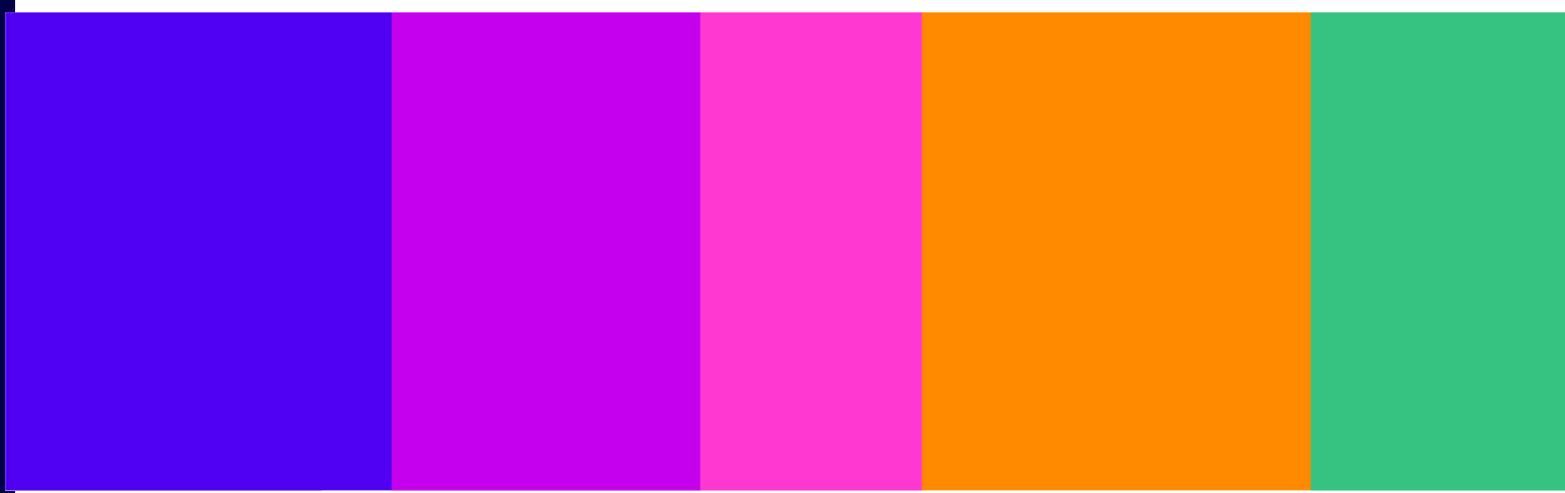




Ofcom Video Sharing Platform (VSP) Tracker

Notification of proposed changes to the
VSP Tracker

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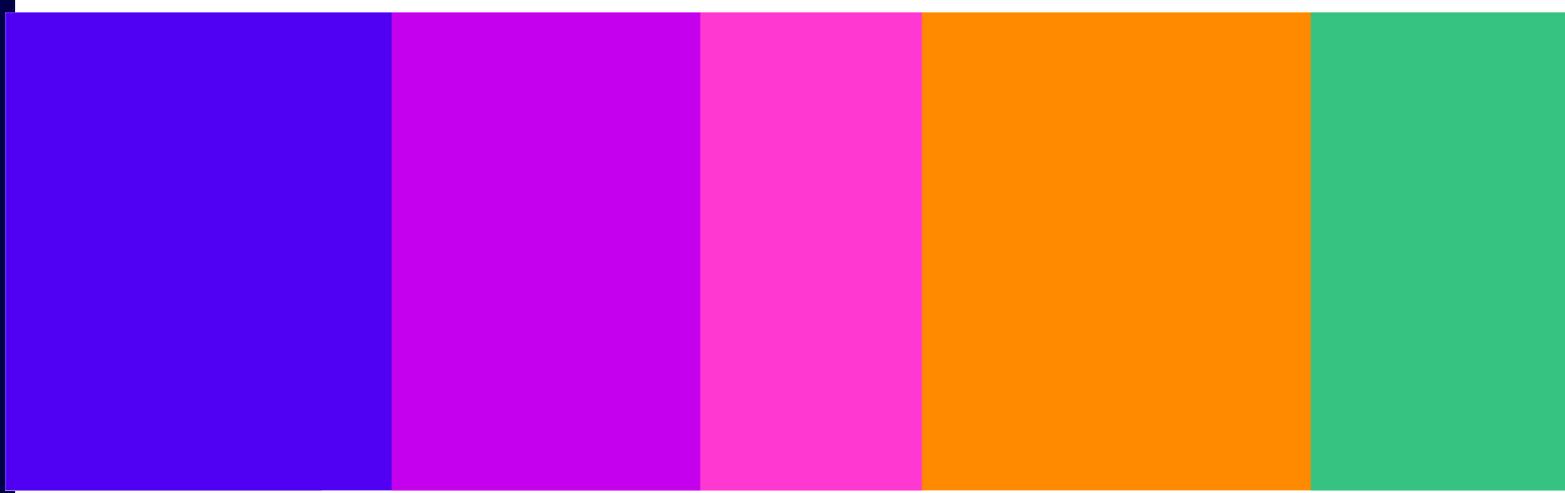
Summary

