Technical report – VSP Tracker Wave 5 (February 2024)

Preface

Wave 5 of the VSP Tracker (2024) was undertaken by YouGov on behalf of Ofcom. This report refers to the fifth wave of the tracker completed in February 2024. The first wave was completed in October 2021 and the second wave in April 2022, both by Yonder Consulting, for more information on these waves please refer to the following technical report:

https://www.ofcom.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0032/245849/2021-22-vsp-tracker-technical-report.pdf.

Wave 3 was completed in January 2023 and Wave 4 was conducted in June 2023, both were undertaken by YouGov, for more information on these waves please refer to the following technical reports:

https://www.ofcom.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0023/254615/vsp-tracker-wave-3-technical-report.pdf

https://www.ofcom.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0027/267075/vsp-tracker-wave-4-technical-report.pdf

The core objective of this study was to understand video-sharing platform (VSP) users' awareness and experiences of the safety measures and tools available to them on VSPs.

This piece of quantitative research specifically focused on awareness and usage of safety features on the following 25 VSPs: **YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, Snapchat, Twitch, Vimeo, Fruitlab, Bitchute, OnlyFans, Recast, Xpanded.com, Fanzworld, PocketStars, Admire.me, Onevsp (formerly Brand New Tube), Thomas Cook, Sponsor Hub, GatorJax, Lemon8, MintStars, Fansify, RevealMe, SoSpoilt, Sesire**. [1]

The research explores:

1. Usage of VSPs

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[1] Since 1 November 2020, UK-established VSPs must comply with new rules around protecting users from harmful content. Providers must have in place appropriate measures to protect under-18s from material which might impair their physical, mental or moral development; and to protect the general public from criminal content and material likely to incite violence or hatred. Services will also need to make sure standards around advertising are met. VSP providers established in the UK before 10 January 2024 are legally obliged to notify to Ofcom, and all those selected for the research have done so. This obligation came into force on 6 April 2021. The list of VSPs selected for the study was correct as of January 2024. The list is updated periodically and can be found here: https://www.ofcom.org.uk/online-safety/information-for-industry/vsp-regulation/notified-video-sharing-platforms

2. Experience of perceived harmful content on those VSPs, including likelihood to come across this content in the future and how protected users feel when using these sites/apps;
3. Awareness and recall of safety measures, including reasons for lack of awareness amongst those who are not aware of these measures;
4. Usage of safety measures such as reporting/flagging mechanisms and whether users would use them again (or not);
5. Parental attitudes towards protection from harmful content and accessibility of reporting measures for children on VSPs;
6. Awareness and usage of VSP complaints systems and whether users would use these again (or not);
7. Awareness of, and experiences with VSP terms and conditions (T&Cs)

The study provides data on a nationally representative sample of UK internet users, with boosts applied to users of specific VSPs to allow for robust analysis of user subgroups where incidence is low.

Further information about the study is summarised in the sections below.

Summary of Approach

- The **VSP Tracker** was conducted with a nationally representative sample of UK internet users and sought to understand VSP users' awareness and experiences of the safety measures and tools available to them on 25 VSPs notified to Ofcom.

- Sample boosts were applied after the main fieldwork had been completed in order to achieve a minimum of n=100 interviews among low incidence user groups of specific VSPs. This was to allow for base sizes robust enough for analysis.

- All research was carried out online, with respondents recruited from YouGov's online panel, containing around 2,668,204 panellists from all over the UK. Respondents were recruited to be nationally representative of the UK internet user population, with quotas set on gender, age, socio-economic group and region.

- The **VSP Tracker** aims to explore the usage and experience of safety measures, and the perceptions of these safety measures and tools.

- A total of 1,271 interviews were conducted in Wave 5 (1,259 interviews were conducted for Wave 1, 1,243 interviews were conducted for Wave 2, 1,376 interviews were conducted for Wave 3 and 1,242 interviews were conducted for Wave 4).

- Fieldwork for Wave 5 was conducted between 16th– 25th February 2024.

Significance Testing

Significance testing for the **VSP Tracker** has been applied at 95% for the purposes of analysis.

The VSP Tracker (Wave 5 February 2024)

Introduction

YouGov interviewed a sample of 1,271 UK internet users aged 13 to 84 years old in order to understand VSP users' awareness and experiences of the safety measures and tools available to them on VSPs. Fieldwork for **Wave 5** was carried out between 16th – 25th February.

Details of the sample design, research methodology, and weighting procedures for this study are outlined in the following pages.

Sample Design

A representative sample of UK internet users aged 13-84 was provided by YouGov's proprietary online panel. Boosts were also applied to low incidence user groups of specific VSPs. Boosts applied to the following VSPs: BitChute, OnlyFans, Fruitlab, Recast, Xpanded.com, Fanzworld, PocketStars, AdmireMe, Onevsp (formerly Brand New Tube), Sponsor Hub, GatorJax, Lemon8, MintStars, Fansify, RevealMe, SoSpoilt, Sesire. This was to ensure that base sizes for these low-incidence demographic subgroups were large enough to allow for detailed and statistically robust analysis.

