

# Livestreaming: The perspective of children and young people who view livestreams

Beano Brain

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This is a report by Beano Brain on livestream viewing among children, commissioned by Ofcom.

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N.B. Documents related to this report published separately :

Annex A contains the pre-task completed by respondents prior to taking part in interviews with Beano Brain researchers.

Annex B contains the discussion guide used by Beano Brain researchers during interviews with respondents.



# Introduction to the project



Image sourced: Pexels, Atlantic Ambience

# Research background

**The Online Safety Act 2023** sets out duties for regulated online services to protect users from illegal content and, where services are likely to be accessed by children, from content that is harmful to them. In response, Ofcom has published Codes of Practice and guidance to support compliance. As regulation develops, Ofcom is continuing to build its understanding of how children interact with specific online features and functionalities, including those that may present heightened risks

**Livestreaming** has been identified by Ofcom to be high risk online functionality for children, as identified in the illegal harms (and PoC) registers of risk<sup>1</sup>, largely due to its real-time nature. Our children's media literacy research shows that livestreaming is a relatively common activity among children, and that some children create their own livestreams<sup>2</sup>. This combination of prevalence and perceived risk highlighted the need for deeper evidence.

To add to our evidence base, Ofcom commissioned a programme of quantitative and qualitative research exploring children's experiences of livestreaming. These studies and accompanying reports (described in the adjacent table examine motivations, experiences, benefits, and risks, providing a rounded picture of how children experience livestreaming.



**NOTE: A more detailed overview of the livestreaming research programme, including a summary of the research, is available [here](#).**

1. [Children's Register of Risks](#)
2. [CMUA 2025 tables](#)

The programme of research comprised of UK-wide surveys on children's livestream viewing and creation, alongside in-depth interviews with children and young people who regularly view or create livestreams.

There are three reports in the research programme, and this is the second report in this series, which focuses on the qualitative insights among 20 regular livestream viewers aged 8-17.

Document/ report	Description	Content
<b>1. Research among children and young people who create livestreams</b>	Qualitative deep dives into 20 regular livestream creators aged 8-19	Qualitative research explores how children create and consume livestreamed content, the motivations behind these behaviours, and the risks and benefits involved (as perceived by children).
<b>2. Research among children and young people who view livestreams</b>	Qualitative deep dives into 20 livestream viewers aged 8-17	
<b>3. Children's usage of livestreaming: viewing and creating</b>	Quantitative surveys of children aged 8-17 and parents of children aged 8-17	The quantitative research provides information on the prevalence of livestreaming (viewing and creating livestreams) among children aged 8-17, and the data are based on children's reported behaviour, supported by the definition of livestreaming we provided in the survey.



## Overall Objective

**To understand children's experiences viewing livestreamed content**

Children's motivations for viewing livestreamed content

What viewing livestreamed content provides children that non-live content does not

How different features and functionalities shape children's viewing experiences

What negative experiences and potential harms children can encounter when viewing livestreamed content

How children (and their parents) protect themselves from negative experiences whilst viewing livestreamed content



Image sourced: Pexels, Kaboom pics



# Research method: deep dives among children who view livestreams



A multi-stage qualitative research project speaking to a sample of children aged 11-17 **who view livestreams at least once a month**. Separate research projects were conducted with children who regularly create livestreams, and the findings, along with quantitative data related to livestreaming habits among children in the UK are presented in separate reports.

Fieldwork took place from August 2025 till December 2025 on a rolling basis

## Stage 1 Screening calls

In the first stage, we conducted 15-minute screening calls to ensure we were recruiting the right people, where we asked potential participants about their online habits and specifically their livestreaming viewing habits (*if livestreaming was spontaneously picked from a list of other content*) to ensure that they met our criteria for this project

## Stage 2 Pre-task via PowerPoint

Once screened, participants completed a pre-task project (*3 tasks in total*) all about their online worlds (*in general, not specific to livestreaming*), including an introduction to them, a moodboard of their online worlds with an explanation of what was included and a look at the good, bad and ugly sides of online through memes/gifs/reactions/images or videos with an explanation for each one

## Stage 3 60-minute interview

Once they had completed stages 1 and 2, participants took part in an hour interview with a Beano Brain researcher looking at behaviours, features and functionalities, motivations and positive and negative experiences of viewing livestreams

Safeguarding was a priority, and children were **not asked** to participate in livestreaming as part of the research process. Researchers applied the project's safeguarding policy, which included processes to follow up on any disclosures or safeguarding concerns.



# Interpreting the data



**The data in this report** is qualitative and based on in-depth research among a small number of individuals. **Findings should not be extrapolated to the broader population** due to: 1) the limited number of interviews and 2) a sample design which prioritised ranges of livestreaming activities vs. a proportionally representative sample (see slide 8 for more info on sample and rationale)

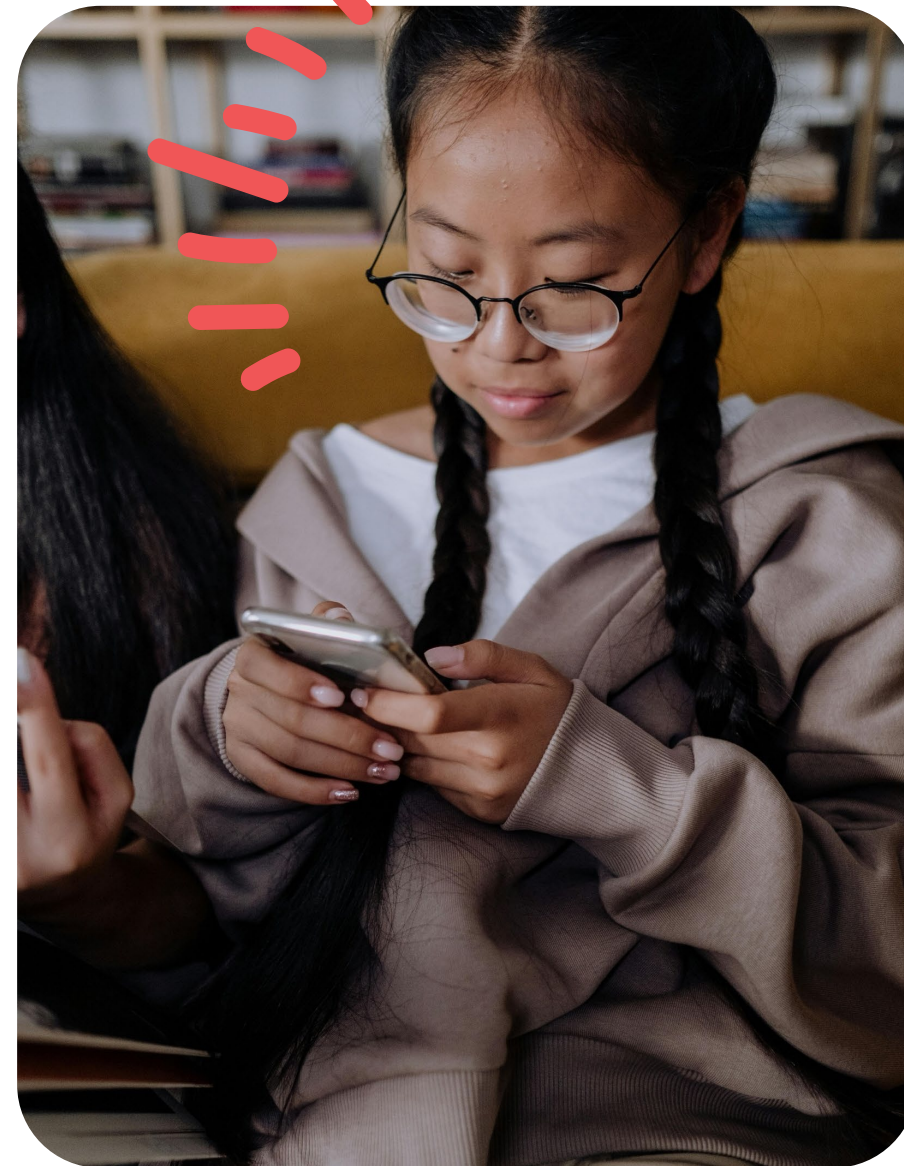


In this report, we refer to the experiences and attitudes of our sample of children who watch livestreams as **'viewers'** – indicated by the **symbol above**. However, certain findings relating to the perceptions of 'creators' (see box, right) we spoke to are included in this report for completeness



A separate research report refers to the experiences and attitudes of the separate sample of children we spoke to who make livestreams as **'creators'** - to differentiate from creators more generally. Findings related to this sample are indicated by the **symbol above**

Children who no longer view livestreams, even if they previously did so frequently, are not included in this research, due to the challenges of recruiting specifically for this behaviour. It's important to note that the experiences of children who currently view livestreams regularly may skew more positive or neutral, as they have chosen to continue the activity. This should be considered when interpreting findings, particularly those related to negative experiences





# Research participants

*Recruitment was targeted by recency, frequency, and to encompass a range of platforms, content and usage of different features and functionalities*

## Rationale

- The sample was structured in this way to ensure depth and relevance of insight.
- These participants can speak in detail about their behaviours, motivations, and viewing practices, yielding richer and more actionable findings.
- Low-engagement viewers offer only surface-level accounts, so including a range of experiences as well as participants with greater engagement with livestreaming enables this research to explore *how and why* viewing livestreams occurs, not just *whether* it does.

### All participants:

- 20 in total, aged 11 to 17
- View livestreams at least once a month

Other aspects of sample coverage where quotas/ targets applied to provide a range of experiences:

- |                      |                                       |                                                       |
|----------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| • Gender             | • App used to watch Livestream        | • Features used when viewing livestreams              |
| • UK Nation          | • Mix of topics of livestreams viewed | • Monetisation / rewards received or given as viewers |
| • Financial security | • Motivations for viewing livestreams |                                                       |
|                      | • Mix of devices owned                |                                                       |

All participant names have been removed from this report. Gender and age are included alongside verbatim quotations to provide context.



## How do we define livestreaming?

*'Livestreaming' refers to "activity undertaken that allows service users (although we are concerned only with children) to **share videos of themselves in real time on a platform that anyone can access** or has access to with an easily shared link. i.e., Live streaming is in real time and **does not limit viewing to designated individuals or curated groups of individuals who have been expressly invited** to see that content.*

*This definition was used to ensure validity during recruitment, and as a part of analysis and story-crafting to distinguish insights specific to livestreaming as opposed to other content*



# Guidance on reading this report, and types of content to be aware of



A glossary is provided in the appendix of the report, to support understanding of certain terms and concepts referenced by children throughout the research. Words that appear in the glossary will have an asterisk next to them.



