Technical report – VSP Tracker (Waves 1 & 2, October 2021 and April 2022)

Preface

Wave 2 of the VSP Tracker (2021/22) was undertaken by Yonder Consulting on behalf of Ofcom. This report refers to both the first wave completed in October 2021 and the second wave completed in April 2022.

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 19 VSPs: **YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, Snapchat, Twitch, Vimeo, Fruitlab, Bitchute, OnlyFans, Triller, Recast, Vuepay, Xpanded.com, TV Girls Plaza, UK Babe Channels Video, Fanzworld, PocketStars,** and **Admire.me**.[1]

The research explores:

1. Usage of VSPs
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;
5. Attitudes towards protection, responsibility, and protective action on VSPs mentioned above, including the implementation of safety measures and how long a VSP should have to resolve any breaches of its rules.[2]

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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 VSP 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 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 September 2021. 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] Both questionnaires have been published alongside this technical report, and are available here: https://www.ofcom.org.uk/research-and-data/online-research/vsp-experiences-and-attitudes.

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 (Waves 1 & 2)** 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 19 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 bases sizes robust enough for analysis.
- All research was carried out online, with respondents recruited from Ofcom's ring-fenced 'Online Research Panel'. This panel comprises 5,000 UK internet users aged 13-84 who 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 2,502 interviews were conducted across Waves 1 and 2 combined; 1,259 interviews were conducted for Wave 1, and 1,243 interviews were conducted for Wave 2.
- Fieldwork for Wave 1 was conducted between 22nd September – 4th October 2021, and fieldwork for Wave 2 was conducted between 18th March – 4th April 2022.

Significance Testing

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

The VSP Tracker (Waves 1 & 2, October 2021 and April 2022)

Introduction

Yonder Consulting interviewed a sample of 2,502 UK internet users aged 13 to 84 years old across two waves of research in order to understand VSP users' awareness and experiences of the safety measures and tools available to them on VSPs. Fieldwork for **Wave 1** was carried out between 22nd September and 4th October 2021 and fiedlwork for **Wave 2** was carried out between 18th March and 4th April 2022.

Details of the sample design, research methodology, and weighting procedures for this study are outlined in the following pages. A note on statistical reliability is also included.

Sample Design

A representative sample of UK internet users aged 13-84 was recruited from Ofcom's ring-fenced 'Online Research Panel'. This panel comprises 5,000 UK internet users aged 13-84 who were recruited to be nationally representative of the UK internet user population, with quotas set on gender, age, socio-economic group and region. Pannelists were recruited from Yonder's proprietary online panel of 150,000 internet UK internet users (YonderLive).

Boosts were also applied to users from specific VSPs for which user incidence is low to ensure that achieved base sizes for these low-incidence demographic subgroups were large enough to allow for detailed and statistically robust analysis. Boosts applied to the following VSPs: TikTok, Twitch, Vimeo, Snapchat, OnlyFans, BitChute, Triller, Fruitlab, Recast, Vuepay, Xpanded.com, TV Girls Plaza, UK Babe Channels Video, Fanzworld, PocketStars, AdmireMe.VIP

In order to ensure successful and timely completion of quotas, no restrictions were placed between waves on respondents who filled the boost quotas for VSP users[3].

Duplication checks took place to ensure that respondents could not complete the survey more than once. As well as duplication checks, Yonder carried out the following standard checks during and post-fieldwork:

- IP geo-locator checks to ensure the respondents were all based in the UK.
- Front- and back-end quality control questions within the survey to ensure respondents were answering logically and consistently.
- 'Trap' questions within the survey to ensure respondents were paying attention and reading each code i.e. at a random question respondents would be asked to select a certain code, those who did not select this would be removed from the data.
- A manual speeder check post-fieldwork to remove anyone deemed to have proceeded through the questionnaire at an unreasonable pace.
- Manual flatlining checks post-fieldwork to check grid questions and ensure respondents did not answer the same codes across an unreasonable range of grid / scale questions.
- Open-end checks to ensure respondents answered thoughtfully and not spamming answers.

Quotas

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

Targets for quotas were derived from Yonder's bi-weekly online omnibus, and moderated by data obtained from the Ofcom Online Research Panel recruitment 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.[4] 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

[3] Yonder operates a standard exclusion period of three months for research among consumer audiences. Given the extended period between waves (six months) there is a high level of confidence that answering bias has been minimised.

[4] Boosts applied to the following VSPs: TikTok, Twitch, Vimeo, Snapchat, OnlyFans, BitChute, Triller, Fruitlab, Recast, Vuepay, Xpanded.com, TV Girls Plaza, UK Babe Channels Video, Fanzworld, PocketStars, AdmireMe.VIP.

