Children's Passive Online Measurement

Pornography services

Report

Published 15 July 2026

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Section

Introduction

Ofcom is the regulator for online safety in the UK. Our role is to make sure online services, like websites and apps, meet their duties to protect their users under the Online Safety Act 2023 ('the Act'). To support this work, it is essential that we have a robust evidence base on people's – including children's - online experiences, which services they are using, and for how long. It is for this reason that Ofcom has carried out the Children's Passive Online Measurement (CPOM) study. The aim of CPOM is to measure the internet use of UK children aged 8-14. We conducted a nationally representative sample for the first time in 2025 and this was published in our first CPOM study report in June 2025. We then conducted a second phase of the study, with our findings published in our second CPOM study report in May 2026. This is a supplementary report following our May 2026 report specifically exploring the data from the second phase of the study to explore children's visits to pornography services.

In this study we collected data from a nationally representative sample of 701 children, passively measuring their use of websites and apps across the smartphones, tablets and computers that they use to go online. Based on the learnings from our initial study we have refined the methodology. As is standard in research, changes and improvements to the fieldwork and data processing are implemented over time, especially with such a novel approach, and we have made changes since our first phase report. For this reason, comparisons to the phase one study have not been made. However, there were five panellists that took part in both phases and visited pornography services in both phases. Their visits to online pornographic services from both phases are explored in the report.

The Act introduced requirements for providers of user-to-user online pornographic services (Part 3) to implement highly effective age assurance to prevent children from encountering primary priority content[1] (including pornography). For services that publish or display their own pornographic content (Part 5 services), this requirement came into effect from January 2025 and for user-to-user services from July 2025. The study took place once the duties on Part 5 and Part 3 services were in place (October 2025-March 2026). We use the term 'pornography services' in the remainder of this report to include both Part 3 and Part 5 services. The online pornography services market is large and highly fragmented. Ofcom estimates there are around 20,000 pornography services being visited by users from the UK and therefore likely to be in scope of the OSA.[2]

All research methods are subject to non-response bias, so although the sampling and weighting ensures that the data is demographically representative of UK online children aged 8-14, the sample is still defined by those who are willing to take part. Monitoring research such as this is also subject to the Hawthorne effect, whereby participants adapt their behaviour because they know they are being tracked, even though they are told that the data will be anonymised. Although this is likely to diminish over time, as participants forget they are being tracked, it is possible that some data may be affected.

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[1] Online Safety Act 2023, s 61(1) defines, "Primary priority content that is harmful to children" as including, among other types of content, pornographic content, save for the following types of content are expressly excluded from the definition of pornographic content that is content which: consists only of text, or consists only of text accompanied by—(i)identifying content which consists only of text, (ii)other identifying content which is not itself pornographic content, (iii)a GIF which is not itself pornographic content, (iv)an emoji or other symbol, or (v)any combination of content mentioned in sub-paragraphs (i) to (iv).

[2] Ofcom modelling using Similarweb services tagged as 'adult'.

Some panellists may have used VPNs[3] during the study. On iOS devices, turning on a personal VPN automatically turns off the passive VPN tracker used for data collection. If a panellist then later re-enables the study's tracker, any internet activity that occurred while it was deactivated would not be captured. As a result, some usage may be under-reported.

Attention: Data interpretation

There are a few important considerations to keep in mind in the interpretation of this data.

In this study, by 'visit' we mean that a website or app was opened on a tracked device for at least one second.[4]

Importantly a "visit" does not necessarily mean that the person viewed pornography. For example, it includes visits where the only page seen was a notice to complete an age-check, or a message saying the site was not available in the UK because of geo-blocking.

Similarly, the passive tracking technology used in this study does not record whether someone actually viewed pornographic content. Instead, we use measures such as how often sites are visited, the length of visits, how people navigate within a session, and patterns of use across services to estimate the likelihood that pornographic content was viewed.

Within the 8% of online 8-14-year-olds who had visited pornography services in our study, there was one child who accounted for more than half of the total time that all children spent on these sites. This data has been removed from the aggregate statistics set out in this report and their behaviour is explored separately.

How pornography services deploy age checks, including where the check takes place, is varied. Ofcom has mapped the services that appear in this data set to their associated type of age assurance gate. For most of these services the information is correct as of May 2026, however where it is known that the age gate type was different during the CPOM fieldwork period, the age gate type during the fieldwork has been applied to the analysis. For instance, xHamster's age-gate placement was 'In-Video' from August 2025 to 1 January 2026. At this point xHamster changed to an Image gate with video previews. All the visits during the study to xHamster were during the service having in-video gate. The type of age gate can have implications on the time spent by a visitor to the service. Placing age checks further along a user's journey on the site results in more time being spent on the site. The report examines visits to services alongside the placement of age checks. The gate types in the table below are referred to in the report.

To avoid highlighting services, that do not have age assurance in place, pornography services without age assurance in place are not named.

Some pornography services identified in the study are geo-blocked, this is where a restriction applied by a service to prevent access from users in specific geographic locations, such as the United Kingdom. Geo-block is not a form of age assurance compliance.

[3] A virtual private network (VPN) creates an encrypted connection that hides a device's online activity and location. Ofcom research shows 25% of GB children aged 11-17 say they have used a VPN in the six months prior to fieldwork. Ofcom, 2026. Children's Use of VPNs

[4] Visits of less than one second are not counted to limit the impact of advertising pop ups and other redirects in the final data.

