

RISKS OF THE METAVERSE: A VRCHAT STUDY CASE

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Abstract

This paper examines the potential social risks of the metaverse. Previous research has found that video games, including Virtual Reality (VR) ones, can be associated with violence normalization and objectification of women. Moreover, some studies have suggested that gaming platforms even serve as tools for extremist groups to recruit and radicalize vulnerable people. Nonetheless, these risks have not been further studied in the context of the metaverse. This research analyzed relevant cases from different gaming platforms including Meta Horizon Worlds. Moreover, the game VRChat was studied due to the similarities it has with the metaverse in terms of design and features. An evaluation of VRChat's user experience was carried out through an analysis of its most popular reviews. Though no signs of radicalization were found, an important number of these reviews expressed sentiments such as loneliness and depression, which make people more vulnerable to be radicalized. Additionally, a tendency for online harassment and sexual deviance was found in the game since 2018 and remained persistent to date. For further insight into the sexual misconduct findings, an interview was conducted with psychiatrist and sexuality expert, Dr. Zenteno. This research found that the game developers of VRChat have not done enough to address sexual misconduct effectively and protect its most vulnerable users. This research concluded that due to the lack of incentives that game developers have to regulate their platforms themselves for social good, further intervention of all the stakeholders involved is needed. This includes policymakers, parents, legal guardians, and educators.

Introduction

The metaverse is the immersive environment that merges virtual and physical realities enabling users to have real-time interactions and experiences across distances and with digital artifacts (Lovich, 2022). It is expected to redefine "how we live, work, and play" (Gulf Business, 2022, para. 1). According to Mark Zuckerberg's vision, the metaverse "will be the successor to the mobile internet", and its defining quality will be "the feeling of presence", meaning that users will be able to "teleport instantly as a hologram to be at the office without a commute, at a concert with friends, or in your parents' living room to catch up" (Bidar & Patterson, 2021, para. 2, 6 & 8). Nonetheless, there are many other companies currently developing their own metaverse worlds, such as Microsoft, Google, and The Sandbox. In 2022, Citigroup estimated that

"the metaverse could be an \$8 trillion to \$13 trillion addressable market by 2030" (Waterworth, 2022, para. 5), and companies like Gucci, Nike, and Coca-Cola have also started to invest, develop products, and even build virtual spaces on the metaverse (Gulf Business, 2022, para. 3).

Even though the metaverse is still under development, several aspects of it can already be found in popular video games like VRChat, which was launched in 2017 on the Steam platform¹. In fact, video game developers are some of the primary designers of the metaverse, because, at its core, the metaverse is a video game (Yorio & Hungate, 2022). Video games themselves pose a lot of health and social risks, such as the normalization of violence, gender and racial stereotyping, gaming addiction, among others (Grinspoon, 2020). VR, because of its nature and design to make virtual experiences feel realistic, can exacerbate many of these. To navigate and regulate these technologies appropriately, societies and, in particular, policymakers must fully understand the dangers associated with them (and those that are emerging).

One could counter-argue that playing these games and being part of the metaverse is voluntary and that people should join at their own risk and take the necessary measures to protect themselves. However, that may not be the case for too long; take social media as an example. In the early 2000s, it was a merely voluntary tool in people's lives. However, less than 20 years later, there is a lot of social pressure to be a part of it. For instance, getting a job nowadays often requires you to apply through LinkedIn or related platforms, and many jobs are remote, requiring people to be active on social media. It can be inferred that the same could happen with the metaverse, especially after Zuckerberg expressed his intention to integrate the metaverse into several aspects of society like education and healthcare (Bidar & Patterson, 2021).

VRChat is a free VR game available through Steam. Users can create their own avatars and worlds to interact with other gamers worldwide (VRChat, n.d.). Even though it was designed to be played with VR headsets, these are not required, making the game highly accessible. The platform was launched by VRChat Inc. in 2017 as 'early access'² and has remained as such to this day. As a video game enhanced by VR, in which users can freely interact with little moderation and their imagination is the limit, VRChat serves as an

¹ Steam is one of the largest online distribution platforms in which users can buy, play, create, share, and discuss PC games.

² Early access games are a work in progress. Despite being unfinished, unpolished, and often buggy versions, they are released to the public.

effective study case to examine how the future of the metaverse could look like and how to address the challenges it may bring.

Video Games and Violent Extremism

Video gaming is one of the biggest industries around the world, as well as one of the “most consistent and fastest-growing sectors” made up of approximately 2.8 billion gamers worldwide (Lakhani, 2021, p. 3) with projections to reach US\$197 billion dollars in revenue for 2022 (Statista, n.d.), which is greater than Greece's GDP (gross domestic product)³ in 2020 (The World Bank, n.d.). Video games do have several positive impacts on people's lives, such as the possibility to make friends, find communities with similar interests, collaborate creatively on technological projects, etc. Nonetheless, as technology develops, so do the potential risks, harms, and challenges. According to Europol's *EU Terrorism Situation and Trend Report*, there is an increasing intersection between video gaming and violent extremism (Lakhani, 2021). Video games and related platforms are already being used by extremist and terrorist groups to disseminate digital propaganda, with far-right violent extremists being the ones with a more anchored presence (Lakhani, 2021). Some of the ways in which these groups take advantage of online gaming platforms are: content propagation, radicalization and recruitment, communication, combat training, money laundering, and terrorist financing (EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator, 2020, p. 3).

In addition, there is research suggesting that video games may provide further the know-how to criminals, such as mission planning and tactics to prepare for military-style operations (EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator, 2020). For instance, Anders Breivik, a Norwegian far-right mass killer, confessed that he used the video game *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare* to train himself for the attacks (Pidd, 2012). One of the claims he made was that the game “consists of many hundreds of different tasks and some of these tasks can be compared with an attack, for real. That's why it's used by many armies throughout the world. It's very good for acquiring experience related to sights systems” (Pidd, 2012, para. 4). Furthermore, he said that he practiced his shots with a “holographic aiming device” on that video game, which allowed him to “develop target acquisition” (Pidd, 2012, para. 2 & 3).

According to the founding director of Stanford's Virtual Human Interaction Lab, Jeremy Bailenson (2018), “virtual reality is the ultimate training machine,” and even “the military has been using it to train soldiers for

³ Greece's GDP in 2020 was estimated to be 188.84 billion dollars according to The World Bank (n.d.).

decades” (paras. 5 & 6). Bailenson (2018) listed some VR features that make it a potential “over-the-counter digital boot camp” (para. 7); for example, players can look all around the scene in a 360° setting and use their whole body to “engage in actual combat moves” (para. 4), resulting in a greater engagement of the brain's motor system, which, as a result, improves performance in the real world. Although the claims made by Bailenson were highly criticized, and the role of video games and VR as digital boot camps for mass shooters is still under debate, its scope should not be overlooked in current and future developments.

Steam: Its Potential to Serve Radicalization Efforts

VRChat is a game available through the Steam platform, which “has become popular for White supremacists” since it allows them to connect and openly spread their ideology, even make calls for violence (Lakhani, 2021, p. 7). According to research published by the Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD), among the four most popular gaming platforms, Steam, Discord, Twitch, and DLive, Steam has the most “diverse subgroups of extreme right communities” (Davey, 2021, p. 6). On top of that, two groups with explicit affiliation to violent extremist organizations were found on Steam: the Nordic Resistance Movement (NRM)⁴ and the Misanthropic Division (MD)⁵. This is alarming since most of these platforms have very limited regulations, and almost no censorship, which facilitate the spread and strengthening of violent ideologies. In fact, that same research found that in Discord, the average age of users in extreme right channels was 15 years old, which raised concerns about the platform being used as a tool to radicalize minors (Davey, 2021, p. 7).

Nonetheless, it is important to highlight that there is not enough research on how online gaming platforms may be used for radicalization purposes. Hence, further studies should be made and consider the following elements. Firstly, the demographic and specific characteristics that many gamers have in common that make them vulnerable targets for radicalization purposes. While it is true that anybody can be radicalized, there are certain conditions that facilitate it. For example, “being easily influenced and impressionable make children and young people particularly vulnerable” (Devon Children and Families Partnership, n.d., para. 4). This is especially important because estimates made in the United States calculated that 20% of the gaming audience in the country are people under 18 years old (Clement, 2022). This figure increases significantly in Europe, where it was estimated that 51% of

⁴ The NRM is a transnational, neo-Nazi organization and was connected to a series of bombings in Gothenburg in 2016 and 2017 (Davey, 2021).

⁵ The MD is also a transnational neo-Nazi organization.

15 to 24-year-olds were playing online games (Kantar, 2020, p. 31). Moreover, it is worth noting that the official minimum age to join many of the platforms like VRChat is 13 years old. However, since there is no reliable mechanism to verify people's identity, including age, many younger children could also join.

Considering that most video games are played at home, one might wonder why parents and guardians are not doing enough to protect their children in these situations. However one must consider that there are many barriers hindering guardians from effectively supervising and supporting children on online platforms; one of them is the digital gap. Factors such as age and socioeconomic status often play an important role in people's digital literacy. Often, guardians with lower incomes must work more hours, cannot afford childcare, or are not educated on digital topics. According to a study conducted by Singapore's Centre for Family and Population Research in 2019, children from lower-income families spend nearly four times as much unsupervised time on electronic devices than those from high-income families (Jean Yeung & Sun Sun, 2021). This shows how socioeconomic status can be a factor making some children more vulnerable to online risks, hence more efforts should be done to increase digital literacy in lower-income families.

Secondly, besides age, there are other factors that make some people more prone to be radicalized, such as low self-esteem; a weak sense of belonging or identity; isolation; depression; resentment at other people, groups, or the government; feeling angry at the way society treats them; going through a transitional period in their life; etc. (BHSCP, n.d.).

Thirdly, the scope of gaming platforms as social media networks should not be underestimated. They have an important presence and, most importantly, they are neither supervised nor regulated in the same way as the bigger platforms like Facebook or Twitter. As a result, they operate "in a kind of vacuum and so are at risk of abuse by terrorists and other criminals" that use them to operate when they get banned or censored from mainstream social media (EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator, 2020, p. 3). For instance, Anders Breivik constantly shared his propaganda with people he met in the online gaming community (EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator, 2020, p. 4). The combination of these three elements: a strong potential for networking, an important presence of violent extremists, and the lack of regulation, pose the possibility that these platforms could replace other social networks as primary channels to disseminate propaganda and recruit people (EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator, 2020, p. 4).

In addition, there is the risk that already radicalized people are using this space to organize and reinforce their ideas. For example, the research from ISD, identified on Steam a significant volume of posts “from users on extremist groups, organizing matches of popular, first person shooting games, with the apparent desire being to connect and share a hobby with like-minded individuals” (Davey, 2021, p. 9). In providing a space where extremists can connect and organize, these organizations become stronger as their beliefs are reinforced.

Rapes in VR: The Experience of Nina Jane Patel in Horizon Worlds

Another important issue that should be taken care of is the safety and integrity of users, especially vulnerable groups such as women, minors, and minorities. In 2022, Nina Jane Patel claimed to have been virtually gang raped in Horizon Venues, a VR platform similar to VRChat owned by Meta (Daly, 2022). According to the victim: “3-4 male avatars, with male voices, essentially, but virtually gang raped my avatar and took photos—as I tried to get away they yelled—‘don’t pretend you didn’t love it’ and ‘go rub yourself off to the photo’” (Daly, 2022, para. 3). Similar to VRChat, Horizon Venues has a *safe zone* feature, which consists of a protective bubble that users can activate anytime so that nobody can touch, talk, or interact with them in any way. However, Patel claimed that she froze and that since everything happened so fast, she did not even have time to think about activating the safe zone. According to Patel, VR is essentially designed for the mind and body to experience it as real, erasing the boundaries between the digital world and reality. Therefore, she claimed that, to some extent, her responses, both physiological and psychological, were as if it had happened in real life. Unfortunately, this is not an isolated case. The same article talked about the experience of another woman, who as a beta tester, was groped in Horizon Worlds. She also claimed that other users supported these violent behaviours in real-time, which made her feel isolated.

Methods: VRChat User Interaction Study Case

An analysis of VRChats reviews was carried out to explore if there were any signs of radicalization among users, identify if the sexual misconduct found in other platforms was also present here, and have a deeper understanding overall of the way in which users interact with the game. This research analyzed the top 100 *most useful* reviews of VRChat that users left on the Steam platform⁶. Steam ranks the reviews according to how useful they are for the community and divides them into time periods. For instance, one can

⁶ One can access them directly through Steam following this link <https://steamcommunity.com/app/438100/reviews/>

retrieve the most useful reviews of the day, week, month, three months, six months, year, or all time. Additionally, users get to classify their individual reviews as positive or negative. For this research the 50 positive and 50 negative most useful reviews of all time were scrapped, totaling 100 reviews. In Appendix 1 and 2, one can find the reviews used for this research. It is important to note that the data was collected at a specific time (October 16, 2022) and the results may change if the data is retrieved on a different date. An initial attempt to analyze a higher volume of reviews through a sentiment analysis, Natural Language Processing (NLP) algorithm was performed. However, the high volume of double-sense jokes and sarcastic content, especially from the positive reviews, hindered the results from being accurate. Therefore, a manual review was conducted instead.

Results: VRChat User Interaction Study Case

50 Most Helpful Negative Reviews

From the top 50 most helpful negative reviews, no signs of radicalization were found; however, a strong incidence of complaints regarding sexual misbehaviour⁷ and age restrictions was found. Many of these reviews describe similar behaviours to those Patel experienced in Horizon Worlds; in fact, 10 reviews complained about sexual content, pointing out pedophilic and deviant behaviours. Furthermore, 13 reviews asked to have stricter age restrictions. Something that also stood out was the dates in which these reviews were posted. There are reviews dating back to 2019 that were already complaining about these issues. However, one can infer that little was done by the game developers to address such complaints effectively because people have kept complaining about the same to date (2022). These are some examples:

...However, what bothers me is the over abundance of sexual content that reeks in this game. It may not be a problem to some, but, if that's the case I think they should up the age rating, even if people don't listen, I would highly recommend do so for those certain parenting types... (@STrottsky, 2019).

