Online Nation

Report 2025

Published 10 December 2025

Welsh version available

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1. Overview

Online Landscape

UK adults spend an average of four and a half hours online a day – up by 10 minutes from last year

95% of the UK 16+ population have access to the internet at home and the average time spent per day online on personal (i.e. not work) smartphones, tablets and computers in May 2025 was 4 hours and 30 minutes. This has increased by 10 minutes from 2024 to 2025. Young adults spend the most time online (18-24; 6 hours 20 minutes a day), and those aged 65+ spend the least time online (3 hours 20 minutes).

Women spend more time online than men across all adult age groups. The daily average for women was 4 hours 43 minutes, 26 minutes more than men. The difference in time spent online was highest among those aged 65+, with women of this age spending 17% more time online than their male counterparts.

Most time online is on a smartphone

Smartphones accounted for the majority of online time for both genders (men: 75%; women: 79%). Men were more likely to use a computer, dedicating 15% of their online time (38 minutes) to it, compared to 8% for women. Women (14%) spent slightly more time than men (10%) on tablets.

One in 20 people remain without internet access at home

Five per cent of people aged 16+ report not having internet access at home, a figure unchanged from 2024 but down from 7% in 2022–23. One in five of those aged 75 and over do not have home internet.

Half (51%) of time online is spent on services owned by Alphabet or Meta

YouTube remained the most-used Alphabet-owned service, used by 94% of adult internet users in May 2025. Time spent on YouTube also increased, reaching an average of 51 minutes a day (not including the TV set), compared to 47 minutes in 2024. Google Search was used by 82% of online adults in the month.

The combination of Facebook and Messenger remained the most widely used Meta-owned service used by 93% of online adults in May 2025, averaging 42 minutes a day. WhatsApp continued its upward trend, with 90% of adults using it in May 2025, up from 87% in 2024. Time spent per person per day on WhatsApp also increased, reaching 17 minutes in 2025.

Amazon, Microsoft, and the BBC rounded out the top five most used online services, with their sites and apps visited by 90%, 87%, and 82% of UK online adults in May 2025, respectively. This ranking was consistent across all UK nations. The BBC (including BBC Online, iPlayer and Sounds) was the highest-ranking UK-based organisation.

Smartphone users use on average 41 apps in a month

This has increased by +3 apps since 2024. WhatsApp was used by 92% of UK adult smartphone users in May 2025, up from 91% in 2024. The Facebook app continued a gradual increase, rising to 85% from 84% in 2024 and 81% in 2023. Google Maps consolidated its position as third most-used smartphone app, by 77% of adults in the month.

Online sectors

Google is still the most-used search service, but Gen AI services are changing the sector

Google search with 3 billion monthly UK monthly web searches remains the most used search service and is rolling out AI overviews in search. Around 30% of keyword search queries deliver AI-supported overviews and 53% of UK people say they often see AI summaries. This is largely passive adoption by users who are using their traditional search service and getting AI overviews included. Gen-AI chatbots are also used for search, and ChatGPT had 252m web visits in August 2025

YouTube, Facebook/Messenger and Instagram are the top three social media services

YouTube is in front of all social media platforms in both UK user numbers and time spent, with the average time per day reaching 51 minutes, up from 47 minutes in 2024. Meta-owned platforms are second and third. Facebook/Messenger was visited by users for an average of 43 minutes per day and Instagram for an average of 20 minutes. Use of Facebook/Messenger is slightly weighted toward 35+ users, whereas for YouTube and Instagram there is a strong skew towards younger adults (18-34).

TikTok visitor numbers (56% of online adults in May 2025) have increased, driven by younger internet users (18-34 users: 49 minutes a day). In contrast, X (formerly Twitter) experienced a decline in users, to 39% of online adults in May 2025 from 45% a year earlier.

Among the top 10 social media and VSP services, Pinterest exhibits the strongest female skew, with 69% of its visitors female. X is the only top 10 social media service where men are the predominant visitors (60% male), while Reddit is also weighted towards men in time spent on the service.

WhatsApp is the top messaging app and is growing

Ninety per cent of UK online adults used WhatsApp in 2025. Facebook Messenger remained the second most-used service (58%); however user numbers fell by 7%, continuing its downward trend from 2024.

On average, 74% cent of UK online adults accessed WhatsApp each day in May 2025, up from 64% in May 2024. Facebook Messenger was used by 23% each day, down from 30% in 2024.

Age assurance is impacting the UK porn sector

There are thousands of services used by UK adults. Pornhub remains the largest UK pornography service with 6% share of total visits. The top 10 services together account for around 25% of the overall market.

From 25 July 2025, services providing content that is potentially harmful to children, including pornographic content, have been required to implement Highly Effective Age Assurance (HEAA) measures. All of the top-10 most visited pornography services have implemented age assurance, and after a decline following 25 July, visitor numbers to those sites continue to be monitored. On average, every day, 7.8 million visitors from the UK are accessing adult services who have deployed age assurance.

VPN usage more than doubled in the UK following HEAA becoming mandatory, rising from about 650k daily users before 25 July 2025 and peaking at over 1.4m in mid-August 2025, but has gradually declined to around 900K in November.

Most (59%) UK adults use online intermediaries for their online news

97% of online adults visited a news service in May 2025, spending an average of 10 minutes on these services per day, level with 2024. The BBC remains the most-visited brand with a news service, used by 77% of UK online adults in a month. The BBC and The Sun (45%) were the only online news services with top five reach in each of the UK nations. The Guardian (44%) became the third-highest reaching news service in 2025, up from fifth in 2024.

Six in ten UK adults (59%) said they used some form of online intermediary for their news consumption. Four of the top ten individual news sources are social media platforms (Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and X).

Online Adult Experiences

Adults are less positive about the internet's societal impact than they were last year

Only 33% felt the internet is good for society in June 2025, down from 40% in June 2024. Also, while 65% of adults believe the personal benefits of being online outweigh the risks in June 2025, this figure has declined steadily from 71% in June 2023. There has also been a small shift in people's views on the impact of being online on their wellbeing: only 29% felt being online positively affects their mental health (28% disagreed), down from 33% in June 2024.

Fewer adults feel freer to be themselves online than offline (25%, down from 30% in June 2024). Only 35% feel they can share opinions more easily online than offline.

More people say they have seen something upsetting online than last year – but there has been a decline in exposure to potentially harmful content

In June 2025, 37% of adults said they had seen something upsetting online in the past four weeks (up from 31% in June 2024). However, there has been a decline in those saying they have encountered specific types of potentially harmful content from a pre-defined list—66% in June 2025, down from 69% in January 2025 and 68% in June 2024.

The most-encountered potential harms were misinformation (41%), scams/fraud/phishing (34%), offensive language (33%), hateful or discriminatory content (26%) and unwelcome friend and follow requests (25%). While experience of most of the surveyed potential harms has remained stable or declined since last year, encounters with fake/deceptive images or videos rose and is now the sixth-most-experienced (22%, up from 18% in June 2024).

Relatively recently, measures came into place requiring online services to protect users from illegal content (17 March 2025). So far, experiences of encountering content in categories where the content is perceived to be illegal has remained stable or decreased in all surveyed cases: there was a decrease in those who said they encountered it in the past four weeks in seven out of 16 potential harms in this category that we track.

Social media platforms are the most-commonly stated service type where recent potential harms were encountered

59% of those encountering potential harms said that their most recent encounter was on social media. The next most common service types where potential harms were encountered were video-sharing platforms 9%, and email 8% (especially among 55+; 14%).

The platforms most likely to be associated with users most recent encounters with potential online harms were Facebook (29% of most recent potential harms), Instagram (16%) and X (14% falling from 18% in 2024).

Potential online harms were encountered in a variety of ways, most commonly: scrolling through feeds (36% of potential harms), in comment sections (22%) and when watching content selected by the user (11%).

60% took some action as a result of encountering their most recent potential online harm

The most common action was reporting, complaining or flagging of content, undertaken by 35% of users for their most-recently-encountered potential harm (of those, one third said they knew the outcome of their report or complaint). Of the 40% who did nothing, their top reasons were not seeing the potential harm as serious/harmful enough (47%), not seeing the need to do anything (25%) and a belief that it wouldn't help (21%). One in ten said that they didn't know what to do (10%).

Women are more likely than men to want more online safety measures

In 2025, almost half (48%) of adult internet users would like to see more safety measures in place on platforms – a sentiment that has been steadily increasing since tracking began in June 2023 (40%). Women (57%) are more likely to agree with this than men (38%).

When asked who is most responsible for ensuring posted content on platforms is appropriate, 37% say there should be more onus on the platform hosting the content and 21% say the onus should be on the individual who posts. With regards to search engines, 42% say these have most responsibility for controlling what is presented in search results, but 24% say individuals should manage settings.

When asked to choose between the importance of the internet in supporting free speech versus the importance of sites moderating offensive views, 37% preferred to advocate free speech while 27% were supportive of platforms acting to protect users from offensive views. Women and minority ethnic users were more likely to support moderation of offensive views.

Overall, 61% overall feel confident in their ability to stay safe online, but this was lower among those aged 55+ (54%) and women (55%). Just over half (56%) believe common sense is enough to avoid harm and only 13% say it's impossible to avoid harmful content.

Children Online

Children aged 8-14 spend an average of nearly 3 hours online each day

This increases to 4 hours among 13-14 year-olds, and is around 2 hours for 8-9-year-olds. It is important to note that this only includes time spent on smartphones, tablets and computers, and does not include games consoles.

Despite not being one of the top-ten services in number of child users, Snapchat (an average of 45 minutes a day spent across all 8-14s) is only just behind YouTube (48 minutes) in the total time that children spent online – combined, Snapchat and YouTube accounted for over half (52% or 1 hour 32 minutes) of the total time spent online among 8-14s.

YouTube and Google search were used by the highest numbers of children, with almost all 8-14-year-olds using them (96% and 95% respectively). Social media sites and messaging services also made it into the top-10 services used by this age group, including Facebook, WhatsApp and TikTok.

A significant amount of the time online spent by children is at night: across four of the main services used by children - YouTube, Snapchat, TikTok and WhatsApp - 15-24% of the time spent for the whole 8-14 age range is between 9pm and 5am and 4-10% of the time spent is late night (11pm-5am), depending on the platform.

Most children are happy with what they do online, though this is lower for older children

Overall, nine in ten (91%) children aged 8-17 say they are happy with the things that they do online. Younger children aged 8-9 were more likely than older children to be happy with their online activity. While there were no differences overall between boys and girls (mostly/always happy combined), boys were more likely than girls to 'always' be happy (47% vs 40%).

Eight in ten (81%) children aged 8-17 said they were happy that the things they see online are 'appropriate for their age'; however, only three in ten (31%) said they were 'always' happy about this. Younger children (aged 8-9) were more likely to be happy that what they see online is appropriate for their age, than those aged 13-15 (84% vs 79%). This is perhaps a reflection of this teenage group using social media more (55% of 3-12s are reported to use social media apps compared to 96% of 13-17s) and our research shows this is where children are more likely to be exposed to inappropriate content for their age.

Over half (56%) of children felt that being online had a 'mostly' good effect on how they feel about themselves. A small minority (3%) felt it had a 'mostly' bad effect, while a third (34%) felt it had a bit of both good and bad.

Lower levels of happiness with online activities and likelihood of feeling good about themselves, corresponded for some groups with higher exposure to content harmful to children, including among children with a health condition and children aged 13+ who identified as Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Pansexual or Queer. This may indicate exposure plays a role in these differences.

Many children use the online world to aid their wellbeing

Our research asked children aged 13-17 who go online whether they use websites, apps or other online services to help with various aspects of their wellbeing, and overall 69% said they did so. The most likely reasons were to help them relax (45%) or improve their mood (32%). Ofcom's research into the use of Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response (ASMR)[1] and self-improvement content among children aged 11-17 found that these types of content are also being used to help children relax. While three-quarters said they had used ASMR or self-improvement content in general, more than half (53%) said they used ASMR in particular to help them relax. However, a similar proportion (52%) who used ASMR disliked at least one thing about it (such as disgusting sounds and images, and inappropriate language or dress). This was higher still among those who used self-improvement content, with 70% saying they disliked at least one thing about it (such as body shaming and toxic messaging).

[1] ASMR (autonomous sensory meridian response) is content that usually involves sensory themes like watching hands playing with slime with very crisp audio of the resulting sounds.

Nearly all children say that being online helps them to learn about the world, develop new skills and build social connections

Aiding their education is one area where children feel the internet benefits them. Nearly eight in ten (78%) of 13-17s say the internet helps with their schoolwork. And our device tracking showed that 76% of 8-14s visited an education-related service in a month. When surveyed, more than half (55%) of 13-17-year-olds selected 'to learn a new skill' and 46% 'to develop creative skills' as a benefit of being online.

Parents agree there are beneficial aspects to their child being online – in particular, helping with schoolwork (72%), finding information about personal issues (35%) and hearing about the news (31%).

Two-thirds (65%) of 13-17s see the online world as beneficial in building and maintaining their friendships, especially among girls (71% compared to 60% of boys). Social media and messaging apps play a big role, as 72% of 13-17s who use them agree that it helps them feel closer to their friends.