Age assurance gate type	Definition
Front Gate	A user sees only a blank landing page, with no content visible until they have completed the age check.
Blur Gate	A user sees a series of blurred images before the age check. In some cases, titles are visible which could contain strong sexual wording. Clicking on a thumbnail directs users to an age check.
Image Gate	A user sees a series of clearly visible images. Often these are of clothed people, sometimes in sexually suggestive poses and/or wearing lingerie. In some cases, titles are visible which could contain strong sexual wording. In some variations, users can see a preview of the video when hovering over with a cursor. Clicking on the thumbnail directs users to an age check.
In-Video Gate	A user sees a series of thumbnails that contain clearly visible images. Often these are of clothed people, sometimes in sexually suggestive poses and/or wearing lingerie. In some cases, titles are visible which could contain strong sexual wording. Users can sometimes see a preview of the video when hovering over with a cursor. Users can then watch the video up until a certain point, usually up until nudity is shown, after which they are directed to an age check.

Overview

What we have found

Eight per cent of online 8-14-year-olds visited a pornography service in a month (28 days) **with most spending very little time on individual sites**. Almost two-thirds (65%) of all porn service visits lasted less than 10 seconds, and a further 22% lasted between 10 and 30 seconds. Most children visited multiple sites and in total 2% of 8-14s visited 28+ sites in the month. The combination of short, repeated visits suggests some participants were moving quickly between sites – potentially seeking one they could access.

Children were purposefully seeking out pornographic content: 5% of 8-14s arrived at a pornography service via a search service at least once in a month. For these children in particular, this demonstrates an intent to view pornography as opposed to an accidentally stumbling on it. Search engines accounted for around 30% of entry points to pornography services in our study of 8-14s, highlighting their importance in initial discovery, with indications that search results include non-age gated sites.

Half of children that visited pornographic websites only visited services with age assurance. In total 4% of 8-14s *only* visited a site with age assurance; these sites accounted for nearly half of the sites visited (46%). A similar proportion (47%) of sites visited had accessible pornography content and 7% were geo-blocked.

Children experienced a range of age gates: 45% of the age assured sites visited placed the check at the front of the site ("front gate"); 39% allowed users to see blurred images before requiring a check ("blur gate"); 14% allowed users to see non-pornographic images before an age check ("image gate"); and 2% placed the age check within a video ("in-video gate").

Children spent significantly longer on image gate sites (a total of 11 hours 41 minutes) than front gate sites (5 hours 39 minutes) or blur gates (2 hours 10 minutes). Longer time spent during visits to services with an image gate likely indicates a child browsing the service anticipating accessing pornographic content, before encountering age assurance.

Four per cent of online 8-14s visited pornography services with no age assurance and therefore most likely encountered pornographic content. Out of the total of 4,062 visits to pornography services, 1,137 were to services without age assurance. Twenty-six children in our panel spent a total of 6 hours 29 minutes on these sites, an average of 14 minutes a month.

Study findings on Pornography services

Eight per cent of online 8-14 year-olds visited a pornography service in a month

Half of children that visited pornographic websites only visited services with age assurance

The requirements for providers of online pornography services to implement highly effective age assurance has not deterred a minority of children either actively seeking or stumbling across pornography services. Overall, our study found 8% of online 8-14-year-olds visited at least one pornography service with or without age assurance in a month (28 days). Seven percent of 8-14s visited at least one pornography service with age assurance, with 4% of 8-14s only visiting pornography services with age assurance. Four percent of 8-14s visited at least one pornography service with no age assurance in place (and therefore it is likely that these children encountered porn).

Older children were the most likely to have visited a pornography service: 13% of the 13-14-year-olds in our panel visited a pornography service, compared to 7% of 10-12-year-olds and 5% of 8-9-year-olds.

Boys across all age ranges were more likely than girls to have visited a pornography service: 20% of boys in our panel visited a pornography service, compared to 6% of girls.

Our study also found that the majority (88%) of the children that visited a pornography service did so via a smartphone[5], with 38% using an iPhone (3% of 8-14s) and 50% (4% of 8-14s) using an Android phone. This study was conducted before Apple introduced their age checks for iPhones and iPad users in the UK in March 2026.

These high-level metrics do not indicate whether children that visited a pornography service were able to bypass age checks, nor do they confirm that pornographic content was viewed by the children. A visitor may have opened a website or app, been shown an age-check page, and not progressed any further. For this reason, a visit to a pornography service in this study does not necessarily equate to exposure to harmful content**.** The report explores time spent, frequency of visits and pornography services age gating to better understand the likelihood of the children encountering pornographic content.

Almost two-thirds (65%) of all porn service visits lasted less than 10 seconds

Overall, 78% of total time spent on pornography services was accounted for by 10% of the children who visited pornography services (and just 1% of all 8-14s). While 8% of children visited pornography services, some spent such a short amount of time on them that it suggests they may not have accessed pornography on most, or potentially all, their visits. Almost two-thirds (65%) of all

[5] 8% tablet and 4% laptop

porn service visits lasted less than 10 seconds, and a further 22% lasted between 10 and 30 seconds. Taken together, nearly nine in ten (87%) pornography service visits were for under 30 seconds.