There are a lot of pedophile groomers lurking around in this game, and it's disturbing how in the open they are. The devs⁸ do not do anything about this; you can report them for straight up doing extremely creepy things towards minors, and they will still be in the game like nothing happened. Nothing is really being done to prevent

⁷ To see examples of this content, refer to Appendix 3.

⁸ Game developers.

these people from luring kids into discord servers. This is why the game sucks so much; it's not fun knowing that this goes on in a game you play. There is also a lot of sexual deviancy in this game, and it makes sense why; you have a VR game where you can have any avatar you want, so it's not surprising to see people use it for sexual activities and perversions...(@Nimufu, 2020).

The fact this game isn't 18+ is irresponsible in the least and at the worst, enabling thousands of cases of criminal pedophilia within several sub-communities; the sexual misconduct of VRChat users makes discord look like it belongs at the end of a rainbow. Expect to become a degenerate and engage with people whose mental age has regressed and morals don't exist (@Meat Sundae, 2022).

50 Most Helpful Positive Reviews

On the other side, the top fifty most helpful positive reviews also provided important insights. For instance, 9 of these reviews talked about explicit sexual activities in which users either participated or witnessed. The tone of these reviews, however, is satirical and sarcastic. Moreover, reviews dating back to 2017 talking about these behaviours were found, which implies that sexual misconduct has been an ongoing issue since VRChat was launched. These are some examples:

First day of VRChat: watched two giant anime girls make out almost got abducted by a gang of tiny Hatsune Mikus met a perverted Morty who went around shoving his face into 'anime tiddies' while screaming "aww geeze" met a guy that was tripping on acid while playing with VR and couldn't stand up saw a businessman that was crawling underneath anime girl avatars to look up their skirts while making fapping noises 10/10 immersive experience would play again (@A Wafflepiezz, 2017).

got sexually assaulted by a small man in penguin costume. Then a small woman kept screaming FBI OPEN UP!. Someone kept showing me a meme image from 2002. Cannot recommend for mental health and safety. Would play again (@UnAuthordox, 2021).

Walked in on 2 dudes dressed as anime girls having pretend sex now i want to kill myself (@[A]dmiral [V]ulva [G]angrene, 2021).

Although no signs of radicalization were found in the positive reviews either, some reviews showed factors that could make many users more vulnerable to radicalization efforts.⁹ For instance, 10 of them described VRChat as a social anxiety simulator or described themselves as socially anxious people. Moreover, the following feelings were described: loneliness and a weak sense of belonging were found in 3 reviews each, while depression and low self-esteem were found in 2 reviews each. These are some examples:

What can i say before i played vrchat i wasnt able to talk thanks to social anxiety and depression and now i am able to talk to anyone whitout any problems. For me it was and still is a life changing expirience. I would recommend anyone to give it a try (@QuiteShy, 2020).

...It might help if you knew why I went to VRChat in the first place. In a way I feel like the people who benefit the most from VRChat are people who can't really find any friends or connections to people around them. When I first started playing I kinda just wanted people to talk to. I ended up finding people I actually seemed to share a connection with, weather it be interests, similarities, music taste, whatever, I ended up finding people that I kinda always wished I would have as irl friends. It's weird how it seems like I can always find the best friends online, yet in most cases I would never actually see/find them in the real world. I would still feel alone, but ever since I never really felt truly alone... (@PolyFloppa, 2022).

Interview with Dr. Zenteno Regarding the Observed Sexual Misconduct in Horizon Worlds and VRChat

In order to assess the effects of online sexual abuse, an interview with Dr. Adriana Zenteno, a psychiatrist and expert in sexuality, from the Fray Bernardino Alvarez Psychiatric Hospital was conducted. Dr. Zenteno recognized that even though she has never had any direct experience with a survivor of sexual abuse in VR, she has already used VR as part of treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). In fact, two of the most commonly used methods used to treat PTSD caused by sexual abuse are cognitive processing therapy and exposure therapy, in which VR is used as a tool to recreate the scenery so that survivors can re-experience and re-live the traumatic event in a guided and supported situation with specialists. Therefore, if a guided therapy with VR has the power to help survivors get over their trauma, Dr. Zenteno hypothesizes that the opposite effects could

⁹ To see which are these factors and why they make individuals vulnerable to radicalization efforts, please refer to "Steam: Its Potential to Serve Radicalization Efforts" in this text.

take place with rape in VR. Dr. Zenteno believes that an experience like that could affect the victim's mental health through the loss of dignity, creating a sense of deep vulnerability and acute stress. She highlighted that maybe the effects would not be as strong as if it had happened in real life but that the aftermath should not be overlooked.

Furthermore, Dr. Zenteno warned that being able to experience sexual fantasies in VR could increase the desire to eventually experience them in real life. This is because whenever we get satisfying sexual stimulation, our brain releases dopamine, which gives us pleasure. Hence, this pleasant sensation after a VR sexual experience can make people want to fully experience it with all the senses in real life, hoping that the enjoyment will be exacerbated. Then, if people are able to rape, have sex with animals, or practice other deviant sexual behaviours in VR, there is a risk that they will want to replicate them in real life at some point. Therefore, there should be limitations to the things users are allowed to do in VR, following the principles of consent and mutual and self-respect.

It is also important to recognize that Dr. Zenteno did point out that people with adequate sexual education could benefit from this freedom to explore and express their sexuality. However, it is very hard to tell who is ready to benefit from such experience, especially because VRChat and similar games are played by minors.¹⁰ One must consider that many of them have not received sexual education yet and may not be familiar with important related principles such as consent. Additionally, Dr. Zenteno warned that being exposed to such content can create false expectations about sex, and even lead to deviations or online compulsive behaviours.

The Effects in Real Life of Online Dehumanization: The Atlanta Mass Shooting Case

One can counter-argue that people should have the freedom to express their sexuality without any constraint. However, as one can see in the reviews shown in Appendix 1 and 2, as well as the screenshots in Appendix 3, a lot of the sexual content posted in VRChat reinforces and perpetuates misogyny and normalizes sexual violence. These harmful representations should be censored because they lead to dehumanization and false expectations about sex. According to Swift and Gould (2021), "when women and girls are repeatedly objectified and their bodies hypersexualized, the media contributes to harmful gender stereotypes that often trivialize violence against girls" (para. 2). Furthermore, these representations often reinforce and normalize

¹⁰ VRChat is a 13+ plus game. but since it is very difficult to verify users' identity, they could be younger.

power dynamics that degrade women, and consequently, reduce the probability that victims report the acts of violence that are done to them. This is because they think that it is the way it should be or that they deserve it. The normalization of this violence can be manifested in many forms, including dating violence, domestic abuse, rape, and sex trafficking.

On top of that, according to Dr. Zenteno, this dehumanization makes it easier for people to perform violent and abusive behaviours. As an example, Robert Aaron Long, the mass shooter that murdered eight people (six of them Asian women) at an Atlanta spa, confessed to law enforcement that his act was sexually motivated (Chang, 2021). He told authorities that he had an addiction, and that he acted in such a way to “eliminate his temptations” (Chang, 2021, para. 8). According to Nancy Wang Yuen, a professor of sociology at Biola University, the perpetrator “completely dehumanized these women” by labeling them as temptations that had to be eliminated, rather than human beings (Chang, 2021, para. 19). This facilitated performing violent acts against them. In his mind, they were no longer human beings with lives, families, and dreams, but objects responsible for making him lose control (Chang, 2021). Besides feeding sexual fantasies, the harmful representation of women and minorities through hyper-sexualization and objectification make them more vulnerable to violent attacks in real life.

VRChat’s Response and Safety Measures

Some measures were, indeed, implemented in VRChat aiming to mitigate issues associated with sexual misconduct. For instance, in February 2018, a *Panic Button* was introduced for users to mute and block “all users who are not your friends,” so that they can no longer interact with the user who activated the panic button (Tupper, 2018, para. 3), a very similar feature to the *safe zone* in Horizon Worlds. However, as one could see with the case of Nina Jane Patel, this may not be sufficient to effectively protect users because during a highly stressful and unexpected situation, users may not react as quickly or may forget that these features even exist. Similarly, in November 2018, the *user reporting* feature was added to address “issues with behavior, the user’s avatar, text (such as their name or status), or the thumbnail image for their avatar” (VRChat, 2018). Nonetheless, there are many testimonies of users claiming that “[t]he devs do not do anything about this; you can report them for straight up doing extremely creepy things towards minors, and they will still be in the game like nothing happened” (@Nimufu, 2020). That makes us realize that often there are no real consequences for reported users, which completely disregards the purpose of having a reporting feature in the first place. More safety features were released in the following years; however, as one could read in the reviews shown earlier, the complaints from

2022 are very similar to the ones in 2018, which makes us infer that these attempts have not been enough or effective. More evidence of this can be found in the high volume of screenshots posted in VRChat with explicit sexual content. This is very alarming because it means that there is no censorship and that users know that there are no consequences of such actions. Users do not even need to hide it. On the contrary, they freely and openly share it with the public. This should not be the case. It is the responsibility of developers to restrict the type of content that users are able to upload, and governments should also enforce it.

Discussion

Though this research did not find any evidence of radicalization in VRChat's reviews, some of them showed feelings of social anxiety, loneliness, low self-esteem, weak sense of belonging, and depression, which according to the literature reviewed, these feelings make people vulnerable to radicalization efforts. Additionally, this research found a strong incidence of sexual misconduct and complaints regarding the lack of age restrictions. The problem does not seem to be that users are not communicating that these issues occur in the game since reviews dating back to 2018 were found complaining over these issues and the sentiment has remained constant to date (2022). However, the perception that users have regarding sexual content in VRChat is very ambivalent. As one could see from the reviews analyzed, almost the same number of users complain about sexual misconduct as the ones that enjoy it, and even consider it a key element of the game. This may be one of the reasons developers did not place effective measures against sexual content in the past years.

The interview with Dr. Zenteno warned us about the risks of having people experimenting sexually in VR without proper sexual education, such as the creation of false expectations about sex, deviations, and online compulsive behaviours. Moreover, we saw that the dehumanization and objectification of women through harmful online representations like the ones found in VRChat normalize violence against women and can be manifested in many ways, from dating violence to mass murders, as seen in the Atlanta case. Therefore, having age restrictions is not enough. It is imperative that these games are continuously monitored and censored when appropriate. However, it is important to acknowledge that there are other incentives, such as profitability and popularity, that influence the decisions of developers. For instance, the support that many users have for sexual misconduct in VRChat might be a stronger incentive for developers to allow it. Another thing to consider is that, usually, when measures that the community does not like are enforced, users tend to migrate to other platforms that allow it. Therefore, if VRChat censors

sexual content, many users would look for alternatives, meaning similar games that allow it. This is why the intervention of governments is necessary to appropriately establish fair standards for all platforms. Additionally, evidence was found that socioeconomic status plays an important role in the way in which guardians support and supervise their children's online behaviour. Lower-income families do not pay as much attention to how minors spend their time online, hence more efforts are needed to increase digital literacy and bridge the digital gap.

Conclusion

As we were able to discuss and evaluate in this research, there are many social risks associated with the metaverse, video games, and virtual reality. To begin with, from the reviews and screenshots posted on Steam, this research found that regardless of being a 13+ game, VRChat allows a lot of explicit sexual misconduct that reinforces and perpetuates misogyny and normalizes sexual violence. In fact, there is evidence that users have been complaining about these issues since 2018. Nevertheless, this study also found that many people place a lot of value on VRChat because of the freedom it provides them with to experiment sexually (in the public screenshots of VRChat, hypersexualized animals and female characters, especially Asians, were seen engaging in unconventional sexual behaviour).

According to evidence and experts in the field, these experimentations and harmful representations can be dangerous because they trivialize violence against vulnerable groups and create false expectations about sex. Though having people live their sexual fantasies in VR can be beneficial with the proper sexual education and professional guidance, without these resources it could increase people's desire to replicate them in real life without following the principles of consent or mutual and self-respect. That is why it is not enough to just limit minors from accessing adult worlds; all sexual content should be monitored and censored when needed. However, we have learned from VRChat that developers alone do not necessarily have enough incentives to regulate their platforms for social good, especially when they have other monetary incentives pushing them in the opposite direction. Hence, policymakers should be the ones enforcing the limitations and security features of these platforms.

Additionally, this research found a tendency for VRChat gamers to describe themselves as socially anxious, depressed, and lonely, factors that make them more vulnerable to radicalization attempts, especially if they are young. These factors, in combination with the great amount of violence that some platforms allow and the lack of regulation on what users can express and share, serve

extremist groups and their agendas as other studies have already pointed out. On top of that, while it is still under debate whether VR can provide further know-how to criminals, such as mission planning and tactics to prepare for military-style operations, the risk should not be overlooked when developing the metaverse.

Metaverse developers should learn from the experiences that many users have had in similar platforms, such as VRChat, to foresee and address these potential issues, from radicalization to virtual rapes. The way forward lies not only in legislation, but in prevention, awareness, and education. All the stakeholders should be aware of the role they play and how to mitigate potential risks. Given that much video game playing takes place at home, parents and legal guardians must have digital literacy to regulate the time minors spend on such platforms, identify risky behaviours, and make proper use of parental controls. However, previous studies have shown there is a digital literacy gap between socioeconomic classes. Therefore, governments should deliver proper education and training at schools, to both children and guardians, to ensure that they are all aware of the risks associated with everyday technologies, know how to mitigate them, and make the most out of them.

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Laura Ortiz

Appendix 1: Top "Most Helpful" Positive Reviews of VRChat "of all time" as of 16 October, 2022

@Circu~

27 November, 2017

Best social anxiety simulator i've played 10/10

@Rantis

15 November, 2017

Its alright.

@Magniras

11 April, 2022

I spent 3 hours talking to a dude dressed as an anime girl about my problems. 10/10, dont need therapy any more.

@xnav

27 March, 2021

Broke up with my VRchat girlfriend and heard my father cry upstairs.