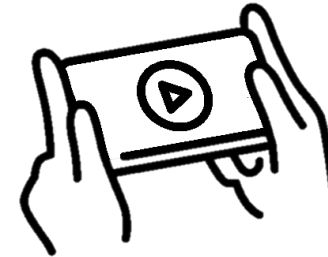
Used to flag where there is **more information** related to a topic elsewhere in the report



Used to flag anything that could be a potential **trigger** for those reading this report



Used to demonstrate insights that refer to the experience or perspective of 'creators'



Used to demonstrate insights that refer to the experience or perspective of 'viewers'

These icons are used throughout the report, to highlight different elements of information

There are **additional slides based on insights from Beano Brain researchers from other research related to online safety they have conducted**. These have been included where relevant to provide context to findings from this research. Where this applies to findings in this report, this is denoted by this symbol.



# Summary of key findings from the research



# Part 1: Key research findings - headlines



For 'viewers', livestreaming feels like a **unique format** that comes with its own distinct experiences, nuanced emotions, benefits and perceived risks

Children tend to **watch livestreams from their favourite creators or relevant to their interests** and three journeys to viewing were observed

**Motivations are wide-ranging** - 'viewers' tended to have several motivations for viewing livestreams over or in addition to other types of content, including those born out of the unique characteristics of the content itself and those that come from the features and functions surrounding it

Researchers noted that, for some 'viewers', the motivations for watching livestreams **also drove regular engagement and/ or substantial time investment**

**'Viewers' considered more potential negative experiences associated with livestreamed content**, compared to pre-recorded content. Further, that these negative experiences were unique to livestreaming due to perceived riskier nature of the live format. However, the children we spoke to in this study more clearly and readily articulated the benefits over the perceived risks of livestreaming - with some having not encountered any perceived risks directly and some perceiving them as just a part of being online

**'Viewers' identified challenges in responding to, and limiting, perceived risks** and harms in live formats, compared with recorded content

**The data in this report** is qualitative and based on in-depth research among a small number of individuals.  
**Findings should not be extrapolated to the broader population** due to: 1) the limited number of interviews and 2) a sample design which prioritised ranges of livestreaming activities vs. a proportionally representative sample (*see slide 8 for more info on sample and rationale*)

*Note: There are some similarities in findings relating to the uniqueness of the format, risks and safeguarding behaviours and resources in both this report and the adjacent report relating to children who create livestreams\**



# Expanded key research findings (1)



For 'viewers', **livestreaming feels like a unique format**, but has a varying degree of importance within their content landscape

**For 'viewers' livestreaming is unique compared to pre-recorded content** - for example there are more opportunities for real time interactivity, it's often longer form and can feel more authentic. **However, for some, livestream content is a part of their viewing repertoire**, it does not have special status to them above pre-recorded content and in some cases, it feels less important. They do not necessarily identify themselves as livestream content viewers specifically. **However, for others (described in the report as 'heavily invested'), livestream viewing is a pivotal part of their content landscape.** It has a special status; they are fans of the livestream format itself (rather than just fans of the content creators or subject matter of the livestream).

Children tend to watch livestreams from **their favourite creators or relevant to their interests** and three journeys to viewing were observed

- There are three types of viewing:**
- **Planned and specific** - 'viewers' set notifications or planned to watch must see events.
  - **In the mood** - 'viewers' searched for relevant livestreams when in the mood to watch.
  - **Happenstance** - 'viewers' came across a live that was either interesting, relevant or was shared with them



## Expanded key research findings (2)

**Motivations for watching livestreams vary amongst 'viewers'** that we spoke to

**Children spoke to us about their reasons for watching livestreams**, which researchers categorised into 6 core motivations related to emotional connections from viewing, and related to the content itself

Emotional motivators include:

- **To deepen creator connection** – 'viewers' enjoyed what they felt was connecting authentically and deeply with a creator that they are a fan of.
- **For companionship** – 'viewers' liked that watching a livestream made them feel less alone, by being there in the moment with a creator.
- **To be part of a community** – 'viewers' liked connecting with *other viewers* who have similar interests or are fans of the same people.

Content motivators include:

- **For entertainment and hype** – 'viewers' liked being entertained by the at times shocking and unpredictable nature of livestreams.
- **For unfiltered realness** – 'viewers' liked that livestreams often gave them what they felt was a real picture.
- **For exclusive deals and benefits** – 'viewers' liked that deals and benefits could become available as a by-product of watching livestreams.

Researchers noted that, for some 'viewers', the motivations for watching livestreams **also drove regular engagement and/ or substantial time investment**

Researchers noted that **some of the reasons that viewers liked watching livestreams were also the reasons that they spent significant time viewing**. For example, feeling a heightened sense of intimacy with a creator, connecting with other viewers, for fear of missing out or to earn in-game currency rewards.





**'Viewers' considered more potential negative experiences associated with livestreamed content**, compared to pre-recorded content. Further, that these negative experiences were unique to livestreaming due to the perceived riskier nature of the live format

**The risks associated with the live format did not deter the children we spoke to from watching livestreams**, as they felt the benefits outweighed these risks.

**'Viewers' considered that livestreamed content had more potential for negative experiences than recorded content, examples from the research included:**

- **Not knowing what a livestream fully entails** (before tuning in), means negative experiences can unfold unexpectedly for 'viewers' to watch.
- Negative experiences **stemming from other viewers in the chat**, which is subject to seemingly weaker moderation than recorded content.
- The **element of impulsivity that comes with viewing a livestream**, and experiences of regretting saying something or responding in a certain way e.g., via chat.
- 'Viewers' negative experiences may also emerge from **the parasocial dynamics of livestreaming**, including perceived pressure to support favourite creators and investing time and/or money seeking recognition from creators they watch and follow.





**'Viewers' identified challenges in responding** to, and limiting, perceived risks and harms in live formats, compared with recorded content.

'Viewers' described several challenges they faced when trying to respond to or monitor harms while watching a livestream:

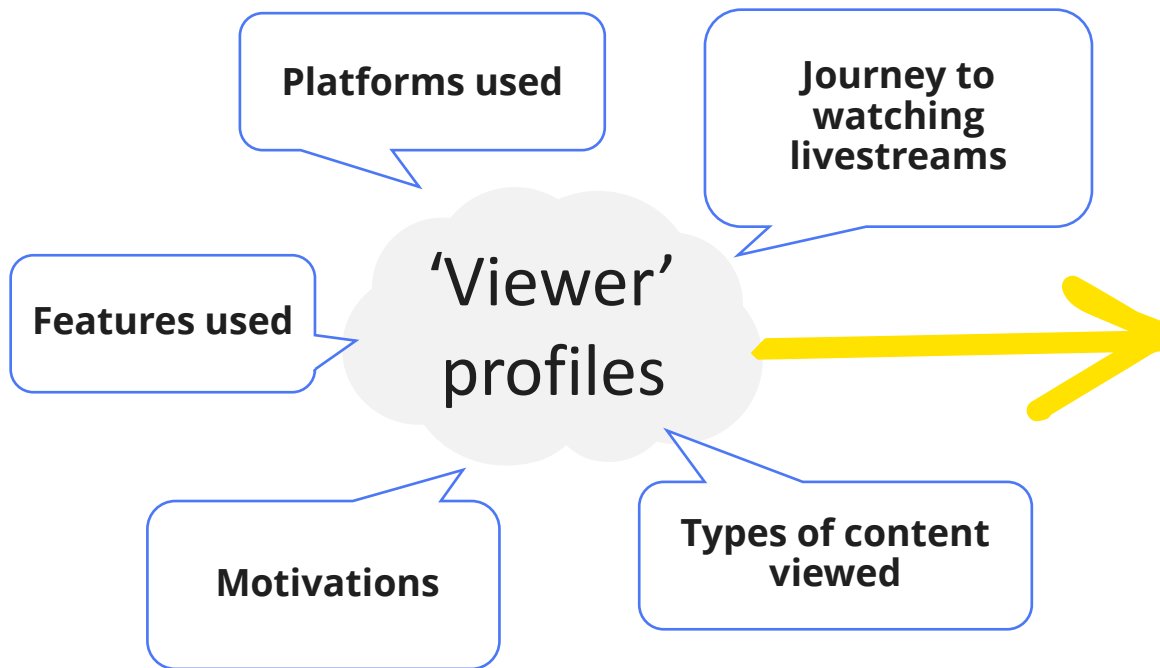
- **Focus on enjoyment over moderation:** As 'viewers', children want to concentrate on the content and enjoy the moment. They prefer focusing on the creator rather than monitoring others' behaviour
- **Pressure to respond quickly:** The live nature of livestreams creates time pressure. Acting in the moment or using safeguards (for example, reporting a negative comment) can interrupt their viewing experience and the sense of real-time connection with the creator
- **Limited ability to take action after the livestream ends:** Once a livestream finishes, negative comments are no longer easily traceable. This makes it harder for 'viewers' to gather evidence or take action after the fact



# Part 2 summary: 'Viewer' profiles and pathways



Researchers created four hypothesised 'viewer' profiles based on what children we spoke to told us about their experiences of viewing livestreams, as shown in the diagram below. *These profiles provide a high-level summary of the differences in livestreaming behaviour that children described in the research and are outlined in more detail in part 2 of this report.*

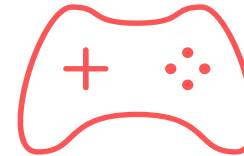


## Discovery via...



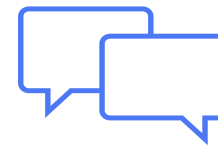
### THE CREATOR

Some viewers first watch livestreams because a creator they already follow goes live, using livestreaming as a way to deepen their connection with that creator.



### INTEREST OR PASSION

Some viewers discover livestreams while seeking more content related to an existing interest (e.g., gaming or shopping), with livestreams offering depth, authenticity and community around that passion.



### WORD OF MOUTH

For some viewers, livestreaming is introduced through friends, peers or family, with social influence prompting initial viewing and shaping uptake.



### THE PLATFORM

Others encounter livestreams incidentally while scrolling on familiar platforms, experimenting casually after platform features surface live content.





