

New report reveals UK as world leader in online safety innovation

- Study shows significant growth of 'safety tech' businesses and their importance in plans to make UK the safest place to be online
- More than 70 companies in London, Leeds, Cambridge and Edinburgh have a quarter of global market share for safety tech products

The independent study, Safer technology, safer users: The UK as a world leader in Safety Tech, highlights significant growth within the sector, with the number of dedicated online safety firms doubling in the last five years and investment increasing more than eight-fold in 2019, making it a record year.

It shows there are almost two thousand people working in more than 70 companies across the UK, including in London, Leeds, Cambridge and Edinburgh.

Leading UK firm Crisp, based in Leeds, has created new technology that is used to detect and remove harmful content from social media and online games, contributing to the safety of an estimated two billion worldwide users each day. While London-based SuperAwesome helps more than 300 of the world's top brands ensure their online engagements with children meet strict data privacy requirements.

The research, carried out between September 2019 and March 2020, comes as the government launches a Safety Tech Innovation Network, the world's first forum for safety tech providers to collaborate and showcase their work, alongside a scheme to boost exports.

Minister for Digital and Culture, Caroline Dinenage, said:

We are all spending more time online during the pandemic and this new report shows the value the safety tech sector could add as we look to power growth out of it.

Its innovative products, many of which are developed in towns and cities across the country, are being used globally to help companies make their online platforms safer.

The government is leading the world, developing online harms laws and it's great to see our brilliant British tech industry is part of the solution.

The companies highlighted in the report are providing tools to help protect users online and demonstrating the UK tech sector can be a central to tackling the challenge.

While the research for the report was carried out prior to the impact of coronavirus, high growth rates are still projected for the safety tech sector driven by increased demand for their products. The main findings of the report are:

- UK safety tech providers currently hold an estimated 25 per cent of the global market share
- The number of dedicated safety tech firms has doubled in the last five years, with 70 firms identified in the report. Almost half have an international presence
- In 2019, the sector generated £226 million in annual revenues, and has grown rapidly with an estimated 35 per cent annual growth rate since 2016
- Some of the most established companies (those earning in excess of £5 million) have grown at rates of up to 90 per cent a year, and the report estimates that safety tech revenues could exceed £1 billion by 2025.
- In 2015, the safety tech sector raised £6 million in external investment across ten deals. By 2019, the figure had increased more than eightfold to £51 million across nineteen deals.
- The report anticipates the UK is likely to see its first safety tech unicorn (a company worth over \$1 billion) emerge in the coming years, with three other companies also demonstrating the potential to hit unicorn status in the early 2020s.

The sector consists of companies in fields such as data and computer science providing a range of tech solutions and applications to help increase safety on websites and in apps and video games such as those allowing user-generated content and interactions.

Examples of British companies and the products and services they provide include:

- Cyan Forensics, Cubica Technology and VigilAI are working closely with law enforcement on 'digital forensics' – the automated identification, location and removal of illegal child sexual abuse and terrorist material

- Crisp, Qumodo and Spirit AI are assisting moderators of social media and gaming platforms to actively identify and respond to bullying, harassment and abuse on their platforms
- SuperAwesome, SafeToNet, Yoti and Trust Elevate are providing tools that verify the age of users and ensure phones, tablets and the apps on them are safe and appropriate for children
- South West Grid for Learning, Smoothwall and Opendium are filtering, blocking or blacklisting harmful content across school, business or home internet
- Full Fact, Factmata and Astroscreen are tackling false, misleading or harmful online narratives, by providing fact-checking services or promoting trusted news and information

To further capitalise on the sector's success, and in response to the report's recommendations, the government is today announcing:

- A Safety Tech Innovation Network, co-funded by Nominet, to launch later in 2020. This will be the world's first forum for safety tech providers to collaborate and promote their work
- A virtual safety tech expo to showcase safety tech to the world
- A safety tech export pilot, run by the Department for International Trade, to include a directory of UK safety tech organisations and exploratory international missions – which can be virtual if necessary

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Further quotes

Andy Burrows, head of child safety online policy, at NSPCC, said:

This report highlights how the creativity and passion of the UK tech sector can lead the world with new solutions to tackle online harms. The emergence of a thriving safety-tech sector is a crucial component of the move towards a Duty of Care, and to ensure tech firms can offer meaningful protections to children online.