Would definitely recommend.

@Kia

19 December, 2017

I ran a bar as the manager.

Some guy with a tiny Knuckles avatar and some other guy with a Winnie the Pooh avatar helped me get drinks that were scattered across the map back to the bar.

Took us around an hour.

Entire room was cheering because they were too lazy to get the liquor themselves.

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I get more people to like me in VR than in real life.

@pspspspsps

30 December, 2017

Was swarmed by a group of Mauis screaming 'You're Welcome', Hid inside a corey in the house house where i was encounted by a mini xenomorph singing Gucci Gang. From that point, I knew I was home. 11/10

@A Wafflepiezz

17 December, 2017

First day of VRChat: watched two giant anime girls make out

almost got abducted by a gang of tiny Hatsune Mikus

met a perverted Morty who went around shoving his face into 'anime tiddies' while screaming "aww geeze"

met a guy that was tripping on acid while playing with VR and couldn't stand up

saw a businessman that was crawling underneath anime girl avatars to look up their skirts while making fapping noises

10/10 immersive experience would play again

@Ash

23 November, 2017

This is the best VR experience I've had and I don't even own a VR headset.

@Rednose

23 December, 2017

Today I sat at a virtual bar and pretended to drink with a cat, a xenomorph, and a tiny anime girl.

What am I doing with my life.

Laura Ortiz

Update:

Logged back in after a week and all my vr pals have migrated.

I drunk alone that night

@TsunTsun

3 January, 2018

I've seen hordes of Ugandan Knuckles chasing after women making clicking noises.

I've seen black and white cats chasing people screaming "cookies and cream".

I've been headpatted by anime girls. I've given headpats to anime girls.

I've drawn stupid things in 3D space. I've seen it all.

I've made new friends.

I've made new enemies.

I've had decent conversations.

I've had memetastic conversations.

Deliver me to the abyss.

@Beeb

15 September, 2021

I've been called racial slurs by at least 74 twelve year olds in this game.

@marcin

11 February, 2021

this game has really made me want to get a vr headset to enjoy the game EVEN MORE, this game is an absolute work of art, you can become any avatar you wish just by downloading it but here are some things to know to start off

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- 1: if you want to see all of the avatars MAKE SURE your pc can handle it
 - 2:clearing the cache DOES NOT remove your avatars and maps, only the other peoples avatars and maps, make sure you do this to increase performance, i do it at least once every 1/2 days
 - 3: c to crouch on pc, z to crawl on pc
 - 4: to change your avatars facial expression (not all have facial expressions) do shift F1-F8
 - 5: some avatars may have cool things you may want to try out!, do RIGHT shift and f1-f2 to enable and disable
 - 6:to see everybody`s avatar, make sure to press escape after you chose your avatar and go into the safety menu and press none, this will let you see every character
 - 7: to block a user (you wont see their avatar or hear them) you press escape, look away from your menu, click on the bubble thing sorrounding then and then go into user details and click block, to unblock you will have to go into social in the same game as the person you blocked, click on them and do the same steps except unblock
 - 8: to add friends, you press escape, left click on a user and do add friends, this will send them a friend request and you will be able to see when theyre online and what theyre doing depending on if they choose to share this information or not
 - 9: if you have mild epilepsy or epilepsy or maybe even seizures, beware, this game is most likely not for you if you have the safety mode on none, there may be some users with flashing rainbows and quick changing colours, there may also be some users which occasionally have a offensive avatar or insignia, so watch out for those and remember how to block them
- and finally number 10: be polite and respectful to others and dont go name calling and dont be rude, this is not liked in the community, though you can still joke around. make sure its not offensive though
- and what i would consider the most important step and how to stop being the trust level "visitor", step
- 11: to stop being a visitor you shouldnt sign in through steam first but if you did so already and have a few avatars and maps favourited worry not, click

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on create account once you start the game and make an account on the VRchat website, then go into the settings in game and click on upgrade account and generate a code, then type the code into VRchats website after you made an account and that will merge your accounts, meaning that all stuff from the old profile will now be in the new one! including friends, avatars and maps, but know it may take up to an hour, then enjoy VRchat!

those are what i would call the 11 things to know about VRchat before getting it, i will also say one more important detail

-----==YOU DO NOT NEED A VR HEADSET TO PLAY VRCHAT==-----

yes it is called VRchat but you can also play it on pc simply, just download the game and when starting it lets you choose between pc and steamVR, choose PC and you will play perfectly normal on PC, anyway that was me just telling you what to expect and 11 important tips i believe everybody should know, stay safe and im signing off!

-Marcin <3

@Tom

14 Novemeber, 2020

I'm scared every time i loge in because of social anxiety.

10/10 would only play with extroverted friends.

@Putrefactive

16 December, 2017

Social Anxiety Simulator.

Now in VR!

@cirno gaming

18 December, 2020

got sexually assaulted and molested by anime catgirls

@Snow

22 November, 2017

The Journal of Intelligence, Conflict, and Warfare
Volume 5, Issue 2

Laura Ortiz

> Downloads game with no VR Headset

> See's two anime girls kissing eachother

> Buys VR Headset

10/10 Would recommend

@aki

11 December, 2017

This game seriously gave me anxiety.

> Really too shy to talk to other people. And when i join in a conversation with some random people, i feel like i'm a third wheel. I stuttered a LOT.

You don't need a VR set to play this game. I played it with keyboard and mouse.

@HolyStarZ

13 January, 2018

I am actually a shy person in real life. I play this game as I thought it will boost my self-confidence and public speaking skills by talking to strangers and doing presentations.

By the moment I step into the world, a bunch of red midgets was spitting at me and asking if I know the way of the 'devil'. Anime catgirls patting each other on the head. Big giant c0ck(i mean chicken) floating in the air. Monika on the stage singing karaoke.

I guess I'm stuck being a self-conscious guy.

9.99/10 will experience this again~

@QuiteShy.

8 April, 2020

What can i say before i played vrchat i wasnt able to talk thanks to social anxiety and depression and now i am able to talk to anyone whitout any problems. For me it was and still is a life changing expirience. I would recommend anyone to give it a try.

Laura Ortiz

@ 🍊

16 January 2022

Broke up with my VRchat girlfriend and heard my father cry upstairs.

@*Epichu*

24 November, 2017

kermit the frog told me to jump off a cliff.

So I did

10/10

@Cyclone Jet Armstrong

16 March, 2019

No better place to meet weeb, furies, and dead memes

@BaldingMan

1 January, 2021

you can be peter griffin

@at12318

24 May, 2021

Social Anxiety Simulator

@乃ΣΠ

I talked politics with a furry dragon guy while getting a lap dance from a anime girl.

10/10

@UnAuthordox

12 November, 2021

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got sexually assaulted by a small man in penguin costume. Then a small woman kept screaming FBI OPEN UP!.

Someone kept showing me a meme image from 2002.

Cannot recommend for mental health and safety.

Would play again.

@naf

6 January, 2021

walked in on 2 dudes dressed as anime girls having pretend sex now i want to kill myself

@Sad Old Man

13 November, 2017

Spent 600\$ on rift

so far have spent 70% of my time in this free game

worth every penny.

@Doggirl

31 July, 2018

I met so many incredibly kind and awesome people because of this game.

I spend as much time as I can here.

This is the happiest I've been in years.

I finally have something to look forward to when i get up in the morning and when i go to sleep at night.

@OwnAHole

19 December, 2020

Left my girlfriend for a mirror.

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@Khu

27 April 2022

This game ruined my life.

@TruNoom

3 July, 2019

i streamed me getting a lap dance and got banned on twitch

@SM1

14 March, 2018

The entire internet in one game

@kingtarky

1 June, 2022

play vrchat

see two grown men groping each other and moaning in a mirror

get off vrchat

@NavySpheal

26 April, 2022

The Virgin Horizon Worlds:

-Owned by Facebook

-Has advertising that implies real life sucks and you should just use VR to pretend you don't have problems

-Avatars and worlds are bland and corporate

-Requires a VR headset to use

-Made to sell things to its users and exploit depressed people

Laura Ortiz

The Chad VRChat:

-Not owned by Facebook

-Unlimited avatars and worlds, meaning there's much more to do and more ways to express yourself

-Most of the content is made by the community for the community

-Does not require a VR headset to use which means more people can enjoy it

-Made to give people a way to socialize and have fun together no matter how far apart they are

@Syntax

12 December, 2018

if we hung out with friends IRL like we do in VR Chat, the world would be a better place

9/9 would stare at mirrors with friends again.

@misato

19 January, 2021

i look at mirror for 52 hours.

@Misato Gaming

6 June, 2020

First time I played it and I created a cult.

Fun game

@ugly chinese girl

13 October, 2021

Best social anxiety simulator i've played 10/10

@jesse

Laura Ortiz

18 February, 2021

Dont tell anybody you play vr chat

@PolyFloppa

26 May, 2022

Just don't make this game your whole life and be careful about what you expose yourself to and who you surround yourself with. The community does get as bad as the top negative reviews say but there are good moments, friends, and fun to be had. I've met the love of my life on VRChat which may sound a bit silly but I truly believe this game has led me to a better life and to be overall more content in myself. Not saying this will happen to whoever is reading this. I'm just saying it has that potential.

It might help if you knew why I went to VRChat in the first place. In a way I feel like the people who benefit the most from VRChat are people who can't really find any friends or connections to people around them. When I first started playing I kinda just wanted people to talk to. I ended up finding people I actually seemed to share a connection with, weather it be interests, similarities, music taste, whatever, I ended up finding people that I kinda always wished I would have as irl friends. It's weird how it seems like I can always find the best friends online, yet in most cases I would never actually see/find them in the real world. I would still feel alone, but ever since I never really felt truly alone.

I mainly wrote this review because I would either see reviews praising this game or completely tearing it down. I just hope I can provide something in between both of those. Something not black and white. I also kinda just need a place to project my thoughts on this game.

There is more to be discussed. So hope more people may write some more down to earth reviews weather negative or positive.

@Court

25 June, 2022

The year that I started playing this game was the best year of my life

@cry

15 June, 2021

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Social Anxiety Simulator

@[A]dmiral [V]ulva [G]angrene

27 December, 2021

Walked in on 2 dudes dressed as anime girls having pretend sex now i want to kill myself

@Shonskii

13 February, 2022

i need a life

@m o o n

21 March, 2020

Covid-19 quarantine hasn't been fun, but this sure has. If you're uncomfortable in social situations, this can be your remedy. For a long time I remained quiet, just chirping in here and there and enjoying the company of other players. Lately my courage has grown and has helped significantly. This is the funniest, most wholesome gaming experience I've had yet. The community (besides a few bad eggs) is what makes VR Chat the incredible social game it is!

@LITTLE THICC

13 August, 2020

walked into a bar, saw shreck, shagg, and a anime boy hugging. they looked at me and they started making monkey noises. 10/10

edit: about 200 hours later and vrchat has still hasn't changed. i was drinking with my homies and we look over see this giant robot and this anime girl (both in full body) having what looked to be a anime duel accompanied by jojo music. i. love. this. game. 11/10

@Derply

4 April, 2019

60% of the people that I met were anime characters

Laura Ortiz

And none of them were talking except watching anime girl dancing

20% of the people were memeing

20% of them were normal folks talking.

10/10 defines the internet.

@Dawniechi

8 February, 2019

The only steam game to have ever legitimately changed my outlook on life.

The only steam game to have ever legitimately managed to help me relax with my anxiety.

(This is a true story, but it is told for a reason, read to the end please)

I'm a high school student; a sophomore, and a couple of months ago, I found out I could legitimately be eligible to graduate high school two years early. But, I would need to manage a few things. For starters I would need to study for a permit test, learn to drive, take a drivers test, and pass (I have always had a serious fear of driving), I would need to move to take different classes than the ones I had planned for the following: Spanish II Honors, Geometry, English II, and AP Computer Science Principles (That last one apparently has the lowest final AP test score averages across the unites states), and I would need to manage to get above a minimum score on sub-category on my ACT (and I'll only have two chances to take the ACT and if I don't get one of them right, everything I have planned will be moved back 2 years). This weighed over me so badly that I legit had constant panic attacks and started to form a bit of depression because I was overworking myself.

I had VRChat prior to this however I hadn't had VR (You don't need VR to play VRChat by the way). When I got VR about a month after learning about what you have already read thus far, I slowly started to be able to cope with these large workloads because I had supportive friends on the game (Who I met on VRChat), and because I began to discover new hidden interests I had that I would of never known about if it wasn't for VRChat; I discovered that I liked to dance (Which prior to VRChat I felt was somewhat pointless and uninteresting), I learned that I enjoyed creating avatars for the game via Unity to impress my friends and make them laugh.

Laura Ortiz

If you feel like you wouldn't be able to make friends on VRChat, even if you feel like you couldn't make 'popular' friends on VRChat, keep in mind that the vast majority of people on that game where/are social awkward in real life, but found a new level of confidence in themselves because they wouldn't be rejected for their interests, they wouldn't be treated like just someone else to be lost in a flood of people.

I want you to know that in about 1-3 weeks I will take my very first ACT test, I haven't gotten my drivers license yet, or finished the classes I'm having to take yet, but there are a few things different:

I'm not depressed.

I'm not socially awkward (debatable :D).

I'm proud.

I'm happy.

Thank you to this amazing community for being yourself, legit that is why you are all so wonderful! The fact that what we see online is the real you, not the real life you, but the REAL you. It makes us all not afraid to be different.

SO WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?

GET

THIS

GAME!

Edit:

Well this is interesting; I've completely forgotten that I had wrote this review. Well, I feel like since I was fairly honest about my life I might as well go ahead and provide updates since I left you all off on a cliffhanger. I did in deed manage to get into that program and am destined to graduate my second year of college in May of 2021. I am prepared to receive an Associate's degree and a high school diploma at the same time as I've practically skipped two years of high school. The fear I had about learning to drive stemmed largely from my fear of ruining someone else's day with my stupidity and causing a wreck, but also largely had to due with the fact that I have Tourette Syndrome. I have been confidently driving now for quite a while and can say it's really relaxing! The classes I took to meet the class requirements I managed to ace

Laura Ortiz

as well. The requirements for the ACT was a 19 I believe, and I managed to get a 27 on my very first try. I then took the ACT for the second time and also got a 27, then took it again during my first year of college and got another 27 (I don't understand either). I'm a hell of a lot more confident than I used to be and have found myself becoming very extroverted when I've always been an introvert.