The average number of individual URL pages visited each time a child visited a site was 1.5, and the median duration of a visit to a porn site was 5 seconds. 8-14-year-old visitors to pornography services spent an average of just under half an hour (26 minutes) on those services in total across a month. The median time spent with pornography services was 10 minutes.[6]

Most of the children visited multiple pornography services, potentially searching for a service they could access

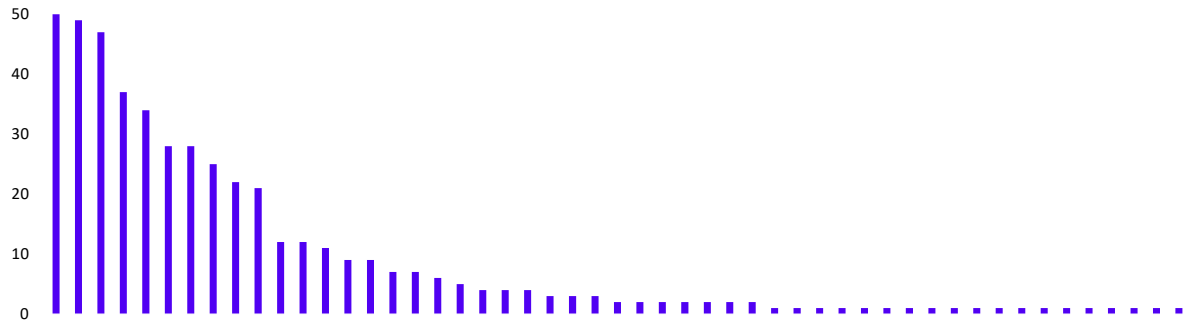
Across our panel of 701 8-14-year-olds, 54 (8%) visited pornography services in a month: 3% of 8-14-year-olds visited at least one pornography service on just a single day, 2% visited these sites on 2-5 days, 2% on 6-15 days and a further 1% visited on 16 or more days across a month.

These children made at least one visit to a pornography service, making a total of 4,062 visits in a month. Consistent with higher use among this age group, 13-14-year-olds made up most of these visits (69%), followed by 10-12s (22%) and 8-9s (9%). Boys accounted for 93% of total visits.

Most (62%) of the children visited more than one pornography service over a month. Figure 1 visualises this: notably seven children in the study (representing 1% of 8-14-year-olds) visited 28 or more services. On average a pornography visitor visited 5 different pornography services and made an average total of 74 visits in a month.

The number of visits combined with very low visit duration on individual service visits suggests many panellists were moving quickly between sites, via short, transient visits – potentially in search of a site they could access without an age-check.

Figure 1: Total number of different pornography services visited by each child in a month



Case Study 1: Five children took part in both phases of our study and visited pornography services in both phases.

Four of them visited more sites in the second phase, with analysis of their journeys indicating they may have been looking for a site where they were able to access pornography.

[6] However, we found one child that spent a large volume of time on pornography services, visiting these sites for almost 16 hours across a month. For this reason, this child is explored separately in this report. Including the data from this participant the average time spent on pornography services across a month is 68 minutes.

One child, a 14-year-old boy, visited only Pornhub in phase one and visited 25 different porn services in phase two. He spent twice as much time visiting pornography services in phase two compared to phase one: 26 minutes on Pornhub in phase one, compared to an hour in phase two spread across the 25 different pornography services. Nearly half of this time (25 minutes) was spent on a single pornography service without age assurance in place.

Search engines are widely used by children to find porn

Thirty per cent of children's entry points to porn were through search

Our study allows us to identify the sites that children used immediately before visiting a pornography service. This shows that search engines[7] are widely used to find pornography, accounting for around 30% of entry points in our study. The majority (62%) of the children who visited pornographic services (5% of all the 8-14s in our research) used a search engine immediately before visiting porn services at least once. This demonstrates an intent to view pornography among these children on those occasions as opposed to them accidentally stumbling on it. Most (88%) search engine searches associated with pornography or age checks were conducted via Google Search. Yahoo, DuckDuckGo and Bing were also used.

Case study 2: The use of search to find porn

Figure 2 is a visual representation of a 14-year-old boy in the study entering explicit search terms into Google Search as well as conducting the following search - 'video for age verification' - indicating an intention to circumvent age assurance. Overall, this child visited porn services on 8 days across a month, visiting a total of 25 services and spending a total of 49 minutes on these services in the month. The session explored in Figure 2 shows the boy visiting several pornographic content services in quick succession.

During the evening (from 6pm onwards) the teen visits 21 different porn sites, moving from one service to the next rapidly, spending less than a minute on each. During this online session he visits Google search several times, using search terms that indicate he is trying to circumvent facial age estimation solutions used on porn sites and search terms that clearly demonstrate he is looking for pornography, as well as visiting a Reddit discussion about the morality of pornography and Quora ('what is a porn site link', 'what are the best free adult porn websites for mobile phones'), indicating he may have been using these platforms to search for and navigate towards further content.