But some children identify the negative impact of endlessly scrolling online, and it leading to 'brain-rot'

Some of the children we spoke in our qualitative Children's Media Lives research reflected on the negative impact they experienced when they had spent a long time on their device (typically a smartphone). The term 'brain rot' was used by some children to describe both a genre of content and the feeling that spending hours on their devices left them with. Brain rot content is characterised by its frenetic, choppy, and nonsensical nature, leaving viewers feeling overstimulated and sometimes disoriented. Some of the children expressed negative feelings associated with spending excessive time online and engaging with this type of content.

Seven in ten secondary school age children have seen harmful content online; the most likely being bullying and hate content

The Online Safety Act distinguishes between Primary Priority Content (PPC) which is content that all children should be prevented from seeing and Priority Content (PC), which is content that children should be protected from seeing dependent on age. At the time of fieldwork (March-April 2025), seven in ten 11-17 year olds had seen or heard some form of PPC or PC in the last four weeks. Nearly all had seen some form of PC[2] and 30% reported having seen or heard PPC[3]. This research was conducted before Ofcom's Protection of Children (PoC) Codes of Practice came into force in July 2025. It therefore provides a baseline measure for the proportion of children saying they have been exposed to content harmful to children and is not indicative of the impact of the PoC codes measures. We will provide an update in May 2026.

Of the PPC/PC harms encountered, content related to bullying was the most likely to be seen (by 58% of 11-17s), 49% saw content related to hate, and 30% said they saw content encouraging them

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[2] Priority Content (PC) in this survey was presented to respondents in the following way: bullying content (cyber bulling, online trolling, griefing in games, excluding others from chats and games), violent content (violence towards others or encouraging this, a person's serious injuries caused by others, real animals and animals who aren't real being seriously injured by others), dangerous stunts and challenges that can cause harm, content encouraging the eating/drinking/inhaling of harmful substances, hate content (someone being hateful to a group of people, or encouraging others to do this).

[3] Primary Priority Content (PPC) in this survey was presented to respondents in the following way: pornography, someone with an eating disorder or encouraging extreme eating or exercise behaviours, self-harm, and suicide.

to do dangerous stunts or challenges and 28% saw content related to eating/drinking/inhaling harmful substances.[4]

Two thirds of children took some form of action after seeing content harmful to children

Overall, 64% of 11–17-year-olds took some form of action after encountering harmful content online. This included both making use of functionalities on the service and taking action offline. Fifteen percent used negative sentiment tools (such as the 'Dislike' button), around one in 10 children chose to report the content (11%), blocked the person who put it up or sent it to them (10%), and told a grown up about their experience (10%). However, the most common response was to ignore the content (30%).

Many children regret purchases they make online

Almost six in ten (58%) children aged 8-17 said they had spent money online in the past month, whether on social media sites, video-sharing platforms, or while they were gaming. However, a third (32%) of them regretted purchases made in-game, and 43% regretted purchases made on social media. Additionally, 42% found it unclear what they were buying in games. There are different influences or persuasive features within these services that encourage children to spend including character customisation (30%), adverts (27%), recommendations from friends or family (23%) and influencer content (22%).

[4] Harmful content was categorised into themes, some of which included multiple types of harm (e.g. content related to bullying included bullying online, online trolling, griefing in online games, and people excluding others from being part of games or chats).

2. Online landscape and sectors

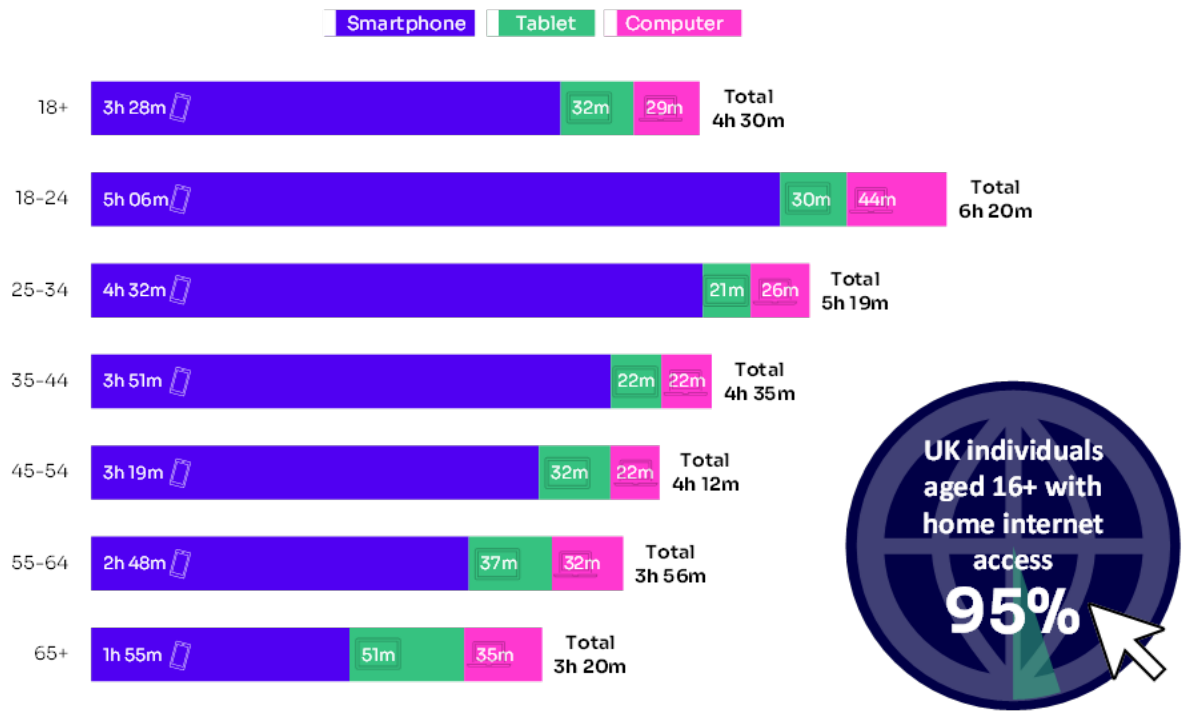
The online landscape

Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of how UK adults engage with the online world, focusing on the most widely used digital services and those that command the greatest share of users' time. The analysis draws primarily on data from Ipsos iris, the UKOM-accredited source for online audience measurement, covering UK adults who use the internet aged 18 and over. May 2025 serves as the primary reference period for this report.

Key metrics

Figure 1: Average daily time spent online by adults only, by device and age (hours: minutes): May 2025



Source: Average daily time spent online by device - Ipsos, Ipsos iris Online Audience Measurement Service, May 2025, age: 18+, UK internet users. Note: custom data supplied by Ipsos. Time spent online includes personal use and in some instances those who also use their device for work. UK home internet access - Ofcom Technology Tracker 2025. QE1: do you or does anyone in your household have access to the internet at home (via any device, e.g. PC, mobile phone etc.), and if so, do you personally use the internet at home? Base: all respondents aged 16+, UK.

Take-up and use

UK adults spend more time online in May 2025, with 18–24s averaging over 6 hours daily

According to Ipsos Iris data[5], 49.1 million adults in the UK accessed the internet via smartphones, tablets, and computers during May 2025.[6] On average, users spent 4 hours and 30 minutes online each day, an increase of 10 minutes compared to May 2024. Young adults aged 18 to 24 remained the most active online, averaging 6 hours and 20 minutes daily (up 19 minutes year-on-year), while those aged 65 and over, spent the least time online at 3 hours and 20 minutes per day, a 10-minute increase from the previous year.

In May 2025, average daily internet usage increased across all age groups compared to May 2024, except for those aged 35 to 44, down by eight minutes from 4 hours and 43 minutes to 4 hours and 35 minutes per day – most of this decrease was due to reduced tablet usage, which fell by 6 minutes year-on-year.

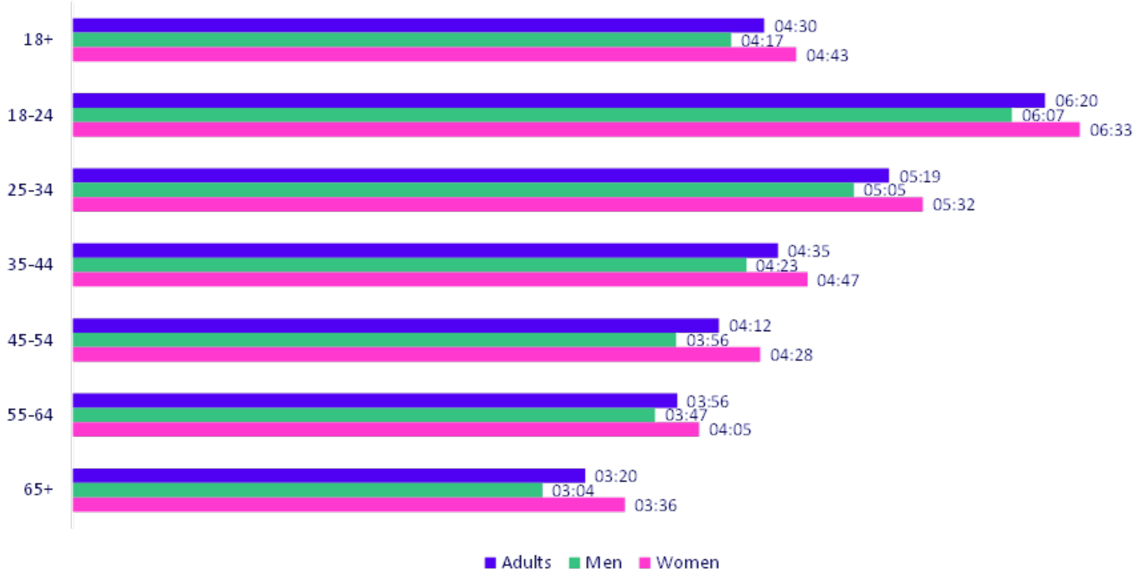
Smartphones remained the primary device for accessing the internet for UK online adults, accounting for 77% of all time spent online on the average day, up slightly from 75% the previous year. Those aged 25-34 were the most reliant on smartphones, spending 85% (4 hours 32 minutes) of their daily time spent online on these devices, however it was 18-24-year-olds who spent the highest amount of time overall on smartphones per day at 5 hours 5 minutes on average (81% of their total daily time online). Smartphone usage either increased or remained steady across all age groups, with 18 to 34-year-olds spending an additional 29 minutes per day online via their smartphones compared to the previous year. Meanwhile, time spent online using computers declined across all age groups except for those aged 65 and over, whose usage held steady at 35 minutes per day. Other age groups saw reductions ranging from 1 to 7 minutes.[7]

[5] Ipsos iris data is primarily derived from personal owned devices, whilst panellists are asked to install on work devices used to access the internet, the majority will not be able to do so

[6] Ipsos, Ipsos iris Online Audience Measurement Service, May 2024 and May 2025, age: 18+, UK internet users.

[7] Ipsos, Ipsos iris Online Audience Measurement Service, May 2024 and May 2025, age: 18+, UK internet users. Note: Custom data supplied by Ipsos.

Figure 2: Average daily time spent online by UK online adults, by age and gender (hours:minutes): May 2025



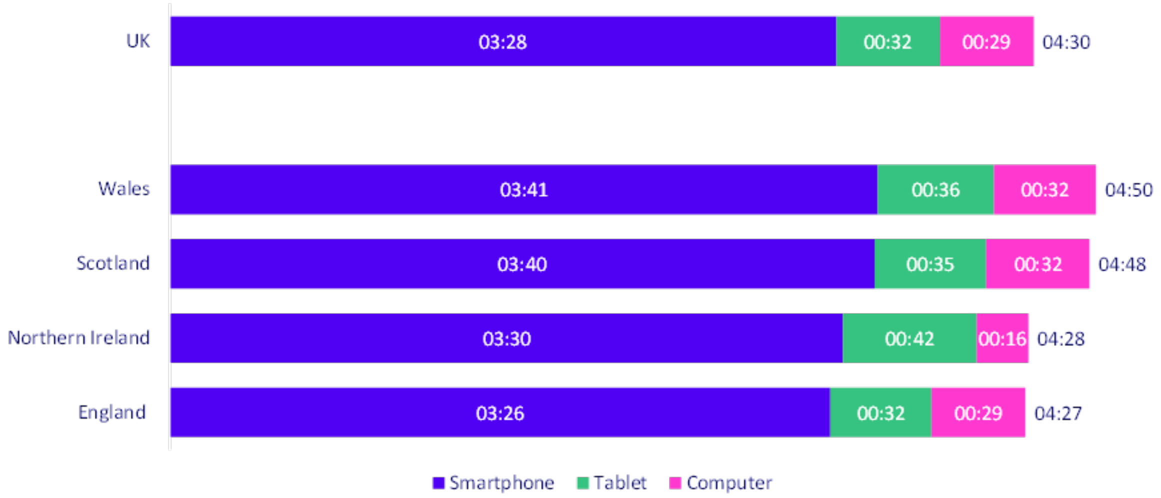
Source: Ipsos, Ipsos iris Online Audience Measurement Service, May 2025, age: 18+, UK internet users. Note: Custom data supplied by Ipsos.