It's taken me quite a while to figure out what I'd like to do and I've narrowed it down to physics or something within the medical field. Astrophysics sounds very cool and I may work towards that. After I finish up this year of college I'll be transferring to another college which provides a really cool opportunity to work towards a Bachelor's and Master's degree at the same time. Basically what this means is I'll be able to get my Master's at roughly the age of 20~21 years old and will start working towards a Doctorate after that. I stopped playing for a while because college began eating up most of my free time until I managed to get into the groove of things. Funnily enough I've met some really cool people and we've played some VRChat together recently which is amazing!

I'd just like to leave a little end note here saying to not be so fearful of change as I was. Things can get tough sometimes but we as a species just gotta keep on chugging and work towards that shine at the end of the tunnel. I hope everyone is being safe during this pandemic!

@TooLegitToQuitLoL

25 December, 2019

A few of my other friends put out some reviews, so i'll do the same.

- 2,447 hrs as of this review. Still averaging about 40 hrs a week with friends.

What I would express to anyone who is looking into getting this game:

1. Without VR, you can still have fun, just keep in mind using VR and using Desktop mode (just your PC monitor) will be 2 drastic differences in how you view this game. That being said, I recommend you start in desktop to see if this is something you would like to bring into a more indepth view of what VRChat is as a game.
2. You get what you put into it, if you want to meet new friends then this is the game for you, HOOOOWWEVER.. here is the run down with no sugar coating

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- Hackers, you will find these mostly in public worlds. What does this mean? Worlds that anyone can join, usually the highest upvoted worlds (public Pug) for an example. Hackers have the ability to overload your PC and cause it to crash the game.

No - They can NOT steal your private information

No - They can NOT fry your PC

Yes - They can steal your avatars

Yes - They can use hacked clients to keep you from being able to remove them from the world

Yes - They can boot people from public worlds as of right now/teleport into your private worlds (can you believe they pay for this?) Guess they forgot VRC is a free game.

I do hang out with one of the devs every now and then and I can tell you they are constantly working on this, and by no means is it perfect but again, how bad do you wanna push past the lost souls on the internet who are just out to hurt others to truly find some amazing people.

I had the struggle years ago with the game, you will have the struggle now, and in the future it will continue until something else can be done, but you know what? I love each and everyone of these crazy people ive met.

TLDR:

You want to make friends and life is already hard? Push past the sad people on the internet looking to hurt others and honestly, something amazing is waiting for you on the other side. I wish I could get you past that sad struggle but we all had to do it and none of us are looking to quit the game anytime soon.

**Appendix 2: Top 50 "Most Helpful" Negative Reviews of VRChat as of
16 October, 2022**

@Zullfix

25 July 2022

VRChat plans to add Easy Anti Cheat in the next update. What will it do for the game? Well let me show you:

What EAC will do for VRChat:

Lower framerates

Increase instability

Stop script kiddies

Stop "wholesome" mods, accessibility mods, and quality of life mods

Stop AMD FSR/RSR, Intel XeSS, Nvidia VRWorks SLI from improving your framerate

Stop select SteamVR mods that modify the game's runtime

Stop programs like AudioTeapot (audio manager/soundboard) from working

Stop Linux users from playing via proton (they claimed it wouldn't yet it does)

Stop Linux users from playing via Windows virtual machines

Lower the playerbase

What EAC will NOT do for VRChat:

Stop ripping (Avatar cache is still unprotected)

Stop crashing (Crasher avatars)

Stop all malicious mods (Those devs see this as a programming challenge)

Stop all malicious actors (There's other ways of being annoying)

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Stop SDK modding

Stop user harassment (Stop claiming this!)

Close the security holes in VRC Udon

Improve the game experience

What EAC has done in the present/past:

Take routine snapshots of the user's desktop/video buffer

Scan all processes running on user's machines

Kill or try to kill all "unknown" or "untrusted" or "unregistered" running processes (including homemade processes)

Locate the files of "unknown" or "untrusted" or "unregistered" processes and upload them to Epic's servers

Scan the user's C:\Users\ folder and appdata folder

Stop users from launching the game if Windows fails to install/update itself "correctly" (google "easyanticheat UNEXPECTED-KERNEL-MODE-TRAP", though epic tries to censor this issue)

Stop device drivers that are "unknown" or "untrusted" or "unregistered" from running (including homemade drivers)

VRChat devs, I know you don't care because you're hiding all the complaint posts on the feedback canny and ignore everyone's requests to just add the QoL mod ideas into the game, but for the love of god don't add EAC and listen to your community's requests. It is not good for the innocent users, the "wholesome" modders, and the QoL modders. Don't get me wrong, I love the community and opportunities this game has provided to me, but this is just an awful move from the devs, even with me not caring for client mods. Also maybe consider change whoever is writing the blog posts, they're so super tone deaf.

@EKYU

25 July, 2022

Laura Ortiz

EAC is a mistake. Also discord mods censor the community and ban you when you start speaking facts.

@Alice Greyheart

25 July, 2022

Cancel your plus. Now.

@OGFoxy

11 August, 2022

I'm going to open this stating that this is my first review, and yes, it's gotten that bad.

VRChat, or VRC for short, thrives because it's a social platform driven by the community. It's a beautiful thing to see so many different, talented people get together and create whatever they'd like, to play in a sandbox where the only limit is their imagination. At least, that's what this game used to be.

Since then, the devs at VRC started dividing the player base by implementing Easy Anti-Cheat, or EAC. Their reasoning was to crack down on malicious clients that would crash other users, causing them grief, as well as prevent these clients from ripping other users content. While this update upset the modding community, the rest of the player base were pro-EAC due to it's ability to lock down these malicious clients. After a few days, some of the modding group even came back around to give the new updates a try (without mods), willing to forgive the devs for ruining their countless years worth of time spent enhancing the game.

During this time, the VRC Team published a listing on InDeed, an online recruiting platform, where they starting looking for a 'Compliance Operations Manager with experience in Crypto and in-game currencies'. This effectively means that the VRC Team started looking to hire someone to oversight a system that would manage micro-transactions. This lead people to believe that the VRC Team were about to advertise the game for further profits and possibly require in game purchases to remove said ads. Little did the community know that the truth was much, much worse.

Yesterday, on August 10th, 2022, The VRC Team rolled out a new TOS, and it is ridiculous. They now hold full intellectual property rights to any user-created content uploaded to their servers. They now own anything you have / will upload to their game. They also specifically stated that they reserve the

Laura Ortiz

right to claim, alter, and redistribute any assets uploaded to their servers, without the need to credit it's original creator(s). Now, this infuriated a mass amount of people, especially community content creators, because now all their hard work can be ripped by the VRC Team without permission from the creator(s), and can be changed and redistributed however the VRC Team want with no input or limitations from the original creator(s). If you think this is the ugly end of the stick, it only gets uglier...

In the same TOS update, the VRC Team amended their right to sell any of the previously mentioned content with none of the revenue going back to the original creator(s). As if that wasn't bad enough, if the VRC Team were to be fined for anything in an asset they ripped because something in the asset wasn't made by the person(s) they ripped it from, said person(s) would receive the fine instead of the VRC Team. So, if the VRC Team stole something and were to get fined for something inside of the thing they stole, the person(s) they stole it from gets the fine instead of the VRC Team.

This is ridiculous! The dev team is creating a tyrannical monopoly where it's very likely that the player base owns nothing they've created, the dev team holds the rights to sell all of their content to other users for profit, and the original creators of said content receive no compensation for any revenue gained from the VRC Team's sales...

If this isn't enough to quit this game, I highly recommend getting up from your chair, getting yourself a nice cup of coffee or tea, whichever you prefer, and touching some grass. Maybe then you might learn a sense of humility and understand how messed up this update is. I'm a 1,000+ hour veteran, and I'm done at this point. This was the nail in the coffin for me, and I hope others see the same.

Rest in Peace to a legend. I'll miss you, VRCat.

@Xaven

25 July, 2022

3,864 hours on record at the time of this review. This game saved my life to be honest. I was at a dark spot in my life alone no friends to actively talk to and antisocial as all hell. There were the good times like meeting my best friend and finally finding my footing on who i am. And there were the bad times like dealing with the crashers and hackers and dealing with manipulators. We built walls in the form of anti-crash mods to defend

Laura Ortiz

ourselves from those subhumans we built crutches in the form of mods to assist those who have medical problems or poor performing computers.

300+ friends. All of which varied in many ways. Some were the fearless types ready to take of the pain of life. Some were the gentle type those to ease your burdens and be a shoulder to cry on. Others were the funny type with a joke or a perfectly timed soundboard to make everyone laugh.

1 update. One update just shattered all of this. With the anti-cheat the only people being punished are those who use mods to assist in playing the game. No more better frame rates due to a AI upscale system. No more sign language assistance mods. No more anti-crash the only thing keeping the subhumans at bay. All of it. Gone. Yet the subhumans have free reign of this game now as easy anti-cheat is a easy to bypass system. Its the one ply toilet paper of the gaming world.

Vrchat was a good game. But what killed it was not the hackers or the rippers or the crashers. No it was greed. If it was not for this game i feel like I would of committed suicide with how alone I was before i found this game. I just hope that we don't have to watch it die.

@FrostClaw

25 July, 2022

horrible devs, entirely disconnected from the community and what they want. edit: check out ChilloutVR instead, uses same engine, all the QoL mods already in, tons of mods and avatar makers are moving there. They've had 7250% growth in the last 3 days.

@Nekomancer

1 September, 2022

This probably won't reach many eyes that can change anything, but I feel an urge to vent stuff that has been weighing on my mind.

Why are you only just adding the features people have been asking about since 2014 in the past month? It's good that you're adding SOME of them now, but did you not care? Are you taking code from the modding scene you destroyed to make yourself look better?

If you can add such systems like a personal portable mirror in a month, why has it taken 8 years to produce when it has been requested over and over? It

Laura Ortiz

has to be either you were too lazy to add it previously or, now that the work has been done for you by other people, you're taking other people's work and putting it in your game.

Why are you annoying the creators who make the content for your game by updating your TOS to take the things they make? Do you plan on making a market place to sell the stuff you've snatched the rights for?

You implemented EAC so that you can try to stop avatar ripping, but you're then updating your TOS so that you can take the avatars instead.

How can you take something so good, that I loved so much, and make it bring me so much hate now?

Rant over, enjoy your money I guess, I'll be looking for alternatives to produce content for.

@CornGolden

31 July, 2022

VRChat with Easy Anti Cheat?

Imagine Garry's Mod without mods, and no real security fixes. That's what adding EAC does to this game that clearly has no need for it. This ain't Apex Legends, Halo MCC, or Fortnite. If you told me this game is a competitive multiplayer game, then yeah I can understand, but VRChat is a VR game where people socialize.

Why the hell do you need EAC for this???

Also shoutout to the devs of this game for turning off comments on their announcements section. Looks like y'all knew people would not be too happy with EAC implemented in this game, and decided to silence criticism.

I don't think even EA would stoop to something as low as that.

@Sleeplus

25 July, 2022

Over the 5 years playing VRChat y'all Finally add EAC great job haha...SIKE, Mods and Clients are the only thing keepin y'all's game afloat and you thought was a good Idea to add EAC get outta here. #RemoveEACVRC

Laura Ortiz

@Skiive

23 September, 2021

This review is coming from someone with 1000+ hours of experience, most of which were in VR.

I own a Valve Index and fullbody-tracking and have been playing since late 2018.

To start this out I make content for this game and I also play it with friends.

The one compliment I can really give it is that the UI of this game is great and very easy to navigate. Aside from that I struggle to say kind things about VRChat in 2021.

The game used to be pretty playable in 'public worlds' but ever since the quest update dropped I've had to resort to private and invite-only instances with those I trust. The number of children on this platform is disgusting and the large community of predators that roam the platform make it even worse. Every time I do enter a public world I feel like a babysitter as children run and scream around me. If the game gave me the option to play with those my age (18+) I would be a lot more forgiving of this, but as it stands there is no way to tell who's 14 and who's 44. The game is also a major security risk to your computer and network. It's disgraceful that you pretty much have to modify the game if you want to protect yourself from ip-grabbers or get even basic features. (such as more favorites, flight, messaging, etc)

VRChat has introduced a monthly subscription-based monetization-strategy that is not only grossly expensive but also provides the same basic features that the free mods offer. The devs also effectively struck down these mod creators and banned them from the platform only to introduce their own compromises for these features, which are (once again) much more limited than the free offerings prior. It is baffling that of all the Facebook money they've received; the devs have put such little work into optimizing their game and providing the same features that players had already worked-hard to code in themselves.

I can't honestly recommend VRChat in 2021, the only reason I stick around is to fulfill avatar commissions and chat with long-time friends. The only thing this game has going for it is the large player-base. Otherwise I highly recommend ChilloutVR or NeosVR.

Laura Ortiz

July 2022 Update: So the VRC team is going Nuclear and adding EAC (Easy Anti-Cheat) and hundreds of QOL mods such as "VRC-CC" that help deaf/HH people will prevent the game from booting, alongside mods that prevent crashers or ip-grabbing. It's absolutely baffling and out of touch. The devs have been dragging modding communities feet through the dirt for years and despite all the money they have It still takes them years to add much needed and promised features. Happy to say their competitors are outclassing them in almost every way.

Don't buy VRC+, in fact it might just be time to jump ship to NeosVR or ChilloutVR.

These platforms are welcoming and cater towards there users.

@ren.

12 August, 2022

putting EAC on a socializing game blows my ♥♥♥♥♥♥ mind.