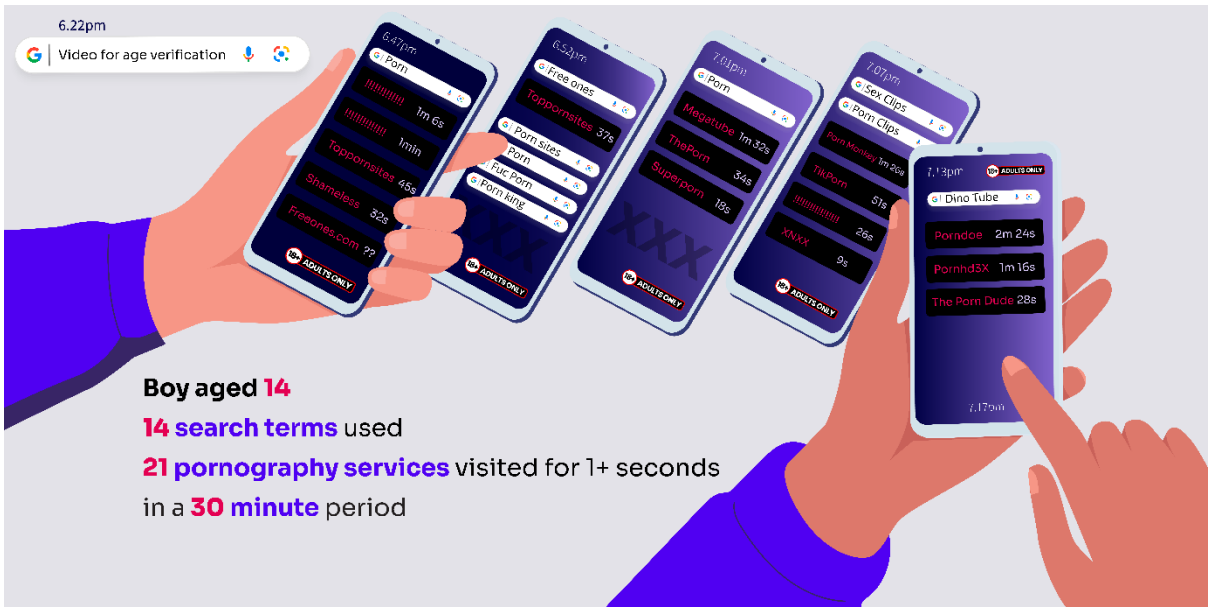
His evening of browsing begins after using the Snapchat app for 5 minutes with a Google search for 'video for age verification'. He does not click on any of the

[7] The passive tracker is unable to report on whether safe search setting is enabled.

search results but does spend two minutes looking at them. He then searches 'porn' then visits a site with no age assurance protections in place, where he visits 10 individual pages over one minute, spending 23 seconds on one of these pages. After this, he returns to Google before visiting a different site with no protections, where he spends 27 seconds on one page and 34 seconds on another. For the next 25 minutes, this child switches between Google Search and porn sites, frequently visiting sites with age gates and returning to Google. At the end of this browsing, he stays on a page from a site with no age assurance in place for 1 minute and 35 seconds and then returns to Snapchat.

The high number of pornography sites visited within a short period, together with repeated Google searches and the presence of age-gating on many of these sites[8], suggests that the child was unable to access content on all of them and was instead trying multiple services to find one that would permit access.

Figure 2: A 14-year-old boy's visits to pornography services on one day



Note: The device was stated to be the child's own smartphone that was not shared with others. The child began the day using Snapchat with very little internet use during school hours (only brief use during the lunchtime period), returning to Snapchat after 3pm, indicating the device was being used by a child.

[8] Information on the placement of the age checks is correct as of May 2026.

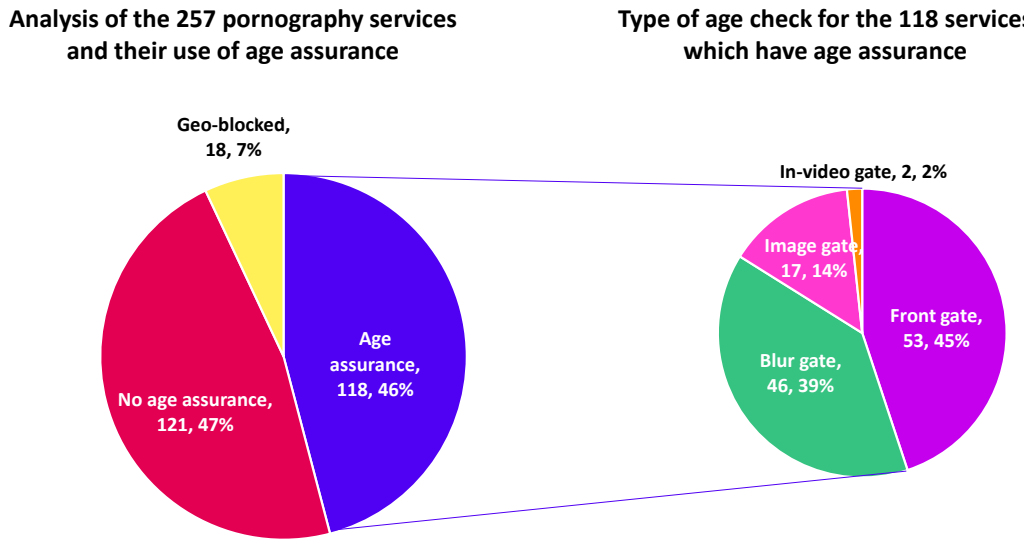
Half of children that visited pornographic websites only visited services with age assurance

Almost half (46%) of pornography services visited during the study have age assurance

As noted above, in total, 8% of 8-14s visited at least one pornography service in a month and 4% only visited service(s) with age assurance. Most (6% of 8-14s) visited at least one pornography service with a front gate, 5% with an image gate, 3% a blur gate, 2% with an in-video gate.[9].

