

# Technical report

## VSP Tracker Wave 4 (June 2023)

---

### Preface

This technical report refers to the fourth wave of the VSP Tracker undertaken and completed in June 2023 by YouGov on behalf of Ofcom. 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 [Technical report – VSP Tracker \(Waves 1 & 2, October 2021 and April 2022\)](#).

Wave 3 was completed in January 2023 and was undertaken by YouGov. For more information on Wave 3 please refer to: <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/research-and-data/online-research/vsp-experiences-and-attitudes>.

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

The research focused on awareness and usage of safety features on the following 21 VSPs: **YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, Snapchat, Twitch, Vimeo, Fruitlab, Bitchute, OnlyFans, Recast, Xpanded.com, Fanzworld, PocketStars, Admire.me, Brand New Tube, Thomas Cook, Sponsor Hub, GatorJax, Lemon8, MintStars.** <sup>1</sup>

The research explores:

1. Usage of VSPs;
2. Experiences of potential 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 they would use them again (or not);
5. Attitudes towards protection, responsibility, and protective action regarding the VSPs mentioned above, including the implementation of safety measures, and how long a VSP should have to resolve any breaches of its rules;

---

<sup>1</sup> 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 June 2023. 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>

6. Extent to which VSP users are aware of what is and is not allowed to be posted on various VSPs and where to find that information, as well as the consequences of someone posting something that was not allowed<sup>2</sup>

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 21 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 1,242 interviews were conducted in Wave 4 (1,259 interviews were conducted for Wave 1, 1,243 for Wave 2, and 1,376 for Wave 3).
- Fieldwork for Wave 4 was conducted between 9th June – 20th June 2023.

## Significance testing

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

## The VSP Tracker (Wave 4 June 2023)

---

### Introduction

YouGov interviewed a sample of 1,242 UK internet users aged 13 to 84 years old in order to understand their awareness and experiences of the safety measures and tools available to them on VSPs specifically. Fieldwork for **Wave 4** was carried out between 9<sup>th</sup> June – 20<sup>th</sup> June.

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 applied to low incidence user groups of the following VSPs: BitChute,

---

<sup>2</sup> The [Wave 4 questionnaire](#) has been published alongside this technical report.

Fruitlab, Recast, Xpanded.com, Fanzworld, PocketStars, AdmireMe, Brand New Tube, Sponsor Hub, GatorJax, Lemon8 and MintStars. 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 by panellists every 6 months. The exact wording of each of the questions used can be found in the [Wave 4 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.<sup>3</sup> 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 4** were conducted between 9<sup>th</sup> June – 20<sup>th</sup> June.

Due to the sensitive nature of some of the topics covered by the research (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)

---

<sup>3</sup> Boosts applied to the following VSPs: BitChute, Fruitlab, Recast, Xpanded.com, Fanzworld, PocketStars, AdmireMe, Brand New Tube, Sponsor Hub, GatorJax, Lemon8 and MintStars.

participants, informed consent was obtained before research began by both parents and children. Furthermore, some VSPs<sup>4</sup> 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 VSPs 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 4 individually.

### Wave 4: Sample representativeness

The following table shows both the initial unweighted sample and the final weighted sample profiles from Wave 4:

Demographic group	Unweighted counts	Unweighted %	Weighted counts	Weighted %
<b>Male</b>	626	50%	636	51
<b>Female</b>	616	50%	606	49
<b>13-17</b>	72	6%	73	6
<b>18-24</b>	151	12%	154	12
<b>25-34</b>	222	18%	232	19
<b>35-44</b>	226	18%	219	18
<b>45-54</b>	226	18%	212	17
<b>55+</b>	345	28%	353	28
<b>Scotland</b>	92	7%	94	8
<b>Wales</b>	68	5%	64	5
<b>Northern Ireland</b>	35	3%	26	2
<b>North East</b>	48	4%	49	4
<b>North West</b>	147	12%	145	12

<sup>4</sup> This included BitChute, OnlyFans, Brand New Tube, MintStars, Xpanded.com, Fanzworld, PocketStars and AdmireMe .

Demographic group	Unweighted counts	Unweighted %	Weighted counts	Weighted %
<b>Yorkshire and the Humber</b>	97	8%	99	8
<b>West Midlands</b>	115	9%	115	9
<b>East Midlands</b>	88	7%	88	7
<b>East of England</b>	108	9%	109	9
<b>London</b>	188	15%	185	15
<b>South East</b>	159	13%	169	14
<b>South West</b>	97	8%	101	8
<b>AB</b>	396	32%	388	31
<b>C1</b>	353	28%	354	29
<b>C2</b>	227	18%	241	19
<b>DE</b>	266	21%	259	21

## Changes to the questionnaire between wave 3 and 4

The following table shows both the initial unweighted sample and the final weighted sample profiles from Wave 4:

Minor revisions were made to the questionnaire for Wave 4 in order to align with changes to the VSPs Ofcom regulates. A summary of changes has been included below<sup>5</sup>.

Section Label	Question number	Changes made
VSP Usage	Q1, Q9, Q10, Q20	New VSPs added and VSPs removed to align with current list of VSPs Ofcom regulates

<sup>5</sup> For reference, please use the following link to access copies of both Wave 3 and Wave 4 questionnaires: <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
Ethnicity	White	Wave 4	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
			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

Category	NET	Wave	Definition
			Chinese
			Any other Asian background
			Black and Black British
	African		
	Caribbean		
	Any other Black / African / Caribbean background		
	Other ethnic group		
<b>Religion</b>	Christian	Wave 4	Roman Catholic
			Church of England / Scotland / Ireland
			Presbyterian/Church of Scotland
			Methodist
			Baptist
			Orthodox Christian
			Pentecostal
			Evangelical
			United Reformed Church
			Free Presbyterian
			Brethren
			Muslim
			Other religions
	Hinduism		
	Islam		
	Sikhism		
	Buddhism		
	Other		
	None		No religion
	Prefer not to say		Prefer not to say

Category	NET	Wave	Definition
<b>Limiting/Impacting Conditions</b>	Any	Wave 4	Any reported limiting/impacting condition
	Mental condition	Wave 4	Your mental health? Anxiety, depression, or trauma-related conditions, for example
			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, Asperger's, etc.
None	Wave 4	Nothing – no impairments or conditions impact or limit your daily activities or the work you can do	