Women spent an average of 26 minutes more online per day than men in May 2025

Women continued to spend more time online each day than men in May 2025, averaging 4 hours and 43 minutes compared to 4 hours and 17 minutes for men. The gender gap was most pronounced among those aged 65 and over, where women spent 32 minutes more online daily, 17% more than their male counterparts.

Smartphones accounted for the majority of online time for both genders, making up 79% of women's daily usage and 75% for men. Men were more likely to use a computer, dedicating 15% of their online time (38 minutes) to it, compared to just 8% (21 minutes) for women. In contrast, women spent a greater share of their time on tablets—14% (38 minutes) versus 10% (26 minutes) for men.

Figure 3: Daily time spent online by adults, by device and UK nation (hours:minutes): May 2025



Source: Ipsos, Ipsos iris Online Audience Measurement Service, May 2025, age: 18+, UK internet users. Note: Custom data supplied by Ipsos.

As in May 2024, online adults in Wales and Scotland recorded the highest average daily internet usage among UK nations, at 4 hours and 50 minutes and 4 hours and 48 minutes respectively in May 2025, an increase of 7 minutes for Wales and 4 minutes for Scotland. England and Northern Ireland followed closely, with daily averages of 4 hours and 27 minutes and 4 hours and 28 minutes. However, both saw larger year-on-year increases than Wales and Scotland, rising by 11 and 13 minutes respectively.

One in 20 people remain without internet access at home

In 2025, five per cent of UK residents aged 16 and over report not having internet access at home, a figure unchanged from 2024 but down from seven per cent in 2022–23. Among those aged 16 to 54, home internet access is near universal, with only 1-3% lacking it. The likelihood of being offline increases notably with age: 13% of individuals aged 65 and above remain without home internet, consistent with the previous year, and this rises to 20% among those aged 75 and over.[8]

Figure 4: Percentage of UK individuals aged 16+ with access to the internet at home, by year: 2023-2025

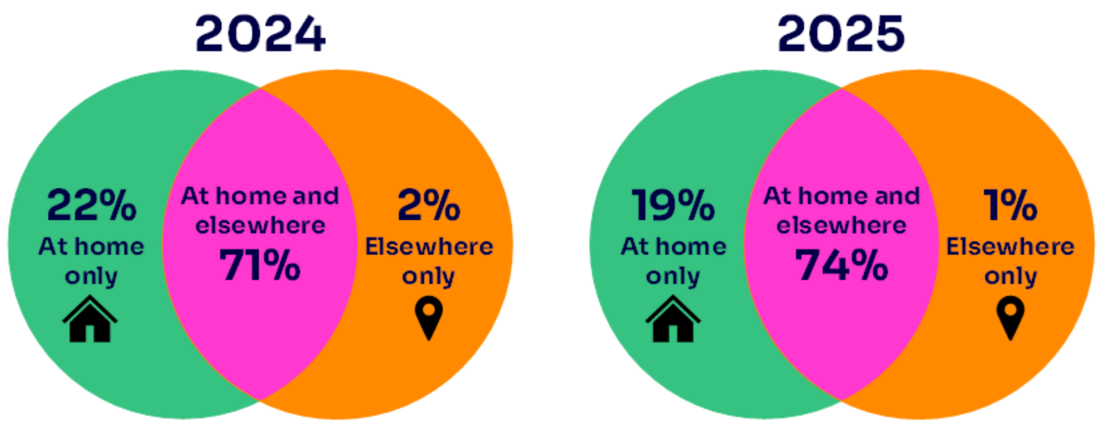
Year	Have access to the internet at home	Have access and use at home	Have access but do not use at home
2025	95%	94%	1%
2024	94%	93%	1%
2023	92%	90%	2%

Source: Ofcom Technology Tracker 2023, 2024 & 2025. QE1: do you or does anyone in your household have access to the internet at home (via any device, e.g. PC, mobile phone etc), and if so, do you personally use the internet at home? Base: all respondents aged 16+. Note: 1% of individuals said they 'don't know' as to whether they had internet access at home.

[8] Ofcom Technology Tracker 2025. QE1. Do you or does anyone in your household have access to the internet at home (via any device, e.g. PC, mobile phone etc), and if so, do you personally use the internet at home?

Younger age groups tend to be more diverse in how they connect to the internet at home. Among 16 to 34-year-olds, 5% rely solely on a mobile phone connection, nearly double the overall average, while 90% use fixed broadband. Across all age groups with home internet access, 94% connect via fixed broadband, and just 3% depend exclusively on a mobile network.[9]

Figure 5: UK individuals aged 16+, location of internet use



Source: Ofcom Technology Tracker 2024 & 2025. QE1. Do you or does anyone in your household have access to the internet at home (via any device, e.g. PC, mobile phone etc), and if so, do you personally use the internet at home? QE4: Do you ever access the internet outside your home in and of the following locations. Base: all respondents aged 16+.

Cost barriers to home broadband take-up reduce but challenges persist

Most (81%) of those without internet access at home were unlikely or certain not to get access at home in the next 12 months; 9% said they were likely and a further 6% responded that they did not know. Of those aged 65+ without internet access at home, 97% stated they were unlikely to get it in the next 12 months, with a large proportion (81%) saying this was due to a lack of interest or need, while 24% say that someone else can go online for them if necessary, up from 19% in 2024, and 12% state that internet use is too complicated, down from 16% the previous year.[10]

In 2025, 18% of people aged 16 and over without home internet access said they were unlikely to get it within the next year due to cost-related reasons, a decrease from 27% in 2023. Of these, the majority (11%) cited the cost of broadband set-up specifically (down from 18% in 2024), while concerns about the monthly broadband cost more than halved, falling from 11% in 2024 to 5% in 2025. Among reasons unrelated to cost, 22% said they could rely on someone else to use the internet for them if needed (up from 17% in 2024), and 11% found using the internet too complicated (down from 13% in 2024).[11]

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[9] Ofcom Technology Tracker 2025. QE7. Which of these methods does your household use to connect to the internet at home? Base: Where have internet at home.
[10] Ofcom Technology Tracker 2025 QE16. Which of these are reasons why you are unlikely to get internet access at home in the next 12 months? Base: Where unlikely to get internet in next 12 months.
[11] Ofcom Technology Tracker 2025 QE16. Which of these are reasons why you are unlikely to get internet access at home in the next 12 months? Base: Where unlikely to get internet in next 12 months.

Figure 6: Reasons related to cost for not getting internet access at home in the next 12 months

Reason	Age			Working status	Socio-economic group
	16+	16-64	65+	Not working	DE
Do not have internet access at home*	5%	3%	13%	9%	12%
Of those without internet access at home and unlikely to get it within next 12 months**					
Any reason related to cost	18%	30%	12%	15%	19%
Broadband set-up costs	11%	16%	7%	8%	12%
Monthly cost of fixed broadband	5%	9%	3%	4%	2%
Cost of laptop/desktop or tablet	7%	9%	6%	7%	9%
Cost of mobile phone	8%	2%	7%	8%	9%
Monthly cost of mobile phone service	5%	2%	6%	5%	5%

*Source: *Ofcom Technology Tracker 2023, 2024 & 2025. QE1: do you or does anyone in your household have access to the internet at home (via any device, e.g. PC, mobile phone etc), and if so, do you personally use the internet at home? Base: all respondents aged 16+. Note: 1% of individuals said they 'don't know' as to whether they had internet access at home. **Ofcom Technology Tracker 2025 QE16. Which of these are reasons why you are unlikely to get internet access at home in the next 12 months? Base: Where unlikely to get internet in next 12 months. Other socio-economic groups and smaller range age groups cannot be displayed due to low base size.*

Use of internet services – top online companies

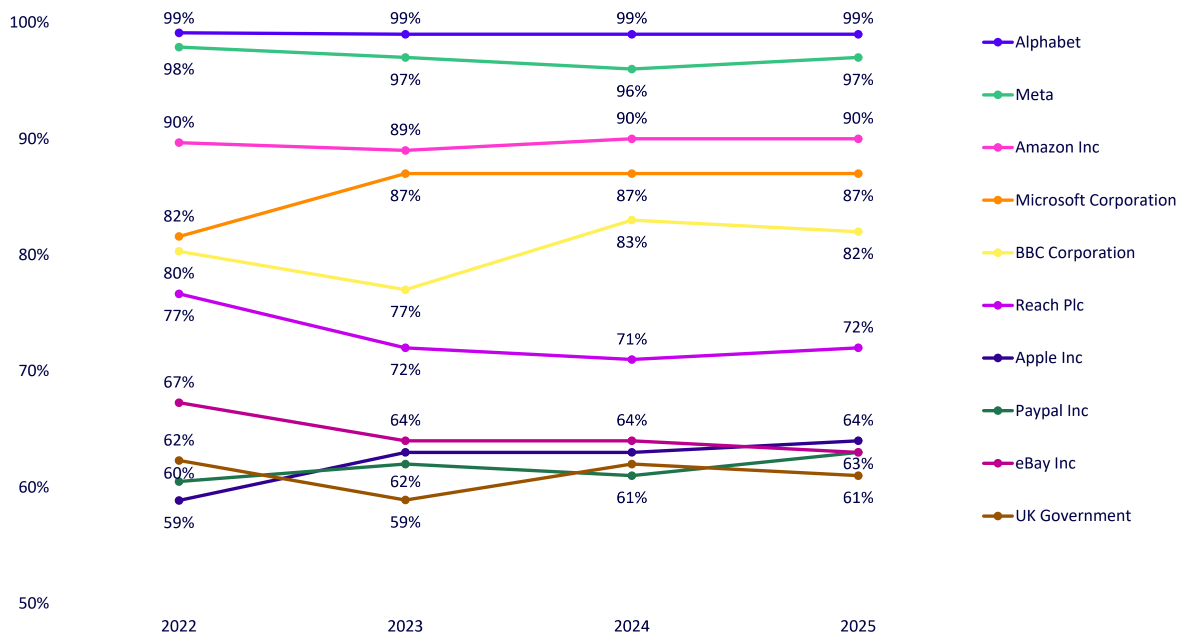
Alphabet and Meta maintain position as most-visited online platforms among UK online adults

Consistent with previous years, Alphabet—the parent company of Google and YouTube—remained the most-visited organisation among UK online adults, reaching 99% of them in May 2025, unchanged from 2023–24. Meta – which owns Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp – followed closely, with 97% reach (up from 96% in May 2024).

Amazon, Microsoft, and the BBC rounded out the top five, with their sites and apps visited by 90%, 87%, and 82% of UK online adults, respectively. This top five was consistent across all UK nations (see Figure x).

The BBC was the highest-ranking UK-based organisation, reaching 82% of UK online adults.[12] Regionally, the BBC was the fifth most-visited organisation in England (82%), Scotland (82%), and Wales (84%), and fourth in Northern Ireland (86%) in May 2025. Its reach was highest among internet users aged 65 and over (87%), and lowest among 25–34-year-olds (75%).

Figure 7: Top ten organisations visited by UK online adults on smartphones, tablets or computers: May 2022/23/24/25



Source: Ipsos, Ipsos iris Online Audience Measurement Service, May 2025, Ranking report, age: 18+ internet users, UK. Top ten reflects May 2025, organisations in previous years' top ten are omitted. Note: 'UK Government' sites do not include those of the devolved governments.

Reddit and ByteDance gain ground among younger audiences, while news services remain prominent with older audiences

Following its first appearance in the top ten for under-35s in 2024, Reddit continued to grow in prominence across age groups in 2025. Among 18–24s, it rose from 7th to 6th place, reaching 71%. It also climbed from 10th to 6th place among 25–34s and made its debut in the top ten for 35–44s,

[12] BBC figures include all BBC Online sites, BBC Sounds and BBC iPlayer.

ranking 8th with a reach of 66%. Overall, Reddit ranked 12th among all UK online adults, with a reach of 60%. For further detail, see Online Sectors – Social Media and Video Sharing Platforms.

ByteDance, the owner of TikTok, remained outside the overall top ten, ranking 17th with a reach of 56%. However, it continued to perform strongly among younger audiences, appearing in the top ten for both 18–24s (81%) and 25–34s (69%). Each group saw ByteDance move up one position compared to 2024—rising from 6th to 5th among 18–24s, and from 8th to 7th among 25–34s.

Reach Plc, a UK news publisher, maintained a strong presence for its sites and apps among older age groups, ranking 6th for all age groups aged 35 and above. However, it dropped out of the top ten for 25–34s, falling to 11th place with a reach of 64%. Audiences aged 65 and over were the only group to feature NHS sites in their top ten, with 62% visiting in May 2025.

Snap and Spotify[13] were only in the top ten for 18–24s, consistent with 2024. Snap ranked 8th with a reach of 73%, while Spotify ranked 10th with 72%. Both platforms increased their reach year-on-year, with Snap overtaking Spotify in relative position.[14]

Across the UK nations, the top six most-visited organisations were consistent, though the order varied slightly. PayPal appeared in the top ten across all nations. UK Government sites and apps[15] were present in all nations except Scotland, where they ranked 12th with a reach of 61%, in line with 2024.