Ian Stevenson, Chair of the UK's Online Safety Tech Industry Association (OSTIA) and CEO of Cyan Forensics, said:

This report comes at a vital time for online safety – important strides are certainly being made, but the challenge to keep internet users safe is broad and ongoing. However, with resources such as today’s report and continued collaboration between specialist companies, industry organisations and the Government, we will continue to see real, sustained changes made in this sector; with the UK remaining as a leading light in the online safety space.

Julie Inman Grant, Australian eSafety Commissioner, said:

This report provides important insights into the burgeoning field of online safety tech, reflecting a growing recognition for the need to develop more responsible technology – with safety built in from the get-go. The significance of international collaboration, multi-stakeholder engagement, and investment in safety tech and ‘safety by design’ has never been more important.

Daniel Korski, CEO of PUBLIC, said:

Thanks to the efforts of some of the country’s most entrepreneurial minds, the UK has fast become a global leader in technologies to help guarantee safety online, as this report clearly shows. Investors should take note; with one quarter of the global online safety tech sector based here in the UK – and demand for such technologies only set to grow, not least because of Covid19 strictures – the opportunities offered by an early-stage market experiencing rapid, significant growth are very exciting.

Ellie Bradley, MD Registry and Public Benefit at Nominet said:

We’ve worked hard to understand what the most effective instruments will be to energise the safety tech sector in the UK. Leaning on our experience operating a world class domain registry, our cyber security expertise and our tech for good initiatives, means we are in a unique position to help enable the digital economy in this emerging space. The aim is that the innovation network we’ll be supporting provides an essential platform to foster creativity and collaboration in this dynamic sector – and bolstered by key research, business support and future investment we hope these interventions sow the seeds that see the UK leading the world in safety tech.

Notes to editors

- The [‘Safer technology, safer users’](#) report is an independent research

report produced for DCMS by [Perspective Economics](#), a Belfast-based economic advisory company. Independent academic advisory input was provided by Professor Julia Davidson and Professor Mary Aiken (University of East London). The report meets the commitment set out in the Online Harms White Paper to assess the capability and potential of the UK online safety sector.

The launch of the 'Safer technology, safer users' report follows the establishment in April 2020 of the UK Online Safety Tech Industry Association, [OSTIA](#) which brings together the UK's leading safety tech companies. These include Crisp, SafeToNet, Securium, Yoti, Cubica Technology, DragonflAI, GoBubble, Image Analyser, Qumodo, SuperAwesome, Securus Software, Trust Elevate, VigilAI and Child Safe VPN.

Alongside the Safety Tech Innovation Network, Expo and Export pilot, the government will also:

- explore ways in which best practices in online safety can be included in standards and guidance for buying, building and reusing government technology, such as the Technology Code of Practice
- develop a Safety Tech Sector Strategy, to guide future priorities for sector support

A podcast interview with the report authors will be released by SafeToNet Foundation on Wednesday 27 May, and will be available at the following URL: <http://safetonetfoundation.libsyn.com/>.

[Tyre particles are contaminating our rivers and ocean, study says](#)

A major government-funded [research study](#) published today suggests particles released from vehicle tyres could be a significant and previously largely unrecorded source of microplastics in the marine environment.

The study is one of the first worldwide to identify tyre particles as a major and additional source of microplastics. Scientists have previously discovered microplastics, originating from microbeads in cosmetics and the degradation of larger items such as carrier bags and plastic bottles, in marine environments globally – from the deep seas to the Arctic.

Following the [government's ban](#) on rinse-off microbeads, which is one of the toughest in the world, the Defra-funded study led by the University of Plymouth now reveals vital new information that will improve our scientific

understanding of how tiny particles from tyres, synthetic fibres from clothing and maritime gear also enter the ocean.

This project will be used to guide future research already underway on marine plastic pollution and the impact of human activities on the marine environment as the government continues in its fight against the scourge of plastics. This includes the 5p plastic bag charge – which has led to 15 billion fewer bags distributed – and plans to end the sale of plastic straws and stirrers and plastic-stemmed cotton buds later this year.

The study shows that tyre particles can be transported directly to the ocean through the atmosphere or carried by rainwater into rivers and sewers, where they can pass through the water treatment process. Researchers estimate this could place around 100million m² of the UK's river network – and more than 50million m² of estuarine and coastal waters – at risk of contamination by tyre particles.

Its findings also highlight some of the optimal places for intervention; for example, that fitting filters to washing machines could be less effective than changing fabric designs to reduce fibre loss, with another study at the University having recently shown that normal wear and tear when wearing clothes is just as significant a source of microplastic pollution as release from laundering.

