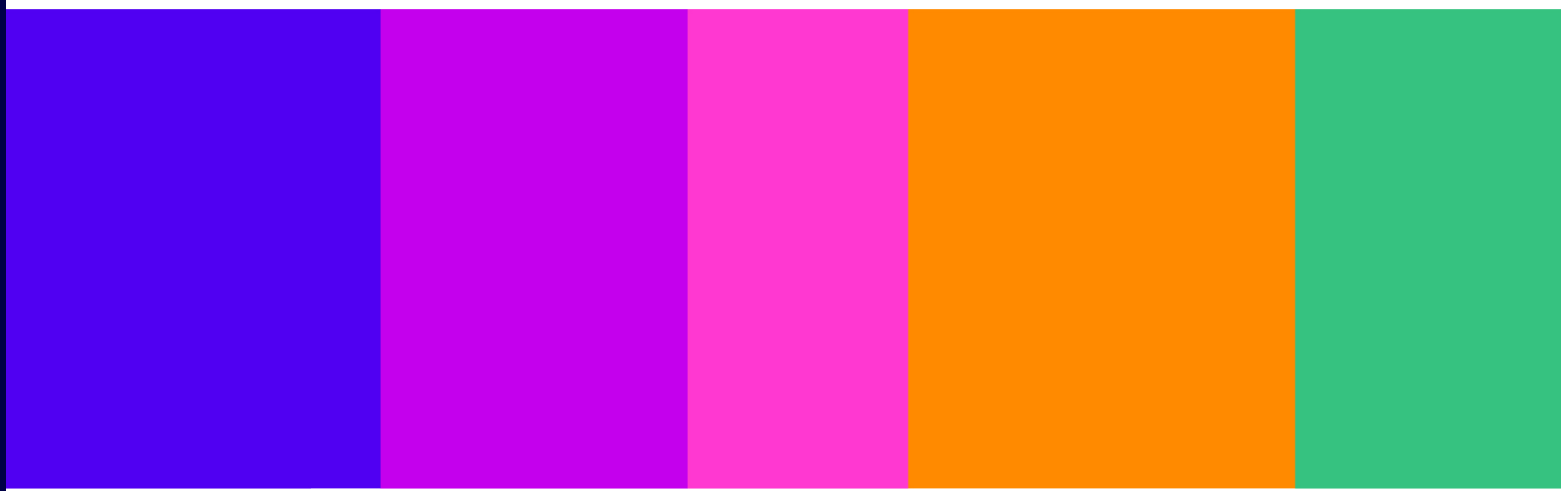


Children who create and view livestreams

Research reports overview

Summary Report

Published 21 May 2026



Ofcom Foreword

This research was commissioned to examine the motivations, experiences, benefits and risks of livestreaming to children. We undertook qualitative research to speak directly with children and young people about their experiences of livestreaming, and quantitative research to help understand the wider context of livestreaming behaviours among children overall.¹ This aligns with Ofcom’s commitment to ensuring that our policies are rooted in children’s experiences and with our broader commitment to evidence-based policy and regulation.

The research presents a complex picture of children’s engagement with livestreaming. For many children, livestreams are part of their online content consumption. Over a quarter say they have created a livestream themselves, with a high proportion of these children doing so recently and regularly. Our qualitative reports focus on children who are frequent and regular livestream viewers and creators, and describes their engagement with the format, their experiences, and how these differ from recorded video content. These children told us that the live nature of the livestreaming format and its associated interaction features such as chat and polls had advantages as it felt more authentic and, compared to recorded video, provided a stronger sense of connection with others, however these features also posed risks.

The research highlights ways in which the real-time nature of livestreaming could present issues. The children we spoke to talked about the limited control of and ability to predict interactions, instances of unwanted contact, and pressure to perform or remain visible. Some younger creators (under 15-years-old) were less aware that anyone could access their livestreams and the potential risks relating to this e.g. the risk that viewers may be dishonest about their true identity. This lack of understanding of online risk is also described in our *‘Child development ages, stages and online behaviour’* report², which indicates that younger children tend to have a limited ability to critically evaluate information or others’ intentions and may overestimate their ability to cope with challenges online.

In several instances, children in our qualitative sample said they were creating livestreams on platforms whose terms of service state that children of their age are not permitted to livestream.³ Findings from the quantitative research, while based on claimed behaviour, appear to suggest that this occurs more widely. This is particularly concerning given that services themselves have set a minimum age to their service or this functionality, which indicates that they consider livestreaming inappropriate for children of certain ages.

Overall, the findings underscore the distinct risk profile of livestreaming for children, in relation to unwanted contact from strangers, inability to control interactions and the pressure to perform and remain visible to the audience, when compared with other forms of online content and interaction. This research makes an important contribution to our ongoing assessment of the risks and benefits of livestreaming for children and helps to inform policies on how to protect children.