Reddit's rising profile among younger users was mirrored regionally, with the platform appearing in the top ten in Scotland (10th, 61%) and Wales (9th, 62%). In contrast, eBay, which featured in the top ten for all nations in 2024, dropped to 13th in Scotland (60%) and 15th in Northern Ireland (58%). While the decline in Scotland was due to other organisations gaining ground (2024: 61%), Northern Ireland saw a more notable drop in reach of seven percentage points from 2024 (65%). [16]

[13] Spotify use across smartphone, tablet and computer only.
[14] Ipsos, Ipsos iris Online Audience Measurement Service, May 2024 and May 2025, age: 18+ UK internet users.
[15] UK Government sites relate primarily to central government sites and services, and exclude the sites of the devolved governments in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.
[16] Ipsos, Ipsos iris Online Audience Measurement Service, May 2024 and May 2025, age: 18+ UK internet users.

Figure 8: Top ten organisations visited by UK online adults on smartphones, tablets or computers, by nation: May 2025

	UK		England		Scotland		Wales		Northern Ireland	
Rank	**Organisation**	**Reach**	**Organisation**	**Reach**	**Organisation**	**Reach**	**Organisation**	**Reach**	**Organisation**	**Reach**
1	Alphabet	99%	Alphabet	99%	Alphabet	99%	Alphabet	99%	Meta	100%
2	Meta	97%	Meta	97%	Meta	96%	Meta	98%	Alphabet	100%
3	Amazon Inc	90%	Amazon Inc	90%	Amazon Inc	91%	Amazon Inc	92%	Amazon Inc	91%
4	Microsoft Corporation	87%	Microsoft Corporation	87%	Microsoft Corporation	89%	Microsoft Corporation	89%	BBC Corporation	86%
5	BBC Corporation	82%	BBC Corporation	82%	BBC Corporation	82%	BBC Corporation	84%	Microsoft Corporation	86%
6	Reach Plc	72%	Reach Plc	71%	Reach Plc	74%	Reach Plc	79%	Reach Plc	75%
7	Apple Inc	64%	Apple Inc	65%	Apple Inc	64%	eBay Inc	66%	Sky	64%
8	Paypal Inc	63%	PayPal Inc	64%	News UK Sites	63%	PayPal Inc	63%	PayPal Inc	64%
9	eBay Inc	63%	eBay Inc	63%	PayPal Inc	61%	Reddit Inc	62%	UK Government	64%
10	UK Government	61%	UK Government	61%	Reddit Inc	61%	UK Government	62%	News UK Sites	63%

Source: Ipsos, Ipsos iris Online Audience Measurement Service, May 2025, Ranking report, age: 18+ internet users, UK, England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. Note: Each organisation has been assigned a colour. 'UK Government' sites do not include those of the devolved governments.

Figure 9: Top ten organisations visited by UK online individuals on smartphones, tablets or computers, by age group: May 2025

	18-24		25-34		35-44		45-54		55-64		65+	
Rank	Organisation	Reach	Organisation	Reach	Organisation	Reach	Organisation	Reach	Organisation	Reach	Organisation	Reach
1	Alphabet	100%	Alphabet	100%	Alphabet	99%	Alphabet	98%	Alphabet	99%	Alphabet	99%
2	Meta	98%	Meta	96%	Meta	96%	Meta	97%	Meta	98%	Meta	97%
3	Microsoft Corporation	90%	Amazon Inc	90%	Amazon Inc	91%	Amazon Inc	92%	Amazon Inc	91%	Amazon Inc	88%
4	Amazon Inc	89%	Microsoft Corporation	89%	Microsoft Corporation	89%	Microsoft Corporation	88%	BBC Corporation	86%	BBC Corporation	87%
5	Bytedance Inc.	81%	BBC Corporation	77%	BBC Corporation	81%	BBC Corporation	86%	Microsoft Corporation	85%	Microsoft Corporation	82%
6	Reddit Inc	77%	Reddit Inc	75%	Reach Plc	73%	Reach Plc	78%	Reach Plc	80%	Reach Plc	80%
7	BBC Corporation	75%	Bytedance Inc.	69%	PayPal Inc	68%	eBay Inc	68%	eBay Inc	68%	Mail Metro Media	65%
8	Snap Inc	73%	PayPal Inc	67%	Reddit Inc	66%	PayPal Inc	66%	Sky	64%	NHS Sites	62%
9	Apple Inc	72%	Apple Inc	66%	UK Government	65%	Sky	66%	Mail Metro Media	64%	Sky	62%
10	Spotify Music	72%	UK Government	65%	Apple Inc	65%	News UK Sites	64%	News UK Sites	63%	eBay Inc	61%

Source: Ipsos, Ipsos iris Online Audience Measurement Service, Ranking report, May 2025, age: 18+, UK internet users. Note: Each organisation has been assigned a colour.

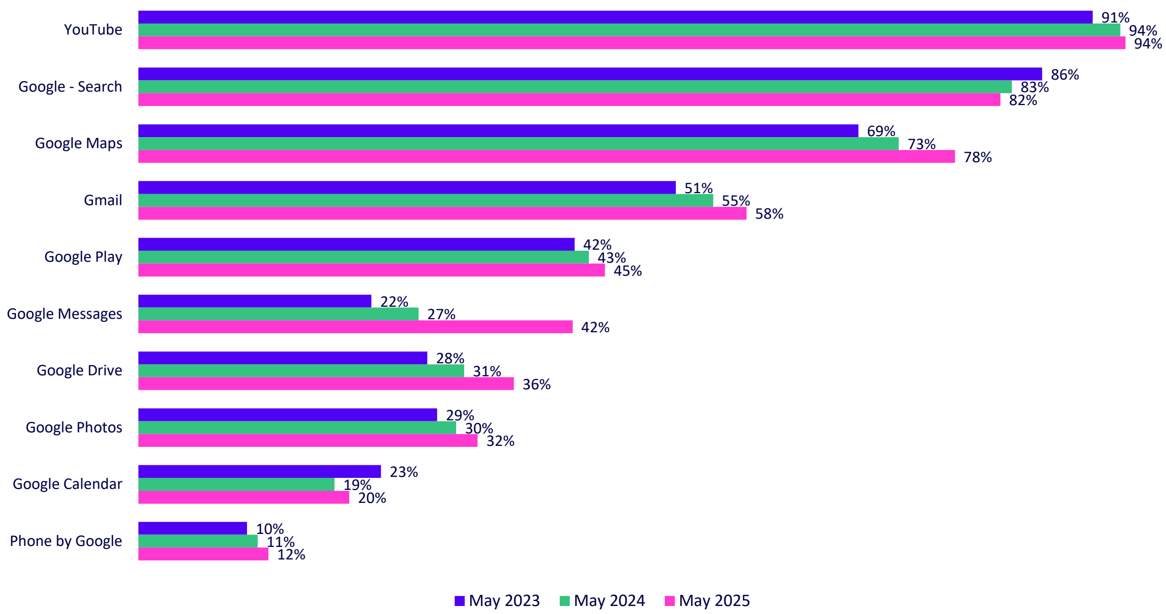
YouTube and Google Maps lead usage gains among UK online adults

In May 2025, YouTube[17] remained the highest-reaching Alphabet-owned service among UK online adults, with a reach of 94%, unchanged from 2024 and up from 91% in 2023. The average time spent per person on YouTube also increased, to 51 minutes per day in May 2025, compared to 47 minutes in 2024.[18]

Google Search continued to maintain a high level of reach, with 82% of UK online adults using the service in May 2025, a slight decrease compared to 83% in 2024 and 86% in 2023. Average time spent per person with Google Search was 1 hour 27 minutes across the month in May 2025, 1 hour 29 minutes in 2024, and 1 hour 15 minutes in 2023. Google Maps usage also grew steadily, reaching 78% in 2025, up from 73% in 2024 and 69% in 2023, with average time spent per person rising to 153 minutes in May 2025, from 139 minutes in 2024.

Gmail remained the leading online email service, with a reach of 58% in 2025, up from 55% in 2024 and 51% in 2023. Average time spent per person on Gmail was 2 hours 50 minutes in 2025, compared to 3 hours in 2024 and 2 hours 23 minutes in 2023. The Google Play Store was used by 45% of UK online adults in 2025, up from 43% in 2024 and 42% in 2023, with average time spent per person at 20 minutes in 2025, 19 minutes in 2024, and 18 minutes in 2023.[19]

Figure 10: Top ten, by UK online adult reach, of Alphabet-owned services: May 2023/2024/2025



Source: Ipsos, Ipsos iris Online Audience Measurement Service, Alphabet breakdown, May 2023, May 2024 & May 2025, age: 18+, UK internet users. Note: custom defined list by Ofcom, Google Play services app has not been included as this is a background service and library for use by mobile apps running on the device. Google Search does not include services Maps, Shopping, Play or News.

[17] 'YouTube' includes YouTube, YouTube Music, YouTube Kids and YouTube Studio

[18] Ipsos, Ipsos iris Online Audience Measurement Service, May 2023, May 2024 and May 2025, age: 18+ UK internet users. Includes in and out-of-home usage across smartphones tablets and computers but not YouTube viewed on a TV screen

[19] Ipsos, Ipsos iris Online Audience Measurement Service, May 2023, May 2024 and May 2025, age: 18+ UK internet users

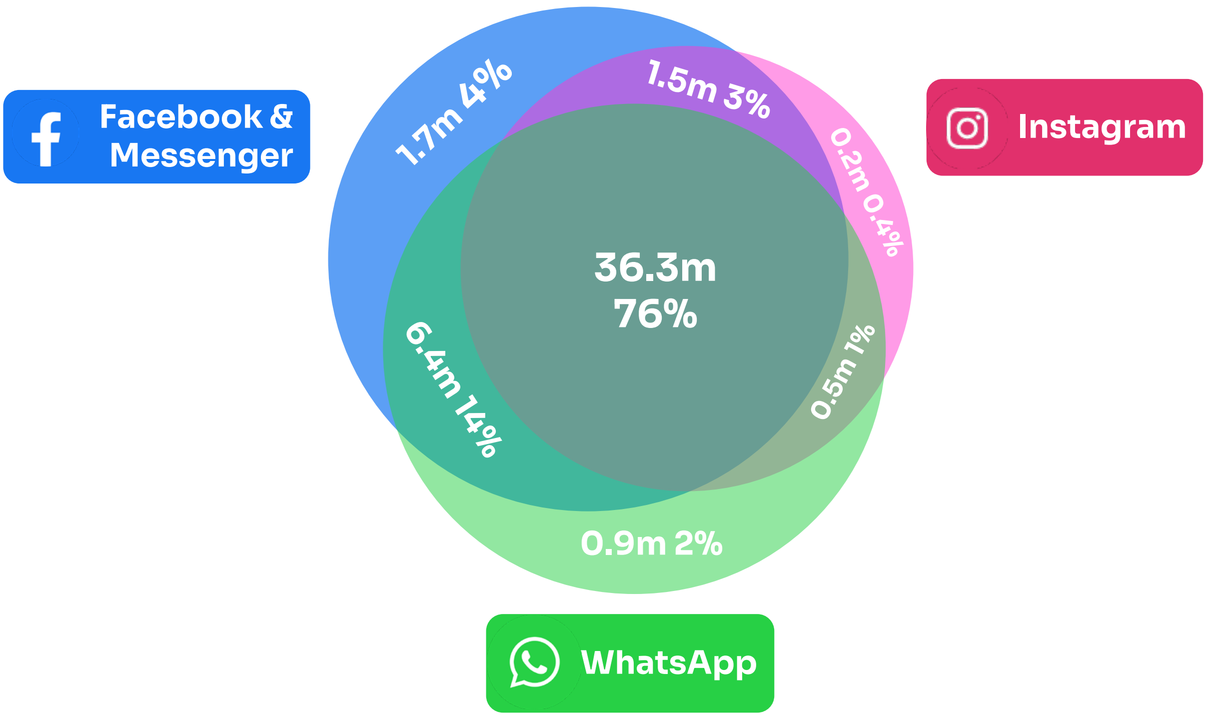
Meta’s core apps continue upward trajectory among UK online adults

In May 2025, Facebook & Messenger remained the most widely used Meta-owned service among UK online adults, reaching 93% of the online population—an increase from 91% in 2024 and 92% in 2023. The average time spent per person on Facebook & Messenger also rose, reaching an average of 42 minutes per day in 2025, compared to 39 minutes in 2024 and 28 minutes in 2023. This growth in time spent appears to come primarily from the Facebook mobile app, specifically the iOS app, with iPhone users increasing from an average of 15 minutes per day in May 2023, to 32 minutes in May 2024, and now 39 minutes in May 2025.

WhatsApp continued its upward trend, with reach climbing to 90% in 2025, up from 87% in 2024 and 86% in 2023. Time spent per person per day on WhatsApp also increased, reaching 17 minutes in 2025, compared to 15 minutes in 2024 and 13 minutes in 2023. Instagram (excluding Threads) saw the largest growth in reach among the three main Meta brands, rising to 78% in 2025 from 76% in 2024 and 73% in 2023. Average time spent per person per day on Instagram also increased, reaching 19 minutes in 2025, up from 16 minutes in 2024 and 12 minutes in 2023.