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 1** were carried out between 22nd September and 4th October 2021 and all interviews for **Wave 2** were carried out between 18th March and 4th April 2022.

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, adult sites 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 has been weighted to be representative of the UK internet user population on age within gender, and overall, to the region and SEG profiles. This approach counteracted any effect that boost oversampling would have had on the final data.

Weighting profiles were created using a combination of Yonder online omnibus data and CATI omnibus data[5] to produce the most accurate profile of UK internet users.

The following sections provide information on the sample representativeness, sampling tolerances and differences required for significance testing for Waves 1 & 2 individually.

Wave 1: Sample Representativeness

The following table shows both the initial unweighted sample and the final weighted sample profiles from Wave 1:

Demographic group	Unweighted counts	Unweighted %	Weighted counts	Weighted %
Male	697	55%	619	49%
Female	562	45%	640	51%
13-17	118	9%	89	7%
18-24	159	13%	143	11%
25-34	234	19%	215	17%
35-44	209	17%	204	16%
45-54	211	17%	221	18%

[5] Certain biases may exist on online panels given the nature of the methodology (e.g. panelists may be higher internet users). In order to mitigate any bias, Yonder conducted an offline CATI calibration exercise to obtain the most up-to-date and accurate data for time spent online per day, device usage, and VSP usage. Weighting profiles were then moderated using a combination of this offline exercise and data on the known proportion of each age group that use the internet, taken from the ONS.

55+	328	26%	386	31%
Scotland	104	8%	105	8%
Wales	57	5%	60	5%
Northern Ireland	33	3%	37	3%
North East	51	4%	52	4%
North West	138	11%	137	11%
Yorkshire and the Humber	99	8%	102	8%
West Midlands	119	9%	107	8%
East Midlands	84	7%	91	7%
East of England	115	9%	112	9%
London	192	15%	171	14%
South East	158	13%	176	14%
South West	109	9%	108	9%
AB	358	28%	342	27%
C1	376	30%	371	29%
C2	242	19%	261	21%
DE	277	22%	279	22%

Wave 2: Sample Representativeness

The following table shows both the initial unweighted sample and the final weighted sample profiles from Wave 2:

Demographic group	Unweighted counts	Unweighted %	Weighted counts	Weighted %
Male	663	53%	606	49%
Female	575	46%	631	51%
13-17	100	8%	87	7%
18-24	121	10%	142	11%
25-34	243	20%	212	17%
35-44	231	19%	202	16%
45-54	215	17%	218	18%
55+	333	27%	381	31%
Scotland	98	8%	103	8%
Wales	57	5%	60	5%
Northern Ireland	37	3%	36	3%
North East	54	4%	51	4%

North West	130	10%	136	11%
Yorkshire and the Humber	95	8%	101	8%
West Midlands	118	9%	106	9%
East Midlands	100	8%	90	7%
East of England	113	9%	111	9%
London	181	15%	169	14%
South East	167	13%	174	14%
South West	93	7%	107	9%
AB	358	28%	337	27%
C1	376	30%	371	29%
C2	248	20%	257	21%
DE	252	20%	275	22%

Guide to Statistical Reliability

The variation between the sample results and the "true" values (the findings that would have been obtained if everyone in the target population had been interviewed) can be predicted from the sample sizes on which the results are based, and on the number of times that a particular answer is given. The confidence with which we can make this prediction is calculated at 95% confidence that is, the chances are 95 in 100 that the "true" values will fall within a specified range. However, as the sample is weighted, we need to use the effective sample size (ESS) rather than actual sample size to judge the accuracy of results.

The following tables compare ESS and actual samples for some of the main groups within the main samples from Waves 1 and 2.

Wave 1:

TOTAL	ACTUAL	ESS
	1,259	978
GENDER: Male	697	526
GENDER: Female	562	459
AGE: 13-17	118	94
AGE: 18-24	159	124
AGE: 25-34	234	177
AGE: 35-44	209	161
AGE: 45-54	211	165
AGE: 55-64	162	133
AGE: 65-74	125	107
AGE: 75-84	41	36

TOTAL	ACTUAL	ESS
	1,259	978
SEG: AB	358	273
SEG: C1	376	301
SEG: C2	242	185
SEG: DE	277	216
ETHNICITY: White	1,041	828
ETHNICITY: Black	31	24

Wave 2:

TOTAL	ACTUAL	ESS
	1,243	1,016
GENDER: Male	663	530
GENDER: Female	575	487
AGE: 13-17	100	93
AGE: 18-24	121	96
AGE: 25-34	243	187
AGE: 35-44	231	180
AGE: 45-54	215	179
AGE: 55-64	153	136
AGE: 65-74	126	115
AGE: 75+	54	45
SEG: AB	358	286
SEG: C1	376	311
SEG: C2	248	206
SEG: DE	252	207
ETHNICITY: White	1,037	870
ETHNICITY: Black	31	23

Approximate sampling tolerances applicable to percentages at or near these levels

The table below illustrates the required ranges for different sample sizes and percentage results at the "95% confidence interval" from Waves 1 and 2.