PART 1:  
RESEARCH  
FINDINGS

# Contextual key findings

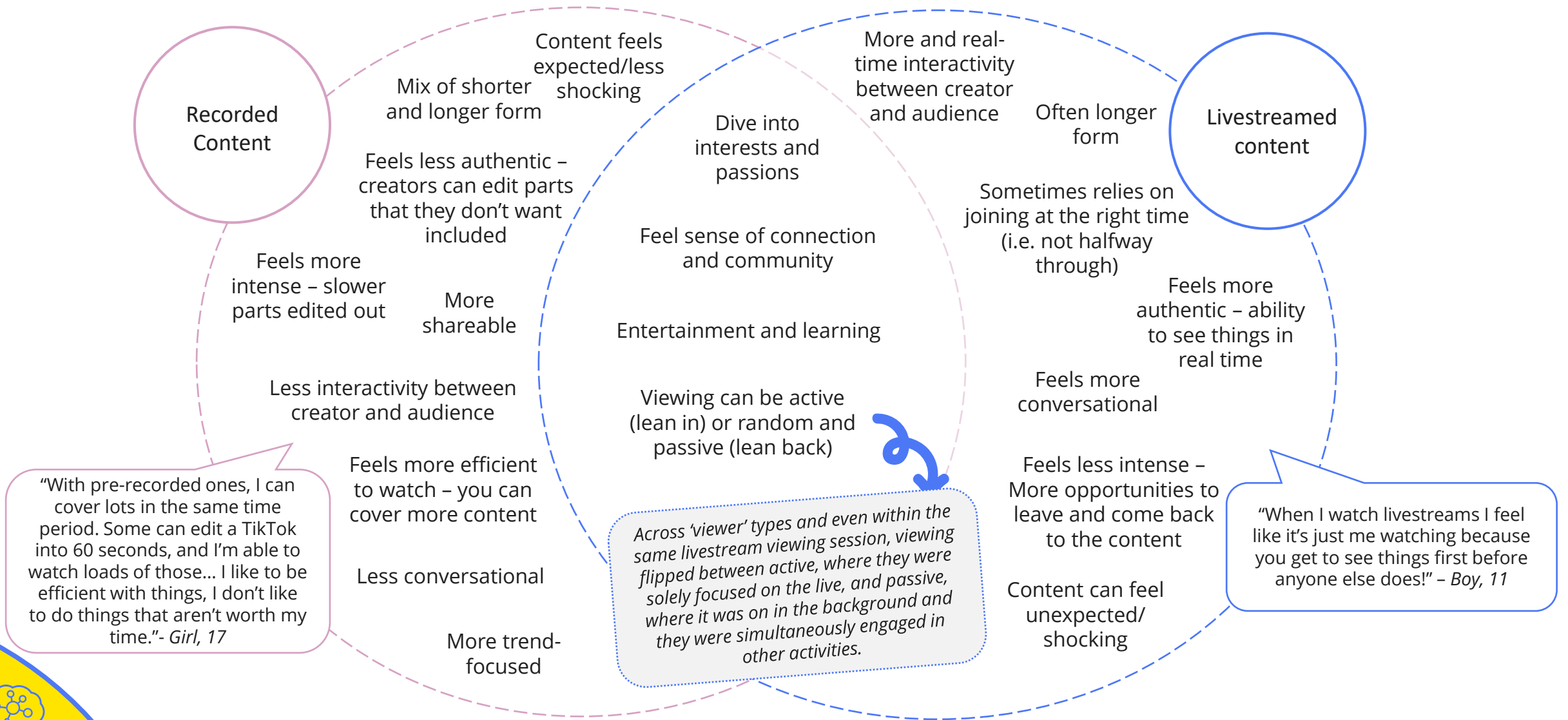


Image sourced: Pexels, Cottonbro Studio

# 'Viewers' identified characteristics that set livestreamed content apart from recorded content



Children in our research told us about the elements that made livestreaming unique compared to recorded content, alongside some shared qualities too



# Despite acknowledging its unique qualities, livestreaming was not always 'viewers' key format for watching content



Children in our research explained how viewing livestreams fits into their wider content worlds. Some of them talked about livestreams as *just a part of it*, while others talked about it as *pivotal*

## Part of the picture / Casually Invested

For some 'viewers', livestreaming is just another way of engaging with their favourite subject matters and content creators. It does not have special status above recorded content (in fact, it tends to play second fiddle) and they don't strongly identify as livestream fans specifically

Although they still describe the unique benefits offered by the livestream format, these are felt purely as 'in-the-moment' benefits rather than motivating any broader livestream viewing journey

Associated platforms

TikTok, Instagram, YouTube

"I watch recorded stuff more than lives but I'll click on them [TikTok lives] sometimes if I see my favourite creators have gone live." -Girl, 14

## Pivotal to the picture / Highly Invested

For other 'viewers', livestreaming occupies a special status, and watching livestreams is an important part of their online world. They are fans of the livestream format itself (rather than just fans of the content creators or subject matter of the livestreams)

The benefits of livestreaming aren't just felt and thought about during viewing moments. Instead, they motivate a wider livestreaming journey and lead to them intentionally seeking out viewing moments

Associated platforms

Twitch

"I prefer livestream content... I really do like that interactivenss and being able to watch what's happening at the exact time." - Girl, 12

**MORE ON THIS**  
Negatives from viewing livestreams could be more pronounced among highly invested children. See slides 42-47 for details



# Different platforms are suited to different needs, from highly invested 'viewers' seeking deeper interaction to casually invested 'viewers' who want to dip in and out



Overview of platforms used to view livestreams by children we spoke to. Our sample was selected to cover a range of platforms so is not necessarily reflective of the platform spread amongst the broader population of livestream viewers.

Main platform for 6 'viewers'

## TikTok

**Platform of choice for:** 'Viewers' of GRWMs\* and Daily Routines and Shopping content. Skewing older (15+) and female. Tended to be more casually invested 'viewers' who also used the platform for viewing non-live content

### What 'viewers' liked about it

- A one-stop-shop for all content with highly curated profiles and feeds – so it's easy to find relevant livestreams or see when their favourite creators go live (through notifications or their Following tab, which indicates creators who are Live via a red icon)

### Why it's chosen

- Convenience; first-choice for viewing all content, happen to be using platform anyway

Main platform for 6 'viewers'

## Twitch

**Platform of choice for:** Gaming 'viewers', especially those highly invested in livestreams. Skews older (15+) and towards boys

### What 'viewers' liked about it

- The ultimate livestreaming platform, built for purpose
- Sophisticated suite of features for interacting with creators and other viewers
- Easy to find livestreams from favourite creators on homepage

### Why it's chosen

- For sense of community around favourite creators – particularly strong on Twitch
- Increased interaction potential
- Desire to support their favourite creators by boosting their Twitch viewership (in cases where Twitch is the creator's platform of choice)

Main platform for 7 'viewers'

## YouTube

**Platform of choice for:** All 'viewer' genres, skewing younger (14 and under)

### What 'viewers' liked about it

- Makes it very easy to find lives (housed on a specific part of platform) and the lives of their favourite creators
- Receive notifications ahead of livestreaming starting, and once it's started too – makes it easy not to miss livestreams from favourite creators

### Why it's chosen

- The obvious choice: younger 'viewers' are more likely to already have an account for viewing non-live content

Main platform for 1 'viewer'

## Instagram

**Platform of choice for:** Older female, focused on live content from favourite influencers (e.g. Q&As and GRWMs\*)

### What 'viewer' liked about it

- Our Instagram 'viewer' described it as calmer and less chaotic vs TikTok lives; chat moves more slowly, and is less glitchy

### Why it's chosen

- Convenience; first-choice platform for following certain influencers so naturally accessing their livestreams there too

\*See 'Glossary' slide in Appendix for definition

# An overview of features and functions used by 'viewers'



The children we spoke to described several different platform features and functions they were aware of and engaged with. This slide presents an overview of these. Further detail on usage and engagement described by the children in our sample can be found in slides 24-26

Feature / function	Outline of how 'viewers' told us they used or engaged with this
<b>Chat</b>	Reading the chat to gauge other viewers' reactions, to interact with or gain recognition from the creators themselves, or to pose questions
<b>Emojis</b>	Sending emojis within the chat to support a creator, react to what is happening or vote on something
<b>Polls</b>	Voting to influence what the streamer does next within the stream itself or in their next livestream
<b>Channel points</b>	Used by highly invested viewers of specific creators to interact with them and/or influence their livestream
<b>Following</b>	To more easily be alerted to content of creators/channels they like (via notifications / their homepage) and as a free way to support them
<b>Subscribing</b>	Paying to subscribe or have membership to a livestream channel in order to support a creator and access exclusive features / content
<b>Gifting</b>	To show appreciation to creators through sending them gifts (of monetary value) and to receive recognition in return
<b>Drops</b>	To earn in-game currency or items by watching specific creators affiliated with specific games



**MORE ON THIS**  
These features and functions were sometimes linked to the negative experiences described by children we spoke to when watching livestreams, see examples in the Negative experiences & Risks chapter, slides 42-47



# Some 'viewers' do not engage with **chat** at all; of those who do, some actively participate – but others just read it



Usage of livestream chat functions among children we spoke to, including how this differed across users and how it influenced livestreaming experiences:

## Who used chat functions:

A broad range of 'viewers' engaged with the chat, but to varying degrees - some just read the chat without directly engaging while others engaged directly, either typing comments or responding via emojis. Heavily invested 'viewers' were more likely to directly engage through commenting. Some 'viewers' found that livestreams with very large audiences (e.g. Taylor Swift Eras Tour stream) had a poorer quality of chat due to spamming

Platforms chat was used on:  
Twitch, TikTok, YouTube, Instagram

"The comments on big livestreams are mostly just random waffle. On the GRWMs\* I watch, the comments section is 'cuter' if that makes sense. **It's like a conversation with the creator.**" – Girl, 17

## How they engaged with chat:

Chat was used by 'viewers' for a number of purposes:

- **Reading chat for other viewer reactions;** for example, for a sense of kinship ('are they thinking what I'm thinking?') or to add further entertainment or hype to their viewing experience (e.g., laughing at funny comments, reading what other viewers want to know about their favourite creator)
- **Interact with, get to know or learn from creators;** e.g., by leaving comments, asking questions or voting, e.g., type 1 or 2 to decide what they do next
- **Get recognition from creators;** e.g., getting your name shouted out or your comment read out (especially for fans of particular creators, who found that the more they commented the more likely their username was to be recognised).
- **To find out more about products on shopping livestreams:** including posing questions to the creator or other viewers about the product