Across Meta platforms there appears to be a large degree of visitor consolidation, with users of the three main services more likely than ever to use the other two services. Facebook and Messenger continued to have 1.7m users who did not use either Instagram of WhatsApp, in line with May 2024, however those using Facebook and Messenger alongside both Instagram and WhatsApp increased from 76% of the total Facebook and Messenger audience in May 2024 to 79% in May 2025. A similar picture appears with Instagram (May 2024: 91%, May 2025: 94%) and WhatsApp (May 2024: 80%, May 2025: 82%).

Figure 11: UK online adult audience for top three Meta-owned services: May 2025



Source: Source: Ipsos, Ipsos iris Online Audience Measurement Service, Audience duplication, May 2025, age: 18+, UK.

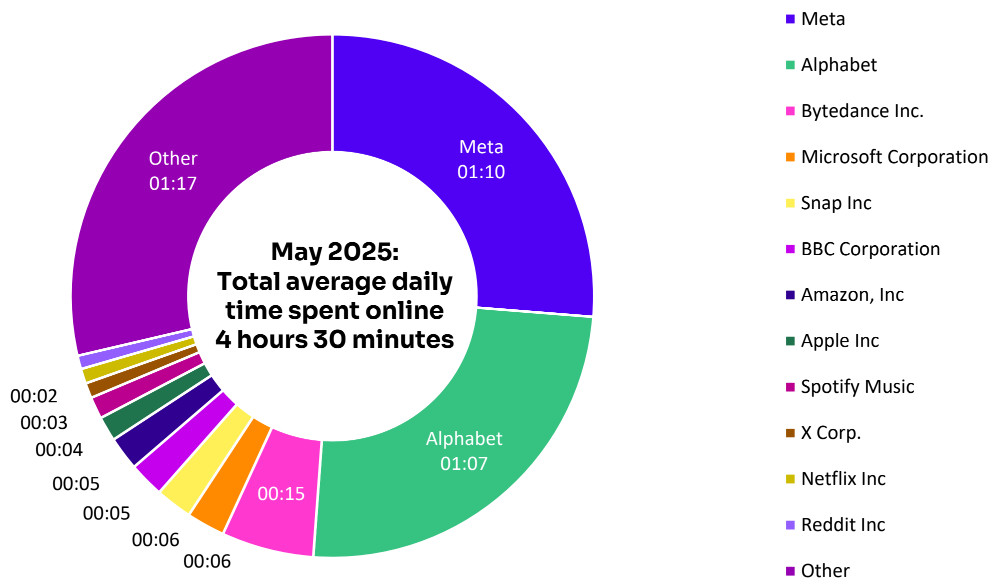
Meta and Alphabet services account for more than half of all time spent online

Alphabet and Meta remained by far the two leading organisations in terms of time spent, accounting for more than half the time spent online (2 hours 18 minutes a day, 51%) by UK online adults in May 2025, up from 48% in May 2024. The next 25% of daily time spent was accounted for by 21 further organisations, an increase on the 17 the previous year suggesting that beyond Alphabet and Meta services, online usage is increasingly fragmented. For further context on this fragmentation, the next 50 organisations after this 21 (which include the likes of News UK, Sky, OpenAI, Roblox, the UK Government, Wikimedia and Reach) account for only a further 7% of time spent online and the 50 following that only a further 2.8%.

In a change to the previous two years, Meta overtook Alphabet in time spend, with UK online adults spending 1 hour 10 minutes on Meta apps and sites per day, an increase of 9 minutes year-on-year (2024: 1 hour 1 minute). Alphabet also increased year-on-year to 1 hour 7 minutes (2024: 1 hour 3 minutes), albeit to a lesser degree. It should be noted however that time spent viewing YouTube via a TV screen is not included in these figures; were this to be included Alphabet would likely remain the organisation with the higher share of time spent.

TikTok-owner ByteDance remained in third place and increased time spent to 15 minutes per day in May 2025, from 13 minutes in May 2024.

Figure 12: Share of average time spent online per day by UK adult online population, by organisation (hours:minutes): May 2025



Source: Ipsos, Ipsos iris Online Audience Measurement Service, organisations, time on smartphones, tablets and computers only, May 2025, age 18+, UK internet users. Other includes organisations with average time of less than 2 minute. Audio play when Spotify app is closed is not measured, only foreground app use measured.

Use of internet services – top apps

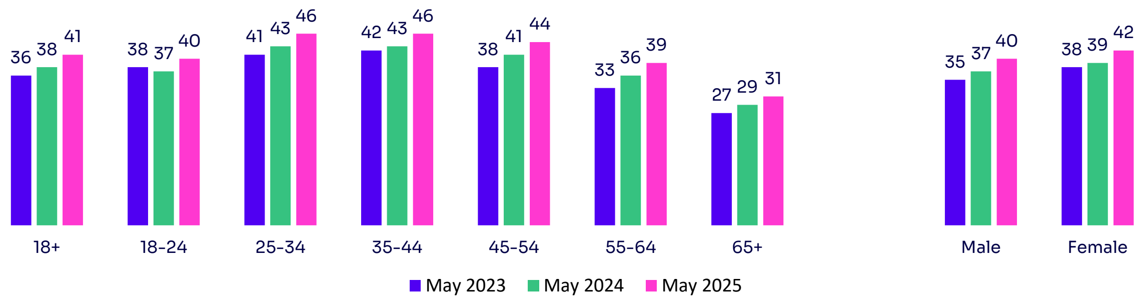
UK women lead men as number of smartphone apps used by UK adults increases

In May 2025, UK adult smartphone users used an average of 41 smartphone apps, marking an increase from 38 apps in May 2024. This upward trend was observed across all adult age groups.

Users aged 65 and over continued to use the fewest apps, averaging 31 in May 2025—up from 29 the previous year. Meanwhile, the 25–44 age groups remained the most active, with an average of 46 apps used. Interestingly, although 18–24-year-olds spent the most time on their smartphones daily, they used only 40 apps on average, lower than the adult average.

Gender differences also persisted. Both men and women increased their app usage, but women maintained a lead, using an average of 42 apps compared to 40 for men—mirroring the two-app gap seen in May 2024 (women: 39, men: 37).

Figure 13: Average number of apps visited on smartphones by UK internet users, by demographic: May each year 2023-2025



Source: Ipsos, Ipsos iris Online Audience Measurement Service, app, May 2023, May 2024 and May 2025, age: 18+, UK internet users. Note: Custom data supplied by Ipsos.

WhatsApp remains the most-visited smartphone app, and YouTube reaches more visitors than ever across all ages

WhatsApp reach rose to 92% of UK online adult smartphone users in May 2025, slightly up on the 91% in May 2024. The Facebook app continued an upward trend, rising to 85% (May 2024: 82%, May 2023: 81%).[20]

Google Maps further consolidated its position as third-highest reaching smartphone app, used by over three quarters (77%) of adults within the month. The next most prominent navigation app is Apple Maps, but far behind in 59th place (15%), and Waze followed in 83rd place (11%).

TikTok moved to 10th in the overall top ten, reaching 46% of UK smartphone-using adults. This position was driven by younger (18-34: ranked 8th, 65%) and female (ranked 10th, 50%) users.

Among younger smartphone users, YouTube rose from fourth to third most-visited app, with 84% of 18-34s visiting in May 2025 (May 2024: 81%). For older smartphone users aged 55+ YouTube also rose in the rankings from 5th to 4th, growing monthly reach from 57% in May 2024 to 60% in 2025.[21]

[20] Ipsos, Ipsos iris Online Audience Measurement Service, May 2023, May 2024 and May 2025, age: 18+ UK internet users.

[21] Ipsos, Ipsos iris Online Audience Measurement Service, May 2024 and May 2025, age: 18+ UK internet users.

Figure 14: Top ten smartphone apps, UK adult reach, by age and gender: May 2025

	Age group								Gender			
	18+		18-34		35-54		55+		Male 18+		Female 18+	
Rank	App	Online reach (%)	App	Online reach (%)	App	Online reach (%)	App	Online reach (%)	App	Online reach (%)	App	Online reach (%)
1	WhatsApp	92%	WhatsApp	94%	WhatsApp	91%	WhatsApp	93%	WhatsApp	90%	WhatsApp	94%
2	Facebook	85%	Facebook	85%	Facebook	86%	Facebook	83%	Facebook	81%	Facebook	89%
3	Google Maps	77%	YouTube	84%	Google Maps	79%	Google Maps	75%	Google Maps	78%	Google Maps	77%
4	YouTube	72%	Instagram	82%	YouTube	75%	YouTube	60%	YouTube	75%	Instagram	73%
5	Instagram	67%	Google Maps	79%	Instagram	70%	Amazon	56%	Amazon	62%	YouTube	69%
6	Amazon	63%	Gmail	69%	Amazon	68%	Facebook Messenger	55%	Instagram	61%	Amazon	63%
7	Gmail	59%	Spotify	66%	Facebook Messenger	61%	Instagram	52%	Gmail	61%	Facebook Messenger	62%
8	Facebook Messenger	57%	TikTok	65%	Gmail	58%	Gmail	52%	Facebook Messenger	52%	Gmail	57%
9	Apple Music	52%	Amazon	63%	Apple Music	50%	Apple Music	49%	Apple Music	49%	Apple Music	55%
10	TikTok	46%	Apple Music	57%	eBay	50%	Google Play Store	48%	Google Play Store	48%	TikTok	50%

Source: Ipsos, Ipsos iris Online Audience Measurement Service, smartphone app, May 2025, age: 18+, UK internet users. Note: Each organisation has been assigned a colour.

Younger adults and more affluent socio-economic groups remain more likely to use Apple smartphones

In 2025, 54% of UK smartphone users aged 16 and over reported using an Apple iPhone as their primary device, while 45% used an Android smartphone. These figures are broadly consistent with those recorded in 2024 (Apple: 52%, Android: 45%).

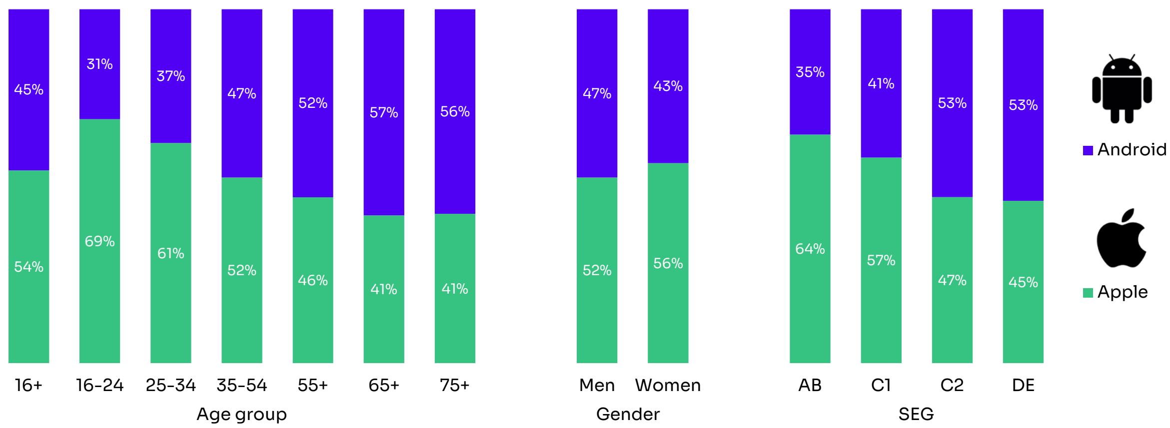
Ownership patterns vary significantly by age group. Among users aged 16–24, iPhone usage is highest at 69%, compared to 31% for Android. Conversely, individuals aged 65 and over are least likely to use an iPhone (41%) and most likely to use an Android device (57%). Gender differences are also evident, with iPhone ownership slightly higher among females (56%) than males (52%).

Across the UK nations, Apple iPhones are the most commonly used smartphone operating system. The highest levels of iPhone usage are observed in Northern Ireland (56%) and England (54%). In Scotland (51%) and Wales (50%), the distribution between iPhone and Android users is more evenly balanced.

There is a clear correlation between socio-economic status and smartphone operating system ownership. Individuals in the AB socio-economic group are significantly more likely to own an Apple iPhone (64%), whereas ownership is lower among those in the DE group (45%). The reverse trend is observed for Android devices, with 53% of DE respondents using Android smartphones compared to just 35% of those in the AB group.

This disparity may be attributed to the higher average price point of Apple devices relative to the broader range of budget-friendly Android options. However, it is important to consider that older individuals, who are more likely to fall within the DE socio-economic group, may also influence this trend, suggesting that age could be an additional contributing factor.