Wave 1:

Effective sample size		10% or 90%	20% or 80%	30% or 70%	40% or 60%	50%
		±	±	±	±	±
TOTAL	978	1.9%	2.5%	2.9%	3.1%	3.1%
GENDER: Male	526	2.6%	3.4%	3.9%	4.2%	4.3%
GENDER: Female	459	2.7%	3.7%	4.2%	4.5%	4.6%
AGE: 13-17	94	6.1%	8.1%	9.3%	9.9%	10.1%
AGE: 18-24	124	5.3%	7.0%	8.1%	8.6%	8.8%
AGE: 25-34	177	4.4%	5.9%	6.8%	7.2%	7.4%
AGE: 35-44	161	4.6%	6.2%	7.1%	7.6%	7.7%
AGE: 45-54	165	4.6%	6.1%	7.0%	7.5%	7.6%
AGE: 55-64	133	5.1%	6.8%	7.8%	8.3%	8.5%
AGE: 65-74	107	5.7%	7.6%	8.7%	9.3%	9.5%
AGE: 75-84	36	9.8%	13.1%	15.0%	16.0%	16.3%
SEG: AB	273	3.6%	4.7%	5.4%	5.8%	5.9%
SEG: C1	301	3.4%	4.5%	5.2%	5.5%	5.6%
SEG: C2	185	4.3%	5.8%	6.6%	7.1%	7.2%
SEG: DE	216	4.0%	5.3%	6.1%	6.5%	6.7%
ETHNICITY: White	828	2.0%	2.7%	3.1%	3.3%	3.4%
ETHNICITY: Black	24	12.0%	16.0%	18.3%	19.6%	20.0%

For example, if 30% or 70% of a sample of 978 gives a particular answer, the chances are 95 in 100 that the “true” value will fall within the range of +/- 2.9 percentage points from the sample results.

Wave 2:

Effective sample size		10% or 90%	20% or 80%	30% or 70%	40% or 60%	50%
		±	±	±	±	±
TOTAL	1,016	1.8%	2.5%	2.8%	3.0%	3.1%
GENDER: Male	530	2.6%	3.4%	3.9%	4.2%	4.3%
GENDER: Female	487	2.7%	3.6%	4.1%	4.4%	4.4%
AGE: 13-17	93	6.1%	8.1%	9.3%	10.0%	10.2%
AGE: 18-24	96	6.0%	8.0%	9.2%	9.8%	10.0%

AGE: 25-34	187	4.3%	5.7%	6.7%	7.0%	7.2%
AGE: 35-44	180	4.4%	5.8%	6.7%	7.2%	7.3%
AGE: 45-54	179	4.4%	5.9%	6.7%	7.2%	7.3%
AGE: 55-64	136	5.0%	6.7%	7.7%	8.2%	8.4%
AGE: 65-74	115	5.5%	7.3%	8.4%	9.0%	9.1%
AGE: 75+	45	8.8%	11.7%	13.4%	14.3%	14.6%
SEG: AB	286	3.5%	4.6%	5.3%	5.7%	5.8%
SEG: C1	311	3.3%	4.4%	5.1%	5.4%	5.6%
SEG: C2	206	4.1%	5.5%	6.3%	6.7%	6.8%
SEG: DE	207	4.1%	5.4%	6.2%	6.7%	6.8%
ETHNICITY: White	870	2.0%	2.7%	3.0%	3.3%	3.3%
ETHNICITY: Black	23	12.3%	16.3%	18.7%	20.0%	20.4%

Likewise, if 30% or 70% of a sample of 1,016 gives a particular answer, the chances are 95 in 100 that the "true" value will fall within the range of +/- 2.8 percentage points from the sample results.