Domestic Marine Minister Rebecca Pow said:

Reducing plastic pollution in the ocean is one of the greatest environmental challenges that we face. This study will help us face that challenge by identifying areas for future research, such as changes to roadside drainage and textile design.

The UK is at the forefront of a global fight against the scourge of plastics. In addition to the pioneering ban on microbeads and the 5p plastic bag charge, plans are also in place to end the sale of plastic straws, stirrers and plastic-stemmed cotton buds.

The study was directed by [Professor Richard Thompson OBE, Head of the International Marine Litter Research Unit](#) , and Plymouth researchers Dr Imogen Napper and Florence Parker-Jurd. It also involved Dr Geoff Abbott from the School of Natural and Environmental Sciences at Newcastle University, who developed a breakthrough method using mass spectrometry to detect tyre-derived microplastics in the environment, Dr Stephanie Wright from Kings College London, and Simon Hann from Eunomia Research & Consulting Ltd.

Professor Thompson oversaw Defra's first research project on microplastics and their impact on marine life nearly a decade ago. It was this, and some of his team's subsequent work, that led to the UK's pioneering ban on microbeads in rinse-off personal care products in 2018.

Professor Richard Thompson OBE said:

Scientists have long suspected that tyre debris is posing a hidden threat to the marine environment. However, there have been few studies measuring abundance in aquatic environments. Now that we have a clearer indication on quantities we need to gain a better understanding on transport in the environment and the potential impacts on marine life.

This study gives us a real insight into the importance of tyre wear as a source of microplastics. However there are still many unknowns, and compared with other forms of microplastics we know relatively little about tyre wear particles. So it is important to continue to take steps to reduce emissions of better understood sources like fibres from textiles and the fragmentation of larger items.

What this study also does is provide further evidence of the complex problems posed by microplastic pollution. We have looked at three pathways and shown that all of them are substantive pathways to the environment. As we work to understand their potential distribution and impacts it is important to also work together with industry and policy makers to identify potential solutions which may include changes in behaviour, changes in product design and waste management.

Defra is continuing to invest in research on waste management, ocean littering and microplastics to support the delivery of the government's 25 Year Environment Plan and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. This research will help identify evidence gaps and recommendations to tackle marine plastic pollution, both in the UK and globally.

The University of Plymouth was recently presented with the Queen's Anniversary Prize for Higher and Further Education for its pioneering research into microplastics pollution and its policy impact in the UK and globally.

[PM calls with António Guterres and Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus: 26 May 2020](#)

News story

Prime Minister Boris Johnson had calls with the UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, and with Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the

World Health Organization.



The Prime Minister had calls this evening with the UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, and with Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organization.

On both calls, the Prime Minister set out the UK's support for the international effort to defeat coronavirus and for the work of the UN and WHO in helping to coordinate the global response.

The Prime Minister and Dr Tedros agreed on the importance of an independent investigation into the origins of the coronavirus outbreak, so we can learn lessons to prevent future pandemics.

The Prime Minister also confirmed he will participate via video message in the UN's upcoming Financing For Development in the Era of COVID-19 event to map out an equitable, green recovery from this crisis.

Both Dr Tedros and Secretary-General Guterres reiterated their support for the UK-hosted Global Vaccine Summit on June 4th, which will raise vital funds to save the lives of millions of children worldwide.

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Government significantly boosts UK PPE supply with more than 100 new deals

- Over 100 new suppliers contracted around the world to significantly boost UK PPE supply
- Domestic production also ramped up significantly with contracts signed to manufacture 2 billion items of PPE in the UK
- Over 1.48 billion items of PPE delivered to the frontline in England with tens of millions more items distributed in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales

A significant boost to PPE supplies that should help meet demand in the health and social care sectors has been announced by government today.

It has signed deals with more than 100 new suppliers from around the world in a challenging global market, including securing a further 3.7 billion gloves to help meet the expected demand.

The government has also supported industry to significantly boost domestic production with companies signing contracts to manufacture over 2 billion items of PPE in the UK, including facemasks, visors, gowns and aprons.

Since the start of the outbreak, over 1.48 billion items of PPE have been delivered to the frontline in England, and tens of millions more items distributed in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. Just yesterday alone, 3.3 million masks, 11.8 million aprons, 33,000 gowns and 36.2 million gloves were delivered to health and social care settings in England.