@piinkhorizon

1 August, 2022

EDIT 1: With recent updates, VRC has become better in terms of features. Previously I would have suggested to move to a different platform but as it stands currently, no other platform can seem to hold a decent player count. Even ChilloutVR despite making a number of improvements has had most of their once high player count revert back to VRC. I myself had even returned to VRC and while I have to play on the lowest graphical settings now due to performance issues, I can't help but continue to stay with VRC for the time being. What I had originally said tho still stands, They will most likely continue down a corporate path if they continue to have the desire to please investors over the community. However I do still hope that they will change for the better and start listening to the community more often, rather than only listening when everyone creates an uproar.

EDIT 2: I would also like to talk about EAC. Like most anti-cheats, EAC runs at kernel level, meaning it has more control over your PC than any other program you have installed and because of this, it can and has caused issues with various PCs across multiple games using anti-cheats. Not to mention anti-cheats also tend to scan for outer programs that don't have anything to do with the game. This can cause the anti-cheat to flag programs that are harmless due to the anti-cheat thinking it is malicious and can flag programs

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for just being installed when they aren't even running. With all that said, I still decided to play VRC again anyways and for right now, I have had no issues so far. Tho this doesn't mean everyone won't have issues but it is something to consider.

Below is what I had originally said:

VRC had good intentions with adding EAC but couldn't see the overall damage it would do. This creates security risks by itself as mods were the only thing that could mitigate client-crashers. As well as the only thing that could protect avatars from people trying to rip them. Now that no one has any way of stopping these malicious people, it has opened a direct path for them to everyone who doesn't know how to bypass EAC. Where-as malicious modders will easily find a way past EAC.

Even with all the backlash of the people saying they do not want EAC, They added it anyway without a second thought and later said they heard the feedback and are now adding features that mods were adding, despite the fact that people have been asking for those features for a very long time now.

Now VRC has went further and ordered a cease and desist on someone who had made a mod a while back that allowed for private servers.

On top of all this, The staff of the VRC discord server are referring to the TOS now saying that NSFW content was "never" allowed. Despite not doing anything about NSFW content from the beginning and giving no in-game indications that NSFW content is not allowed. The only mention of NSFW is one of the messages during the loading screens. It states that NSFW content is not allowed to be "streamed" or "shared" in "private" worlds and NSFW content is not allowed in "public" worlds. This implies that it should be allowed in private worlds so long as it is not "Streamed" or "shared". Yet they are ignoring this and even going as far as to say that they will be banning ALL nsfw content in the future.

All of this is to please their investors and make their platform more suitable for advertisers, They are even talking about adding an in-game currency with real money value into the game just to make more money.

@Confide

25 July, 2022

Anti-cheat bad

Laura Ortiz

@Froggo

19 August, 2022

Almost a month now since the dreaded EAC update dropped, so feel that I can finally write a review on this and the impact.

As starter info, I am not a mod user really but I have seen the need for them over the years, specifically anti-crashing mods, performance increasing mods and mods that help people with disabilities. I do content creation for VRChat, both worlds and avatars, and I have been playing since 2019. I have also been programming for 14years now and work professionally as a Data Scientist.

The EAC update completely tanked my performance, going from stable 75fps (max on Pimax 8KX native) in my homeworld down to 35-40fps, and that's a fully optimized world on an RTX3090 and overclocked 5950X. I can't even use AMD FSR or Pimax FFR because EAC blocks that for me, so I am now stuck with a lagfest in many worlds unless I go down to 30-50% resolution in SteamVR which is a big no for visual fidelity. And seeing how pissy the devs are about high resolution headsets in their developer update (regarding the mirror resolutions), I get the feeling that they don't care about anything other than Quest 2 now really and was hoping to just milk money like before and don't want to deal with any more "advanced" development.

This massive dip in performance also ruled out VRChat as a streaming platform for me now, there is no way I can stream anything from VRChat without dropping down to 20fps, making it more of a very uncomfortable experience than anything fun.

And the sudden extreme change in development speed now after all the drama went down regarding EAC makes me very suspicious too. In less than a month they are suddenly releasing so many features that have been requested by the community for 3-4years that the devs opted to completely ignore previously, and took quite some time for the modding community to create and publish, makes me really wonder where they are getting the code and solutions from because that is not normal speed at all, especially seeing the velocity of the devs before...

Cancelled my VRC+ sub after having had it for almost 2years, feel that I can't support the devs like this. And looking into moving content creation (large hangout world + RPG combat worlds) over to ChilloutVR instead seeing how different the attitude is between the dev teams and also that I have far higher performance in ChilloutVR now compared to VRChat. Though, I will still be

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on VRChat one day a week for community evenings and checking Vkets, but not more than that really anymore.

Other issue that plague VRChat is the massive amount of kids, and with that I mean kids below age 13, that came with the Quest 2 release. VRChat has not made any system at all to remove them from the platform or any way to make instances 18+ so adults can have their own public instances where they can chill without having kids come in and ruin it completely. Used to hang in public worlds before the release of Quest 2 (dubbed Questpocalypse in my VRChat friend group at the time), finding other chill adults to just talk with and have a drink after work especially during early pandemic, but that disappeared completely for me when 10year old kids started to come into all the popular worlds we used to be in, we switched over a little to private worlds but most people quit VRChat in the friend group instead since they didn't want to act as daycare people after a workday and VRChat devs completely ignored the requests to implement an 18+ system (ChilloutVR has one through steam for example since the start).

@Vranium

25 July 2022

Among all the other reviews to crop up recently in a protest against the upcoming EAC update, I'll toss my hat in the ring.

I have met several dozen friends and groups through this game over the years and have spent hundreds of hours across multiple types of headsets exploring worlds and connecting with others- and yet a vast majority of the content I enjoy in this game will soon go down the drain solely because of the dev team choosing to implement Easy Anti-Cheat. This will absolutely destroy the game's playerbase and the mini-economy that orbits the game composed of world/avatar creators, media producers, and the like.

The reason this will destroy the game is that it is mostly due to mods that this game is even enjoyable in the first place, as a large minority of hackers and players find enjoyment in crashing others through the use of broken and abusable avatars designed explicitly to overrun computers and Quest systems- causing players to crash frequently in any public lobby. This problem is not addressed by the dev team in any capacity, and introducing EAC will not help this issue in the slightest. The fix? Custom crash-defense mods that have been designed by and for the community that actually work. With the introduction of EAC, these safety, QoL, and content mods that vastly improve this game

Laura Ortiz

will now either disappear, or become significantly harder to develop- let-alone download or use locally.

I highly recommend any and all players cancel their VRC+ subscriptions and/or refuse to login within this following week in a form of protest, as the introduction of EAC will unilaterally destroy this game for the foreseeable future and the dev team needs to see that too many people to ignore disagree with the decision. The funniest part? The introduction of EAC is a move made in the hopes of securing proper funding from a larger corporation, likely Meta or Epic, but in adding EAC, it is likely they will single-handedly kill their own game and the funding they currently have.

@Noglad

9 August, 2022

TLDR of recent negative reviews and why you should look elsewhere for vr socialising;

>community asks for features

>devs don't implement them (or say they will at some point but never do)

>community mods in the features themselves to make game more enjoyable

>devs say they're gonna put in EAC which will disable all mods

>community clearly voices that they oppose this change

>devs do it anyways.

you can't have a community-driven game like this and just ignore your community so blatantly.

@Queinx

9 September, 2022

look I'm not gonna say the game it self is bad. it has it's glitches here and there and the community behind it is amazing. however the development team is no long worried about what there community wants. there are now legal issues, and issues with certain things. in what was supposed to be a semi open source game has turned in a game about the development team worrying about gaining money. it went from a passion project created because a group

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of people wanted to show off the capabilities of vr, to a corporation turning their back on the people who has got this game to the popularity is has today. so the game it self is not the problem. if you knew nothing of the dev team and just look at the game. it's not all that bad. but I don't recommenced supporting the game in a monetary sense. and if the game get the point where it's no long free, which is what it's seems to be heading down that path, I don't think you should put a cent towards this game.

@JAMMY

26 July 2022

I've played almost 7k hours throughout the years.

This is the first time I have written a review.

Banning the protections of emm to put in an anticheat that will not stop crashers and rippers.

I've had a small group of hackers constantly crashing my world for years now and vrchat has done nothing.

Even with the mod I paid for Vrchat+ to support the developers, but this kind of disregard for the community has made me unsubscribe and look for possible alternatives elsewhere.

@justplanecrazy

12 September, 2020

I started playing this game mid 2018 and as my hours show, I've logged a pretty sizable amount of time in the game. I've met a lot of very friendly people in the game and even been able to find out more about myself. There are groups in game for just about any personality type out there, and I've found the community itself very open minded which is nice. Some people don't use a mic and are still able to communicate and be a part of a friend circle. There are some people who try to crash the game and make in unpleasant for others. But as a whole, the community of this game is really great. So if the community is so great, what's the problem? Most of my issues in the game mostly stem from development decisions or lack of support. Over the past two years, I've slowly watched VR performance decline. I now get on and experience roughly 35 and 40 fps which is okay, but after a 6+ hour play session, it gets really tiring. Some of the performance drop has been caused by creators not caring about performance, or not considering it. VRC has

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released several updates giving creators more freedom than ever, but not paid attention to the performance aspect of things. I think overall, the added freedom is great, but they could have balanced it out by giving better creator rules and guidelines. The lack of documentation is pretty bad too. For the most part, you must resort to asking questions on the discord or watching youtube videos. Furthermore, the biggest detriment I see toward creators is that it's very easy for someone to steal avatars or even whole worlds. I've seen someone's avatar stolen right in front of them because of a modded client. Imagine spending hours to create a personal avatar that was unique just to have someone pull it off you and then distribute low-effort models to everyone else. It's incredible discouraging. My final issue is really with VRC's support team. I need to preface this by saying my VR setup is probably shared by 0.01% of people. I mainline Linux and use a Windows VM to exclusively play VR content. For the past two years, this has worked without a hitch. I recently went on vacation and found that I had been banned when I came back. The reason when signing onto their site? "For having a modified client." I think it's pretty clear what my stance is on modified clients. I contacted support to ask them what had happened. I provided details of my setup and what I thought might be going on. Instead of working with me or even discussing with me what they found so I could fix the issue, I received a canned response saying they had "overwhelming proof" and that they would uphold the ban. A broken link was at the bottom of the email pointing to their community guidelines. I tried responding explaining my situation again. I didn't really care about the ban. I just wanted to know how I could fix the problem to ensure a second ban doesn't happen again as soon as I sign on to VRC. I received nothing in response. So pretty much, this ban killed my remaining interest for the game. We'll see what happens in the future, but in order for this review to change, I would like to see more effort put into documentation, support, and performance. The community for the game is there. I've met dozens of life-long friends through the game. Experiencing social VR is unlike anything I've ever done. It's a shame that experience will now have to happen on another platform. It's still early days for VR and there are plenty of social VR titles in the works. Hopefully they can take lessons from VRC's mistakes.

@Meat Sundae

3 May, 2022

First off, if this review gets bombed, please do not see it as evidence of me being disingenuous, but rather evidence of perceptual indignation of people who identify themselves with those of whom I'm about to **very** seriously criticize. Anyway

Laura Ortiz

Do not let kids play this game. So many users are groomers, abusing substances, stalkers, mentally ill, and using this para-social disasterpiece as a replacement for real connection and often therapy. This game attracts, aids, and abets broken people and makes them worse. This game is literally crack, and not in a funny sense. It is addictive and engaging, yet traumatizing and detrimental to your betterment as a person. With only 500 hours, I have racked a laundry list of horrid, horrid people and experiences who turned out to be hiding awful and disgusting things while making about 2 good friends. Even if people don't have these personal issues, most users seem to willfully ignore and enable all these behaviors (including inappropriately engaging with minors at varying severity). I have several stories about "hey this guy said he diddled a child" with witnesses and sometimes screenshots of them stating this to back me up and no matter how much evidence you stack, the typical response of their friends will be "I don't care *block*," all in order to not lose a (imo worthless) friendship; that's how socially broken this game will make you. Absolutely no integrity in its users. It is not worth playing unless you belong to a common category of user as listed above or would like to go out of your way to be traumatized. I have yet to recover from my experiences as you can likely tell. It's been a long time since I've played and I've yet to feel safe or comfortable even talking to strangers in the game or online in general.

tl;dr: The fact this game isn't 18+ is irresponsible in the least and at the worst, enabling thousands of cases of criminal pedophilia within several sub-communities; the sexual misconduct of VRChat users makes discord look like it belongs at the end of a rainbow. Expect to become a degenerate and engage with people whose mental age has regressed and morals don't exist

@TVVBandMakeMe

27 July 2022

Imagine ♥♥♥♥♥♥♥♥ over your ENTIRE player base and ruining your own game in one update.

Good job VRChat.

What a joke

@CrazyGamerMike

26 August, 2022

My voice is likely to be lost with the rest, but nevertheless I shall scream into the void. I have created innumerable wonderful memories and found

Laura Ortiz

phenomenal friends that I may keep for a lifetime on this platform, but many of us have had to move to VRChat's competitors after this update. Every single mod any of us have used has been for quality of life and provided features that VRChat themselves would not with their glacial development pace. Mods allowed for unfathomable amounts of customization, extra features, protection, accessibility, and overall improvements to the experience. I personally used a plethora of mods that allowed for better frames, limb manipulation, portable mirrors, avatar search, join notifications, infinite avatar slots (while paying for VRChat Plus), or even just letting me sit upon friends with a required consent code/phrase. I've played for well over a year and put in far more hours and capital than I'd like to admit. During my entire experience, I've only encountered one individual with a malicious mod client. By and large, the modding community of VRChat is full of passionate and creative individuals looking to improve the game and the experience it provides. So often they've picked up the slack left by the development team and I cannot help but to applaud the dedication and sheer talent of the modding community. This EAC update should have never been pushed through as it doesn't resolve the issues it claims to address. It simply hurts the community and stifles creativity to a colossal degree. I wholeheartedly recommend giving Neos VR and ChilloutVR a look if you're seeking alternatives to this platform. They're both fantastic games and are more deserving of your time and money than VRChat as it stands.

