

# Technical report – VSP Tracker Wave 6 (August 2024)

## Preface

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Wave 6 of the VSP Tracker (2024) was undertaken by YouGov on behalf of Ofcom. This report refers to the sixth wave of the tracker completed in August 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](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, Wave 4 was conducted in June 2023 and Wave 5 was conducted in February 2024. All 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/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](https://www.ofcom.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0027/267075/vsp-tracker-Wave-4-technical-report.pdf)

<https://www.ofcom.org.uk/siteassets/resources/documents/research-and-data/online-research/vsp/tracker/Wave-5/vsp-tracker-Wave-5-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 22 VSPs: **YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, Snapchat, Twitch, Vimeo, Fruitlab, Bitchute, OnlyFans, Recast, Xpanded.com, Fanzworld, Admire.me, Onevsp (formerly Brand New Tube), Thomas Cook, Sponsor Hub, GatorJax, MintStars, Fansify, SoSpoilt, Sesire.**<sup>1</sup>

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<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 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>

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, how protected users feel when using these sites/apps and reasons why users feel protected 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 22 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 1,155 interviews were conducted in Wave 6 (1,259 interviews were conducted for Wave 1, 1,243 interviews were conducted for Wave 2, 1,376 interviews were conducted for Wave 3, 1,242 interviews were conducted for Wave 4 and 1,271 interviews were conducted for Wave 5).
- Fieldwork for Wave 6 was conducted between 6<sup>th</sup>– 15<sup>th</sup> August 2024.

## Significance Testing

Significance testing for Wave 6 of the **VSP Tracker** has been applied at 95% for the purposes of analysis. Significance testing has been applied at 99% confidence level when comparing wave on wave data.

## The VSP Tracker (Wave 6 August 2024)

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### Introduction

YouGov interviewed a sample of 1,155 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 6** was carried out between 6<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> August.

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, AdmireMe, Onevsp (formerly Brand New Tube), Sponsor Hub, GatorJax, MintStars, Fansify, 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 6 questionnaire [here](#).

### 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>2</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 6** were conducted between 6<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> August.

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<sup>3</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 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 6 individually.

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<sup>2</sup> Boosts applied to the following VSPs: BitChute, OnlyFans, Fruitlab, Recast, Xpanded.com, Fanzworld, AdmireMe, Onevsp (formerly Brand New Tube), Sponsor Hub, GatorJax, MintStars, Fansify, SoSpoilt, Sesire.

<sup>3</sup> VSPs not shown to under 18s include: BitChute, OnlyFans, Onevsp (formerly Brand New Tube), MintStars, Xpanded.com, Fanzworld, Admire.Me, Fansify, SoSpoilt, Sesire

## Wave 6: Sample Representativeness

The following table shows both the initial unweighted sample and the final weighted sample profiles from Wave 6:

Demographic group	Unweighted counts	Unweighted %	Weighted counts	Weighted %
<b>Male</b>	593	51%	586	51%
<b>Female</b>	562	49%	569	49%
<b>13-17</b>	68	6%	70	6%
<b>18-24</b>	130	11%	125	11%
<b>25-34</b>	246	21%	249	22%
<b>35-44</b>	196	17%	195	17%
<b>45-54</b>	182	16%	192	17%
<b>55+</b>	333	29%	324	28%
<b>Scotland</b>	93	8%	94	8%
<b>Wales</b>	53	5%	55	5%
<b>Northern Ireland</b>	30	3%	24	2%
<b>North East</b>	34	3%	42	4%
<b>North West</b>	128	11%	126	11%
<b>Yorkshire and the Humber</b>	88	8%	87	8%
<b>West Midlands</b>	102	9%	101	9%
<b>East Midlands</b>	82	7%	76	7%
<b>East of England</b>	103	9%	102	9%
<b>London</b>	187	16%	190	16%
<b>South East</b>	152	13%	162	14%
<b>South West</b>	103	9%	96	8%
<b>AB</b>	389	34%	354	31%
<b>C1</b>	334	29%	338	29%
<b>C2</b>	212	18%	225	19%

Demographic group	Unweighted counts	Unweighted %	Weighted counts	Weighted %
DE	220	19%	238	21%

## Changes to the questionnaire between Wave 5 and 6

Several revisions were made in Wave 6. These changes include the removal of some VSPs (Lemon8, PocketStars and RevealMe) and the addition of new questions to investigate reasons why users felt protected from violent, abusive or inappropriate videos when using these sites or apps:

Section Label	Question number	Changes made
VSP Usage	Q1	VSPs removed to align with current list of VSPs that Ofcom regulates. These were reflected at the relevant questions throughout.
Reasons for feeling protected from violent, abusive or inappropriate videos when using these sites or apps	Q4b	New question for Wave 6
Reasons for feeling protected from violent, abusive or inappropriate videos when using these sites or apps (Open end question requesting further information from those who selected 'Other' at Q4b)	Q4b_Other	New question for Wave 6
Reasons why parents feel as though their child/children is protected from violent, abusive or inappropriate videos when using sites or apps	Q25b	New question for Wave 6

## 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	
<b>Break Group 1: Demographics</b>				
<b>Ethnicity</b>	White	Wave 6	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			

Category	NET	Wave	Definition
	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
<b>Religion</b>	Christian	Wave 6	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		
	None		Other
			No religion

Category	NET	Wave	Definition
	Prefer not to say		Prefer not to say
<b>Limiting/Impacting Conditions</b>	Any	Wave 6	Any reported limiting/impacting condition
	Mental condition	Wave 6	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.
	None	Wave 6	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)

## Coding of open-end responses at Q7

*Q7 (What sort of rules or safety measures are you aware of these sites or apps having in place? please provide as much detail as you can recall)* - is an open ended response question within the survey, though, respondent comments have been coded in categories/ themes within the tables to aid analysis.

In Wave 6, the coding framework for this question was revised to ensure specific rules/ measures were captured. To allow for wave-on-wave comparison, Wave 5 coding was also updated to reflect the new framework.