YouGov carried out the following standard checks during and post-fieldwork:

- A manual check post-fieldwork to remove anyone who responded in an unreasonable or suspicious way
- Open end checks to ensure respondents answered thoughtfully and were not spamming answers or bots.
- Ongoing panel quality monitoring and removal of respondents identified as straight-liners from the YouGov Panel.

The majority of demographic information (age, gender, social grade, ethnicity, religion, region, highest education, dwelling size, working status and household income) was information declared and collected by YouGov from its panellists as part of initial signing up process. This demographic information is updated regularly by panellists (every 6 months). The exact wording of each of the questions used can be found in the Wave 5 questionnaire.

Quotas

Interview quotas were applied so that the final sample (excluding boosts) was representative of UK internet users by age, gender, region and socio-economic group (SEG).

Targets for quotas were derived from YouGov online omnibus, and moderated by data obtained from the Ofcom and the Office of National Statistics (ONS).

Quotas were set on the following variables:

- Age (13-17, 18-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64, 64-74, 75-84)
- Gender

- Region
- Socio-economic group (SEG)

Fieldwork

For the main sample, online interviews with interlocking quotas were set to be broadly representative of UK internet users based on age, gender, region and SEG. For the 'boost' interviews, minimum quotas were set on specific VSP user subgroups.[2] The criteria for inclusion for these 'boost' interviews was being a member of one of the subgroups of interest where fewer than 100 interviews had been conducted in the 'main sample' surveys. Boost interviews were conducted to ensure at least 100 interviews among all subgroups of interest.

All interviews for **Wave 5** were conducted between 16th – 25th February.

Due to the sensitive nature of the research topic (e.g. experiences of violent, abusive or inappropriate content on VSPs), respondents were forewarned and asked to give their consent to participate, in line with MRS guidelines. In order to protect child (under 18) participants, informed consent was obtained before research began by both parents and children. Furthermore, some VSPs[3] that were asked about as part of the research were suppressed for respondents under 18, so that the survey / discussion content did not inadvertently promote these adult sites to under-age respondents.

Weighting

The data (excluding boosts) has been weighted to be representative of the UK internet user population on age within gender, and overall, to the region and SEG profiles. The VSP user boosts are not weighted.

The following sections provide information on the sample representativeness for Wave 5 individually.

Wave 5: Sample Representativeness

The following table shows both the initial unweighted sample and the final weighted sample profiles from Wave 5:

Demographic group	Unweighted counts	Unweighted %	Weighted counts	Weighted %
Male	662	52%	654	51%

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[2] Boosts applied to the following VSPs: BitChute, OnlyFans, Fruitlab, Recast, Xpanded.com, Fanzworld, PocketStars, AdmireMe, Onevsp (formerly Brand New Tube), Sponsor Hub, GatorJax, Lemon8, MintStars, Fansify, RevealMe, SoSpoilt, Sesire.
[3] VSPs not shown to under 18s include: Bitchute, OnlyFans, Onevsp (formerly Brand New Tube), Lemon8, MintStars, Xpanded.com, Fanzworld, PocketStars, Admire.Me, Fansify, RevealMe, SoSpoilt, Sesire

Demographic group	Unweighted counts	Unweighted %	Weighted counts	Weighted %
Female	609	48%	617	49%
13-17	71	6%	77	6%
18-24	154	12%	154	12%
25-34	262	21%	260	20%
35-44	220	17%	222	17%
45-54	206	16%	211	17%
55+	358	28%	348	27%
Scotland	95	7%	95	7%
Wales	60	5%	62	5%
Northern Ireland	33	3%	25	2%
North East	48	4%	49	4%
North West	136	11%	139	11%
Yorkshire and the Humber	94	7%	94	7%
West Midlands	117	9%	112	9%
East Midlands	83	7%	84	7%
East of England	111	9%	109	9%
London	218	17%	222	17%
South East	163	13%	173	14%
South West	113	9%	108	8%
AB	399	31%	389	31%
C1	360	28%	367	29%
C2	260	20%	260	20%
DE	252	20%	256	20%

Changes to the questionnaire between wave 4 and 5

Several revisions were made in wave 5. These changes include changes to existing questions, removal of questions which now hold limited value & the addition of new questions to ensure information collected meets user needs. A summary of changes has been included below[4]:

In this wave, participants answered some questions based on all of the VSPs they have used in last 3 months. In previous waves, for some questions we asked about a smaller number of what could be considered 'popular' VSPs.