@Ukiyo

23 March, 2022

made me gay, but ♥♥♥♥♥♥ over the community. i want my sexuality back

@john2volk

26 April, 2020

Edit (08/14/2022): Due to recent events revolving around mods and the addition of East Anti Cheat. I no longer feel this is a game I can recommend to people. I'm changing my review to not recommended. I will consider changing the recommendation back in the future.

To Start I'd like to say that this game is 100% worth your time if you want a game to socialize in. It's also pretty good as a collection of mini games that are made by members of the community. Would recommend it to anyone on the fence about it who is 18+.

Laura Ortiz

Now on to the negative things. This game lacks MUCH of it's impact without a proper VR setup. If you're not going into this with at least an oculus quest or some other "entry" level headsets with hand tracking at a minimum. You're missing out immensely, and will even find some features completely unusable.

It's hard for me to really say if it's a fault of the Dev's for not trying to make better or just more robust M/K controls or if I should just side with the idea that this IS a VR game primarily and first. And people getting into it should have the understanding that without the VR part, you are limiting yourself quite a bit. Think of it like trying to talk to someone in person Vs. talking to them through a webcam. But you're also trying to play a game with them at the same time through a remote control arm. It's just not the same.

Creating characters and worlds is "easy". And by easy I mean that you have to have a decent understanding of or be willing to learn how to use Blender, Unity, and a selection of other software packages, SDK's, And web portals. In order to create one. I only call it easy because technically, YOU are the only barrier of entry. Or in other words, your willingness to do it. And unlike coding to create software, you don't really have to start from scratch and most of what you need to do is laid out in front of you in a few web searches. It is all quite possible to be done 100% free. And for those who don't want to do it themselves. There is a small market for artists who take commissions to make one for you. Most are quite reasonably priced at 50USD or less for a fairly competently done model. It will cost more if you want more things like custom emotes and sound effects. And all this is without mentioning that there are literally thousands of free avatars that have been uploaded by people for free to use by anyone. So don't feel too caught up on making / buying one for yourself.

Another negative is the general way you move about the game's different "Worlds" (levels), it's performance, and stability. Since much of what you will find in the game, i'd say 99% of what you will most often encounter. Will be user created content, There will inevitably be areas that run poorly. In both VR and desktop modes. The Worlds created by the developers and the avatars they make are, as far as i can tell, Quite well optimized for up to 24 players in a lobby if not more. The game's Stability is much more questionable. With rather frequent crashes and just a weirdly long time to close the game when done, sometimes it will just hang and skip audio for a few min.

For some reason if i go idle in the game for an extended period of time, many models lose their walking/running cycles. I'm unsure as to the minimum amount of time it takes, but i've seen it happen in as short as a few hours. This

isn't a major issue, since few if any people will actually go AFK that long and not have just turned the game off.

Lastly for this section, The way the game handles caching worlds you go to. The game works somewhat like a web browser for when you move between worlds. It essentially downloads the world to a temporary storage location. And hold a copy of it until you go to a certain number of other worlds, log out, or exceed an amount of memory consumed. This keeps your disk space usage relatively low overall. But comes at the cost of having to redownload maps you frequent super often. The game has a favorites list for worlds you like to go to. It would be super nice if worlds on your Fav list would auto DL and stay downloaded with daily checks for new versions while you're logged in. Player avatars are in the same state, if you've seen the avatar in the room with you recently, it will generally load instantly when you see it again within a small time span. I would like to see some option to allow for MUCH larger cache sizes that remain much longer. Or at least keep your fav avatars and worlds saved.

Now on to my opinions of the Social experience of the game so far. As of now I'm about 125 hours of play in. I'm still on the "New User" trust level. I've made about 15 friends, most added me first. I haven't made a world but I have started to make my own avatar, it's going to be a long time before i'm done with it since I know very little about how to do this stuff.

The general atmosphere in the game is positive. The variety of people who play this game from all over the world is most impressive. And that includes some of the worst and most immature people you'll meet. Like literally kids running around with NSFW screaming the N word at people. But you also come across some kids' dad trying to cheer their kid up after they were bullied at school. The developers have given us the tools needed to "filter" out people based on their user level, which creates a decent barrier to guard against trolls. Most of the way you improve your user level is from other people interacting with you and your creations. So it isn't easy to game the system unless you have some kind of a massive social media following. And even then you'll be somewhat high profile and be noticed by the devs, so you wouldn't want to troll to avoid having your account banned or removed.

What i'm trying to say is that GENERALLY, the atmosphere in the game is not Toxic. And can be quite enjoyable. I've enjoyed sitting with some friends and watching youtube videos and having silly dance parties. There are many places to visit and have a good time alone or with friends.

Laura Ortiz

The Dev's have an interesting "Gray line" sort of approach with NSFW content. The in game message (which is what most people will likely go by) States that NSFW content is NOT ok in any form of a Public lobby world, Which indirectly says that it is ok in Private (request to join) worlds. You will still see some NSFW content in the game very often, since this is an almost open forum and free for users to access.

>>>I would not suggest children play this game, due to some graphic content (user created) and excessive vulgar language regularly used.<<<<

TL;DR: This is a great game, so good in fact. That it's the sole reason for me buying a VR headset (i know it sounds ridiculous, but still). I don't think this game is safe for children to be exposed to. Unless you don't mind them being surrounded by big anime tiddies and furies down for some ERP. This game is literally talking to strangers on the internet with all the good and bad involved.

8/10 - Would recommend

@Nova-4

6 June, 2021

This may be a biased review

I'd love to say I enjoy this game. Without a doubt, this game has one of the most diverse communities out there with some of the most talented creators on the internet. Thanks to this game I've met the love of my life and many great friends. Hell, I even managed to grow into a better person because of this game.

But no. This game isn't fun. The social aspect of this game has been almost completely sectioned off to any newcomers by a hierarchy of users as well as social circles that are permanently closed. Vrchat management and developers consistently try to rip the game away from their original target demographic that tries incredibly hard to cling onto this game that really doesn't want them.

First of all, the social aspect. This game has always been branded as a social game, and that's certainly what it was to begin with, but it's not anymore. Primarily, the user trust system. It's a good idea executed poorly. It publicly shows how "trusted" you are in vrchat but all this heirarchy does is highlight people who have played the game for hours on end and uploaded tons of avatars for personal use against people who just downloaded the game to have

Laura Ortiz

fun with their friends. Visitors and new users get almost no permissions within the game to act as they like and they can be pretty quickly terminated by people who just don't like them from simple spam blocking and reporting. Secondly we have the social circles. Now, I understand that when a group grows old they become more tight knit, that's pretty easy to understand, but with the entire landscape of vrchat being either "freeze tag/murder" games Vs "hangout and stare at mirrors" the game seems very unwelcoming as well as the fact that most prominent social circles just don't accept people in (especially those with low "trust" factor). Of course there are exceptions but those are few and far between.

Secondly, we have vrchat management and developers. Vrchat is primarily populated by horny social outcasts, there's no denying it. There's obviously the meme side of the community as well as the role players and the artists, etc. But that doesn't stop those who make lewd avatars and pretend to ♥♥♥♥ each other day in and day out. Vrchat was initially aimed towards the group of social outcasts, not specifically as a place to ♥♥♥♥ but as a place to hang out and be themselves. Vrchat has slowly been pushing that under the rug, banning anyone who goes into public worlds with avatars that are in any way skimpy and outright banning users permanently for using avatars that strip down in private. It's stupid since they're suppressing some of their biggest audience. Of course the vrchat team will deny this or try to bring attention away from it but the fact remains that they're having a major ♥♥♥♥♥♥ identity crisis. Next, we have the egos. The staff team themselves aren't bad, they're just following rules. It's once again the management that have no self awareness nor do they care for what the users want. For example, instead of listening to what the community want (i.e. more favourites, public assets for avatar creation, invite+ world permission changes, etc) they instead go "Hur Hur lets add our own discord nitro." Don't get me wrong, it's cheap for what it gives you, but it's not what the community wants. The vrchat team has lost touch with its community more and more over time. The last good thing they added wa the 3.0 system. But that's about it.

In conclusion, do I recommend you pick up the game if you haven't already? No. Go get chilloutvr, neosvr, or something like those instead, or go buy Garry's mod or Minecraft if you have the money. Do I recommend you stop playing if you enjoy the game? ♥♥♥♥ no, keep enjoying it. Just don't blindly defend the game.

@dasMEHDI

18 February, 2017

Laura Ortiz

This game could be good, if only:

- * Had a moderation team that did not target non G-rated content
- * Allow for age-locked rooms, to prevent children from joining and to allow adults to be adults
- * Allow for password-protected rooms to play with your friends

The number of times I've seen moderators ban people for next to nothing is likely going to prevent this game from actually becoming successful. It's unfortunate because the formula they have is actually pretty good.

UPDATE: Shortly after the posting of this review, I found myself IP-banned from the game. Cannot even access their website. The VRChat video of the banning also was "banned" from their community page.

TLDR of the video: Someone else's actions resulted in a mass-banning of the entire world. This is not the way to generate a fanbase.

@Rifykoh

14 June 2022

EDIT: Noticed this review of mine got some attention. I want to specify that it has nothing to do with the anti-cheat, but I'll still give my 2 cents about it: I disagree with the update, but it's not what will make me boycott the game. It's not because I'm unhappy with one update that I'll start screaming at people online and move to other games. If I left a game each time their devs did a bad decision, I'd have stopped playing every single games a long time ago. Nothing is perfect, no one is perfect, everyone makes mistakes, stop jumping to hasty conclusions, many of you are adults, act your age, this isn't kindergarten.

While I still plan on playing VRChat regularly, I have to admit that I absolutely loathe public servers.

I can tolerate screechy kids being obnoxious, but damn there haven't been a single public server I've gone to where I haven't witnessed idiots showing off their NSFW models to little kids. It's not funny, it's disgusting.

I'm constantly seeing half-naked furry femboys with massive butts, naked anime girls who invade your personal space, huge fnaf avatars with heavily

Laura Ortiz

sexualized proportions pulling out large genitalias, people with fetish avatars showing them off just to make people react.

Once again, it's just gross. Keep your NSFW and fetish stuff IN PRIVATE WITH OTHER ADULTS.

@BBqWoa

5 October, 2022

The game isn't really my thing, but I need to report my experience after their 'anti-cheat' update that apparently broke everyone's fun.

I opened the game to see a bunch of messages about caring about safe spaces, and anti cheat being important. fine

I loaded a room and found german march music playing, a Lego Nazi man asked me to come over to him, when I did my game froze and I heard him saying "see it works on PC users too" my game crashed, apparently defeated by some cheat.

What an odd thing for this company to destroy their game's community and not even block cheats. Nothing lost for me personally as it isn't interesting to me. but what a shame nonetheless.

@Connie

25 July 2022

You really only have two options for social VR spaces online - it's this or Neos. Neos currently has cryptocurrency ♥♥♥♥♥♥♥♥ strapped to it, which is detestable to everyone but weird grifters, so that leaves VRChat.

I've enjoyed my time with VRChat, but everything good about it has to do with the very good people I spend my time with on it and the very good content the community has made for it. On its own, VRChat is an adequate social VR space with an absolutely glacial development pace headed by a dev team that's very out of touch with its userbase. Since VRchat's inception, the community has had to come up with their own workarounds to get a lot of basic quality of life functionality, including accessibility tweaks, while the developers take multiple years to implement their own versions of the same things.

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This brings us to a recent update: VRChat is now looking to add Easy Anti-Cheat, a notoriously ineffective piece of software. If you're familiar with Elden Ring, for example, you probably know that Elden Ring's implementation of EAC DIDN'T stop hackers from invading your game, DID disrupt co-op connection stability, and DID make the game perform noticeably worse, as people that managed to strip EAC from the game got tangibly better framerates.

VRChat, however, is acting like EAC is a silver bullet that will stop disruptive behavior online (it won't), but it will disable all mods people have been using for a long time. Stuff like portable mirrors, avatar resizing, and voice falloff adjustment? That's just a small list of things that are going to vanish.

Use VRChat if you want - it's free, after all - but I can't justify spending any money on the paltry offerings of the VRChat Plus subscription, which charges you ten whole United States Dollars to... let you have a profile pick and to have more avatars favorited at once. Even though that's a really bad deal, I used to pay it because I wanted to support the developers, but I've cancelled it because the developers have returned the favor of my subscription with weird, pointless anti-mod antagonism

@landwhale

30 July, 2020

June 4, 2022 edit: Devs have worked hard this year to improve the game's systems with creator support through SDK additions and the addition of Phys Bones. Communications and communities have improved too; Online games are always changing. However, I'm leaving this review unedited for posterity. July 25, 2022 edit: Spoke too soon because they're adding EAC to this game! Once again the devs are proving how out-of-touch they are with the community, despite the fact that they all play the game too.

I normally don't like to write reviews for online multiplayer games I've played over a long time because I tend to write them from a jaded perspective. I told myself after three months I'd write a review, then 1000 hours, then a year, then 1.5k hours, then two years... I kept pushing it off until around March when the shutdowns started and I was basically forced back into playing on the weekends since I couldn't go out anymore. There are a lot of long-standing issues with this game and 2½ years later most of them are still unchanged. To keep this from turning to a 10 page essay, I'm going to break this down into the good, the bad, and the ugly with quick points. If you're looking for a tl;dr,

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I will summarize VRChat's problems in one sentence: this was a good game in early 2018 but the devs inaction on multiple levels slowly ruined it.

The Good:

+ (Almost) limitless creative freedom. You can make or be anything (as long as you follow the dev's rules). You can have a Game Night with a group of friends that provides hours of free content that would normally be charged per game on Steam. With enough skill, you can be or do anything (and even make money off of it).

+ Helpful creative community. You can find a tutorial or even a tutor sometimes for just about any problem you will have with avatar or world creation through Youtube, fan sites, or Discord. Even if the game technically won't let you do something, there's probably a workaround for it that someone has figured out.