Figure 15: UK smartphone users aged 16+, share of Apple vs Android operating system: 2024



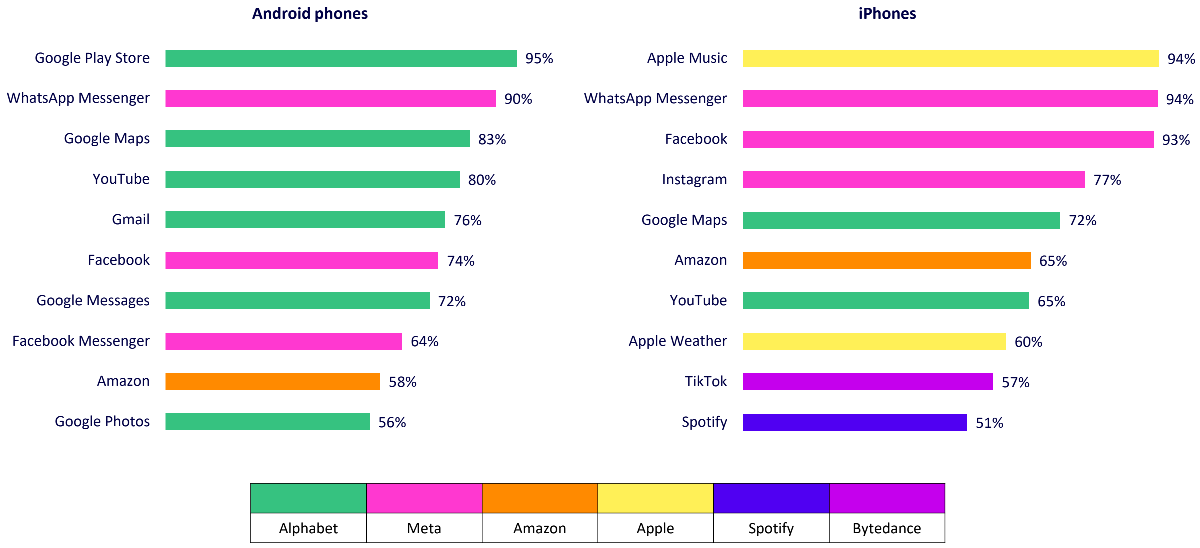
Source: Ofcom Technology Tracker 2025. QM9. Thinking of your main mobile phone does it use an Apple or an Android operating system? Base: Where have a smartphone. 'neither' or 'don't know' responses not shown on chart.

Google Maps and WhatsApp are go-to apps, regardless of operating system

In May 2025, six of the ten highest-reaching apps on Android smartphones were owned by Alphabet, consistent with trends observed in 2023 and 2024. On Apple iPhones, two Alphabet-owned apps, Google Maps and YouTube, featured among the top ten. Google Maps was used by 72% of iPhone users (compared to 83% on Android), while YouTube reached 65% of iPhone users (versus 80% on Android). Both apps saw increased usage compared to May 2024 (Google Maps: 66%, YouTube: 62%).

Despite being the default navigation app on iPhones, Apple Maps was used by only 28% of iPhone users, a further decline from 33% in May 2024, and remains significantly less popular than Google Maps. In the music streaming category, Apple Music, which comes pre-installed on iPhones, maintained a strong lead among iPhone users, with a reach of 94%, compared to Spotify at 51%. Overall, music app usage was considerably lower among Android users with only 59% using any music category app, compared to 97% among iPhone users.[22]

Figure 16: Top ten smartphone apps, Android phones vs iPhones, based on reach as a % of the total smartphone app universe: May 2024



Source: Ipsos, Ipsos iris Online Audience Measurement Service, app only Android vs iOS, smartphone only, May 2025, age: 18+, UK internet users. Note: Apple App Store is not measured by Ipsos iris, Google Play services app has not been included as this is a background service and library for use by mobile apps running on the device.

WhatsApp, Facebook and Instagram are the three most-used apps

In May 2025, Meta-owned smartphone applications continued to lead in daily reach among UK online adults, with the three apps with highest daily reach, mirroring trends from 2024. WhatsApp ranked highest, with daily usage rising to 76% (up from 67% in 2024). Facebook followed at 63% (2024: 57%), and Instagram placed third at 44% (2024: 40%). Gmail maintained its position in fourth, increasing its daily reach to 36% from 32% the previous year. Notably, YouTube entered the top five with a 32% daily reach, replacing Facebook Messenger, which fell to 22%.

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[22] Ipsos, Ipsos iris Online Audience Measurement Service, May 2025, age: 18+ UK internet users, all music category apps on respective devices, smartphone only

Figure 17: UK online adults' top five highest-reaching smartphone apps, based on average daily reach: May 2025

Rank	Smartphone app	Parent company	Average daily UK online adult reach		Daily online adult audience		Year-on-year difference
			May 2024	May 2025	May 2024	May 2025	
1	**WhatsApp**	Meta	67%	76%	30.2m	35.9m	+5.7m
2	**Facebook**	Meta	57%	63%	25.7m	29.8m	+4.0m
3	**Instagram**	Meta	40%	44%	18.1m	21.0m	+2.8m
4	**Gmail**	Alphabet	32%	36%	14.4m	16.8m	+2.4m
5	**YouTube**	Alphabet	29%	32%	13.0m	14.9m	+1.9m

Source: Ipsos, Ipsos iris Online Audience Measurement Service, top smartphone apps by average daily reach, May 2024/May 2025, age: 18+, UK internet users. Due to rounding, difference may appear to be 0.1 million off. Green boxes indicate year-on-year increase, red boxes decrease.

Online sectors

Introduction

This chapter explores internet users' use of online services in selected sectors: search engines and generative artificial intelligence (AI); social media, messaging and calling; porn services; news and gaming; along with brief updates on the latest developments in the dating, health and wellbeing and retail sectors.

Key metrics

Figure 18: Top-reaching online services by sector among UK online adults in May each year: 2023-2025

	Sector	2023	2024	2025
	Search	Google search **86%**	Google search **83%**	Google search **82%**
	Generative AI	**	ChatGPT **9%**	ChatGPT **13%**
	Social media and video sharing platforms	Facebook / Messenger **92%**	YouTube **94%**	YouTube **94%**
	Messaging and calling	WhatsApp **85%**	WhatsApp **87%**	WhatsApp **90%**
	Dating	Tinder **5%**	Tinder **4%**	Tinder **3%**
	Services for pornographic content	PornHub **18%**	PornHub **18%**	PornHub* **15%**
	News	BBC **70%**	BBC **75%**	BBC **77%**
	Health and wellbeing	NHS **51%**	NHS **56%**	NHS **57%**
	Games apps	Candy Crush Saga **5%**	Candy Crush Saga **5%**	Candy Crush Saga **5%**
	Retail	Amazon **87%**	Amazon **88%**	Amazon **88%**

*Source: Ipsos, Ipsos iris Online Audience Measurement Service, May 2023, May 2024 and May 2025, age: 18+, UK internet users. *Pornhub data is provided for August 2025 to reflect usage following the commencement, on 25 July 2025, of the highly effective age assurance duties introduced under the Online Safety Act 2023. **comparable data not available.*

Search & Generative AI

AI is changing how people find things online

Search is shifting from traditional pages of links to AI-generated answers with chat-style interactions where AI agents can execute tasks on behalf of the user. Early evidence shows that as users adopt these benefits, they are reducing their click-through to the original content, reducing publisher traffic.

Google search, with 3 billion monthly UK monthly web searches.[23] remains the most-used search service and is rolling out AI overviews (AIOs)[24] in search and Gemini in Chrome. ChatGPT is already the second-largest search service with a strong leading position as the largest AI-native challenger. ChatGPT had 252m UK web visits in August 2025 up 156% on the same period last year, while Gemini (+146%), Claude (+138%) and Perplexity (+100%) all also grew in in the year to August 2025, though from much smaller bases. Brave (+37%), focusing on privacy for users, is building its own index of search results rather than using other search companies.[25]

The AI search ecosystem is evolving, generating revenues with advertising and licensing deals. Some content owners are striking deals with AI platforms for their content to be used by AI models. OpenAI and News Corp Platforms struck a paid content deal in 2024,[26] and in mid-2025 Cloudflare unveiled a feature called "Pay-Per-Crawl", which lets website owners charge AI crawler operators for access to their content.[27] Reddit and OpenAI have a partnership giving OpenAI access to Reddit's data API. OpenAI becomes a Reddit advertising partner, and Reddit will use OpenAI's models/technologies to enhance features for moderators and users.[28]

Service rollout has reached the stage where 30% of keyword search queries provide AI-supported overviews (AIOs)[29], and research from YouGov found that 53% of UK people say they often see AI summaries and up to 34% of non-branded searches include AI overviews.[30] This is largely passive adoption by users who are using their traditional search service and getting AI overviews included. More active adoption can be seen from ChatGPT which in the first eight months of 2025 had 1.8 billion UK visits, up from 368 million in same period of 2024.

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[23] Similarweb August 2025: Web visits from UK from fixed and mobile devices.
[24] AIOs stands for AI Overviews (sometimes also written "AIO"). These are AI-generated summary boxes that appear in search engine results (notably Google) and aim to provide a concise, synthesized answer to a user's query rather than a simple list of links.
[25] Brave Search removes last remnant of Bing from search results page,
[26] OpenAI and News Corp deal May 24
[27] Cloudfare description of pay-per-crawl
[28] Reddit and Open AI deal in May 24
[29] AIOs appear in 39.9% of keyword searches
[30] 53% of UK citizens often see AI overviews, YouGov, 18 February 2025

Figure 19: Largest traditional and native AI search sites, year on year UK traffic growth by month for 2025.Visit traffic volumes for Jan to August 2025.

Website	Jan-25	Feb-25	Mar-25	Apr-25	May-25	Jun-25	Jul-25	Aug-25	Visits Aug Ytd - millons
Traditional search									
google.com & google.co.uk	1%	-3%	1%	0%	-4%	-5%	-5%	-7%	25,073
bing.com	2%	-7%	-3%	-5%	-4%	2%	1%	2%	1,755
yahoo.com & uk.yahoo.com	-6%	-11%	-4%	-6%	-13%	-10%	-5%	-6%	1,139
duckduckgo.com	1%	-5%	-7%	-11%	-8%	-2%	1%	-4%	301
search.brave.com	76%	56%	44%	52%	54%	59%	49%	32%	154
ecosia.org	-10%	-12%	-4%	-8%	-10%	-4%	1%	6%	178
Native AI									
chatgpt.com & openai.com	171%	165%	188%	246%	148%	146%	153%	134%	1,966
gemini.google.com	N/A	8%	3%	26%	43%	146%	172%	146%	100
claude.ai	276%	269%	104%	51%	58%	123%	87%	138%	40
perplexity.ai	355%	380%	337%	181%	116%	128%	99%	100%	31
x.ai	450%	1952%	1180%	947%	835%	825%	2057%	323%	4

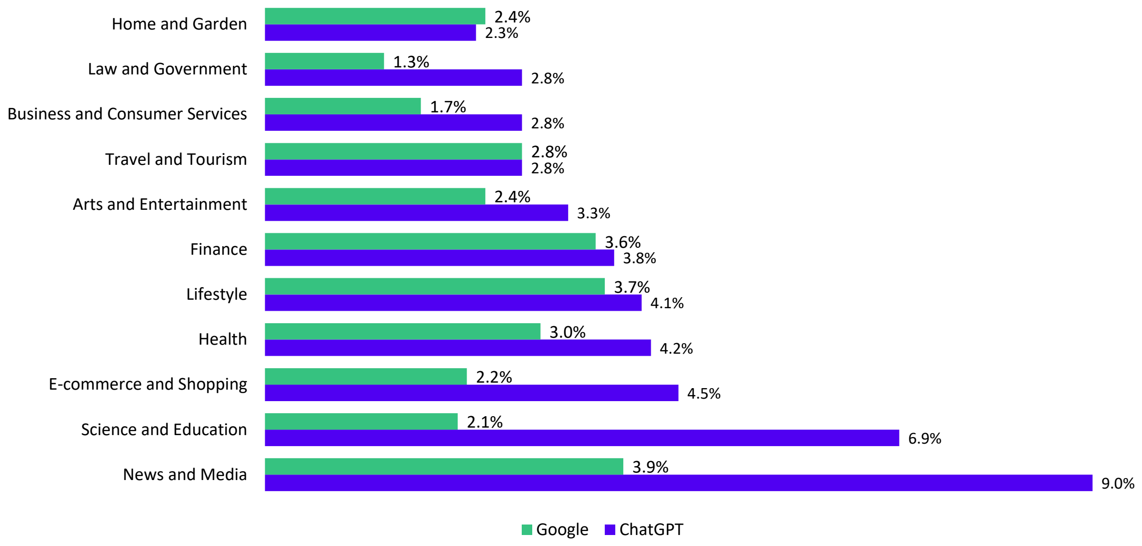
Source: Similarweb monthly visits to website via desktop or mobile browser. Red is negative, Green is over 10% YoY growth. N/A used where services nascent or non-existent in previous year. OpenAI &ChatGPT, Google.com & google.co.uk combined for improved trend comparison as significant traffic transfer between sites.

9% of ChatGPT queries relate to news and media

Computer and technology-related queries are still by far the largest topic areas for UK users, accounting for 36% of ChatGPT and 55% of Google outgoing traffic. Besides this area, news and media is second largest at 9% for ChatGPT searches which, combined with lower click-through to source material, puts a higher premium on AI summation accuracy. The engaging and supporting nature of chat responses is encouraging users to also discuss highly personal areas such as health (4.2%) and lifestyle (4.1%), which includes dating. Given that end users are new to this area, there are potential risks. For example, in August 2025, it was discovered that hundreds of thousands of Grok user conversations (chat logs) had been indexed by search engines like Google, Bing, and DuckDuckGo, making them publicly searchable.[31]

[31] Hundreds of thousands of Grok chats exposed in Google results, BBC News Online, 21 August 2025

Figure 20: Top outgoing UK referrals topics from ChatGPT and Google in 12 months to August 2025, excluding Computer and technology queries



Source: Similarweb outgoing referrals

AI overviews and chat responses reduce user click through of traditional search results

Many users are receiving an AI overview (AIO) along with their traditional search responses. As these can often satisfy a user's search requirements, users less often need to click through to the original content. A US study showed Google users who encounter an AIO were almost half as likely to click on links to other websites than users who do not see one.[32] They are also much more likely to end their browsing session entirely after seeing an AIO (26% vs 16%).[33] Figure 21 below shows that six months after visiting ChatGPT for the first time their search clicks reduce by 26%.