"This creator I was watching was talking about the dumb stuff he'd done as a kid and then the **chat went off with all the stupid stuff everyone had done** when they were young too... **it felt like there was a real kinship.**" – Girl, 15

*Though none of our sample actively used **Superchat\***, they mentioned this as a paid-for feature available to YouTube viewers to have their message highlighted so that it's impossible for the livestreamer to miss*

\*See 'Glossary' slide in Appendix for definition



# Beyond leaving comments in the chat, some 'viewers' used **emojis, polls and channel points** to interact with creators and influence their streams



Interaction features used by some of the children we spoke to either in addition to the chat, or to enhance possibilities within chat:

## Emojis

Platforms used on:  
Twitch, TikTok,  
YouTube, Instagram

Used by:

No skew – an accessible way to engage that feels more 'anonymous' than chat

How they were used:

- Sending emojis within the chat to **support a creator, react to what is happening, or vote** on something (with creators assigning different emojis to denote different options)
- Some 'viewers' told us that emojis allowed them to **engage without giving away too much** of themselves

"I don't write in the chat apart from sometimes I'll **put an emoji because I don't want to put myself out there** like that with people I don't know" – Girl, 15

## Polls

Platforms used on:  
Twitch, TikTok,  
YouTube, Instagram

Used by:

No skew – an accessible way to engage / influence content that feels anonymous

How they were used:

- To **influence what the livestreamer does next**, e.g. which challenge the creator should take on in their next livestream, or which weapon they should use in the game they're playing

"I **really love the polls...** the other day I was watching a stream and it [the poll] said, **what game should I play next** – this horror game or that horror game?" – Boy, 15

## Channel points

Platforms used on:  
Twitch, YouTube

Used by:

Highly invested viewers who are fans of particular creators

How they were used:

- **Viewers earn Channel Points** for hitting viewing hours and daily streaks against individual creator channels
- These **points can be spent on custom rewards** set by the creator – typically **influencing the livestream** (e.g. reminding a creator to drink water, putting jump scares\* into the livestream, i.e. sudden appearance of a 'frightening' visual / loud audio)
- They can also spend them on **communicating with the creator** in ways more likely to get noticed, including exclusive emojis and Superchat\* (*NB. The latter was not used by our sample but was mentioned as a possibility they were aware of*)
- Some 'viewers' described these interactions as a **'safe', anonymous** way to communicate

"Sometimes I've used viewing currency to do stuff like telling them to have some water – it's not communicating with them exactly but **it's a way to feel closer to them**" – Girl, 15

\*See 'Glossary' slide in Appendix for definition

# 'Viewers' who were fans of specific creators used other features to support them, get recognition from them, and access exclusive benefits



Engagement amongst the children we spoke to with features that boost the income and/or status of creators they watch or admire:

## Following

Platforms used on:  
Twitch, TikTok,  
YouTube,  
Instagram

Used by:

'Viewers' who are fans of specific creators

How this were used:

- To **support their favourite creators (for free)** – some 'viewers' told us that creators get more money for having more followers
- To make it **easier to find content / lives** creators who they follow because it shows up on their homepage and they get notified when they go live

"There's a **following tab to see people you already follow** and you can just look at the livestream from there" – Boy, 16

## Subscribing / Membership

Platforms used on:  
Twitch,  
YouTube

Used by:

Highly invested 'viewers' who are fans of specific creators

How this was used:

- **Paying to 'subscribe' or have 'membership'** to a livestream channel to **support a creator** and have access to **exclusive features or content**

"I used to have a membership with [popular livestreamer]... it would give you some cool chat features, and gifs that people wouldn't be able to use. It **gives you some features while also benefiting the streamer** by giving them money" – Boy, 15

## Gifting

Platforms used on:  
Twitch, TikTok

Used by:

Highly invested 'viewers' who are fans of specific creators

How this was used:

- To **support creators** and show appreciation for their work through sending gifts of some monetary value
- To **get recognition from creators** e.g., receiving messages saying 'thank you' or having a shout-out from the creator on a livestream saying thank you

"You can like, gift on Twitch so you **donate money to the creator**... I think it's quite fun. Also when you do gift it sends them a notification and **they say thank you** to you." – Girl, 12

## Drops\*

Platforms used on:  
Twitch

Used by:

Highly invested 'viewers' who are fans of specific creators / games

How this was used:

- Drops involve **being rewarded for watching livestreamers affiliated with certain games** for specific amounts of time in order to **earn in-game currency**
- Some 'viewers' learn about drops via game or game developer (e.g. Ubisoft) social media channels, and the livestreamers themselves

"If they've [video game] linked with a creator you also like, then great - **you get bonuses even though you're going to watch them anyway.**" – Boy, 16

\*See 'Glossary' slide in Appendix for definition



# Prompts and motivations for viewing livestreams



Image sourced: Pexels, Karolina Grabowska

Though some 'viewers' planned some livestream watching moments ahead of time, this was not always the case - with several mentions of it being a spur of the moment decision



Children we spoke to described a range of different journeys to viewing livestreams, from intentionally planning to watch a specific livestream all the way through to coming across a livestream and watching it spontaneously

## Planned & Specific

**Who are they watching:** Favourite creators or must-see events

Intentionally logging on to their platform of choice to view a specific livestream, either as a result of:

- Having checked creator's social media/livestreaming platform profiles to see when their next 'live' is scheduled; OR
- Receiving a notification that a favourite creator has gone live; OR
- Logging on to a platform to find a livestream of a specific event, e.g., a concert or a sports match

"On Instagram, [popular livestreamer] will post when he's going live, and I'll make sure I do my homework before so that I can watch him" - Boy, 15

## In the mood

**Who are they watching:** Either favourite creators who happen to be live or other creators who are streaming content that is relevant to them

In the mood to watch a livestream, but without a specific livestream in mind:

- Logging onto a livestreaming platform to see which of their favourite creators are online
- Searching for streams based on an area of interest (e.g., particular game title or sport)
  - Going to Live area of a platform (e.g. YouTube Live or TikTok Live Central) and scrolling to find something of interest
- Already watching a livestream which ends and platform automatically plays the next

"When you go on Twitch you get a notification at the top of your screen [telling you a creator has gone live]... If it's a person that I like, or a subject that I like, then I will click on it and it will open the stream" - Boy, 16

## Happenstance

Not specifically in the mood to watch a livestream, but end up watching on either because:

- Came across a livestream from scrolling through other content (most common on TikTok and Instagram)
- Received a link to a livestream from a friend

"If I'm scrolling on my stories and see [popular content creator] is live, I may click on it, but it's not like I'm going on Instagram with the intention of watching a live" - Girl, 17



# From feeling part of a community, to feeling like they are hanging out with creators, 'viewers' had a multitude of reasons for watching livestreams



The children we spoke to told us about the positives that motivated them to keep watching livestreams, and specifically what made livestreaming stand out versus watching other content. Researchers have grouped these into 6 key motivations:

## EMOTIONAL MOTIVATORS

### Deepen Creator Connection



*Connecting authentically and deeply with a creator that you're a fan of*

### Companionship



*Feeling less alone by watching a livestream and being in the moment with a creator*

### Be Part of a Community



*Connecting with other viewers who have similar interests or are part of the same fandom*

## CONTENT MOTIVATORS

### Entertainment and Hype



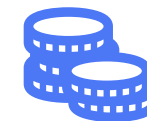
*Being entertained by the shocking and unpredictable nature of livestreams*

### Unfiltered Realness



*Watching livestreams to get a real picture*

### Exclusive Deals & Benefits



*Getting exclusive deals and benefits as a by-product of watching livestreams*



# 'Viewers' spoke about livestreams as a means of supporting and connecting more deeply with creators they are fans of



**Deepen Creator Connection** – Children that we spoke to described how viewing livestreams allowed them to deepen their fandom of specific creators:

- 'Viewers' talked about watching livestreams as a way to get to know the 'real' creator, **a more authentic way to connect to them** – hearing from them unscripted and in a more candid, personal way
- 'Viewers' told us that getting noticed by their favourite creator feels very special and is a **unique element of livestreams because they can communicate in real time**
- 'Viewers' talked about watching livestreams as a way of **supporting people they like** (creators and stars/celebrities). This is because it boosts the creator's views/followers, or because their presence and comments act as a buffer to any hate comments or negativity



## SUPPORTING FEATURES & FUNCTIONALITIES

Chat, polls, emojis, gifts, following  
subscribing, notifications, channel  
points / rewards

## THIS APPLIES TO...

'Viewers' who are a fan and follower  
of a specific creator

## CASE STUDY 1

- A 15-year-old girl described watching an influencer prepare for a football game via livestream
- She found the experience more engaging than standard content, valuing the sense of immediacy and the "inside scoop" it provided
- The appeal lay partly in seeing the influencer's lifestyle outside her everyday reality, which made the content feel novel

## CASE STUDY 2

- Girl, 17, is a huge fan of a K-pop group. One member of this group started going live regularly, which allowed her to deepen her connection to them
- For example, on Valentine's Day, they joined a livestream, which felt particularly special as it felt like the member of the group was spending Valentine's Day with her and other fans rather than someone else
- She looked forward to each week to boost her mood

"On Valentine's Day, it was the usual day of his Sunday lives, and he said I'm your Valentine, and you're my Valentine. If it was pre-recorded, he could have been out with his friends or his girlfriend, but it was live, so it showed he really cares about us." – *Girl, 17*



The heightened intimacy and potential to interact with creators they are a fan of can increase the time and money 'viewers' put into watching livestreams



Researchers identified potential for **significant emotional investment** amongst viewers who were fans of specific creators – resulting in **increased time and/or money** spent watching livestreams. This was due to the heightened intimacy and interaction potential unique to the live format:

*Certain features strengthen the connection between time / money investment and getting a shout-out:*

### Heightened intimacy

Researchers observed that the live format could intensify the parasocial relationships\* between 'viewers' and the creators they are fans of, due to the sense of hanging out with the 'real them'. Observations from our creator sample also point to the intensity of feelings viewers can develop. This includes 'creators' who had viewers divulging personal information and a 'creator' whose viewers had submitted applications to be his chat moderator – a time-consuming responsibility.

