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

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

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

2018
Starting our journey
What started as an idea finally became a reality – Surfshark was born. We launched our VPN browser extensions and apps on macOS, Windows, Linux, iOS, Android, Android TV & Fire TV, and went through our first independent audit by Cure53.

2019
Launching new products
As our first year passed, we began to add more layers to our cybersecurity offering – Surfshark Alert & Search. We also kick-started our research activities by releasing the first Digital Quality of Life (DQL) index, which has been updated annually since then. Our hard work was noticed, and Surfshark was the one of the first VPN providers favored with the AV-Test Seal of Approval.

2020
Earning the industry’s trust
We boomed in promoting online safety and privacy. Not only did Surfshark move to a 100% RAM-only server network and introduce the WireGuard® protocol to our clients, but we also became a founding member of the VPN Trust Initiative.

2021
Receiving international recognition
We continued to grow our cybersecurity suite, launching Surfshark Antivirus & Incogni. We also won the PCMag Editors Choice award and gained recognition as TechRadar’s must-have Work from Home app. This year has also granted us another independent infrastructure audit by Cure53 and provided an opportunity to start upgrading our servers to 10Gbps.
Technical overview
Becoming a fully-fledged cybersecurity suite in 2021

**Surfshark One & Incogni**

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

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

**Incogni** improves our clients’ privacy by removing personal information from data brokers and the data market.
**Cookie pop-up blocker**

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

**10 Gbps servers**

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

**Browser extensions v3.0**

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

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

**macOS app v3.0**

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

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

**Post-purchase campaign**

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

**In-app notification center**

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

**Widget in the Android app**

The VPN status is within a hand’s reach! A handy widget on our Android app lets you monitor the VPN connection without opening the application. It has an adjustable size and displays the connection status with the option to connect to the VPN straight from the home screen.
Here are the TOP 10 locations Surfshark VPN users were connecting to:

United States
United Kingdom
Germany
Canada
Australia
Hong Kong
Netherlands
France
Spain
Italy
Last year was full of major achievements that we’re proud to share with you.

**Product awards**

- **Techradar**: 2021 WFH app must-have
- **PCMag**: Editor’s Choice
- **Trusted Reviews**: Best VPN 2021
- **Cybersecurity Excellence Awards**: Gold 2021
- **AV Comparatives**: Top 3 Fast VPN 2021
- **Globe Cyber Security Global Excellence Awards**: Editor’s Choice
- **PCWorld**: Verified Product 2021
- **Computer Bild**: Best Price-Quality-Ratio Product 2021
In April 2021, our servers passed an independent infrastructure audit by a Germany-based audit company called Cure53. The extensive research did not detect any serious issues, proving that our VPN service is robust and has a secure server infrastructure.

Cure53’s report stated that Surfshark’s server network relies on good defaults and that the company engineers demonstrated their dedication and skill in configuring constructs and cipher suites. This was the second time Cure53 ran an audit on Surfshark. You can read a summary of the Cure53 report here.
At Surfshark, we put our clients’ security and privacy first. This means that we follow the development of legal and data protection rules worldwide very closely and embed those in our products.

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

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

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

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

During the year 2021, we had around 4,400 data subject requests, including user requests to erase their data. Understanding the importance of the rights that privacy laws give to users, we created Incogni – a service that helps our users get their personal data off the market.

We strive to leave little to no space for human errors, that’s why we seek to automate as many processes as possible, including, for example, the process for exercising certain data subject rights.
Research projects
We have successfully looked into issues including digital quality of life, social media censorship, and app privacy policies. To demonstrate the accuracy of our studies, we relied on trusted associations like the FBI, Europol, and NetBlocks.

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

Here at Surfshark, our angles of inquiry are based on various research projects we’ve done to address privacy and security concerns. Our research is based on these major pillars: humanized cybersecurity, consumer data privacy, internet censorship and surveillance, and data breaches.
Our 2021 Digital Quality of Life Index evaluated the well-being of online users in 110 countries, covering 90% of the global population. This research aimed to provide a unique understanding of the overall digital quality of life. Using multiple angles, we considered not only the quality and affordability of the internet but also the development of cybersecurity, e-infrastructure, and e-government systems. As a result, we gained valuable insights, such as the fact that the worst internet access in the world is also one of the least affordable.
Our Social Media Censorship Tracker is aimed at documenting the ever-increasing government-mandated social media shutdown cases. As social media is an excellent tool for raising awareness and organizing movements, it often comes under attack by regimes fearful of popular sentiment. The tracker also follows the cases of internet shutdowns – a blunt tool used by governments that can’t be satisfied by merely curtailing access to social media.
There are a lot of apps that respectably consider users’ privacy. However, it is not a secret that many apps track users’ data. One of our major app research projects analyzed which apps collect user data – and for what reasons. Uncovering the apps that actually respect your privacy helps people make an immediate, informed decision without having to read through reams of confusing terms and conditions.
NGO partnerships & donations
By partnering with non-governmental organizations, we can focus our resources on helping them achieve their goals and taking global action.

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

Access Now defends and extends the digital rights of users at risk around the world. By combining direct technical support, comprehensive policy engagement, global advocacy, grassroots grantmaking, legal interventions, and convenings such as RightsCon, they fight for human rights in the digital age.
By partnering with non-governmental organizations, we can focus our resources on helping them achieve their goals and taking global action.
The people behind Surfshark
Surfshark wouldn’t be what it is today without its most valuable asset – people. In our company’s three-year run since 2018, we have gathered over 200+ specialists that are always looking for ways to improve. Our employees spent a total of 747 learning hours, which is equal to 93 full work days, to improve their soft and hard skills. This year, our efforts were noticed, and we’ve made it to MeetFrank’s 2021 top employers list.
THE PEOPLE BEHIND SURFSHARK

Employee statistics

Years working at Surfshark

- 1 yr: 47%
- 1+ yrs: 23%
- 2+ yrs: 15%
- 3+ yrs: 7%
- 4+ yrs: 8%

Seniority level

- Junior: 30%
- Mid: 45%
- Senior: 25%

Gender balance

- Female: 42%
- Male: 58%
Surfshark cares about its employees’ professional development. That’s why everyone is encouraged to spend a specific amount of work hours for self-development: watching online courses, attending learning programs and workshops. We trust our people and understand that quality work isn’t done only at the office desk; hence, we encourage a hybrid working model and the possibility to work from anywhere. Last but not least, we firmly believe that meeting and learning from the most influential people in the industry is a fantastic method of professional development. To reach this, we pursue business trips and conferences around the world as well as invite international speakers to our office.

Surfshark also offers various opportunities for employees to take care of their mental and physical health. Therefore, we offer access to numerous wellbeing apps and private health insurance, which also covers certified therapist sessions. Additionally, employees can take part in group workout sessions with in-house physiotherapists.
What’s next for 2022?
What’s next for 2022?

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

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

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

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

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

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

- Expand Surfshark One with more cybersecurity solutions, additions to Alert, Search, and Antivirus.
Aside from technical improvements, we also plan to:

- **Release more educational content** both on our own and in collaboration with external partners.
- **Collaborate with more NGOs** that share our goals and values.
- **Review current online threats** and create a data vulnerability check for our clients to see how vulnerable they are to data breaches.
- **Strengthen our presence in the global job market**, open a new office in Warsaw, and expand our talent pool with international people.
- **Expand our YouTube channel with an educational podcast** & create more content dedicated to cybersecurity awareness.
- **Educate children** and create a fun program called Cyber Ocean.
We’ve reached new heights throughout the year of 2021...

We’re excited to see where 2022 will bring us.
And that’s a wrap!