+ Self-sustaining community. The larger communities have their own Patreons to help fund their interests, such as paying for commissions and assets. You can make a living off of selling 2D/3D art without going through the developers. The Virtual Market conventions have been amazing spectacles, showcasing digital art from across the world for sale.

+ Excellent third party support. OpenVR Advanced Settings is so popular and powerful that it's now available on Steam. CATS Blender Plugin is so powerful that I'd recommend getting it for any kind of character modeling in Blender. Dedicated community members created all the tools needed to create content while the devs themselves have done nothing besides provide an upload tool.

+ Excellent control scheme. One of the few VR games I've played that feels natural to play on both Vive & Index controllers with minimal tweaks. Traditional locomotion is just the right speed and movement unlike other games that feel like crawling or cause motion sickness.

The Bad:

- Everything about the developers. The game is run by the video game equivalent of Twitter moderators. Updates take forever and always break key game elements. Again, the devs have shockingly provided no tools for character creation for Blender or Unity and rely on the community to create everything themselves. The SDK used for uploads is the equivalent of the Youtube video uploader and is absolutely barebones besides the avatar performance check added last year.

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- Genuinely toxic social community. All types of people play this game but it might take you weeks or even months to find "your people". More healthy socializing happens on Discord than in-game if you can believe it. I have no desire to play public worlds since the end of 2018 because of abusive avatars, streamers trying to create "content", and unacceptable social behavior.

- Genuinely toxic creative community. The vast majority of avatars and worlds in this game are anime or Japanese-themed and if you try to make something outside of that, you will be nitpicked and ridiculed. A friend's avatar that he paid \$60 for is covered in UV seams, mismatched color textures, and clipping clothes, but that's okay because he's using a trendy anime girl. Meanwhile I had someone trashing my avatar last weekend because: "your knees are too dark, they look rug-burned."

- Genuinely toxic inter-community relationships. I've been through dozens of online video game communities and I've never played a game where people will dedicate their lives to ruining other people's events. If you run a similar event at the same time as one of the "big boys", their owner and staff will harass you through DMs and in-game, and basically make your life miserable until you quit the game. The harassment of myself and my friends across multiple communities was so bad that I completely withdrew from that scene both in and out of the game.

The Ugly:

~ Lack of developer communication from heavy-handed devs. For example: a massive ban wave went out earlier this month and one of my friends got banned for something they posted on Twitter from another game. This game used to be The Wild West and quickly turned into modern social media. As soon as another platform stands up, there will be a mass exodus as the developers seem to actively hate their own community. Adults get banned for doing adult things in private while child groomers run rampant in public.

~ Script kiddies everywhere will force their way into invite only worlds, steal your avatar (which sometimes people pay hundreds of dollars for commissions), blast abusive visual and audio effects on you, crash you, and DDoS you. Even if the devs ban them, they'll find a workaround and keep ruining your life. The devs have unleashed irreparable harm on the VR landscape by their inaction against these people in early 2018. Future games will have to work overtime to crack down on these people and they will constantly be at war. I have never seen this in another community and it's frankly shocking to see happen in a completely free to play game with no micro-transactions.

Laura Ortiz

~ Complete lack of social and grouping tools. You have three friends groups that you can favorite people into and that's it after 2½ years. All social management has to be done through Discord which is still risky because people get banned from the game for things they do on Discord.

I have been playing VRChat since Jan 11th, 2018 and have noticed healthy community members sieving slowly together to create their own communities. Early on, everyone put on a nice face as they fought for power but eventually the terrible human beings were exposed for what they were and have either created their own terrible communities or quit the game. In 2018, I bought a headset to play this game and would've recommended this game wholeheartedly. In 2019, as communities became more gated and unhealthy, my interest slowly dropped off. In 2020, I can't recommend this game even with the lock downs still going on. The only thing keeping me playing this is the community I'm in now. I'm now in my "hyperbolic time chamber" (as my friend put it), working on improving my art skills and looking forward to The Next Big Thing

@Chev

15 August, 2022

Groomer paradise

@SnOwO

20 Nov, 2020

Spent over 7k hours in VRC.

I know my hours don't show correctly here, I used to play using the Oculus software but when i got a better PC I switched over to SteamVR.

I love making avatars for this community,

I love making worlds for this community,

I love interacting with this community,

I love exploring and seeing what this game and it's community has to offer.

-

Laura Ortiz

I hate the amount of bugs in the game,

I hate toxic script-kiddies,

I hate the EasyAntiCheat rootkit.

I hate the removed/changed features,

I hate the elitist attitude some creators have,

I hate the lack of stability of the game,

I hate the "I'm on quest so it's not my problem" people.

I hate the "I hate questies because reee" people.

I hate the "it's an early access game" excuse, it's been 7 years.

I hate the fact that the developers of this game ignore feedback of over 22,000 people consisting of mostly veteran players.

I hate the shady business practice of banning players for adding in features they've been asking for for years themselves, but then later trying to create a subscription service to add those very features.

I hate the fact that players who relied on slight modifications to the game (the deaf and the handicapped) are now unable to play the game due to the Security Update released on 7/26/22

Ultimately, I can't recommend it.

Thank you everyone who gave me the all those rewards and I'm glad I was helpful to 350

people out there and somehow made 18 of you laugh.

Edit to respond to a few comments:

"Are there any issues with homophobia/transphobia?"

Laura Ortiz

Tbh you're gonna find toxicity no matter what game you play especially when the rules are as vague as VRChats. So Yeah I guess, but you can just use the built in features to block, report, and/or mute the toxic elements. (unless of course the toxic element has client mods then it's better to just leave the lobby)

"Do you still play the game?"

Very rarely, the security update came out and a lot of us veteran players feel like VRC just spat in our faces. Based on this whole situation it's clear, the devs don't care about feedback and will just ignore it.

For that reason, I'll move on to other games.

It's a shame.. I have fond memories of vrchat.

And I'll check in every now and then... but only for the sake of my friends.

All the content I've created I will most likely move to another game.

with their VRC counterparts stating no further updates due to vrcdevs ignoring the community.

If you have any further questions about VRC or wish to have a civil discussion do so in the comment section below. I will do my best to reply.

-

Before you comment, please check the posts comment section, I do reply often to answer questions people may have.

@花野井玲那大好き

6 August, 2022

why do you need anticheat for a ♥♥♥♥♥♥♥ non-competitive game

@Nimufu

31 October, 2020

This is a great game for hanging out with your friends, meeting strangers, exploring worlds, drinking and overall just socializing and having a good time. People have shown a lot of creativity with world building despite the limitations, so you will always feel like there is something new to discover.

There are a lot of very interesting people you will encounter, and many that you will make friends with. It feels really nice to escape every now and then, and this is an example of a game that offers that. Though, it's not a very good game; it's kind of the only game like it right now, so it is plagued by a lot of problems.

The Quest 2 has really opened up the game to a lot of children, and that itself is really annoying, but not really the core issue. There are a lot of pedophile groomers lurking around in this game, and it's disturbing how in the open they are. The devs do not do anything about this; you can report them for straight up doing extremely creepy things towards minors, and they will still be in the game like nothing happened. Nothing is really being done to prevent these people from luring kids into discord servers. This is why the game sucks so much; it's not fun knowing that this goes on in a game you play.

There is also a lot of sexual deviancy in this game, and it makes sense why; you have a VR game where you can have any avatar you want, so it's not surprising to see people use it for sexual activities and perversions. A lot of the time you can just avoid this; they seem to have their discord servers and private worlds, but for some that's not good enough, and you will deal with inappropriately sexual people making a spectacle of themselves in public worlds when no one asked or wanted that.

You cannot go very long in public worlds without children running up being out of place and annoying. I am also talking like: annoying steam grey names without VR that just go around making noise. Like, everyone likes a good troll; everyone is fine with someone who manages to join a room and piss people off without actually doing anything wrong. Though, most of what you get is loud spam that takes two seconds to block, or kids(or adults) trying to be annoying like their favourite youtuber.

The game is so poorly optimized, as there is no real standard for avatars and worlds. By default you should disable avatar particle effects and animations; they will grind even the most powerful PCs to a halt. This blatant disregard for any quality assurance means you have known users going around with avatars playing audio of one minute introductions upon server entry, "generic egirl has joined the room," followed by MCR blasting a full album. And then you have crashers, which anyone can get, and once you have it you just join and crash servers, or if you don't like someone have a small radius and crash them; it's petty and extremely annoying, and most commonly done by known players. There is a degree of elitism and toxicity within those groups of people.

Laura Ortiz

The concept of this game is great, but its execution really sucks; it's good when it is, and horrid when you notice why its not. There needs to be a lot more done by the devs to separate children from adults. And should come with a massive warning to parents that this game is complete stranger danger.

@STrottsky

16 June, 2019

From the 1200+ hours I hammered into this game, the accounted experience of mine changed overtime, drastically.

- When I first joined, the community was thriving with social interaction (yes this includes the knuckles trend). I would log on every evening after class and experience VRChat's oddities, meeting some friends that I still hang out with outside VRChat now. However, as time went, a lot has changed with the game because of the community and developer decisions.

- The social interaction this game had dwindled quite a bit from my experiences. The game has countless amounts of worlds being pumped in the game like its a life support system. In context, it shows the creative senses of the community, which is good. But when I see an abundance of avatar worlds with copy/paste MMD models that are very similar to ones in another world, it gets really old fast. Games are fun first few plays, then same fate happens. Maps I used to go on like Doki Doki High School are complete ghost towns nowadays. Popular maps being ones with a mirror in proximity of it.

- From what I seen a lot now, I sometimes call the social aspect of this game "Mirror Chat". A majority of the time I would go online hoping to meet some friends, and it would be a satisfactory experience. Nowadays, I would lift the Rift off my face, and ask myself why did I even bother going on today. I would go into worlds, and lot of people are standing in the mirrors with groups of friends, just talking, maybe even dancing if they have full body. I do psychologically understand the narcissism of looking at ones online self, perhaps even wishing they looked like that. No offense to these folks, by all means they can look at the pixels they are as much as like. But to me, its a hinderance to the social interactions the game used to have compared to the present. Going up to these groups would lead to very minimal, almost no social interactions. And in difference, I would go up to those not standing in the mirror and I was able to socialize, even making friends. However, my next point has led to a hinderance to this.

- Last summer was the introduction of the trust and safety system, in idea I thought the game was going to get a lot better with finding people in public because of the hack/crash epidemic (Ongoing) in the early days—I was wrong. In idea, it brought a social class system and its caused more negativity than expected. In past days, there was more social interaction when you learned about somebody and gradually decided thoughts about them. Nowadays, I been seeing minimal friendships being made because people are given titles for how they act. Its pure prejudice without knowledge of them. People chose their friends, but at least give people chances, disregarding biased statistical titles of the game. Some do, some don't.

- On the idea of the community, it does offer a variety of personality to suite yourself into. Although, a majority of the online personality is anime centered. It honestly doesn't matter, to ones own interests is theirs. However, what bothers me is the over abundance of sexual content that reeks in this game. It may not be a problem to some, but, if that's the case I think they should up the age rating, even if people don't listen, I would highly recommend do so for those certain parenting types.

(EDIT: From recent experiences of this game, I would like to also include how little optimization there is; despite the safety features and me having a decent computer. That it makes my game almost unplayable at times. This game is messy Picasso of avatars with flashy shaders, realistic physics, sounds, detail. Its unbearable at times. People can be artists, they can use their skills to create amazing avatars. But the common sense of going into a public where some don't have good way of running the game, its barren. Seeing dancers with lights, feathers, high detail fur, facial gestures and realistic dynamic bones is some common examples. I used to run this game with no problem, now I have worries that I need to give CPR to my PC after I have to hold down the power button.)

(EDIT 2: Very small addition but last summer, the developers had promised an eventual release of the so-called playmaker that would improve the variety of creative worlds—It doesn't exist. This statement will be wrong maybe in the future, but in the meantime, its currently the developers saying to us Sweet Little Lies. Listen to your community devs. They want to help improve the game, don't leave it up to JUST us to make the game, and only intervene when there is bugs and glitches we can't really fix.)

- Today, I still play the game, but scarcely. Its dwindled social opportunities have led me to depressions, and divides of friend groups I have got into playing this game. Nowadays, I plead to my social friends to help me find ways to get out of the house. If you are looking for something to make friends

Laura Ortiz

and practice socializing. You are a little late. THIS IS NOT THE BEST METHOD. Look at other games like this before deciding. Even better, Go outside and potentially explore a hobby that would lead into socializing.

If you insist, go ahead, its a different experience per person

@CrocMasterCroc

16 September, 2022

I have been playing this game since 2017 but have never done a review on it till now. Obviously the game has gone through many changes, some for the better, and more recently for the worst. Ever since the EAC Update it is as though the developers of VRC want to kill their game permanently. I always praised the game for its' unique stance on being laid back with majority of their MOD/Client users. It is something that made the game stand out from the rest. Ever since they pushed this "security update" it took a lot of the fun away from the game. You can no longer protect yourself against photon crashers or anyone who can/will find a way around the EAC. It just feels like the developers took codes from clients that gave us accessibility features and pushed it as their own creation instead. Feels like stolen work if you ask me, especially with how fast they were able to implement them right as the EAC update came out. Instead of a fun social game we are now left with a game overpopulated by kids who don't belong on there, an unsafe environment with no way to protect ourselves, and a dev team that has proven to us that they only care about the \$\$, not what their users want.

@noob dog

26 May, 2018

Imagine placing yourself into a room with a 7th grade class. This is just where you start. Now imagine that you place yourself into a after school hours manga club with a bunch of generic teenage girls practicing anime voices all day. Now take that, and don't forget to add the sprinkle of horny teenage boys with hormones racing confused on if they like the anime avatar its self, or the appeal of a cartoon voice half flirting with them, so they keep feeding the attention hungry in hopes of being able to feel one step closer to having their "waifu" in real life. Oh but you aren't done just yet, how could you possibly forget your youtube fanbase that come to this already amazing room to make loud noises and verbally poopoo post memes they saw on the internet in hopes of finding like minded 14 year olds or making some old fart mad enough to yell at them in between their consistant voicecracks. The final ingredient is

Laura Ortiz

your average "I made this myself" person who actually downloaded a finished 3D model and ran it through mixamo to auto rig it who then speaks from the perspective of a professional 3D model developer.