¹ For more detail about the research conducted, see ‘research coverage’ in this document

² Link to report: [Child development ages, stages and online behaviour: Overview of research and evidence, Ofcom 2024](#)

³ For this qualitative study, we spoke to children and young people aged 10-19. Whilst age restrictions for creating livestreams vary across services, there were several instances where children in the research were using platforms to livestream whose age restrictions at the time were higher than their age.

Research findings

Research coverage

The summary in this document draws together findings from three separate pieces of research among children relating to livestreaming, each with different objectives, a different sample and methodology.⁴ This research was conducted by Beano Brain on behalf of Ofcom and comprised UK-wide quantitative surveys which collected data on children's livestream viewing and creation, alongside two qualitative studies (using in-depth interviews) with children and young people who regularly view or create livestreams.

- The **quantitative** research provides information on the prevalence of livestreaming (viewing and creating livestreams) among two UK representative samples of children aged 8-17 (and parents).⁵
- **Qualitative research comprised of two studies:** one among regular viewers of livestreams, and alongside that, a study among regular creators of livestreams.⁶ Both studies explored how the children we spoke with **created and consumed** livestreamed content, the **motivations** behind these behaviours, and what they perceived as the **risks and benefits** involved.

More information on where to find these full reports, which include detailed analysis, is in the table in the Appendix

Overall summary of research findings

This summary presents key data from quantitative surveys on children's (and parents') self-reported behaviours and attitudes. This is presented alongside findings on the lived experiences, motivations, and perceptions of livestreaming, as described in detail by the children and young people we interviewed.

However, please note that, due to sample design and coverage, inferences should not be drawn from quantitative research to qualitative data, or vice versa.⁷

⁴ Full details relating to data collection, sample and analysis can be found in the individual research reports – see links in the Appendix of this document

⁵ Quantitative data in this programme of research are drawn from two quantitative UK-representative surveys of 8-17-year-olds. The first survey was conducted in July-August 2025 with 2,007 children aged 8-17 (recruited with permission of their parents/guardians). The second survey was conducted in October - November 2025 with 1,490 parents of children aged 8-17, and their child aged 8-17. For more details on sample and data collection see the full report (link in Appendix).

⁶ 20 children and young people aged 10 to 19 who create livestreams at least once a month were interviewed, alongside 20 children aged 11 to 17 who view livestreams at least once a month. Fieldwork was conducted between August-December 2025. For more details on sample and data collection see the full report (link in Appendix).

⁷ The qualitative research describes the experiences and attitudes of children who view and create livestreams, whom we spoke to, but may not reflect what may be most typical or the viewpoints of all children undertaking those activities. Recruitment targeted recent and frequent viewers and creators of livestreams. The sample parameters were also designed to cover a variety of platforms, content, and feature and functionality usage, rather than be a proportionally representative sample of livestream viewers and creators. Findings from the qualitative research, specifically regarding viewers and creators, will be presented in italics

1. Viewing and creating livestreams among children aged 8-17

(Note that these findings are based on how children responded to survey questions about livestreaming, based on a description, rather than a verified measure of actual behaviour.⁸)

Quantitative data indicates that livestreaming is a mainstream viewing activity among children, though fewer livestream their own videos: 71% children aged 8-17 said they had ever watched a livestream (including both live (49%) and recorded (34%) livestreams), while 28% said they had ever livestreamed their own video. Livestreaming behaviours overlap: almost all children who said they had ever livestreamed also said they had watched livestreams (96%), while a smaller share of livestream viewers said they had ever created them (37%).

2. What differentiates livestreaming from recorded content for children

The qualitative research highlights, for the children we spoke to, what differentiates livestreaming from recorded content, and identifies distinct dimensions of viewing and creating. While 'live' is central to how children describe what makes livestreaming distinctive, quantitative survey data indicate that livestreams are not always watched in real-time: among 8-17s, around half have watched livestreams live (49%) and around a third have watched recorded livestreams (34%). Most viewers tend to watch either live-only (37%) or recorded-only (22%), while watching both is less common (12%).

Research participants who regularly viewed livestreams (*viewers*) described the format as distinct from watching any recorded content because of perceived authenticity, longer-form 'hanging out', and real-time interaction with creators and other viewers, which could make watching feel more engaging and social. Similarly, the regular livestream creators we spoke to (*creators*) appreciated the spontaneity and interactive nature of the live format, with some *creators* perceiving livestreaming as more accessible and lower-effort to start than producing edited videos, while still offering real-time feedback and connection with audiences.

In the qualitative research, there are also examples of perceived downsides and negative experiences which come with the unique 'live' format, as seen in section 7 below.