Of the total of 257 different pornography services visited by panellists during the study, 118 (46%) had age assurance deployed, 18 (7%) were geo-blocked, while 121 (47%) had accessible pornography content. Of the services with age assurance, 45% had front gate age assurance in place, 39% had a blur gate, 14% had an image gate and 2% had an in-video gate. (Age assurance gate type definition).

Figure 3: Analysis of age assurance and geo-blocks on the pornography services visited during the study



Note: Type of age-gate correct as of May 2026, with some exceptions where gate type was known to be different during the time of study. xHamster's age-gate placement was 'In-Video' from August 2025 to January 2026. At this point xHamster changed to an Image gate with video previews. All the visits to xHamster were during the service having in-video gate. Pornhub is assigned as front gate. In February Pornhub changed their approach to age assurance, stopping new users going through the process. At the same time Pornhub added non-pornographic content to its landing page. Geo-block is not a form of compliance.

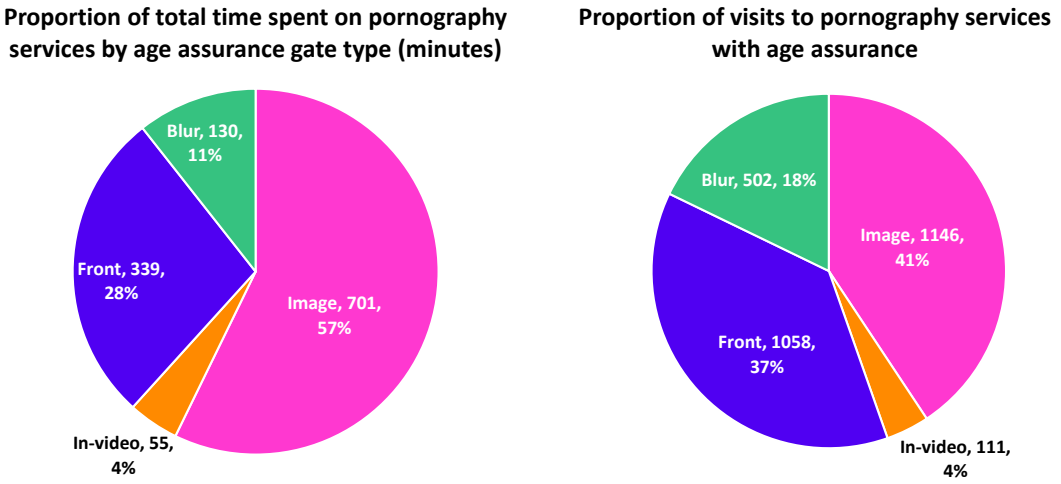
Placement of the age check impacts the time children typically spend on services

The placement of age checks and type of age gate a service has in place has an impact on the time spent on services. Among the 8% of 8-14-year-olds who visited pornography services, there was a total of 1,146 visits and 11 hours and 41 minutes spent on services which use an image gate. Longer time spent during visits to services with an image gate compared to services which use a front gate

[9] Information on the placement of the age checks is correct as of May 2026.

(5 hours 39 minutes) or blur gate (2 hours 10 minutes, as seen in Figure 4) could indicate a child spent time browsing the service with an image gate anticipating that they had access to the service before encountering age assurance. The longer length of a visit therefore does not necessarily equate to the child bypassing age assurance and/or seeing any pornographic content.

Figure 4: Proportion of total time spent and visits to pornography services by age assurance gate type



XVideos was the most widely visited pornography service, 3% of 8-14-year-olds visited the service in a month

XVideos is a pornography service with an image gate.[10] It was the service visited by the highest proportion of 8-14s in our panel and where the most time was spent. The 3% of 8-14s visiting XVideos in a month made 714 visits to the service spending in total 6 hours and 55 minutes. Sixty-three percent of visits lasted 10 seconds or more and 6% of visits lasted for over two minutes, suggesting that children were able to browse further into the service before encountering age assurance. The longer length of visits seen on XVideos and XNXX which also uses image-gate age assurance, compared with Pornhub and Chaturbate, which have front-gate age assurance, suggest that as the age check is initiated further along the user journey on these two services, time spent on the services is longer, as a visitor can browse potential content to view. This navigation through the site will lead to longer durations and more page visits, even for visitors who ultimately do not successfully complete an age assurance check.

The most visited service[11] without age assurance was visited by 1% of 8-14s, totalling 138 visits. The average time spent on the service per visitor was 5 minutes across a month, the maximum time spent by a child (a 14-year-old boy) on the service in a month totalled 27 minutes. Our study found children searched for this service directly via Google indicating that they have prior knowledge of the service being accessible.

[10] On XVideos visitors can navigate to a homepage which shows multiple thumbnails. Many of these thumbnails show images, while other thumbnails are blurred with an "18" indicator. Titles and descriptions can be read. When clicking on an unblurred thumbnail, the visitor is presented with a video screen, along with thumbnails of other recommended videos below. When the visitor clicks play, they are redirected to age assurance. Visitors can close the age assurance pop-up and navigate to other video pages, only being presented with the age gate when trying to play each video.

[11] The report does not name services without age assurance in place to avoid highlighting services.