**Researchers observed that these parasocial relationships could lead to significant emotional investment and increased time or money spent engaging with the format.**

A parasocial relationship is a one-sided emotional bond where a person feels connected to a public figure or media persona who does not know them personally

"He speaks in Korean, I understand a bit but I'd be watching him just listening, just trying to catch on with his facial expressions... I felt like I needed [to watch his livestream] to survive, it became a part of my routine." - *Girl, 17*

### Interaction Potential

The possibility of having a comment or username read out by a favourite 'creator' is elevated in livestreams versus regular content, and some 'viewers' were willing to invest time, effort and money for this to happen. This included increasing their viewing and commenting frequency to be more likely to be recognised, carefully crafting comments and sending at exactly the right moment, as well as gifting favourite creators.

**Though 'viewers' talked about getting a shout-out very positively, researchers identified a potential risk for investing significant time, effort or money to reap this reward**

"The more consistent you are... the more likely they are to recognise you because they know you're consistent, they can see a real history with you watching their stuff so they're more likely to engage." - *Boy, 16*

### Channel Points – 'viewers'

described being rewarded for daily streaks with or time spent watching specific creators. These could be spent on things like custom emotes, Super Chat\*, and text to speech – all increasing likelihood of a shout-out. *Note that none of our sample had used Super Chat\* but described this as something they had observed other viewers do*

### Leaderboards – one 'viewer'

described (in relation to TikTok) the drive amongst other viewers to earn Super Fan status and get onto the leaderboard through consistent viewing, gifting and commenting.

\*See Glossary slide in Appendix for definitions

# Spotlight: We spoke with a 'viewer' of VTuber\* content, who described their connection to the character and the stories in the livestream



The VTuber community is particularly niche, with a less widespread following than other creators but is gaining traction. Our 'viewer' followed both indie VTubers (not represented by an agency) and commercial VTubers (represented by an agency)

VTuber content is mainly based on them speaking and **conveying their 'lore' or VTuber storyline:** 'viewers' discover this through watching, Googling for information (about bigger VTubers) or being told by other VTubers in the community

Because this lore is unique to each VTuber, the 'viewer' we spoke to **feels more connected to the creator as they follow their story.** Researchers also hypothesise that 'viewers' of VTubers may feel a heightened need to continue watching to keep up with the story

"Unless you're there for like the start, most of the time it's either through the community, like seeing it on a Discord server or something, or it'll be from watching a video about it. A lot of them have like a video explaining it. There was a recent thing launched that I think I mentioned about that there was a comic, virtual comic that's explaining it. But most of the time I'd say it's through the community." - Boy, 16

"That character, the personality, the story just feels a lot more connected I suppose, and you can enjoy it like it's a series or something like that compared to the pre recorded stuff which very rarely has that sort of thing unless it's just clips or something from a YouTuber's live stream." - Boy, 16



Source: Google Images, ROKOKO

**\*Vtuber/ing:** A creator who livestreams using a virtual avatar - often animated with motion-capture technology - rather than their real-world appearance.



# 'Viewers' found that watching livestreams made them feel less alone because it felt like the creator was there with them in real time



**Companionship** - Children that we spoke to described how viewing livestreams allowed them to feel a sense of companionship:

- 'Viewers' enjoyed that the live element **can help them feel less alone**, as they feel that they have company even if not in real life,
- Watching livestreams **can build a connection** (even if it's a creator that they're unfamiliar with). In comparison, pre-recorded content can feel fast-paced and, at times, disconnected because of the number of different creators you can watch in a short period of time. Whereas watching a single livestreamer talk for an extended period builds a stronger sense of connection
- **Some find companionship in mirroring the creator's behaviour:** whether that's playing the same game, or doing their makeup at the same time, for them it's about the action rather than the creator themselves, which may in turn fuel their own productivity (potentially as a form of body doubling\*)



## SUPPORTING FEATURES & FUNCTIONALITIES

Those motivated by companionship are less likely to engage with lots of features and are happy to just watch - but some do monitor the chat

**THIS APPLIES TO...**  
Most viewers

## CASE STUDY 1

- Boy, 16, likes watching gaming lives mostly when he's getting ready for school or when he's gaming at the same time
- He likes being able to put something on in the background, which makes him feel like he's there with the livestreamer. He sometimes monitors or even participates in the chat, mostly when he is alone and has no one else to talk to
- He likes to mirror what the livestreamer is doing by gaming alongside them

## CASE STUDY 2

- Girl, 17, watches mostly chit chat or beauty and shopping livestream content
- Whilst she tidies her room or does other things e.g., homework, she often will have a livestream on in the background, which she finds comforting as well as productive as she can multi-task!
- She also finds that when she's had a bad day at school, even listening to a creator talk positively about their day can boost her mood

"I find it relaxing personally, like because you're just, you're just kind of sitting there on the live. I think it's the fact that they're just talking and it's just like a normal conversation." – Girl, 17

\*See Glossary slide in Appendix for definitions



# 'Viewers' liked that they can build friendships and bonds with other viewers through shared interests



**Be Part of a Community** – Children that we spoke to described enjoying the sense of community with other livestream viewers:

- **'Viewers' enjoyed the feeling of being part of a community** that comes with watching livestreams
- Unique to livestreams is that they can **be together in the moment with other fans / followers**, meaning they're all experiencing the same moments together
- **They can also engage in real-time discussion**, with others in their community forming bonds around the content
- They find that the chat can occasionally act as **a safe space, for those who are fans of certain creators or subject matters to talk, form bonds and support each other**



## SUPPORTING FEATURES & FUNCTIONALITIES

Chat, private servers, emojis

## THIS APPLIES TO...

All types of 'viewer', but especially those who are more invested

## CASE STUDY 1

- Boy, 16, specifically likes to watch VTubers\* livestream
- He enjoys feeling part of what he describes as "niche and nerdy" community, because it is a passion of his
- Seeing other viewers who like the same thing as him e.g., 'Sailor Moon,' a niche manga series, makes him feel like there is a community around his passion(s)
- Joining a private server can make this community feel even more special and exclusive

## CASE STUDY 2

- Girl, 17, loves how livestreams can bring together fans over an event e.g., in her case a Taylor Swift Eras concert
- She described watching the concert on a livestream, speculating with other fans in the chat about what she was going to do/ wear for the next song(s)
- Not only did she feel there in the moment with Taylor, but the fans too – and really felt part of a community
- She also messaged friends during this livestream on TikTok to discuss the concert, and bond over their shared fandom

"It kind of feels like you're in the concert with everyone else watching her when you found out. And it was like, we'd all see it on live and then we'd all message each other like, Oh my God, she played this and that sort of thing." – *Girl, 17*

\*See 'Glossary' slide in Appendix for definition



# The interactivity of livestream chats felt like a community to some 'viewers'



Researchers observed a sense of intense belonging between some highly invested 'viewers' and their fellow viewing communities:

Livestream chats afford **in-the-moment responses to comments from other viewers** who they may **share (niche) interests with**.

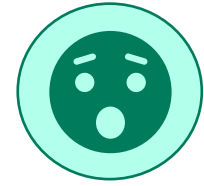
This is different from other content, where comments are not shared at the same time, rather, as-and-when people watch. 'Viewers' described how enjoyable livestream chats could be, with some even moving to Discord after a stream to continue their chat.

"It felt like a little bit of a community, like everyone's just having fun together." - *Girl, 17*

"Sometimes it's fun, talking to other viewers... it happens more in the talking ones [livestreams] because it'll be about a subject like old anime. There was one talking about an old anime called Sailor Moon which I am quite a fan of. You don't see fans of that very often so it was nice" - *Boy, 16*



# 'Viewers' liked the shock factor and authenticity during big moments on livestreams



**Entertainment and Hype** – Children that we spoke to described enjoying the entertainment and hype that came with viewing livestreams:

- **Livestreams are often unpredictable both for the 'viewer' and the creator**, and 'viewers' like the element of shock and surprise that comes with it which can help cure boredom
- **The fact that creators can't edit livestreams often means that the content can feel funnier**, more in-depth and allows 'viewers' a real look at a creator's personality
- Being the first to know / see these moments on a livestream adds to the specialness of the format, as **knowledge is exclusive to those watching the livestream**, which also brings heightened excitement



## SUPPORTING FEATURES & FUNCTIONALITIES

Chat, polls, emojis, servers, gifts

## MORE ON THIS

See slide 44 for the negative impact some 'viewers' described that stems from the element of shock and surprise



## CASE STUDY 1

- Boy, 11, usually watches gaming lives. He loves the exciting and shocking moments on lives
- For example, watching a streamer blow up a 'fake apartment' on a live, have pillow fights and generally cause chaos, which feels very entertaining
- He described feeling really immersed in these moments as they feel more fast-paced than pre-recorded video

## CASE STUDY 2

- Boy, 15, regularly watches gaming and GRWM\* streams from a popular livestreamer
- The day before our moderator spoke to him, he was watching a stream from this creator where they had got to 100k subscribers – and as a surprise to celebrate this, LeBron James came on the stream to cut all his hair off
- He explained how shocked he was to see this, expecting a regular gaming livestream
- He was engaged in the chat at the time, interacting with other viewers and enjoying sharing the moment with them

"I was just expecting him to be doing what he normally does, maybe with another influencer – not to be cutting his hair! It was quite shocking to be honest, because I know him, he likes his hair!" – Boy, 15

\*See Glossary slide in Appendix for definitions



The unique entertainment, suspense and hype from watching livestreams could be linked to a heightened 'fear of missing out' and result in longer viewing sessions



Some of the children we spoke to described dedicating longer times to viewing livestreams, as compared to regular content, in order to catch all the exciting moments, live while they unfold:

Some 'viewers' described **planning their days around livestreams** and **not wanting to leave** once they'd started watching so that they didn't miss the exciting or unexpected moments

"Normally, I'll see what time they're going to stream and I'd work my day around it and try to be at the stream on time and stuff!" - *Boy, 15*

Some 'viewers' described instances of creators setting **Gifting / Donation Goals and Like Goals** during livestreams: once these are reached, they will do something on the live that viewers want to see - with potential to lead some viewers to stay on longer so they don't miss it, and even to invest money

"They'll be playing guitar on a live and they'll get 'Like Goals' for each of the songs that viewers want them to play. They'll get people to get them to the goal and then play a song" - *Boy, 15*

Some 'viewers' reflected that the **duration of their livestream-watching sessions** was much longer than regular content-watching sessions, with one describing watching for 2 hours whilst laying on his hand, to the point that his hand went numb

"I might just have them on and sit down for one to three hours... for non-live content it would probably be a lot shorter" - *Boy, 16*

Researchers hypothesise that the **unique 'you have to be there' quality of livestreaming combined with the extensive length of some streams** may encourage users to spend long periods of time watching live content (and potentially with greater frequency) to ensure they don't miss noteworthy moments.



