

# Technical report

## VSP Tracker Wave 3 (January 2023)

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### Preface

Wave 3 of the VSP Tracker (2022) was undertaken by YouGov on behalf of Ofcom. This report refers to the third wave of the tracker completed in January 2023. The first wave was completed in October 2021 and the second wave completed 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).

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 20 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, Freyja.**<sup>1</sup>

The research explores:

1. Usage of VSPs
2. Experience 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 again (or not)
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.
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>

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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 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 November 2022. 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>

<sup>2</sup> The Wave 3 questionnaire has been published alongside this technical report and is 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** 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 20 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 1,376 interviews were conducted in Wave 3 (1,259 interviews were conducted for Wave 1, and 1,243 interviews were conducted for Wave 2).
- Fieldwork for Wave 3 was conducted between 5<sup>th</sup> January – 25<sup>th</sup> January

## Significance testing

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

## The VSP tracker (Wave 3 January 2023)

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### Introduction

YouGov interviewed a sample of 1,376 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 3** was carried out between 5th January – 25th January.

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: OnlyFans, BitChute, Fruitlab, Recast, Xpanded.com, Fanzworld, PocketStars, AdmireMe, Brand New Tube, Sponsor Hub, GatorJax and Freyja. 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 way

- 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 were not spamming answers.

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 3 questionnaire](#).

## 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 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 3** were conducted between 5<sup>th</sup> January – 25<sup>th</sup> January.

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>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.

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

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

## 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.

The following sections provide information on the sample representativeness for Wave 3 individually.

### Wave 4: Sample representativeness

The following table shows both the initial unweighted sample and the final weighted sample profiles from Wave 3:

Demographic group	Unweighted counts	Unweighted %	Weighted counts	Weighted %
<b>Male</b>	685	50	693	51
<b>Female</b>	687	50	679	50
<b>13-17</b>	81	6	80	6
<b>18-24</b>	154	11	155	11
<b>25-34</b>	262	19	258	19
<b>35-44</b>	245	18	242	18
<b>45-54</b>	251	18	242	18
<b>55+</b>	383	28	401	29
<b>Scotland</b>	116	8	107	8
<b>Wales</b>	61	4	65	5
<b>Northern Ireland</b>	38	3	27	2
<b>North East</b>	53	4	52	4
<b>North West</b>	160	12	161	12
<b>Yorkshire and the Humber</b>	122	9	116	8
<b>West Midlands</b>	116	8	123	9
<b>East Midlands</b>	100	7	96	7
<b>East of England</b>	117	9	119	9

Demographic group	Unweighted counts	Unweighted %	Weighted counts	Weighted %
<b>London</b>	198	14	202	15
<b>South East</b>	168	12	185	13
<b>South West</b>	127	9	124	9
<b>AB</b>	455	33	447	33
<b>C1</b>	372	27	380	28
<b>C2</b>	257	19	263	19
<b>DE</b>	292	21	286	21

## Changes to the questionnaire between wave 2 and 3

Several revisions were made to the questionnaire for Wave 3 in order to align with shifting policy focus. A summary of changes has been included below<sup>5</sup>.

Section Label	Question number	Changes made
<b>Profiling and screening</b>	Age	New questions used
	Gender	
	Social grade	
	Ethnicity	
	Religion	
	Region	
	Highest education	
	Size of dwelling	
	Working status	
	Household income	
Number of people in the household	Removed	

<sup>5</sup> For reference, please use the following links to access copies of both [Wave 2 and 3 questionnaires](#).

<b>Section Label</b>	<b>Question number</b>	<b>Changes made</b>
	Internet usage	Removed
	Device used to access internet	Removed
<b>VSP Usage</b>	Q1	New VSPs added and VSPs removed to align with current list of VSPs Ofcom regulates
<b>Extent to which users feel these sites protect their users</b>	Q6c	New question added to gauge the quality of safety measures in place on specific VSPs that respondent uses
<b>Awareness of the individual safety measures on VSPs</b>	Q10	Wording for some of the safety measures has been updated to improve respondents' understanding
<b>Ease of locating reporting tools</b>	Q11	Wording of the answer options has been updated
<b>Likelihood to use reporting tools again</b>	Q11b	New question added to understand the likelihood to use the reporting buttons/mechanisms again
<b>Why they would use reporting tools again</b>	Q11c	New question added to understand the reasons why users would use the reporting buttons/mechanisms again
<b>Why they would not use reporting tools again</b>	Q11d	New question added to gauge the reasons behind not wanting to use the reporting buttons/mechanisms again
<b>Attitudes towards safety measures</b>	Q12b	Question about the extent of current regulations removed; question about ease to flag/report removed
<b>Awareness of what is allowed to be posted on sites/apps</b>	Q20	New question added to understand awareness of what is allowed to be posted on VSPs

Section Label	Question number	Changes made
<b>Actions expected to happen if post something not allowed</b>	Q21	List updated
<b>Awareness of where to find information about what allowed to post</b>	Q22	New question added to understand if users are aware where to find information about what they are allowed to post on VSPs

## 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>Ethnicity</b>	White	Wave 3	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

Category	NET	Wave	Definition	
			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			
	<b>Religion</b>	Christian	Wave 3	Roman Catholic
				Church of England / Scotland / Ireland
				Presbyterian/Church of Scotland
Methodist				
Baptist				
Orthodox Christian				
Pentecostal				
Evangelical				
United Reformed Church				
Free Presbyterian				
Brethren				



Category	NET	Wave	Definition
	Muslim		Muslim
	Other religions		Judaism
		Hinduism	
		Islam	
		Sikhism	
		Buddhism	
		Other	
	None		No religion
	Prefer not to say		Prefer not to say
<b>Limiting/Impacting Conditions</b>	Any	Wave 3	Any reported limiting/impacting condition
	Mental condition	Wave 3	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 3	Nothing – no impairments or conditions impact or limit your daily activities or the work you can do	