Figure 5: Pornography services with at least 1% of 8-14-year-old visitors

Service	Gate type	Proportion of online 8-14-year-old visitors in a month	Total visits in a month	Total time spent by all visitors across a month (hours:minutes)
XVideos	Image	3%	714	06:55
Pornhub	Front	3%	67	00:51
XNXX	Image	2%	392	04:28
XHamster	In video	2%	150	01:00
Stripchat	Blur	2%	64	00:14
Chaturbate	Front	1%	31	00:07
Site with no age assurance	No gate	1%	67	00:39
Site with no age assurance	No gate	1%	138	00:36

Note: Only services with at least 1% of visitors are included in the table. Sites with no age assurance have not been named to minimise directing readers to sites without age assurance. xHamster's age-gate placement was 'In-Video' from August 2025 to 1 January 2026. At this point xHamster changed to an Image gate with video previews. All the visits to xHamster were during the service having in-video gate. Type of age-gate correct as of May 2026. In February Pornhub changed their approach to age assurance, stopping new users going through the process. At the same time Pornhub added non-pornographic content to its landing page. Each gate type has been allocated a colour.

The decline in visits to Pornhub suggests its front-gate age assurance was effective in stopping children accessing porn

Among the small subset[12] of the panel that took part on both phases, visits to Pornhub fell sharply between phases, from 122 visits in our first phase of research when Pornhub was not required to and did not have age assurance in place, to just 8 visits in phase two after Pornhub had implemented age assurance following new regulations coming into force. Only one child in phase two visited Pornhub more than once. At the time of our phase two fieldwork, Pornhub was an example of a pornography service using a front gate age assurance model. Pornhub introduced age checks in July 2025, visitors who do not pass the age check are shown only the age check page. [13]

Very short visit lengths to Stripchat suggest children were not getting past its blur-gate age assurance

Stripchat is an example of a pornography service using a blur gate age assurance model. Our study found 2% of 8-14-year-olds visited Stripchat. All Stripchat visits were less than 2 minutes long with

[12] There were 5 panellists that took part in both phases of the research that visited pornography websites in both phases.

[13] From 2 February 2026, towards the end of our phase two research period which ran from 9 October 2025 to 7 March 2026, Pornhub introduced further restrictions by preventing new user registrations in the UK, at the same time adding non-pornographic content to its landing page.

the majority (67%) lasting less than 10 seconds. The short visits strongly indicate that children were likely unable to successfully complete age assurance checks.[14]

Figure 6: Share of total visits during the study, by length of visit

Service	Gate type	Share of visits less than 10 seconds	Share of visits 11-120 seconds	Share of visits > 2 minutes
XVideos	Image	38%	56%	6%
Pornhub	Front	41%	44%	15%
XNXX	Image	36%	56%	8%
XHamster	In video	62%	33%	4%
Stripchat	Blur	67%	33%	0%
Chaturbate	Front	55%	45%	0%
Site with no age assurance	No gate	58%	37%	4%
Site with no age assurance	No gate	75%	22%	2%

Each gate type has been allocated a colour. Services ranked in accordance with highest proportion of 8-14-year-old visitors as ranked in Figure 5.

Four per cent of online 8-14s visited pornography services with no age assurance and therefore most likely encountered pornographic content

In total 4% of children visited services with no age assurance in place, visiting an average of four such different services during a month. Out of the total of 4,062 visits to pornography services, 1,137 were to services without age assurance, with 26 children in our panel spending a total of 6 hours 29 minutes on these sites, an average of 14 minutes a month.

Among the 8-14s (4%) that visited pornography services without age assurance: 11% were 8-9s, 30% were 10-12s and 58% were 13-14s; 83% of those visiting pornography services without age assurance were boys and 17% were girls.

[14] The high frequency of very short visits to Stripchat may also be partly due to how videos are served on the site, which are frequently presented as a pop-up window served as an advert from another site. A window being opened, even inadvertently, for longer than one second, is recorded as a visit.

Case study 3: One participant showed sustained browsing on Hentai services with no age check

There was one panellist that displayed substantially higher use of pornography services than other participants who visited pornography services. Due to the disproportionate influence this data had on the averages it has largely been removed from and is considered separately. This participant made 1,441 visits across seven Hentai services during the study, visiting at least one of these websites on 23 of the 28 days that were tracked.

Hentai is a subgenre of anime and manga which includes sexually explicit content. Many websites are dedicated to this and other drawn or animated pornographic content, often presented in comic form. The child spent an average of one hour and 23 minutes on these websites on each day that they visited these services. None of these services had any age-check mechanism in place.[15] The data indicated sustained browsing and engagement with pornographic content. The child did not visit any other pornographic content websites.

As an example of this behaviour, late one evening the child spent just under one minute looking at BBC Bitesize, then switched to a hentai site and spent 25 minutes visiting 36 pages on the site. The participant then used Google to search for a specific episode of a pornographic comic series, navigated to a different hentai site and spent 3 minutes visiting 6 pages on this second site. They then searched for another title of a pornographic comic series, visited 6 pages on a third different site for 33 seconds before returning to Google to do the same search, visiting a further 5 pages on a fourth website for one minute and forty seconds, before their browsing ended. No sites visited presented any age checks.