# 'Viewers' liked learning about products, passions and experiences in a true to life, unfiltered way



**Unfiltered Realness** – Children that we spoke to described how livestreaming provided a unique opportunity to see the 'real' picture:

- 'Viewers' liked being able to see content that feels authentic and unfiltered, including **the good, the bad and the ugly** - in comparison to pre-recorded content, which was felt to edit out the less entertaining parts or things that go wrong
- The longer duration of livestreams means that **'viewers' can see a more well-rounded, complete picture**. For example, not skipping through the hard parts on games and being able to see products up close
- Livestreams **offer opportunities for greater interactivity**, meaning that creators can respond to 'viewers' with their advice, learnings and experiences in detail, whether that's how to get to a new level on a game, or their review of a skincare product



## SUPPORTING FEATURES & FUNCTIONALITIES

Chat, Polls

## THIS APPLIES TO...

'Viewers' with specific interests or niches, or those who view shopping livestreams and product hauls

## MORE ON THIS

The unfiltered nature of livestreams can lead to negative emotional outbursts by creators- see slide 47

## CASE STUDY 1

- Girl, 14, mostly buys products via TikTok shop because of how you can access what she describes as an "up close and honest review" of products
- She recently bought hair straighteners for example, and says that seeing the product being used by a creator on a livestream felt more trustworthy because she knew the video could not be edited as it was in real time
- Alongside this, she had the opportunity to ask questions in the chat of this shopping livestream, and had her questions answered promptly because of the live format

## CASE STUDY 2

- Boy, 16 likes to watch gaming content on livestreams and especially likes that you don't have random gaps in the game that he notices with pre-recorded content
- He likes that gamers can't edit out the emotion that they feel when playing (although at times this might become more extreme with livestreamers getting visibly angry)
- He likes that he can see every failure or mistake that's made by the creator: for him, that feels more genuine

"When it's pre-recorded, you tend to get the idea that it was probably faked because there are so many people who fake it. Whereas when it's in person, and you almost feel like the emotion because they can't edit it out of the video or anything because it's life, you must, in a way, know it's genuine." – Boy, 16

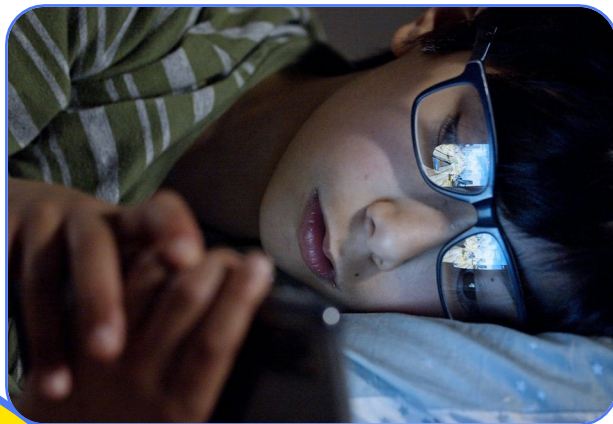


'Viewers' liked that they can access exclusive rewards for their time spent watching livestreams, which isn't often a feature of watching pre-recorded content



**Exclusive deals and benefits** - Children that we spoke to described benefiting from exclusive discounts and rewards as a result of viewing livestreams:

- 'Viewers' like the **rewards that come just from watching a livestream**. For example, they can be rewarded with **exclusive giveaways** on livestreams, set up by the creators
- They also feel **rewarded for repeat watching of the same creator and the number of hours spent watching**. Rewards include: **gaining channel points\*** (which allows them to influence the stream and receive channel-specific benefits) and **in-game currency** by watching streamers affiliated with certain gaming platforms, developers or titles
- 'Viewers' liked the fact that you **can get special/exclusive deals and discounts** when buying through a livestream (for example, **limited-time discounts** on TikTok shop), making watching feel even more worthwhile



#### SUPPORTING FEATURES & FUNCTIONALITIES

Channel points, in-game currency (drops), leaderboards, rewards

#### THIS APPLIES TO...

All 'viewers' but particularly those who are committed to a certain creator, game or products

#### CASE STUDY 1

- Boy, 15, is a fan of a popular livestreamer and the games he plays, including Rainbow Six Siege (developed by Ubisoft)
- When this livestreamer became Ubisoft\* certified, the 'viewer' was excited to earn in-game rewards by watching his livestreams for certain lengths of time
- He looks out for opportunities to earn this type of reward, either learning about these through the in-game newsfeed or by following game developers on TikTok

#### CASE STUDY 2

- Girl, 17, loves to watch TikTok product lives where creators are showing the products that are available to purchase through the live
- For example, she particularly likes to tune into clothing TikToks and often purchases these herself. She finds that she can get clothing for a reduced price, through her shopping basket which holds clothing at a reduced price for the duration of the live

"If I'm on a live and they're promoting a product, the majority of the time it's on a sale for the amount of time that they're on the live so you need to buy it there and then, otherwise it'll go off sale. It's cheaper for you to buy it in the moment." - *Girl, 17*

\*See Glossary slide in Appendix for definitions



## Platforms that incentivise livestream viewing through opportunities to earn in-game currency may encourage longer or more frequent viewing sessions



Some of the children that we spoke to described certain platforms incentivising their viewing through gaming drops\*:

Gaming drops were mentioned in the context of Twitch. Drops involve rewarding viewers for watching livestreamers affiliated with certain games with in-game currency. This can lead to prolonged viewing sessions in order to gain certain rewards

"It records how long you've been watching these people and at certain milestones, so for example 2 hour, 4 hour, you will get the reward and it can be used in the game." - *Boy, 16*

"Yeah, rewards do make me spend more time watching stuff from certain creators, on certain games. I don't see any bad things from rewards because really it's just benefitting the players and the streamer" - *Boy, 15*

While some 'viewers' talk about these rewards as a nice-to-have bonus from their usual viewing behaviour, or even as not particularly motivating to them, researchers hypothesise that this feature has the potential to encourage more frequent or longer viewing sessions.



# Whilst livestream recordings fulfil some needs, certain benefits are unique to watching in real time for 'viewers'



The children that we spoke to told us about some clear differences between watching a livestream in the moment vs. watching it back via recordings:

Recordings **lack the in-the-moment surprise factor** and aren't appealing for those who enjoy the interactive element of livestreams

**Lack of access to interactive features** means that they are not able to engage with creators or others in their viewing community and form those deeper connections

However, some children, **particularly those heavily invested in certain livestreamers on Twitch**, still watch livestream recordings back for certain benefits:



**Entertainment and Hype** – 'viewers' sometimes catch up on top entertaining moments via clips and edits



**Deepen Creator Connection** - superfans still like to catch up on streams they've missed to keep up with their favourite creators / stars



**Unfiltered Realness**- recordings still valuable here. For example, to see how gamers get through boss fights\* or for demonstrations of skills & hacks

N.B. recordings of livestreams aren't always uploaded by the creator themselves; instead, a viewer or fan will record the livestream and share on another platform (especially TikTok or Instagram) as a form of supporting the creator

\*See Glossary slide in Appendix for definitions



# Negative experiences & Risks

Section note: All participants in this study were recruited to be regular, active livestream 'viewers', watching livestreams at least once a month. As such, their experiences may not reflect the experiences or behaviours of occasional or former livestream viewers. Further, given our sample size of 20, this section does not capture the full extent of potential risks



The live nature of livestreaming means it feels riskier to most 'viewers' than watching recorded content



When researchers asked 'viewers' about negative experiences associated with livestreaming, they identified several perceived risks that were elevated specifically as a result of the liveness of the format:



## The riskier nature of livestreaming

*Symbol above denotes findings related to the riskier nature of livestreaming (in contrast to pre-recorded content) for 'viewers'*

Not knowing what a livestream fully entails (before tuning in), means negative experiences can unfold unexpectedly for 'viewers'

Negative experiences stemming from other viewers in the chat, which is subject to weaker moderation than recorded content

The element of impulsivity that comes with viewing a livestream, and experiences of regretting saying something or responding in a certain way e.g., via chat

**MORE ON THIS:** 'Viewers' negative experiences may also emerge from the parasocial dynamics of livestreaming, including pressure to support favourite creators and investing time and/or money seeking recognition from creators they watch and follow. See slides 31 and 37 for further detail.



# Not knowing what a livestream fully entails before tuning in means negative experiences can unfold unexpectedly for 'viewers'



'Viewers' described **livestreams as unpredictable and inherently risky** because there is no way to know what a livestreamer will say or do, including the use of explicit language. 'Viewers' may be exposed in real time to unsafe or traumatic situations, such as **creators being swatted\* or involved in police incidents**. The **pressure for creators to stay engaging and go viral** can also lead to exposure to rage-bait\* behaviour, including creators verbally attacking others or escalating conflict. Emotional outbursts, such as creators breaking equipment in fits of rage, and shocking moments like the appearance of fake weapons on a stream, **can be distressing for 'viewers'** and difficult to contextualise in the moment.



## Fake Weapon Reveal

Boy, 11, was watching a creator who was play fighting with his younger brother on a livestream, when suddenly his younger brother pulled out a fake gun. Although he knew it was fake, he recognised that younger children viewing might not and that could be harmful to them. However, he likes the fact that live content like this can't get taken down as it would if it were a pre-recorded video.

"His little brother got angry and brought in a fake gun, to shoot [creator] live. I knew it was a fake gun, because who would shoot their brother with a gun... to little children who clearly don't understand, you have the actual streamer fake dying, that would be a little negative to them." - *Boy, 11*



## Unexpected animal cruelty

Boy, 15, was watching a creator on Twitch, who had featured his dog in the livestream; he told us that viewers joined the live commenting in the chat that the dog was really cute. However, shortly into the livestream the creator shocked his dog using its electric dog collar – he left the live when this happened, as he did not enjoy watching the dog being harmed.

"The dog just kind of got up, moved a bit and he had this shock collar on it and he just shocked it, which was just like horrible (...) he kind of shocks the dog and everybody's sort of a bit shocked. They (viewers) put it in the chat kind of this certain face, kind of they put a colon and then like a capital D to make it look like they're kind of a bit shocked." - *Boy, 15*



## Features & Functions involved

- Chat
- Guesting
- Emotes / Emojis

## Sample call out:

This was a bigger concern for 'viewers' watching creators who are known for more prank or challenge oriented content



# Spotlight: The unpredictability of watching a live



Swatting\* was described to us in this research as when **individuals falsely report violent crimes** to law enforcement at a streamer's address, prompting armed police responses that can add an element of risk and drama to watching livestreams – as well as danger. Two viewers in this research referenced swatting as a **key example of the riskier nature of livestreaming**, highlighting how the live, unscripted format can enable unpredictable behaviour.