As a producer of official statistics, Ofcom follow the guidance set out in [Changing or ceasing to publish official statistics – Government Analysis Function \(civilservice.gov.uk\)](https://civilservice.gov.uk/guidance/2018/04/27/Changing-or-ceasing-to-publish-official-statistics). In line with this guidance, where substantial changes are made to a piece of research that is established as an official statistic, we notify stakeholders of the changes that are planned to be made and allow a period of time for stakeholders to provide input or feedback if they wish to do so.

We are proposing to end Ofcom's VSP Tracker, which is a survey that tracks VSP users' awareness and experiences of safety measures and tools available on the VSPs they use

and move some questions to our existing Online Experiences Tracker survey (TBC).

More information on the background and proposed changes can be found throughout the rest of this document.



Background

The VSP regime

Since 1 November 2020, Ofcom has regulated video-sharing platforms (VSPs) that have the required connection with the UK. We also regulate on-demand programme services (ODPS) and from the 26th October 2023 were also appointed as the online safety regulator under the Online Safety Act.

The VSP Regime is set out in Part 4B of the Communications Act 2003 (the “Act”) and derives from the European Audiovisual Media Services Directive 2018. In this report, we refer to the regulatory framework set out in Part 4B of the Act as “the VSP Regime”.

Ofcom’s role under the VSP Regime

Ofcom has powers to take the necessary steps to ensure that VSP providers comply with their obligations under the VSP Regime. Our work to secure compliance with the VSP Regime includes ongoing policy development, supervisory engagement with VSP providers, publishing transparency reports, and taking enforcement action as appropriate.

What VSP providers must do under the VSP Regime

The VSP Regime does not centre on which individual pieces of content are allowed on a platform. VSP providers must ensure their platforms have appropriate systems and processes in place to effectively protect the general public from “relevant harmful material”¹ and children from “restricted material”². These two types of video content, together, are referred to as “harmful material”.

In particular, the VSP Framework sets out a list of measures (known as the Schedule 15A measures) and VSP providers must take those that are appropriate for their platform³ in order to protect users from harmful material.⁴ Providers are also required to implement these measures effectively.⁵

VSP providers established in the UK are legally obliged to notify to Ofcom, this obligation came into force on 6 April 2021.