[32] Pew Research Centre, July 2025
[33] Pew Research Centre, July 2025

Figure 21: Indexed number of Google Search clicks in the months following first visiting ChatGPT: US used as proxy for UK market.

Source: Similarweb, Indexed number of Google search clicks in the months following first visiting ChatGPT. US, Determined Based Relative to 6 Month Avg. Prior to First Visit

AI search can complete tasks on behalf of the user rather than simply supplying links to resources

Agentic AI refers to artificial intelligence systems that take goal-directed actions autonomously — they plan, make decisions, and execute tasks without constant human input. These systems are built around agent architectures that combine large language models with memory, tool use, and goal management loops. Examples include AutoGPT, BabyAGI, and OpenAI's o1-preview agents. They mark a shift from passive tools to active collaborators that can act independently, with implications for automation, productivity, and safety.

For people searching for things on the internet, Agentic AI tools can plan and execute steps on their behalf such as summarising pages, comparing products, filling forms, planning holidays and many more. Google's Gemini in Chrome may be another challenge to traditional Search Engine Optimisation (SEO).[34]

The generative AI market has many use cases beyond search

AI is and will continue to become an increasingly important component of search but of course has many other use cases. From content generation to specialized apps, GenAI is booming. Rapidly evolving AI-tools, fast user adoption and unprecedented levels of investment are likely to maintain current high growth levels and new product developments.

Social Media and Video Sharing Platforms

Social media services facilitate user connection and community-building around shared interests or personal networks. These platforms typically allow users to discover, follow, and interact with others through direct messaging, content posting, sharing, commenting, and reacting. Many also support

[34] WIRED, Google Injects Gemini Into Chrome as AI Browsers Go Mainstream, 18 Sep 2025

video-sharing capabilities, enabling users to upload and distribute videos publicly. Additionally, some platforms also offer livestreaming features.

The vast majority of UK adults use YouTube – spending an average of 51 minutes a day on it

As of May 2025, YouTube remains the most widely used platform in social media and video sharing platforms among UK adults, showing consistent growth across all metrics. Its total monthly reach rose to 94% of online adults (46.3 million), a 6% year-on-year increase, while its average daily reach climbed to 58% (28.6 million). Notably, YouTube also leads in average time spent, with the average time per day reaching 51 minutes, up from 47 minutes in 2024.

Meta-owned platforms continue to perform strongly. Facebook/Messenger ranks second in total reach, growing to 93% (45.9 million users, +6% YoY), with daily reach increasing to 69% (34 million) and average time spent rising to 43 minutes. Instagram, in third place, saw +7% year-on-year increase in monthly reach, now at 78% (38.5 million).

Reddit experienced double figures year-on-year growth (+28%) in their monthly audiences for a second year in a row, now reaching 60% of UK internet users, up from 48% in May 2024, and 33% million in 2023. This marks a 88% increase in two years, placing it ahead of TikTok as fourth most visited social media service. However, average time per day for Reddit users is just 4 minutes, compared to 28 minutes for TikTok users. Reddit may be benefiting from its prominence among AI search results - as reported by Press Gazette[35] it was the most-cited source for Google AI overviews in 2.2% of responses) and Perplexity (6.6%), and second most-cited by ChatGPT (1.8%), potentially directing visitors to the site via the citation for further information. Its prime position in AI responses comes as, unlike some online services, Reddit has agreed deals for the use of its content as training data for LLMs.[36]

TikTok also maintained double digit year-on-year growth, following a +13% audience increase in May 2024 with a further 14% in 2025 – up to 56% of online adults – however daily audiences increased even more rapidly, rising to 21% (10.4 million visitors, +37% YoY) per day.

[35] Press Gazette, Reddit claims top spot as most cited domain in AI-generated answers, 4 Aug 2025
[36] The Verge, Google cut a deal with Reddit for AI training data, 22 Feb 2024

Figure 22: UK online adult reach of top ten social media and VSP sites/apps, and time spent on services: May 2023, 2024 and 2025

May 2025 reach rank		UK total adult reach in month				UK online adult reach	Average daily UK adult reach in month			Average time spent per day by UK adult visitor		
	Social media	May 2023	May 2024	May 2025	May 2024 vs May 2025 Year-on-year change	May 2025	May 2023	May 2024	May 2025	May 2023	May 2024	May 2025
1	YouTube	43.6m	44.5m	46.3m	+4%	94%	20.4m	25.4m	28.6m	*	47 minutes	51 minutes
2	Facebook / Messenger	43.9m	43.1m	45.9m	+6%	93%	29.5m	30.5m	34.0m	28 minutes	39 minutes	43 minutes
3	Instagram	34.7m	36.1m	38.5m	+7%	78%	16.6m	19.6m	22.6m	12 minutes	17 minutes	20 minutes
4	Reddit	15.6m	22.9m	29.4m	+28%	60%	3.6m	4.9m	7.0m	5 minutes	4 minutes	4 minutes
5	TikTok	21.2m	24.0m	27.3m	+14%	56%	6.7m	7.6m	10.4m	26 minutes	27 minutes	28 minutes
6	X	24.0m	22.1m	19.3m	-13%	39%	9.5m	8.6m	6.9m	10 minutes	9 minutes	6 minutes
7	LinkedIn	18.9m	18.3m	18.4m	+1%	38%	5.3m	4.3m	4.7m	2 minutes	2 minutes	2 minutes
8	Pinterest	12.5m	13.2m	12.6m	-5%	26%	1.9m	2.1m	2.4m	1 minute	1 minute	1 minute
9	Snapchat	10.3m	10.1m	11.1m	+10%	23%	5.8m	6.1m	7.3m	29 minutes	31 minutes	27 minutes
10	Quora	11.8m	14.6m	10.7m	-27%	22%	1.5m	1.6m	1.2m	1 minutes	1 minute	<1 minute

*Source: Ipsos, Ipsos iris Online Audience Measurement Service, Category: Social Media and Online Forums, May 2023/2024/2025, age: 18+, UK internet users. Note: TV set and smart display use not included. Time spent based on monthly average time per visitor in month divided by number of days in month. *Due to methodology enhancement YouTube time-spent data cannot be compared to years prior to 2024. Green boxes indicate year-on-year increase, red boxes decrease*

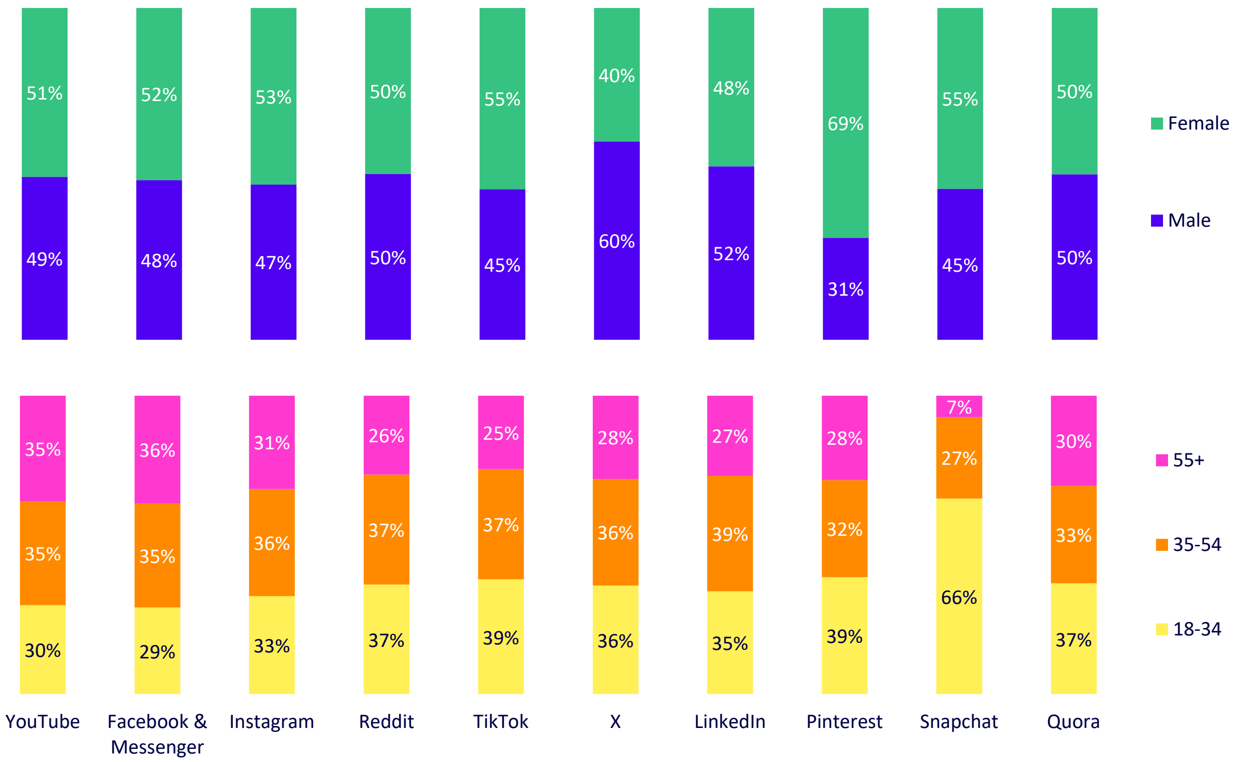
X is the only top ten social media service where males are the predominant visitors

Among the top four social media and VSP services, gender usage is broadly balanced. However, more pronounced differences appear outside this group. Pinterest exhibits the strongest female skew, with 69% of its visitors female. Snapchat and TikTok also lean female, each with 55% female users. In contrast, X (formerly Twitter) shows a male-dominant user base, with 60% of its visitors being male. Of the top ten services, those most heavily skewed towards men in terms of time spent are Reddit (59% of total minutes, 4 minutes per day), X (68%, 7 minutes) and LinkedIn (58%, 2 minutes). Among women the services are Facebook and Messenger (60% of total minutes, 49 minutes per day), Instagram (61%, 22 minutes), TikTok (63%, 32 minutes) and Pinterest (79%, 1 minute).

Of the top ten social media platforms, Facebook and Messenger have the highest proportion of users aged 55 and over, closely followed by YouTube. However, due to their large user bases, both platforms broadly reflect the age distribution of the general population.

In contrast, Snapchat has the most youth-oriented audience profile, with 66% of its users aged 18–34 and only 7% aged 55 or older. TikTok and Pinterest also attract younger audiences, with 39% of their visitors falling within the 18–34 age group.

Figure 23: Top ten social media service audience composition



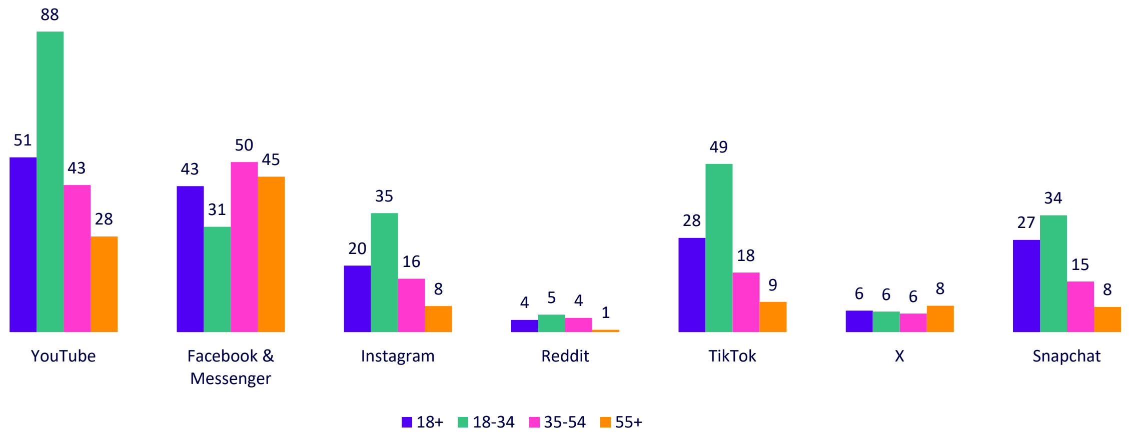
Source: Ipsos, Ipsos iris Online Audience Measurement Service, Category: Social Media and Online Forums, May 2025, age: 18+, UK internet users. Note: TV set and smart display use not included.

Younger visitors spend nearly an hour and a half on YouTube each day

Although the overall audience composition of YouTube and Facebook/Messenger is evenly spread, the time spent by different age groups varies. Visitors to YouTube in the 18-34 age group spend considerably more time with the service per day compared to older users, at 1 hour 28 minutes per day on average, more than double the 43 minutes spent by 35-54 -year-olds and 28 minutes by those aged 55 and over. TikTok and Snapchat also see young people spending considerably more time with the services each day compared to those aged 35 and over.