## Swatting on a Livestream

Boy, 16 described a negative experience witnessing a creator being “swatted,” where viewers falsely report a crime at a creator’s address, leading to armed police or FBI breaking into the home to arrest the creator. He personally witnessed this while watching a livestream involving a popular livestreamer and noted that the incident was widely discussed among peers at school, which made it feel even more real and dramatic. He also described discomfort with “raging” behaviour from creators on lives, where creators break objects or act aggressively to attract viewers. He found this behaviour disturbing and chose to stop watching one creator who frequently engaged in it.

“[Popular livestreamer] was streaming and because he lives in America, he got swatted, which means where people report them to the police, called the FBI and then they have armed people holding guns burst into the room and actually arrest them on the spot. You could see some people, like, still in the chat, like in various degree of panic... and unfortunately, there are some people in the chat who find it funny. It was slightly scary” – *Boy, 16*

\*See 'Glossary' slide in Appendix for definition



Most 'viewers' have had negative experiences stemming from chat due to other viewers' behaviour on livestreams, where moderation is weaker because of the live format



'Viewers' described the **less moderated nature of livestream chats increasing the risk of encountering more negative comments from other viewers**. 'Viewers' gave examples including sexualised lives in spaces like Twitch's "Just Chatting\*" channel or brief exposure to explicit imagery on TikTok Lives. Sometimes **'viewers' also experienced second-hand abuse**, harassment, or hateful comments directed at creators, other viewers, or minority groups – which felt difficult to watch and be part of. Even 'viewers' who have not personally experienced these issues are aware they happen and approach livestreams with caution, often accepting this **lack of control as inevitable**. **'Viewers' do detail that some creators use moderators**, but they aren't always water-tight when it comes to preventing negativity in the chat, especially if it's a live with a larger audience.



### Negative Comments Read Aloud

Boy, 15, describes how text-to-speech features in livestreams can amplify harmful behaviour, allowing viewers to pay for chat comments to be read out loud, including rude or disruptive messages. He is aware that this can negatively affect the livestream and explains that he will report users who pay for negative comments to be read out.

"It's just like in the comments that you can see people saying rude stuff and that, there's stuff you can pay and, whatever you type, it'll read out loud, like in the stream, and everyone can hear it" – Boy, 15



### Exposed to Unkind Comments

Girl, 17, explained how livestreams - particularly those hosted by young female creators - can attract unkind comments focused on appearance in the chat. She feels this lack of control over other viewers can make going live feel exposing for creators and make these unkind comments feel more intense when received in the moment.

"When it's like a young girl going live, there's always someone in the comment going like, oh, your nose is too big or something like that, Like something just so trivial and useless (...) you're putting yourself out there in the moment and then someone goes out of their way to like try and put you down. I think that must be a lot harder (vs pre-recorded content)" – Girl, 17

### Features & Functions involved

- Chat
- Moderators (human or bot)

Gender call out: Researchers observed a gender nuance in the finding around inappropriate sexual comments in the chat. 'Viewers' described seeing/ being more exposed to negativity in the chat of a female creator's livestream in some cases – due to their appearance being commented on or sexualised

\*See 'Glossary' slide in Appendix for definition

# Some 'viewers' described experiences of acting impulsively themselves whilst watching a livestream, some of which led to feelings of regret



'Viewers' feel the **live format can encourage them to behave impulsively**, more so than pre-recorded content. Even 'viewers' who are not typically interested in spending money may feel pressured by time-limited deals e.g., **TikTok shopping deals** that are only available during the livestream, alongside the fact that live selling is perceived as more authentic and trustworthy. **The real-time, emotional nature of livestreams** can also lead 'viewers' to post impulsive comments they later regret, such as overly familiar messages like *"I love you, bestie."* In more extreme cases, **'viewers' also gave examples of seeing others impulsively donate to a (sometimes fake) charity appeal** and stream due to the live format leaving little time for reflection.



## TikTok Shop Impulse Buys

Girl, 17, regularly buys from TikTok shop, and likes the live format because it allows her to ask questions about products and see them tried on. However, she does find that the basket feature on TikTok live means she feels pressured at times to buy in the moment, as the deals are only there for a limited time, and the basket is constantly on screen.

"Sometimes it's annoying if you don't want to buy it right there and then, you might want to look on their site and see if there's anything else you want to buy, but it's on sale for that amount of time. It's difficult because you aren't sure what to do." - *Girl, 17*



## Regretful Commenting

Girl, 12, described how the fast-paced nature of livestreams can lead her to comment impulsively, before fully thinking through what she's sharing. She explains that in the moment, messages feel appropriate, but afterwards she sometimes realises they may have crossed a personal boundary - particularly when directed at creators or people she doesn't know well.

"Sometimes I might accidentally comment and then decide, oh, that comment doesn't really seem right (...) I'll be like I love you. But then like I accidentally once commented on not a closest friend" - *Girl, 12*

## Features & Functions involved

- Chat
- Gifting

**Sample call out:**  
No sample skew



# Safeguards and Self-Regulation in Livestreaming

Section note: All participants in this study were recruited to be regular 'viewers' of livestreams, viewing at least once a month. As such, their experiences may not reflect the experiences or behaviours of occasional or former viewers



Regarding safeguarding and self-regulation, researchers classified the measures children spoke about as either protective or reactive



### PROTECTIVE BEHAVIOUR

Deliberate action or behaviour taken by the 'viewer' (and/ or parent) to prevent or lower perceived risks or harm **before** they occur



### REACTIVE BEHAVIOUR

Action or behaviour that occurs as an immediate response to a perceived risk or harm experienced in the moment or **after** viewing a livestream

*Symbols above denote findings related to the type of behaviours described in this section of the report*



'Viewers' (and their parents) put certain measures in place to protect themselves from some of the perceived risks of watching livestreams



Children we spoke to who view livestreams described the different ways they (and their parents) try to limit the risks they identify

## Self-regulation

Using an account with an anonymised username to view and interact with lives

Not using or looking at certain features (e.g., chat) to avoid seeing negativity

Vetting creator profiles before watching their livestreams

Setting rules and restrictions around how often they watch a livestream for / are online

Not gifting or commenting / engaging with features and functions to minimise risks from interacting

"I always double check who the creator is... and I always check the general comments first to make sure there's nothing bad being said there"  
-Girl, 12

## Monitoring and safeguarding

Parents being in earshot / in the room next door whilst child is online watching livestreams

Parents linking account to child's profile

Only viewing livestreams with moderators on

Filtering key words to block or blur out

Parent-imposed or platform age restrictions e.g., being banned from TikTok selling lives, due to being under-age

"I can't comment or gift... my parents won't let me" - Boy, 11

# In response to negative experiences, some 'viewers' take action whilst others ignore the negativity or struggle to know how to respond



These are examples provided by some of the children we spoke to of how they reacted to negative experiences when viewing livestreams:



Speaking to/ confiding in trusted sources e.g., parents, teachers and friends

"I did [tell my parents] and they were going to take it further. I was like no let's leave it I don't want to make it into a bigger thing" -*Girl, 17*



Reporting negative comments in the chat, in-platform

"I've reported messages where people were sending horrible kinds of slurs and things... when they're reported, TikTok actually has to check them themselves" -*Boy, 15*



Leaving or exiting the livestream

"I could see the streamer was upset with the comments in the chat so that's when I just stopped watching" -*Boy, 15*



Ignoring the negativity

"There will always be a horrible comment... mostly it's just about like, ignore it" -*Girl, 14*

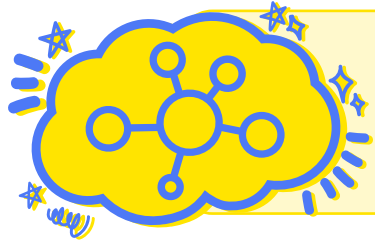


Feeling helpless and unsure how to report experience

"[I do not take action] because I don't really know how to report them to be honest." -*Girl, 12*



The choice not to use safeguards is not unique to this research on livestreaming, but the reasons for avoiding measures become heightened in a live format



There are different ways in which the live format specifically dissuades or prevents 'viewers' from engaging with safeguarding measures:

It is more difficult for 'viewers' to use safeguards while watching live content. For example, **when focused on interacting with the stream or creator**, reporting something they see can interrupt their viewing experience or require multitasking


Once a livestream ends, **negative comments, for example, are not traceable**, making it hard for 'viewers' to draw evidence to take action afterwards

The live format means **'viewers' often feel they must react quickly to perceived risks or harms as they arise**. Making use of safeguards feels more stressful and time-sensitive, especially when compared with recorded content

"I think the fact that it's live, it's harder for people to spot it, report it, and it takes a certain amount of reports for it to get taken down." - *Girl, 17*

As a result, livestream 'viewers' we spoke to (similar to 'creators') are more likely to put **preventative measures** in place e.g., not looking at the chat, filtering and blocking key words, than responsive ones – due to how the live format impacts their ability to engage with safeguards in the moment





PART 2: 'VIEWER'  
PROFILES AND  
PATHWAYS

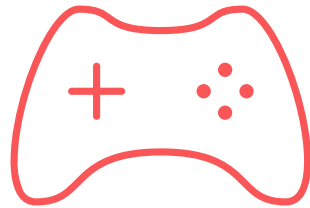
Though no two 'viewers' were the same, some were united by their journey into, and discovery of, livestream content



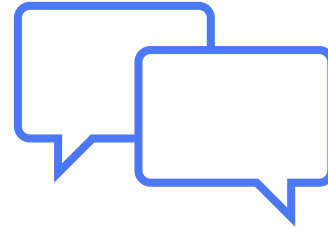
The children we spoke to told us about their initial journey into watching livestreams, which researchers have split into 4 means of discovery:



Discovery via  
**the creator**



Discovery via **interest**  
**or passion**



Discovery via  
**word of mouth**



Discovery via  
**The platform**



# DISCOVERY JOURNEY 1: via the creator



The 'viewers' that we spoke to told us about their journey to viewing livestreams, as based on **engagement with the creators' non-live content**