3. Children's motivations for creating and viewing livestreams

Quantitative findings on creating livestreams indicate that 8-17-year-olds who livestream value the activity primarily for enjoyment and social connection. Among recent livestream creators, the most

to emphasise that these findings are based on the particular samples of viewers and creators interviewed, rather than representing all creators and viewers.

⁸ A description was included in the survey to support children's understanding of the livestreaming questions. This description was based on livestreaming as a **one-to-many, real-time communication**. However, it is important to recognise that, in some cases, children may have interpreted this more broadly to include other types of real-time communication activities that involve overlapping or alternative formats such as video calls. **Therefore, caution should be exercised when interpreting livestreaming prevalence data as representative of the overall population (even when applying confidence intervals).**

commonly selected reasons for 'liking' livestreaming⁹ were that it is 'entertaining/fun' (51%), followed by 'I can chat with my friends' (42%) and 'it can help pass time' (34%). Smaller proportions selected 'I can make money' (20%) and 'I get gifts' (20%).

In the qualitative research, *creators* described the social atmosphere, community dynamics, and the shared 'live' experience of livestreaming, which was perceived as more engaging because it is unpredictable and happens "with others" in real time.

4. Interactivity and platform features: chat, reactions, rewards and monetisation

The quantitative research suggests that engagement with livestreaming among children aged 8-17 could be characterised as 'interactive' rather than 'passive'. A majority of children (72%) who said they had watched a livestream when it was live, reported that they had undertaken one interactive activity; 42% used emojis/reactions, 27% took part in polls, and 26% joined live chat, while 12% said they had sent a gift and 9% said they had bought something in a livestream. Among recent child livestream creators, 64% said they had used emojis/reactions while livestreaming and 59% reported using the live chat. The data also indicates some engagement with monetisation-related features among *creators*, including features related to in-app gifts (48%) and people paying to subscribe (38%)¹⁰.

The qualitative research provides examples of how these features may be used by children and the motivations behind this. *Viewers* described using (interacting with and/or reading) the live chat to gauge other viewers' reactions, ask questions, and seek recognition from creators; some engaged actively, while others preferred to read it only, and some avoided the chat entirely. *Viewers* also described how features such as polls, channel points, subscribing/membership and gifting can be used to influence streams, support creators and access perks, and how incentives like 'like goals' or rewards can encourage longer viewing sessions for some. *Creators* described using chat, polls, gifting/co-lives and rewards to build interaction and community; and provide accounts of how they engage with gifts/subscriptions and how these can shape motivations and experiences of going live.

5. Platforms and content: what children watch and what they livestream

Gaming is the dominant content type overall among children aged 8-17, both in viewing and in creating livestreams. Among children who had recently livestreamed, 53% said they had livestreamed gaming content, and boys were more likely than girls to report gaming as a livestream topic (64% vs.39%). For viewing, 63% of children who watch live livestreams said they have watched gaming content, with boys more likely than girls to say they do this (78% vs. 45%). The data also suggests a range of other livestream genres are in circulation (e.g., performing, arts and crafts,

⁹ All questions in the survey had lists of options for children to select from rather than free-form questions. For example, questions for 'likes' and 'dislikes' of livestreaming included options for children to select from, including 'other', 'nothing', 'don't know' and 'don't understand the question'.

¹⁰ Based on a response of 'I have used this feature whilst livestreaming', interpretation may vary from features being available for viewers but not being used, as well as those which are being actively used on a stream.

GRWM (Get Ready With Me), Q&As, unboxing¹¹), with girls more likely than boys to report several of these content types, and to combine multiple topics.

Qualitative findings suggest that platform choice is connected to what viewers and creators are trying to do in the moment. *Viewers* described TikTok and Instagram Lives as convenient for dipping in while already using the app (often linked to lifestyle, shopping or GRWM-style content), while Twitch was framed as purpose-built for livestream viewing with deeper interaction features and community dynamics. *Creators* described different perceived advantages across platforms (e.g., simplicity and discoverability on TikTok vs. the sophistication of Twitch for gaming), and how some navigated or bypassed platform age restrictions, for example by using their parent's account or by inputting a fake date of birth.

6. Livestreaming audiences

Among children aged 8-17 who had recently livestreamed, 69% said they streamed to 'people I know' (friends/family)¹² were more likely than girls to say they streamed to anyone (45% vs. 31%).

Creators described feeling uncertain about who is watching their livestreams, a feeling that was particularly noticeable for some. This uncertainty includes concerns about unknown viewers, the possibility of being silently observed, and the possibility that their content will be recorded and shared outside the original stream. For others, there appeared to be a lack of understanding that anyone could access their livestreams - particularly among younger *creators*. For example, one child assumed that those who approached her on social media were always being truthful about who they were.