Differences required for significant at or near these percentages

When results are compared between separate groups within a sample, different results may be obtained. The difference may be "real", or it may occur by chance (because not everyone in the target population has been interviewed). To test if the difference is a real one – i.e. if it is "statistically significant" – we again have to know the size of the samples, the percentages giving a certain answer and the degree of confidence chosen. If we assume "95% confidence interval", the difference between two sample results must be greater than the values given in the tables below to be significant.[6]

Wave 1:

Sample sizes being compared	10% or 90%	20% or 80%	30% or 70%	40% or 60%	50%
	±	±	±	±	±
GENDER: Male v Female (526 v 459)	3.80%	5.10%	5.90%	6.20%	6..30%
AGE: 25-34 v 45-54 (177 v 165)	6.50%	8.60%	9.80%	10.50%	10.60%
SEG: ABC1 v C2DE (574 v 401)	3.90%	5.20%	5.90%	6.30%	6.40%
ETHNICITY: White v Minority Ethnic Background (828 v 138)	5.90%	7.70%	8.50%	9.00%	9.00%

[6] It is important to note that these numbers are estimates. Further testing should be carried out on individual examples to understand whether differences are significant.

Wave 2:

Sample sizes being compared	10% or 90%	20% or 80%	30% or 70%	40% or 60%	50%
	±	±	±	±	±
GENDER: Male v Female (530 v 487)	3.80%	5.00%	5.70%	6.10%	6.20%
AGE: 25-34 v 45-54 (187 v 179)	6.20%	8.40%	9.50%	10.10%	10.30%
SEG: ABC1 v C2DE (597 v 413)	3.90%	5.10%	5.90%	6.20%	6.30%
ETHNICITY: White v Minority Ethnic Background (870 v 137)	5.90%	7.70%	8.50%	9.00%	9.00%

Changes to the questionnaire between waves

Several revisions were made to the questionnaire for Wave 2 in order to align with shifting policy focus. A summary of changes has been included below[7].

Section Label	Question number	Changes made
Profiling and screening	CR1	New parent / carer responsibility question added
VSP Usage	Q2	Removal of question about the extent to which content on a user's feed or homepage has been personalised
Experience of violent, abusive or inappropriate content	Q6b	New question added to gauge awareness of rules or safety measures in place on specific VSPs that respondent uses
Attitudes towards safety measures	Q12b	New question added to gauge attitudes towards responsibility for protecting users and ease of access of safety measures
	P1	New question added to gauge attitudes towards responsibility for protecting users and ease of access of safety measures from perspective of parent / carer (only asked of parents / carers)

[7] For reference, copies of both Wave 1 and 2 questionnaires have been published alongside this report https://www.ofcom.org.uk/research-and-data/online-research/vsp-experiences-and-attitudes

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	Waves 1 & 2	English/ Welsh/ Scottish/ Northern Irish/ British
			Irish
			Gypsy, Traveller or Irish Traveller
			Any other white background
	Mixed/ Multiple ethnic groups / BAME (Wave 1 only)		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		Caribbean
			African
			Any other black/ African/ Caribbean background
	Other ethnic group		Arab
			Any other ethnic background
Religion	Christian	Waves 1 & 2	Catholic
			Church of England / Scotland / Ireland
			Other Christian
	Other religions		Muslim
			Hindu
			Jewish
			Sikh
			Buddhist
			Other religion
	None		No religion

Limiting/Impacting Conditions	Any	Waves 1 & 2	Any reported limiting/impacting condition
	Mental condition	Waves 1 & 2	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, Asperger's, etc.
			Your mental health? Anxiety, depression, or trauma-related conditions, for example
	Physical condition	Waves 1 & 2	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
	None	Waves 1 & 2	Nothing – no impairments or conditions impact or limit your daily activities or the work you can do

Bases and significance testing within published tables

The following was applied to tables from both waves:

- If weighted bases are less than 10 for any total columns or cross-breaks for any of the tables these have been removed

- Added a note on the tables to explain that where data is not shown, this is because the base sizes were too small to allow reliable interpretation of the data.

- We include the following note to tables where relevant: “Data suppressed where weighted base is lower than 10, ** very small base (under 30) ineligible for sig testing, * small base (under 50). Asterisks displayed in the data refer to the effective base, although displayed alongside the weighted base.”

For Wave 2 only:

Due to a software error encountered when applying the above rules, which prevented tabulation, significance testing has been removed from the Ethnicity, Number of people in household, Presence of children in the household, and Highest education crossbreaks, in tables relating to the following questions and platforms:

Q3b. Likeliness to come across harms – OnlyFans

Q4. Protected/unprotected- OnlyFans

Q6b. Awareness of measures - OnlyFans

Q6b. Awareness of measures - Xpanded.com

Q6b. Awareness of measures - TV Girls Plaza

Q6b. Awareness of measures - UK Babe Channels Video

Q6b. Awareness of measures - Fanzworld

Q6b. Awareness of measures - PocketStars

Q6b. Awareness of measures - Admire.Me

Q10. Safety measures - OnlyFans

Significance testing remains in place for all other tables and crossbreaks.