Stages of Discovery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>STAGE ONE:</b> 'Viewer' is a fan of a creator's non-live content</li><li>• <b>STAGE TWO:</b> They see that this creator makes livestreams and decide to view this too</li><li>• <b>STAGE THREE:</b> They find livestreaming as another way to deepen their fandom and engage with their content</li></ul>
Viewing Motivations	Those who discover livestreams through a specific creator do it to increase touchpoints with this creator and/or to engage with them in a format that feels more 'authentic' and offers more opportunities for interaction
Typical Content Type	GRWM*, Gaming, Chit Chat, Performing, Challenges
Future of viewing	'Viewers' may join for a specific creator, but some stay for the livestreaming format itself. For others, livestreaming becomes just another way to consume content, while some use it exclusively to engage with that one creator
Platforms for discovery	TikTok, YouTube, Instagram

Representative of this 'viewer' discovery journey as a whole



## 'VIEWER' CASE STUDY

- **Started viewing because:** Her favourite creators started going live and she wanted to keep up with them
- **The content they watch is:** Gaming, Challenges, ChitChat etc
- **Level of investment:** She only tunes into livestreams when her favourite creators are live. She finds that their lives are a good way of finding out who they really are, and especially loves when her favourite creators collaborate with each other

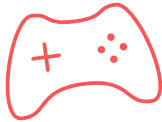
"I jumped into it because the big creators were doing lives and were really popular and I've just been watching them ever since." - *Girl, 12*

*This case study is of an individual 'viewer' and used as an example to show how this discovery journey manifested in the 'viewers' we spoke to*

\*See 'Glossary' slide in Appendix for definition



# DISCOVERY JOURNEY 2: via interest or passion



The 'viewers' that we spoke to told us about their journey to viewing livestreams, stemming from a desire to double down on a **specific interest or passion**

## Stage of Discovery

- **STAGE ONE:** 'Viewer' has an existing interest or passion that they wish to deepen
- **STAGE TWO:** Through their interest, they discover livestreaming as another format for more content, events, limited products, etc.
- **STAGE THREE:** They continue to watch livestreams as another way to engage with their passions

## Viewing Motivations



Be part of a Community



Unfiltered Realness



Exclusive Deals & Benefits

Livestreams are another way to engage with their interests and passions, whether that's through sharing knowledge, authenticity, special events, Q&A or community building

## Typical Content Type

Passion Points, Gaming, GRWM\*, Hauls, Performing, Events, Shopping

## Future of Viewing

For those who discover livestreams through their interest or passion, they can become very involved, not only in the format but also in the community built around livestreaming

## Platforms for Discovery

TikTok, YouTube, Twitch, Instagram



## 'VIEWER' CASE STUDY

- **Started viewing because:** He wanted another lens through which to look at a passion of his: gaming. By watching his favourite creators play the games he plays, he gets to re-live the excitement and/or hone his own gaming skills
- **The content they watch is:** Gaming
- **Level of investment:** Very invested; he has transferred over from pre-recorded content being the main content he watches, to live content taking up more of his time and interest

"I've enjoyed the game a lot and it's kind of a way once you've completely finished the game, to kind of always relive some of the bits that you've enjoyed, seeing someone else's reaction." - Boy, 16

*This case study is of an individual 'viewer' and used as an example to show how this discovery journey manifested in the 'viewers' we spoke to*

*Representative of this 'viewer' discovery journey as a whole*


*\*See 'Glossary' slide in Appendix for definition*



# DISCOVERY JOURNEY 3: via word of mouth



The 'viewers' that we spoke to told us about their journey to viewing livestreams, stemming from **what other viewers had told them**

Stages of Discovery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>STAGE ONE:</b> 'Viewers' are already watching pre-recorded content</li><li>• <b>STAGE TWO:</b> They hear about livestreams from family or friends</li><li>• <b>STAGE THREE:</b> They watch for themselves and like the format</li></ul>
Viewing Motivations	<p>They might be bored of their current content or looking to keep up with their friends or peers. They may also be lured in by certain events, or trending content from livestreamers talked about at school that feels appealing. Sometimes older siblings are watching livestreams in the home, which may encourage younger siblings to watch.</p> 
Typical Content Type	Any
Future of Viewing	For some, livestreams become their primary content format and for others just part of the content they watch
Platforms	TikTok, YouTube, Twitch



## 'VIEWER' CASE STUDY

- **Started viewing because:** She often chats to their friends about their online worlds: who they watch, follow and are interested in. Some friends mentioned livestreaming as something they enjoy to watch, which incentivised her to also try out this format of content
- **The content they watch is:** Chit Chat, Shopping, GRWM\*, Make-up tutorials
- **Level of investment:** She is semi-invested – it's not the main type of content that she watches, but can sometimes prefer it to pre-recorded content for its authenticity

"I guess from my friends, because we speak about like the people that we like to watch and they said that they quite like watching livestreams. So, I feel like almost like peer influence." –*Girl, 12*

Representative of this 'viewer' discovery journey as a whole

*This case study is of an individual 'viewer' and used as an example to show how this discovery journey manifested in the 'viewers' we spoke to*

\*See 'Glossary' slide in Appendix for definition



# DISCOVERY JOURNEY 4: via the platform



The 'viewers' that we spoke to told us about their journey to viewing livestreams, stemming from **seeing livestream content on a platform that they use to watch other content**

## Stages of Discovery

- **STAGE ONE:** They are scrolling through a platform e.g., TikTok or YouTube
- **STAGE TWO:** They come across livestream content through features on the platform (e.g., the Live button) or on their feed
- **STAGE THREE:** They begin watching and realise that they enjoy the livestreaming format

## Viewing Motivations

Often, they're looking for a break from scrolling pre-recorded content, potentially looking for something longer. Often, they don't have a particular genre or creator in mind, rather are looking for what else the platform might have to offer



Companionship



Entertainment & Hype



Exclusive Deals & Benefits

## Typical Content Type

Any

## Future of Viewing

Some continue to dip in and out of livestream content when they're on the platform. Others may become more heavily invested, even seeking out livestream content on other platforms too

## Platforms

TikTok, YouTube, Instagram



## 'VIEWER' CASE STUDY

- **Started viewing because:** She was scrolling through TikTok and wanted a break from scrolling and something to keep her occupied whilst doing homework and came across the Live button
- **The content they watch is:** Chit Chat content and GRWM\*
- **Level of investment:** Live content isn't her main source of entertainment: she actually prefers pre-recorded content because it's more trends focused. However, if it comes up, she'll watch it

"On TikTok their icon shows a red ring around it with a live button and it comes up on your following which shows you all the ones that are live at the top." - *Girl, 15*

*This case study is of an individual 'viewer' and used as an example to show how this discovery journey manifested in the 'viewers' we spoke to*

*Representative of this 'viewer' discovery journey as a whole*

*\*See 'Glossary' slide in Appendix for definition*



# Appendix





# Glossary

# Glossary of Terms

Term/ acronym	Definition
<b>Body doubling</b>	A livestreaming or co-working method where a creator works on-camera to help viewers stay focused.
<b>Boss fights</b>	Major battles in video games where players face a powerful enemy, often streamed for entertainment.
<b>Channel points</b>	A Twitch feature rewarding viewers for watching, redeemable for perks and interactions.
<b>Chat</b>	The live text conversation that runs alongside a livestream.
<b>Drops</b>	Rewards viewers earn in games by watching partnered livestreams.
<b>Emojis</b>	Digital icons used in chat to express emotions or reactions quickly.
<b>Following</b>	A free action to receive updates and notifications from a streamer.
<b>Gifting</b>	Viewers pay for subscriptions on behalf of others in chat.
<b>GRWM (Get Ready With Me)</b>	A livestream where creators talk while getting ready, often doing makeup or preparing for the day.
<b>Jump scares</b>	Sudden alerts used to startle the streamer, sometimes viewer-triggered.



# Glossary of Terms

Term/ acronym	Definition
<b>Leaderboards</b>	Rankings showing top contributors like donors or gift-givers.
<b>Lore</b>	Backstory or world-building behind a character or streamer persona.
<b>Polls</b>	Viewer voting tools used for decisions or interaction.
<b>Q&amp;A</b>	A segment where viewers ask questions and streamers respond live.
<b>Rage bait</b>	Content intended to provoke strong reactions or frustration.
<b>Subscribing</b>	A paid way to support streamers, unlocking perks like emotes and ad-free viewing.
<b>Superchat</b>	A YouTube feature where viewers pay to highlight their messages.
<b>Swatting</b>	A dangerous harassment tactic involving false emergency reports to a streamer's location.
<b>Twitch "Just Chatting"</b>	A Twitch category focused on conversation rather than gameplay.
<b>Ubisoft</b>	A major game publisher known for Assassin's Creed, Far Cry, and Rainbow Six.
<b>Vtuber</b>	A virtual streamer using an animated avatar powered by motion capture.



A decorative border with a scalloped, cloud-like shape, composed of multiple concentric layers of blue and yellow lines, framing the central text.

# Detailed Sample Breakdown

# Sample Detail

20 x Participants

Each participant completed an activity related to their online world before taking part in a 60-minute interview with a Beano Brain researcher



## 'Viewer' Participants

1.	12 year old	Female
2.	11 year old	Male
3.	16 year old	Male
4.	15 year old	Female
5.	14 year old	Female
6.	17 year old	Female
7.	13 year old	Male
8.	15 year old	Female
9.	17 year old	Female
10.	12 year old	Female
11.	17 year old	Female
12.	14 year old	Male
13.	11 year old	Female
14.	11 year old	Male
15.	16 year old	Male
16.	13 year old	Female
17.	15 year old	Male
18.	15 year old	Male
19.	15 year old	Male
20.	12 year old	Female

Children who took part in this study were aged 11-17

For this research, we recruited participants to fit certain criteria and ensured we recruited a good mix of:

- **Gender:** however, not necessarily an even mix in order to capture full range of behaviours
- **Location:** across London, North, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales
- **Platforms used to watch livestreams:** YouTube, Twitch, TikTok and Instagram
- **Type of content watched:** Gaming, Arts & Crafts, Comedy, Daily Life, GRWM/Make-Up, Unboxing, Events/concerts, ASMR, Performing, Food
- **Motivations for watching livestreams:** e.g. For entertainment/ fun, To give gifts, To connect with a community, To help pass the time, To chat with friends, To meet new people, To speak to people I don't know in real life, To learn/ get inspired
- **Devices owned**
- **Household income:** (including 2 x children from lower income households)