Section Label	Question number	Changes made
VSP Usage	Q1	New VSPs added/updated to align with current list of VSPs that Ofcom regulates. These were reflected at the relevant questions throughout.
Experience of violent, abusive, or inappropriate videos on VSPs	Q3a	This wave, respondents answered this question based on all of the VSPs (listed in Q1) they have used in last 3 months. In previous waves, this was only asked about what can be considered as 'popular' VSPs (YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, Snapchat, Twitch, BitChute, OnlyFans, Vimeo, Fruitlab)
Likelihood to come across violent, abusive, or inappropriate videos on VSPs	Q3b	This wave, respondents answered this question based on all of the VSPs (listed in Q1) they have used in last 3 months. In previous waves, this was only asked about what can be considered as 'popular' VSPs (YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, Snapchat, Twitch, BitChute, OnlyFans, Vimeo, Fruitlab)
How protected users feel from violent, abusive, or inappropriate videos on VSPs	Q4	This wave, respondents answered this question based on all of the VSPs (listed in Q1) they have used in last 3 months. In previous waves, this was only asked about what can be considered as 'popular' VSPs (YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, Snapchat, Twitch, BitChute, OnlyFans, Vimeo, Fruitlab)
Perception of who is responsible for protection of users on VSPs	Q5	Removed
Awareness of rules and safety measures put in place by VSPs	Q6	Removed

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[4] For reference, please use the following links to access a copy Wave 4 questionnaires.

Section Label	Question number	Changes made
Awareness of rules or safety measures put in place to protect users from violent, abusive or inappropriate videos on VSPs	Q6b	Minor question wording adjustment
Recall of rules and safety measures on VSPs	Q7	This is now routed from those who said they were aware of rules/safety measures at Q6b. In previous waves, this was routed from Q6 which was removed this wave.
Reasons for not being aware of rules and safety measures on VSPs	Q8	This is now routed from those who said they were not aware of rules/safety measures at Q6b. In previous waves, this was routed from Q6 which was removed this wave. Option codes have also been removed and updated.
Recall of seeing rules and safety measures on VSPs	Q9	Removed
Rules and safety measures users perceive to be in place on VSPs	Q10	Minor code wording updates for clarity.
Usage of reporting/ flagging mechanisms on VSPs	Q11	Descriptive text added to question text to define what is meant by flagging/reporting mechanisms
Reasons for being likely to use reporting tools/ mechanisms again	Q11c	Option codes randomised this wave. 'Other' option changed to a 'please specify' open response code for further detail
Reasons for being unlikely to use reporting tools/ mechanisms again	Q11d	Option codes randomised this wave. 'Other' option changed to a 'please specify' open response code for further detail
Parental view on ease of use of flagging and reporting mechanisms for children on VSPs	Q11f	New question created (using an existing statement from P1), to understand parental view on ease of use of flagging/reporting measures for children on VSPs

Section Label	Question number	Changes made
Views on responsibility when it comes to protecting users from violent, abusive or inappropriate videos on VSPs	Q12c	Removed
Views on whether different types of VSP content should have rules/safety measures in place	Q13	Removed
Parental view on protection of children from violent, abusive or inappropriate videos on VSPs	Q25	New question added to gauge parental view on how well they feel children are protected from violent, abusive or inappropriate videos on VSPs
Usage of complaints systems on VSPs	Q23	New question added to gauge usage of complaints systems on VSPs amongst those aware of the safety measure
Likelihood to use complaints system in future	Q23a	New question added to gauge whether those who have previously used complaints systems on VSPs would be likely to use them again in future
Reasons for being likely to use complaints system again in future	Q23b	New question added to understand why users would use complaints systems again on VSPs in future
Reasons for being unlikely to use complaints system again in future	Q23c	New question added to understand why users would not use complaints systems again on VSPs in future
Accessing T&Cs on VSPs	Q24a	New question added to gauge whether users are accessing/reading T&Cs when signing up to VSPs
Reasons for accessing T&Cs on VSPs	Q24b	New question added to understand reasons for accessing T&Cs on VSPs
Reasons for accessing T&Cs on VSPs – other	Q24b_other	New question added to gather open end responses to the 'other' option at Q24b
Knowledge of where to access T&Cs on VSPs	Q24c	New question added to gauge whether users think they know where to find T&Cs on VSPs

