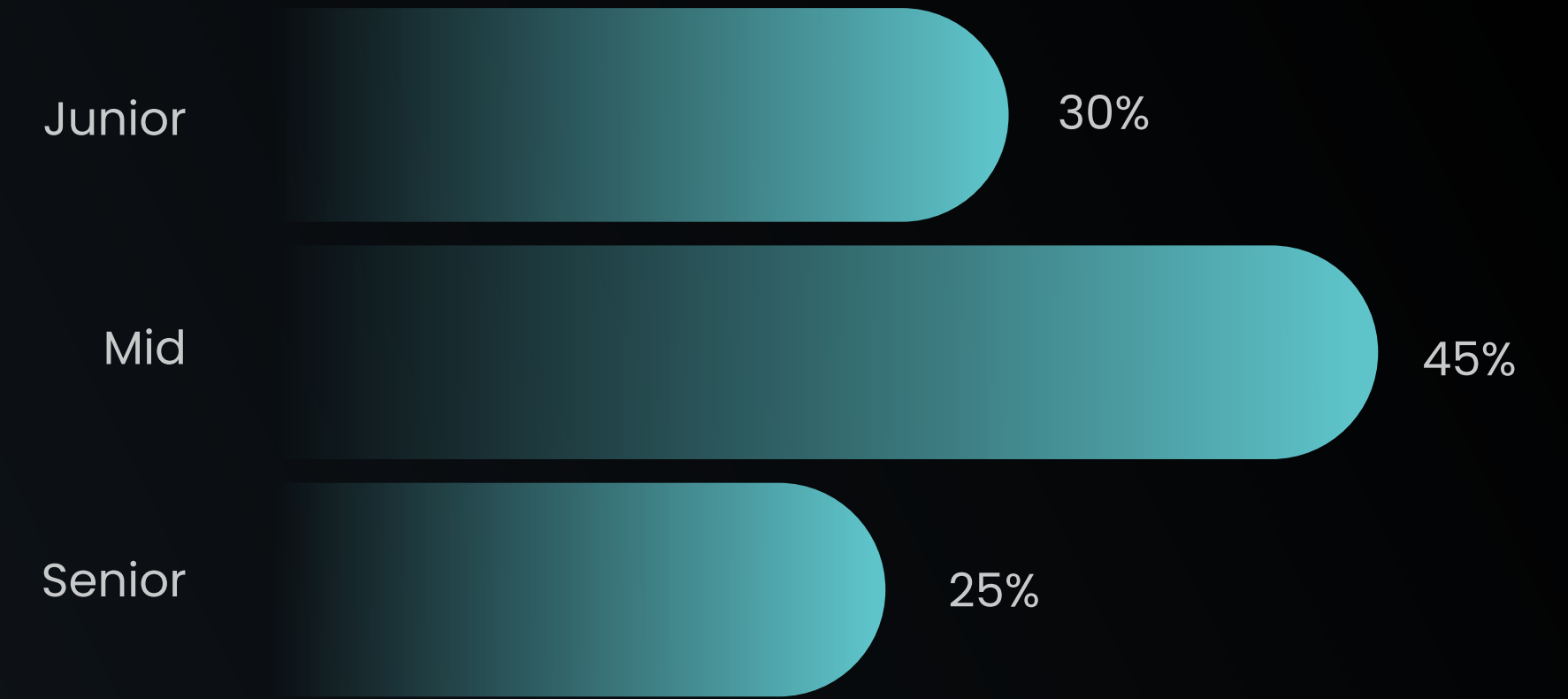
THE PEOPLE BEHIND SURFSHARK

Employee statistics

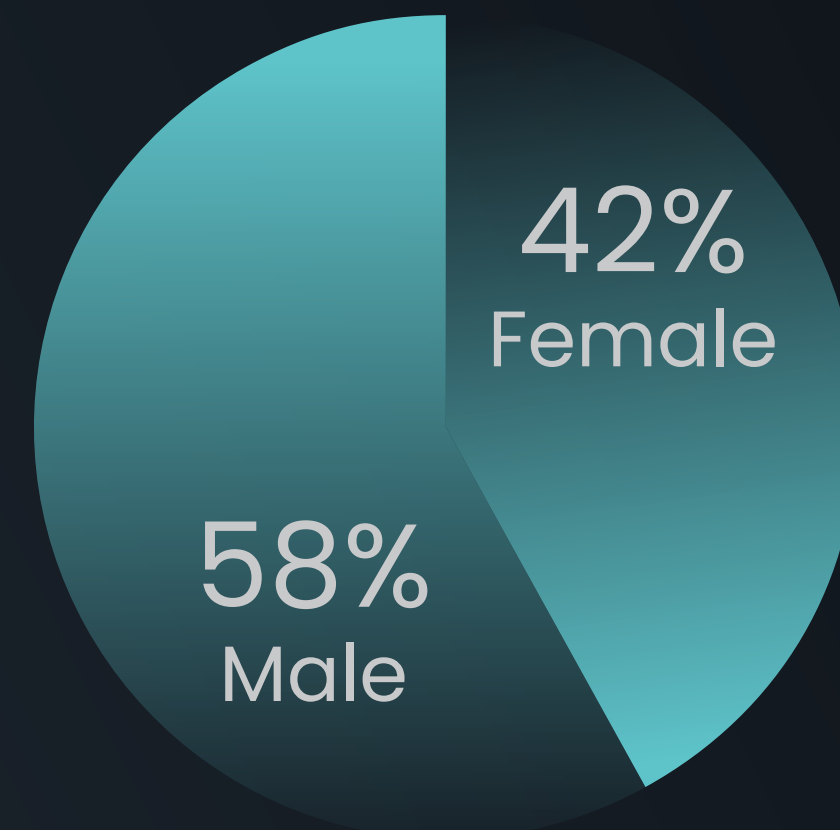
Years working at Surfshark



Seniority level



Gender balance





THE PEOPLE BEHIND SURFSHARK

Development & wellbeing

Surfshark cares about its employees' professional development. That's why **everyone is encouraged to spend a specific amount of work hours for self-development**: watching online courses, attending learning programs and workshops. We trust our people and understand that quality work isn't done only at the office desk; hence, **we encourage a hybrid working model and the possibility to work from anywhere**. Last but not least, we firmly believe that meeting and learning from the most influential people in the industry is a fantastic method of professional development. To reach this, **we pursue business trips and conferences around the world as well as invite international speakers to our office**.

Surfshark also offers various opportunities for employees to take care of their mental and physical health. Therefore, **we offer access to numerous wellbeing apps and private health insurance, which also covers certified therapist sessions**. Additionally, employees can take part in **group workout sessions with in-house physiotherapists**.



**What's
next for
2022?**



What's next for 2022?

We hope the year 2022 will be just as exciting. Our team plans to:

Create a cutting-edge server network – Surfshark Nexus. It will be a network made up of all Surfshark servers that provides better speeds and stability. This network will allow us to implement features such as an IP rotator, IP randomizer, and dynamic MultiHop

Implement a GUI for our Linux application. We will create a fully-developed GUI with features such as the Wireguard connection protocol, MultiHop servers, and the CleanWeb feature

Release in-app features, such as the option to pause the VPN connection and new VPN locations to connect to

Expand our antivirus support to other operating systems, like macOS. We will bring Surfshark Cloud Protect from zero-day threats and real-time protection to all operating systems

Improve our browser extension. Extension users enjoy the Cookie pop-up blocker feature and we plan to make it independent from the VPN connection. It will function as a powerful stand-alone feature

Expand Surfshark One with more cybersecurity solutions, additions to Alert, Search, and Antivirus.



What's next for 2022?

Aside from technical improvements, we also plan to:

Strengthen our presence in the global job market, open a new office in Warsaw, and expand our talent pool with international people

Release more educational content both on our own and in collaboration with external partners

Expand our YouTube channel with an educational podcast & create more content dedicated to cybersecurity awareness

Collaborate with more NGOs that share our goals and values

Review current online threats and create a data vulnerability check for our clients to see how vulnerable they are to data breaches

Educate children and create a fun program called Cyber Ocean

**We've reached
new heights
throughout the
year of 2021...**

**We're excited to
see where 2022
will bring us.**

And
that's
a wrap!