Conclusions

Eight per cent of online children aged 8-14 visited a pornography service during a 28-day period although most spent very little time on individual sites. The data indicates that children were actively seeking out this content, with 5% of 8-14-year-olds arriving at a pornography service via a search service at least once in a month.

Among children who visited pornographic websites, half of children only visited pornographic websites with age assurance in place. Children encountered a range of age-gates across these services. Four per cent of online 8-14s visited pornography services with no age assurance and therefore were most likely to have encountered pornographic content.

We will be conducting a further phase of our children's passive online measurement study later this year.

[15] Sites checked for the presence of age assurance on 26 February 2026

Methodology

Objectives

Study summary

The requirements of the study were to measure, across a robust UK representative sample of online children aged 8-14, their use of websites and apps across smartphones, tablets and computers. The measurement was to include the websites and apps that were visited on the device(s) used by the child panellist and how long was spent on the services visited. To collect this data the recruited children had passive monitoring software installed on the devices they used to go online, with the data being reported back anonymously. The children's internet use was measured over a period of 28 consecutive days for each panellist, with fieldwork conducted between 9 October 2025 and 7 March 2026, which means that all results reflect usage patterns over that period, but are not necessarily representative of their use over a whole year.

This study used a single-source sample in which each panellist had one or more devices tracked.[1] This method results in more accurate deduplicated figures for the proportion of online visitors for the devices tracked.

The sample was drawn using UK census data to ensure we obtained a nationally representative sample of 8-14-year-old children. Weighting for age, gender and household socio-economic group was applied using the Office of National Statistics (ONS) 2024 Mid-Year Estimates and the NRS (National Readership Survey) to align the final sample of 701 children with the known UK population of 8-14-year-olds. Population figures were further adjusted using responses to question QP1 from Ofcom's Children and Parents' Media Literacy Tracker, which reports the proportion of children who go online.

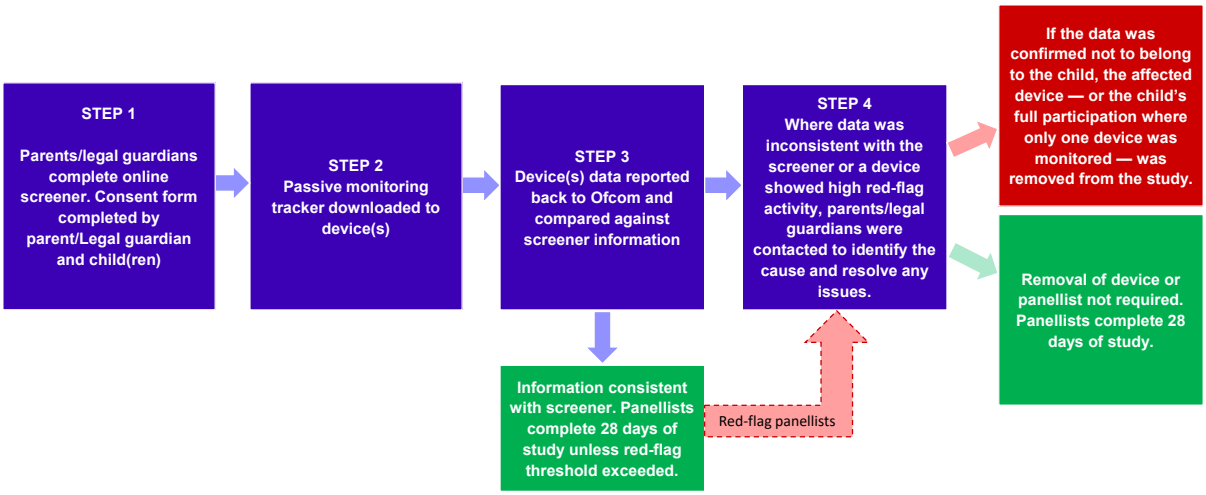
One participant's use of pornography services was substantially higher than that of other panellists who visited these services. Because this had a disproportionate influence on the overall averages, this data has been excluded from much of the reporting and is considered separately where relevant – see Case Study 3.

Ofcom commissioned RealityMine and Yonder Consulting to conduct the research, with RealityMine providing the passive monitoring technology and Yonder Consulting conducting the recruitment.

Fieldwork

Yonder undertook a qualitative recruitment exercise to ensure demographic requirements were met. Yonder recruited a total of 831 children aged 8-14 living in the UK via their parents/legal guardians, with a total of 701 complying with the study requirements.

The overall process of recruiting, verifying and monitoring the panellists is set out in the diagram below.



Step 1 – Completion of screener and consent forms

The parents/legal guardians completed an initial screener providing details on the devices used by the child panellist to go online and the frequency of use as well as demographic information about the panellist. Informed consent was provided by both the parent/legal guardian and the child panellist, and relevant data protection and safeguarding procedures were implemented.

There was a change in the recruitment approach for this second phase. While the sample source, recruiter and quotas remained similar, in phase 1, the recruitment involved an initial simple qualification screener, this was followed by the recruiter contacting the parent or legal guardian to go through the more detailed screening process which captured the devices used by the child panellist to go online and the frequency of use as well as demographic information about the panellist. All this information was manually captured by the recruiter via telephone. In phase 2, parents or guardians were recruited by the same recruiter and using the same sample source but rather than the recruiter calling the parent or legal guardian via telephone and manually capturing the screener information the recruiter sent out an email link with the questionnaire which contained drop-down lists for most of the questions. This revised approach ensured more consistency in the information received that was used for both quotas and quality checks. While we are unable to quantify the impact of this change, it is likely that this may have some impact on the higher figures observed for some services in this report compared to what was published in our first report, as panellists recruited online could be more digitally engaged.