¹ Video-content which would be considered a criminal offence under laws relating to terrorism, child sexual abuse material, and racism and xenophobia. Please refer to paragraphs 3.21-3.41 of our VSP Guidance: https://www.ofcom.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0015/226302/vsp-harms-guidance.pdf

² Restricted Material means video content which has or would be likely given an R18 certificate, or video content not suitable for BBFC classification or material that might impair the physical, mental, or moral development of under 18s. For more information on the definition of Restricted Material please refer to paragraphs 3.7-3.20 of the VSP Guidance: https://www.ofcom.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0015/226302/vsp-harms-guidance.pdf

³ When VSP providers determine which of the measures listed in Schedule 15A are appropriate for their VSPs, they must do so having regard to the practicable and proportionate criteria listed under section 368Z1(4) of the Act. This includes taking into account their VSP’s size and nature, nature of material in question, harm the material may cause, characteristics of the people to protect, legitimate interests of the public and users, any other measures taken.

⁴ Section 368Z1(1) of the Act.

⁵ Section 368Z1(2) of the Act.

The Online Safety Act and repeal of the VSP regime

On 26 October 2023, the Online Safety Bill received Royal Assent, becoming the Online Safety Act 2023. The Online Safety regime replaces the VSP regime. However, for a transitional period which commenced on 10 January 2024, all pre-existing UK-established VSPs (in other words, platforms that met the scope and jurisdiction criteria under Part 4B of the Act as at this date) will be regulated under both the VSP Regime and the Online Safety Act, although they are exempt from having to comply with most duties under the Online Safety Act until the end of the transitional period.

Government must give VSPs at least six months' notice of its intention to repeal the regime. The assessment start date of 2 September 2024 marks the start of the six months' notice for repeal of the VSP regime, being the first stage of the repeal process. The ultimate date of repeal will be decided by Government and it is expected to happen after Ofcom's codes for protection of children come into force (date to be confirmed). The Secretary of State will lay a second and final statutory instrument before Parliament, setting the date of repeal. From that date the current transition period will end and pre-existing VSPs will become fully subject to the OS Act.

Official statistics

Ofcom is named in the [Official Statistics Order 2023](#) as a producer of official statistics. As a producer of Official Statistics, Ofcom has a responsibility to follow the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#) which ensures that published statistics have public value, are of high quality, and are produced by people and organisations that are trustworthy.

As a producer of official statistics, Ofcom follow the guidance set out in [Changing or ceasing to publish official statistics – Government Analysis Function \(civilservice.gov.uk\)](#). In line with this guidance, where substantial changes are made to a piece of research that is established as an official statistic, we notify stakeholders of the changes that are planned to be made and allow a period of time for stakeholders to provide feedback if they wish to do so.

The VSP Tracker to date

In Q3 2021, we set up the first wave of the VSP Tracker, with fieldwork conducted in Q4 2021. The VSP Tracker is a survey conducted biannually by Ofcom to track VSP users' awareness and experiences of safety measures and tools available on the VSPs they use, to gain an understanding of whether they experience harmful content on those VSPs, and to assess their broader perceptions of the VSP landscape, such as whom they believe responsibility falls upon in terms of protecting users. We have conducted six waves since (Wave 2 fieldwork in Q1 2022, Wave 3 fieldwork in Q1 2023 and Wave 4 fieldwork in Q2 2023, Wave 5 fieldwork in Q1 2024 and Wave 6 fieldwork in Q3 2024), establishing the VSP Tracker as an official statistic from Wave 3 onwards.

For more information and access to research materials from the previous waves please follow the link here: <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/research-and-data/online-research/vsp-experiences-and-attitudes>

What we are proposing

We are proposing to end the VSP Tracker survey and move some questions to other existing or new research vehicles (for example Ofcom's 'Online Experiences Tracker' survey). Due to the repeal of the VSP regime and commencement of our regulatory powers under the Online Safety Act, we will be ending the VSP Tracker after the completion of Wave 7 (publication on April 30th 2025).

Given the importance of measuring users' experiences with safety measures we will be assessing which questions from the tracker will be of most importance to continue collecting data for and to potentially include in an existing or new existing survey (Ofcom's 'Online Experiences Tracker' for example).

How to respond

If you would like any further information or if you would like to highlight any concerns for Ofcom's consideration regarding the change to the VSP Tracker, please contact market.research@ofcom.org.uk by 31st August 2025.