Some *viewers* similarly highlighted how they experience large-scale live environments (including fast-moving chats and sometimes weak moderation) and may adjust their engagement accordingly, e.g., by disengaging from the chat.

7. Dislikes, perceived risks and how children describe managing them

In the quantitative survey, three-quarters (75%) of recent livestream creators aged 8-17 selected at least one dislike about livestreaming. The most commonly selected individual dislike was that 'it can take up too much time' (22%). Some dislikes related to unease or concern (e.g., feeling uncomfortable, worried or scared, or disliking messages/comments), and 46% of recent creators selected at least one of these as a reason to dislike livestreaming.

The qualitative research can provide further context on why the live format can be experienced as harder to control than recorded content. *Viewers* describe accounts of unpredictability (not knowing what will happen before tuning in), negative experiences emerging from the live chat and other viewers' behaviour, and the time pressure that can make it difficult to respond in the moment (as this could disrupt the viewing experience) or to evidence/report any negatives experiences after a livestream ends. *Creators* similarly describe perceived risks linked to livestreaming (e.g., the inability to edit, the challenge of moderating the live chat while multitasking, and concerns about who is

¹¹Performing (e.g. singing, dancing, musical instrument), Arts and Crafts (e.g. drawing, painting, crocheting), GRWM ("get ready with me") and ASMR (Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response) content.

¹²Note: Children may have interpreted this question by thinking about the audience who views the streams and not the audience that may be able to view the stream.

watching), alongside accounts of protective and reactive strategies such as using moderators, filtering words, limiting personal information, or leaving/ending streams.

8. Parents' perspectives on livestreaming

Findings from the quantitative research suggest that parents of 8-17-year-olds hold a range of opinions about livestreaming, and that, for some parents, there is a distinction between viewing and creating livestreams. A higher proportion of parents said that the risks outweighed benefits for creating livestreams (41% risk vs. 25% benefit), however parents' responses were evenly balanced for children viewing livestreams (33% risk vs. 32% benefit). A majority of parents (63%) indicated that there should be age restrictions for viewing livestreams and 70% for creating livestreams. Among those who supported restrictions, the average¹³ age suggested was 14 for viewing and 16 for creating livestreams.

Approximately one in five parents¹⁴ whose child had a negative experience online in the last six months said this was when their child was watching (22%)¹⁵ or creating (20%) livestreams.

¹³ The **median** is the value that lies in the **middle of an ordered set of numbers**.

¹⁴ 18% of parents told us that their child had a negative experience online in the last 6 months.

¹⁵ [Children's Online Safety Tracker \(wave 2\)](#): 9% of 11-17-year-olds who had been exposed to harmful content online (PPC/ PC content - see report link for more details) in the last 4 weeks (73% of children had been exposed to at least one type of harm online) said that this was when they were watching a livestream. The following differences between the studies will contribute to the difference. **Time period**: 4 weeks (Children's Online Safety Tracker) vs. 6 months (Children's Interaction with Online Functionalities). **Research participant**: child (Children's Online Safety Tracker) vs. parent (Children's Interaction with Online Functionalities). **Definition**: of livestreaming, and a specific experience of harmful content (Children's Online Safety Tracker) vs. a more general 'negative experience' (Children's Interaction with Online Functionalities).

Appendix

Figure 1: List of research reports and related documents

| Title | Type of document | Focus | Description |
|---|------------------|------------------------------|--|
| Report 1: Research among children and young people who create livestreams | Report | Livestream creators | Findings and supporting methodological information related to <u>qualitative</u> deep dives into 20 livestream creators aged 8-19 |
| Annex A | Field materials | Livestream creators | Task given to children to complete prior to in-depth interview with the Beano Brain researcher |
| Annex B | Field materials | Livestream creators | Discussion guide used in the research among children and young people who create livestreams research |
| Report 2: Research among children and young people who view livestreams | Report | Livestream viewers | Findings and supporting methodological information related to <u>qualitative</u> deep dives into 20 livestream viewers aged 8-17 |
| Annex C | Field materials | Livestream viewers | Discussion guide used in the research among children and young people who create livestreams research |
| Annex D | Field materials | Livestream viewers | Task given to children to complete prior to in-depth interview with the Beano Brain researcher |
| Report 3. Children's usage of livestreaming: viewing and creating | Report | Livestream creators, viewers | Findings and supporting methodological information related to livestreaming taken from <u>quantitative</u> surveys of children aged 8-17 and parents of children aged 8-17 |
| Annex E part 1 and part 2 | Field materials | Livestream creators, viewers | The questionnaires used in the children's usage of online functionalities, part 1 and 2 surveys |
| Annex F part 1 and part 2 | Data tables | Livestream creators, viewers | Data tabulations of children's usage of online functionalities, parts 1 and 2 |