Oh wait, that is exactly what you do on this game.

@Dan

25 July, 2022

Developers have ignored community feedback and are implementing EAC. This does not prevent malicious users from doing what the things they've always done, crashing people/lobbies being one of them. It does, however, prevent users from using several QOL mods that the devs will probably add as VRC+ exclusive features later on.
I've used VRChat for a while and have always enjoyed it, even through all its issues, some of which were fixed by the mods they're now removing, but since the devs have backed themselves into a corner they no longer have my support.

@Quindlyn

24 February, 2022

VRChat is one of the most accessible, consistently enjoyable VR titles currently available. There's a huge variety of content available to enjoy made by its creative and diverse community. Despite my negative review, you are most likely going to have a good time playing it.

The reason I am rating it negatively at this time is because the development team of VRChat appears to not really care at all about its communities. VRChat frequently goes on these strange purge cycles where it blanket bans groups of people without any warning or discussion. Sometimes, the backlash is so great that they have to backpedal on their bans (like when they targeted the modding community).

When they target small, niche communities, however, there's no recourse other than to frustratingly accept that the world and communities you've poured hundreds and hundreds of hours into making and curating for months and months can be deleted arbitrarily because suddenly the moderation team deems a keyword is classified as "objectionable content" and when you try to appeal it you're basically told to pound sand.

VRChat and user-generated-content-based platforms like it are a gestalt of the artistic expression of its diverse playerbase. It is a generally unpleasant

Laura Ortiz

to have poured your time and creative energy into making something for the community only for it to be spontaneously erased on a whim.

@Feror

25 July, 2022

No one needs a third party anti cheat software in a social game.

Removing all access to mods will take away your safety options (anticrash) and empower crashers even more.

It will make the game less accessible and less comfortable but also strip it of many features that were previously possible.

I am not against security measures like this in general, but bringing the hammer down on everything at once - and BEFORE vital Quality of Life adjustments (portable mirrors, distance based avatar hiding, accessibility features for deaf people, ...) - have been addressed can not be the way to go. Either whitelist wholesome mods or even provide an official way to extend the functionality, like an API like you tried with Avatars. Maybe some features could have been recreated with the Avatar OSC, but in order to do so it would need more than a 24h period upfront.

@Ani

25 July, 2022

man they sure do know how to ruin a game

@wisty

25 July, 2022

uninstalled because i dont want a rootkit on my system

@Boost

13 September, 2022

THEY MADE IT WORSE?!

@Commando950

25 July, 2022

Laura Ortiz

UPDATE: Unfortunately the developers have pushed the update out despite community pleas not to do so. This unfortunately leaves only one option to go to other games. Please try out something like ChilloutVR instead for the time being! Cancel your subscription to VRChat and play something else. Don't worry as I'm sure you'll make more great memories elsewhere!

Quick Summary

VRChat has actively and repeatedly shown it's complete disrespect for it's users.

VRChat developers intend to release an update in the future that will add Easy Anti Cheat. This will create a variety of serious problems thanks to the community heavily relying on mods to get an acceptable standard of enjoyment out of VRChat. This will ruin support with hardware, operating systems, as well as more negative side effects. This has created massive, well deserved backlash for such a terrible decision they actually knew in advance would happen.

EAC and Modding

Mods & The Community

Monetization is one thing of course, but to actively insult the modding community by trying to create an Easy Anti Cheat update in their open betas is downright laughable. While this sounds incredibly tame at first and silly to be mad at there are many intense effects this will have on the game that are irreversible once this decision is done.

Modding is a critical portion of the game and they have created Easy Anti Cheat to remove all modding from their entire platform. If this sounds like I'm making it up, ask yourself a valuable question, why would a virtual chat room need anti cheat?

Features

The developers are outdid by the modders a lot and it's been long speculated they know this makes them look pretty bad. Mods have literally added support for more hardware, new safety settings, and many new features that simply to this day still do not exist on VRChat. They only recently have done an update that adds features that have been around for AGES through mods.

Monetization

Laura Ortiz

Another important note is their attempts at monetization through VRC+ subscriptions is that they add additional favorite slots for avatars. This is an annoying thing to paywall and everyone has literally always complained about this. Mods existed to add unlimited favorites so in the past the devs attempted to shutdown all the mods including ones that do not have any malicious or bad features. This was the first time massive backlash happened just like what we see now. They eventually settled with mod creators to just have them remove options that negatively impacted their monetization.

So as you can see, this isn't just speculation in some ways, we know the VRChat developers actively want to remove GOOD modding. This is proof they also knew that the decision to add EAC would also be controversial. This is why we can't let them get by with this decision as they are hoping they can slip by without too much trouble.

No Mods Ever

As you can see from this quote below they do not intend to allow ANY mods. The rest of the article is more nonsense about how they are doing it for security. That's definitely a lie and exaggerated.

"Finally, we're aware that many legitimate users install modifications to add features they wish VRChat had natively. We're very aware of the popularity of these modifications, and we're aware that EAC means those modifications are gone, too." - EAC Announcement[hello.vrchat.com]

EAC and PC&VR Support

Easy Anti Cheat doesn't just mean mods will get ruined... this effects EVERYTHING. Let's go over everything that will happen from EAC getting added.

Certain hardware will no longer be supported as people needed to use mods to get it work.

Certain systems may no longer function.

Performance will be guaranteed worse with EAC. There is a lot of overhead to an anti cheat.

Good mods that exist to protect users from malicious mods will not be available.

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Malicious mods will easily bypass EAC.

Accessibility additions from mods will be lost, making the game much more difficult to play with deaf, mute, blind, and even more kinds of users.

Linux support is probably immediately lost. Despite certain versions supporting Linux, many will not and still do not. This will effect me as I've switched to Linux full time. While VRChat works great on Linux it's functionality will likely end as soon as EAC update is released.

Resulting Backlash

Their Discord server literally has slowmode on as of writing.

Despite slowmode the Discord server messages are practically flooded.

It's simply a meme at this point how bad their decision making is. Joke images are already just spit out lighting fast.

Call out posts, statuses about the game, boycotting, and straight up protest.

Negative reviews, including this one, and more to be expected.

This will make the second time this type of backlash has occurred to their attempt to kill out modding.

What Can We Do?

Protest. In game, out of game, online, their discord, and on social media.

Upvote this: <https://feedback.vrchat.com/open-beta/p/eac-in-a-social-vr-game-creates-more-problems-than-it-solves>

Cancel your VRC+ subscription. Don't give them money for terrible service.

Call them out.

Make a negative review.

Tell your friends.

Upvote this review and others like it. :D

Consider switching to ChilloutVR instead.

Laura Ortiz

Conclusion

For now, I can not recommend this game to anyone. I'm not sure if I should ever remove this review because even though there is many good things about VRChat the direction of development clearly isn't. They will likely change their mind about these decisions, but if they don't VRChat could very well go under. This isn't something we should forget either even should these decisions be reversed as it's showing a very bad sign for the future of the game.

@F4LCO

4 June, 2022

Live Mental Ward

@Sweet Hushabye

25 July, 2022

The most harmful update to the game by far. Cancel your VRC+. #votewithyourwallet

@zendra

28 February, 2022

You see the hours, It's time I talk about this Social Experience.

VRChat by itself has been optimizing and improving as a platform over the years and has come quite a long way, This review is nothing against the Developers or anyone on the Team of VRChat, this review is about the people.

Toxic Behavior & Individuals

Over the years (Since January 2018) a variety of individuals have made a name for themselves in this game by being malicious. Making clients that can log you out of the game, grabbing your IP, and a variety of other things to dox you and share valuable information to anyone they so please. Not to mention the capability that people have to crash your game whenever they so choose. Hell they could go into a world and crash an entire lobby if they REALLY wanted to. You might add "That's what safety settings are for right?". No, incels will continuously find ways to disrupt and ruin your

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socializing experience that you're having with people, **Because they can**. These individuals will find ways through coding at the comfort of their computer to naturally mess around with people kicking it with their friends.

The Model Making Community

Not to say that EVERYTHING is awful about this game, something that to this day I appreciate and something that single-handedly has been the glue, keeping this game from falling, is the aspect of Creativity. Using a Unity based uploading system people can create 3D models with a variety of character to them. Obviously with this you have the people who make the models that can lag your game on purpose, but other times you have the people who genuinely put hours of hard work into making something that they want to represent and let other people represent themselves as. This is what separates VRChat from any other kind of VR Social game. There have been many negatives to this however.

The Model Making Community (Cont.)/

With all of the above in mind, you wouldn't have a community if their weren't people there to try and ruin it, right? In people Creating models, there's so much more that goes into it. Using assets that you're not supposed to, or going directly against the Original Creators wishes to not repurpose their model. It's become a free for all of "Who has the best assets/Models". With that in mind you might ask "How is using someone else's model in a free game so bad?". A lot of the people who make models will sell the work that they claim to have created, even if it's someone else's. Not to mention the people who do create Original models have the risk of getting their model ripped from VRChat and resold or republished for free. Model ripping is a HUGE problem in the community and while people have created external clients to help put a band-aid over the issue to get these people banned, there's currently nothing in the game (as of writing this review) that is stopping these people from stealing other people's models. It can happen to anyone, just because they don't like you, or maybe just because they like the look of the model. **Because they can**

The Alcoholic Epidemic

Through the course of the years, VRChat becoming a more and more social experience has turned the game into a magnet for people who come on to have a good time with their friends. In that being said people will easily get addicted to this, because they are having a good time right? You could get

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on everyday of the week, at any time of the day and you will find someone from where you're from asking you if you're drinking. When calling out these no-lives for.. well, having no life and for what life they have that they shouldn't be drinking it away. You'll always get the classic, "Today is my weekend". I mean if that's your kind of crowd and that's what you're into then take with that what you will but for me, it aint my thing.

ERP & Pedophilia

The final segment in this review is about the oversexualization that everyone feels about these virtual anime characters. Man or woman on the other side of the headset, there is so much mutual masturbation that happens on this game, it's actually ♥♥♥♥♥♥ insane. In aspects of long-distance relationships, I see the appeal, ♥♥♥♥ 2640 hours in the game you know I've dabbled in that ♥♥♥♥. However in the right situations and circumstances I have, in times when its appropriate. Others feel that even in public places, it's all good to get their rocks off. It's not as bad as it used to be because it is now a bannable offense in public places but the fact that it was a problem is a ♥♥♥♥♥♥ Y I K E S. On top of all of this, children under the age of 18 will frequent this game, especially the females, and are consistently being preyed on by people older then them, I can name a few instances but I've decided against dropping names in this review.

Conclusion

In VRChat you are capable of having a good time. It's all about the people you meet and the friend group that you fit in most with. This review isn't a testament saying you can't achieve this, it's just much harder to now. Being a new player and having a grey nameplate will subject toxic people to ♥♥♥♥ around with you. If you watch old VRChat videos on YouTube, it's not like that anymore. It's not the same game it was back then when people were more careless, took the game less serious and made models to have fun, not for monetary game. You have a game where people find it their home and have found the most comfort inside of it. Is the game bad? No. Will you find more Incels than fun and accepting people? Yes. It's just the way it is now unfortunately. There is definitely people that you will mesh with and have fun spending time with, however for me it took 1400 hours in desktop mode and an additional 1200 in VR to find who will stick with me. You can find Genuine friends. You just have to look.

@Shellac

25 July, 2022

Laura Ortiz

I would give the game a thumbs-up rating, but as of recent events I have changed my opinion:

I love this game, but modding is a way of freedom and expression that is crucial for the longevity of games. (Just look at Garry's Mod, Minecraft (Java), Left 4 Dead, Terraria, Starbound, Fallout (3,Vegas,4), Skyrim, etc..)

Those games aren't alive because of the base content, they're alive because the community makes content that adds to the game, and makes them re-playable over and over and over again. You could argue that VRChat is a social game so replayability doesn't matter, but it's about the sheer freedom of customization and expression.

Remove your plans to implement Easy Anti Cheat, it cuts down performance, is an intrusive piece of software, and it's not needed. Then I'll enjoy the game once more.

Nobody on the team will probably see this review anyway.

@Spunky

16 November, 2021

Needs age restrictions

@ttv.D1SC00RD

25 July, 2022

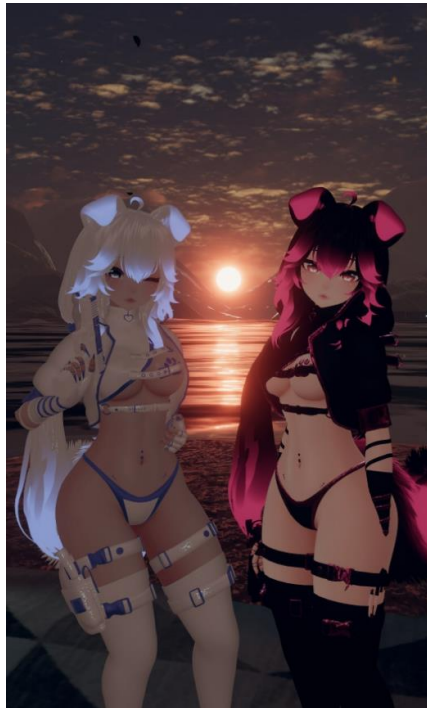
Devs are ignoring the wants of the community with an anti-cheat for a game that isn't even a competitive game. Modders who want to crash/ruin other people's experience will happen no matter what cause cheaters always find a way around anti-cheats. Adding an anti-cheat takes away the more personal game-positive experiences the community wants.

@SonicGamer

11 May, 2022

Age rating and requirements should be changed, this game is no longer what it appeared to be. It is full of degenerates and paedophiles.

Appendix 3: Public Screenshots Posted by the VRChat Community on Steam



Published by @LostEvil on 22 July, 2022



Published by @Cassandra Dimitrescu on 6 December, 2020



Published by @Damion on 10 October, 2022



Published by @Flynn 24 May 2020



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