Section Label	Question number	Changes made
Understanding of T&Cs on VSPs	Q24d	New question added to understand whether users who accessed and read T&Cs understood them
Reasons for not understanding T&Cs on VSPs	Q24e	New question to gauge why users said they did not understand T&Cs on VSPs
Reasons for not understanding T&Cs on VSPs - other	Q24e_other	New question added to gather open end responses to the 'other' option at Q24e
Suggested improvements for T&Cs on VSPs	Q24f	New question added to gather suggested improvements for T&Cs amongst those users who said they did not understand them
Suggested improvements for T&Cs on VSPs - other	Q24f_other	New question added to gather open end responses to the 'other' option at Q24f
Reasons for accepting T&Cs on VSPs without reading them	Q24g	New question to understand reasons for not reading T&Cs before accepting them on VSPs
Reasons for accepting T&Cs on VSPs without reading them - other	Q24g_other	New question added to gather open end responses to the 'other' option at Q24g
Preference on having the option to select protective measures on VSPs	Q14	Removed
Agreement with VSPs taking action on inappropriate content	Q15	Removed
How long users think it should take for VSPs to take action against inappropriate content	Q16	Removed
Awareness of what users are allowed to post on VSPs	Q20	Removed
What actions users would expect to happen if posting something they are not allowed to	Q21	Removed

Section Label	Question number	Changes made
Awareness of where to find information on what you are/are not allowed to post on VSPs	Q22	Removed
Parental view on measures & responsibility to protect children from violent, inappropriate or abusive videos	P1	Removed

NET definitions featured in the published tables

Certain subgroups within the sample were grouped together to aid analysis and are featured alongside this report in the published data tables. The definitions of these so-called NETs are in the table below.

Category	NET	Wave	Definition
Break Group 1: Demographics			
Ethnicity	White	Wave 5	English/ Welsh/ Scottish/ Northern Irish/ British
			Irish
			Gypsy, Traveller or Irish Traveller
			Any other white background
	Minority ethnic background		White and Black Caribbean
			White and Black African
			White and Asian
			Any other Mixed / Multiple ethnic background
			Indian
			Pakistani
			Bangladeshi
			Chinese
			Any other Asian background
			African

Category	NET	Wave	Definition
			Caribbean
			Any other Black / African / Caribbean background
			Arab
			Any other ethnic group
	Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups		White and Black Caribbean
			White and Black African
			White and Asian
			Any other Mixed / Multiple ethnic background
	Asian and British Asian		Indian
			Pakistani
			Bangladeshi
			Chinese
			Any other Asian background
	Black and Black British		African
			Caribbean
			Any other Black / African / Caribbean background
	Other ethnic group		Arab
			Any other ethnic group
Religion	Christian	Wave 5	Roman Catholic
			Church of England / Scotland / Ireland
			Presbyterian/Church of Scotland
			Methodist
			Baptist
			Orthodox Christian
			Pentecostal
			Evangelical
			United Reformed Church
			Free Presbyterian

Category	NET	Wave	Definition
			Brethren
	Muslim		Muslim
	Other religions		Judaism
			Hinduism
			Islam
			Sikhism
			Buddhism
			Other
	None		No religion
	Prefer not to say		Prefer not to say
Limiting/Impacting Conditions	Any	Wave 5	Any reported limiting/impacting condition
	Mental condition	Wave 5	Your mental health? Anxiety, depression, or trauma-related conditions, for example
	Physical condition		Hearing? Poor hearing, partial hearing, or are deaf
			Eyesight? Poor vision, colour blindness, partial sight, or are blind
			Mobility? Cannot walk at all/ use a wheelchair or mobility scooter etc., or cannot walk very far or manage stairs or can only do so with difficulty
			Dexterity? Limited ability to reach/ difficulty opening things with your hands/ difficulty using a telephone handset/ television remote control/ computer keyboard etc.
			Breathing? Breathlessness or chest pains
			Mental abilities? Such as learning, understanding, concentration, memory, communicating, cognitive loss or deterioration
			Social/ behavioural? Conditions associated with this such as autism, attention deficit disorder etc.

Category	NET	Wave	Definition
	None	Wave 5	Nothing – no impairments or conditions impact or limit your daily activities or the work you can do

Please note that in the data tables, for 'any_' summary variables which are summarising single code grid questions asked for multiple VSPs, respondents are assigned a code based on the most 'positive' or frequent response given for any VSP they answered about.

More specifically:

- Q1_any_vsp – Assigns based on the most frequent answer code chosen (i.e. from 'Several times a day' through to 'Never' (in order)
- Q3a_any_harm – Assigns based on 'yes' responses, followed by 'no' and 'don't know' (in that order)
- Q3b_any_harm – Assigns based on 'Very likely' through to 'Very unlikely' (in order)
- Q4_any_vsp – Assigns based on code 10 (Completely protected) through to code 0 (Completely unprotected) (in order)
- Q24a_any_vsp – Assigns based on whether T&Cs have been accessed and read thoroughly through to whether respondents didn't come across them and 'don't know' (in that order)
- Q24c_any_vsp – Assigns based on 'yes' responses, followed by 'I think so, but I have never looked' then 'no' and 'don't know' (in that order)
- Q24d_any_vsp – Assigns based on code 5 (Fully understood) through to code 1 (Didn't understand at all) and 'Don't know' (in that order)