As demand for PPE hit record levels during the global pandemic, government and industry joined forces to build a PPE distribution network from scratch. With the help of the Armed Forces, the NHS Supply Chain now delivers PPE to 58,000 settings including care homes, hospices and community organisations.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

Last month, I set a national challenge to ensure we continue to supply enough PPE to those on the frontline of this battle.

We have now signed deals with over 100 suppliers across the world to secure more PPE, and at the same we have ramped up domestic production. We have now ordered 2 billion pieces of PPE from homegrown firms which is also great news for jobs and the economy, and over 3 billion pieces from abroad.

Worldwide demand for PPE has never been higher so I want to thank Paul [Lord Deighton] for his work in ensuring that PPE continues to be delivered to where it is needed.

The UK has worked with numerous international partners to procure additional PPE supplies throughout the pandemic. A new team has been established to secure new supply lines from across the world and will continue to strengthen and diversify the supply chain.

We're rapidly progressing over 14,500 offers from suppliers and ensuring they meet the safety and quality standards that our NHS staff need, as well as prioritising offers of larger volumes. We have already contracted over 100 new suppliers able to deliver at the scale and pace the UK requires.

Domestic production is simultaneously being ramped up to unlock new avenues to get PPE to the frontline as part of the government's 'Make' programme, headed up by Lord Paul Deighton, who is leading the government's efforts to secure PPE and ensure this gets to where it is needed. As part of this, he is

driving forward coordination of the end-to-end process design and manufacture of new domestic PPE supplies.

The government is in contact with over 350 potential UK manufacturers and contracts have been signed to manufacture over 2 billion items of PPE in the UK.

This includes:

- a deal for 70 million face masks agreed with company Honeywell this month
- Don & Low manufacturing 12 million metres squared of fabric for gowns over the next 6 months
- Jaguar Land Rover manufacturing 14,000 visors a week for healthcare staff

Lord Paul Deighton said:

As unprecedented demand for PPE continues around the world, British industry has stepped forward to strengthen the UK's response and increase PPE supplies.

We have already secured millions of PPE items through deals with British industry, and continue to work with hundreds of potential manufacturers to further bolster our domestic supply chain now and in the future.

From this week, GPs and small care homes can also register on the PPE Portal, a new online portal developed in collaboration with eBay to help primary and social care providers to order critical PPE, as it is scaled up nationally.

The PPE Portal has been tested with the sector and is now being scaled up nationally over the coming weeks. During this phase of the roll-out, GPs and small residential and domiciliary social care services will be invited to register on the portal.

We are focusing on small care providers because our data shows that, although they account for half of all care provision, they seem to be less likely to be registered with wholesalers. It's therefore important that we ensure that they have the option of quickly joining the portal should they need to.

This forms part of our national effort to ensure critical PPE continues to be delivered to those on the frontline.

A small residential social care provider is defined as one with 24 beds or fewer, while a small domiciliary care provider has 99 clients or fewer.

Further £1 million invested into England's fishing industry

News story

A £1 million grants scheme supporting innovative ways to sell fish and shellfish has awarded the first grants to projects across England.



The Domestic Seafood Supply Scheme was set up in April to help projects that will increase the sale and consumption of locally caught seafood. It was a competitive scheme, judged by an independent panel of, fishing industry, government and Marine Management Organisation representatives.

The panel today approved 13 significant projects that have the potential to deliver wider collective benefits. It is seeking further clarification on a number of other projects which will be considered at a further panel meeting on 8 June 2020. Applicants will be notified from Wednesday 27 May.

The fund and the grants scheme were administered by the Marine Management Organisation.

The Scheme is funded by HM Treasury and the Maritime and Fisheries Fund and is a joint endeavour between Defra, MMO, Seafish and the fishing industry.

It is part of the government's £10 million Fisheries Response Fund to assist the fishing industry sectors most impacted by Covid-19, also administered by MMO.

Seven weeks since the launch of this fund, payments of up to £10,000 each have been made to more than 1200 fishing and aquaculture businesses to help with their fixed business costs.

The judging panel includes representatives from industry and government, including The National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations (NFFO), the New Under Ten Fishermen's Association (NUFTA), The Cornish Fish Producers Organisation (CFPO), Grimsby Fish Merchants Association, Seafish, the Marine Management Organisation and Defra.

Guidance has also been published on the [further support available for the fishing industry.](#)

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