Siblings were allowed to be recruited within the same household provided they were the target age and used one or more devices that were not shared with their sibling panellist.

Step 2 – Passive Monitoring Tracker installed

The RealityMine monitoring app/VPN was downloaded to at least one device that was used by the child at least a few times a month. Devices included were smartphones, computers/laptops and tablets, across operating systems iOS, Android and Windows. The passive tracker cannot measure Amazon Fire Tablet and Chromebook use, so these are not included as part of the study. While games consoles can be used to go online, these devices were not included in the passive measurement, so any online activity via consoles is outside the scope of this study. For a breakdown of total number of devices by type see Device Sample.

Steps 3 and 4 – Data collection and monitoring

Once the RealityMine technology was set up, this automatically collected passive metering data of websites and apps visited on devices, frequency of visits and time spent on these platforms.

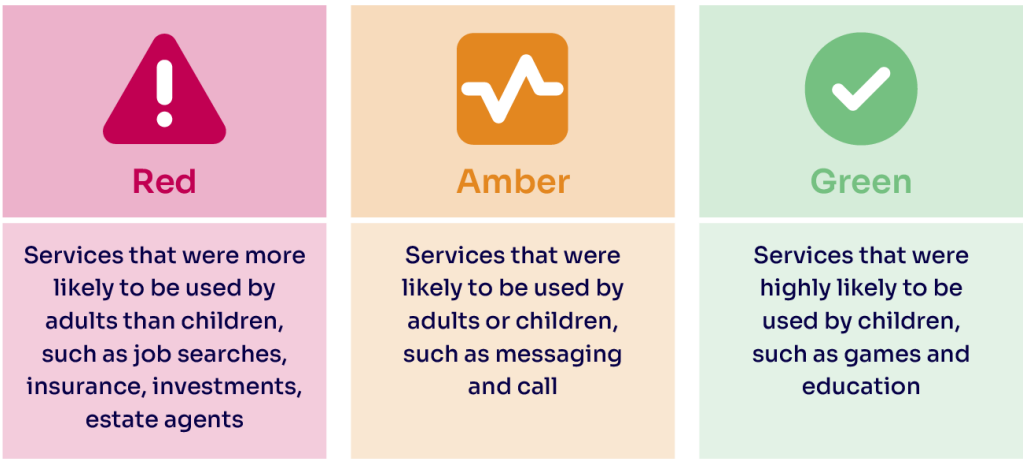
The fieldwork process in phase 2 was also enhanced to monitor the data collection during fieldwork, so that panellists who did not meet the requirements of the study could be removed from participation during fieldwork, with another child taking their place to meet our sample target. For instance, in the screener, parents/legal guardians reported how often the panellist used each device that was to be monitored. This information was compared against the passive data reported back from the devices during the study. Where parents/legal guardians reported daily or near-daily use but the passive data showed activity on far fewer days, these panellists' parents/legal guardians were followed up to confirm whether the recorded behaviour was a true reflection of the panellists' use rather than a technical issue, and if found not to be, the panellists were potentially removed if no other resolution could be achieved (e.g. the discrepancy may have been because the tracker was installed on the parent's device instead of the child's). As a small number of panellists included in the phase 1 sample would not have met the final sample threshold had the phase 2 criteria been applied, the results from the phase 1 panel are therefore not comparable with phase 2.

Where parents/legal guardians mentioned in the screener that the child used more than one device they were encouraged to have the passive tracker installed on all the listed devices that were used a few times a month, but as a minimum, if only one device was tracked, this must be the main device used by the child panellist.

From our pilot study in 2023 we understood that using devices shared between parents and children is common, especially for younger children (8-10-year-olds), who may not have their own devices. Checks were therefore put in place to monitor the level of 'adult' use. A rules-based approach was developed to flag potential adult usage data.

The sites (websites and/or apps) that had been measured during the study were categorised in their relevant sector or 'best fit' e.g. Gauth was categorised as education. First, all sites that appeared in the phase 1 study retained their assigned category from phase 1 during the fieldwork monitoring process. Sites were assigned to one sector category.

The categories were assigned a red/amber/green (RAG) colour and in some cases specific sites within a category were independently assigned a colour; e.g. banking was categorised as amber but child banking service GoHenry was categorised as green. This RAG system was used to categorise sites and sectors that were likely to be used by children and those most likely to be used by adults.



Using the RAG system, any panellist whose red-flagged activity exceeded 3% of total app and website visits on a tracked device had their data investigated in more detail. Where adult usage was

identified this was followed up with the parents/legal guardians during fieldwork to check whether the device was being used by the child. If the usage did not correspond with the child panellist, the device was removed from the study. Ofcom processed and summarised these panellists' internet use to understand the proportions of use under each flag colour and all the services that were visited on each of these panellists' devices.

Recruitment was conducted on a rolling basis with the first panellist starting on 9 October 2025 and the last completing on 7 March 2026, each participant's data collected for 28 consecutive days.

The fieldwork monitoring process identified and removed 130 panellists and 226 devices, leaving the unweighted base at a total of 701 8-14-year-olds with data across 787 devices.