With Facebook/Messenger it is older age groups that spend longer with the service each day, 35-54s spending 50 minutes and those aged 55 and over 45 minutes compared to 31 minutes spent by 18-34s.

Figure 24: Average daily time spent by UK adult visitors to selected social media services, by age: May 2025 (minutes)



Source: Ipsos, Ipsos iris Online Audience Measurement Service, May 2025, age: 18+, UK internet users. Note: Time spent based on monthly average time per visitor in month divided by number of days in month. Time spent across smartphone, tablets and computers only.

Visitor numbers to X have fallen but it remains by far the most-used microblogging service in the UK as rivals have plateaued

X (formerly Twitter) remains the largest microblogging service, visited by 39% of UK adults in May 2025. However, its monthly visitors fell by 13% year-on-year and its users spent an average of 6 minutes a day on the service, down from 9 minutes a year earlier (see Figure X above)

In the last few years, a number of microblogging services have launched to compete with X. The largest of these services is Threads**,** Meta's microblogging platform launched in 2023, allowing users to post text updates up to 500 characters, along with images and videos. Integrated with Instagram, users can use existing Instagram accounts to sign up and the service is linked to within the Instagram app and site. Threads claims to emphasize community and conversation over real-time news, it lacks hashtags and direct messaging. In May 2025, Threads was visited by 4.3 million UK online adults (9%).[37]

Bluesky is a decentralized microblogging platform developed by Twitter co-founder Jack Dorsey, launched in February 2024. In contrast to other microblogging services, Bluesky is ad-free and allows customizable timelines, domain-based identity verification via the AT Protocol,[38] and community-driven content curation. In May 2025, Bluesky had 2.7 million (6%) UK online adult visitors.[39]

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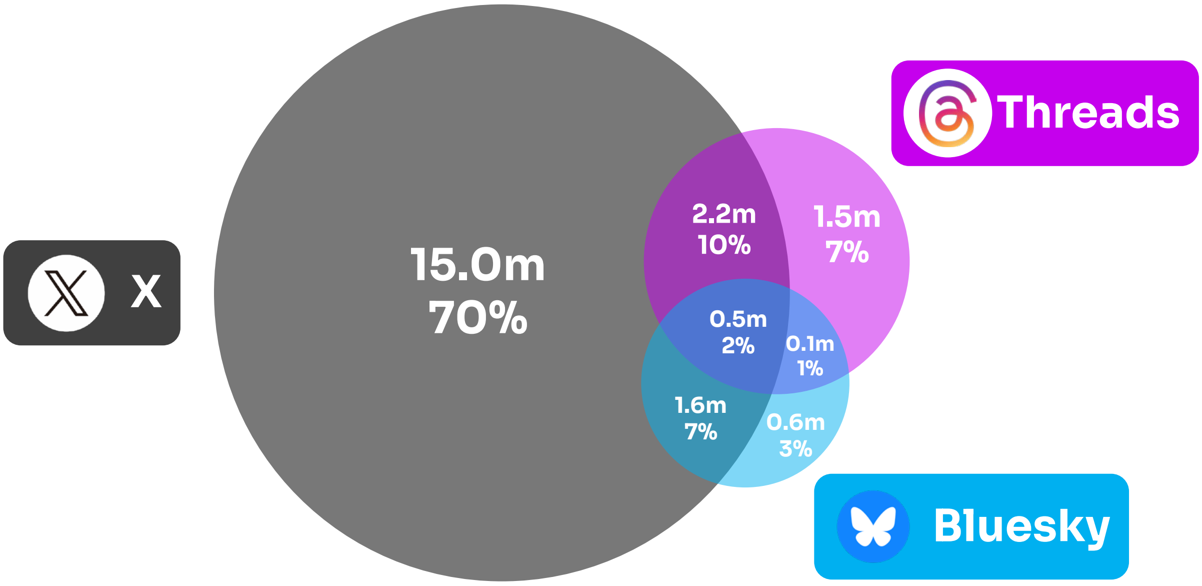
[37] Ipsos, Ipsos iris Online Audience Measurement Service, Audience duplication, May 2024 and May 2025, age: 18+, UK.
[38] Bluesky, How to verify your Bluesky account, 28 Apr 2023
[39] Ipsos, Ipsos iris Online Audience Measurement Service, Audience duplication, May 2024 and May 2025, age: 18+, UK.

While X visitor numbers and average time spent is continuing to decline over time, the relatively flat growth rate of these competing platforms suggests that greater competition is not the sole cause of this trend.

Figure 25: UK online adult audience cross-visiting for major microblogging services: May 2025



Source: Ipsos, Ipsos iris Online Audience Measurement Service, Audience duplication, May 2025, age: 18+, UK.

Messaging and calling

Messaging services enable users to send and receive messages that can only be viewed or read by a specific recipient or group of people. Some services apply encryption to messaging. In addition to text, most of these services allow users to share voice notes, images and videos, and make and receive video calls. Some high-reaching messaging services are also social media services; these social media services are explored in the Social Media section.

Figure 26: Key messaging services feature comparison

Feature	Signal	Telegram	WhatsApp	Facebook Messenger	Discord
Primary Use	Private 1:1 or small group messaging	Messaging, large groups, public channels	Mass-market personal messaging	Integrated social networking & chat	Community servers, voice/video for groups
Business Model	Non-profit; donation funded	Venture-funded; optional premium tier	Free; ad-driven via Meta ecosystem	Free; ad-driven via Meta ecosystem	Freemium; Nitro subscription, partnerships
Encryption	End-to-end (E2EE) by default	Optional E2EE	E2EE by default	E2EE by default	Not E2EE by default, but E2EE livestreaming

Feature	Signal	Telegram	WhatsApp	Facebook Messenger	Discord
Notable Features	Disappearing messages, sealed sender	Large channels, bots, cloud storage	Status, channels, voice/video calls	Integration with FB/Instagram	Voice channels, streaming, moderation tools

WhatsApp is the most used messaging app among UK online adults, and its reach and engagement is growing

Meta-owned WhatsApp continued as the highest-reaching messaging service, reaching 90% of UK online adults in May 2025. Facebook Messenger remained the second most-visited service, used by 58% of UK online adults in May 2025, however visitor numbers fell by 7% (-2.1 million), this continued the downward trend from 2024 which saw a 9% (-3.0 million) drop in visitors.

Three of the top ten services increased their monthly audience by more than 20%: Google Messages added 7.7 million (+61%) visitors compared to May 2024; Discord 1.2 million (+21%) and Telegram 0.8 million (+26%). The dramatic increase for Google Messages potentially relates to a number of enhancements rolled out in 2024.[40] [41] [42]

While WhatsApp's gender audience composition was fairly evenly split in May 2025 (men 48% vs women 52%), some services skew to a male audience: 67% of adults who visited Telegram in May 2025 were men (women: 33%), and Discord's adult audience was similarly split by gender (65% men vs 35% women). Discord and Telegram also skewed younger: 59% of Discord's visitors were 18-34, as were 40% of those using Telegram.

> Discord is a communication platform which includes real-time voice, video, and text features within user-created groups or "servers". Originally popular among gamers, Discord has expanded to support a wide range of interest-based groups, offering features such as group chats, private messaging, and media sharing.

Figure 27: UK online adult reach of ten highest-reaching online messaging / call services: May 2025

Rank	Messaging or call service	Total adult audience in month				UK online adult reach in May 2025	Average time spent by visitor in May 2025 (hrs:mins)
		May 2023	May 2024	May 2025	Year-on-year change		

[40] Google blog, 7 new Android features to elevate your everyday, 30 May 2024
[41] 9to5 Google, New Google Messages and RCS features launched in 2024, 28 Dec 2024
[42] Tom's Guide, Google Messages is about to look very different — here's what's new, 9 Oct 2024

1	**WhatsApp**	40.9m	41.4m	44.2m	+2.7m	90%	17:28
2	**Facebook Messenger***	33.4m	30.4m	28.3m	-2.1m	58%	06:55
3	**Google Messages**	9.7m	12.7m	20.4m	+7.7m	42%	01:45
4	**Microsoft Teams**	8.1m	8.4m	9.2m	+0.8m	19%	03:09
5	**Discord**	5.9m	6.2m	7.5m	+1.2m	15%	10:20
6	**Zoom**	7.1m	6.7m	7.1m	+0.4m	15%	01:24
7	**Phone by Google**	5.0m	5.4m	6.1m	+0.7m	12%	05:49
8	**Telegram**	3.2m	3.4m	4.3m	+0.8m	9%	02:44
9	**Google Meet**	3.2m	3.0m	2.9m	+0.6m	6%	00:18
10	**Signal**	1.1m	1.2m	1.3m	+0.1m	3%	01:59

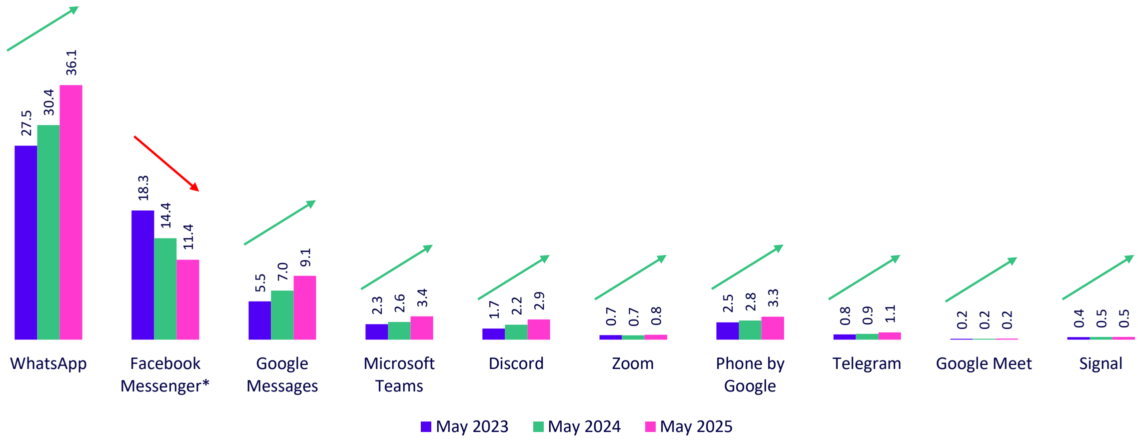
*Source: Ipsos, Ipsos iris Online Audience Measurement Service, May 2023, May 2024 and May 2025, age: 18+, UK internet users. Note: Custom-defined list by Ofcom. *Facebook messaging service can be accessed via the main Facebook platform and is not counted here. Includes Facebook Messenger app or messenger.com visitors. Microsoft Teams figures under-represented as desktop app use not measured. Green boxes indicate May 2025 year-on-year increase, red boxes decrease.*

The majority of WhatsApp visitors use the app daily

On average, 74% cent of UK online adults (36.1 million) accessed WhatsApp each day in May 2025, an increase of 10 percentage points compared to May 2024 (64%, 30.4 million), meaning four out of five of those who used WhatsApp at all in May 2025 were using it on any day within that month. Facebook Mesenger had the second highest daily reach, with 23% (11.4 million) of UK online adults using the service each day, this fell from 30% (14.4 million) in May 2024.

On average, 14% of those aged 18-34 visited Discord each day in May 2025, this was higher than the share of that age group who visited Phone by Google, (12%), Telegram (12%), Google Meet (7%) and Signal (2%) across the month as a whole.

Figure 28: UK online adult daily audience of top ten messaging and call sites/apps: May 2023, 2024 and 2025 (millions)



*Source: Ipsos, Ipsos iris Online Audience Measurement Service, May 2022, May 2023 and May 2024, age: 18+, UK internet users. Note: Custom-defined list by Ofcom. *Facebook messaging service can be accessed via the main Facebook platform and is not counted here. Includes Facebook Messenger app or messenger.com visitors. Microsoft Teams figures under-represented as desktop app use not measured. Green arrows indicate year-on-year increase, red arrows decrease.*

Services for pornographic content

As of 25 July 2025, service providers which allow pornography must implement highly effective age assurance to prevent children from encountering it.[43] We are analysing thousands of services active in the UK to understand user migration and the popularity of the services, including emerging services.

The top 10 services account for 25% of UK visits and all have age assurance

Pornhub remains the largest UK porn service with a 6% visit share of the total and the top 10 services together account for 25% of the overall market. Conversely, the smallest services outside the top 10,000 account for only 2% of the market.

Figure 29: Share of UK online porn market by website visits, August 2025

Service	Service Count	Service count share	Visit Share	Cumulative share
Pornhub	1	0.005%	6%	6%
2-10	9	0.042%	19%	25%
11- 100	90	0.423%	31%	56%
101-1000	900	4%	26%	82%
1001-10,000	9,000	42%	16%	98%
10,001+	11,260	53%	2%	100%
Total	21,260	100%	100%	

Source: Similarweb. August 2025 Adult Sector, 21,269 services analysed.

[43] Quick guide to implementing highly effective age assurance

Figure 30: Top 10 Porn Services Visitor Numbers 2023-2025 and Share of Visits

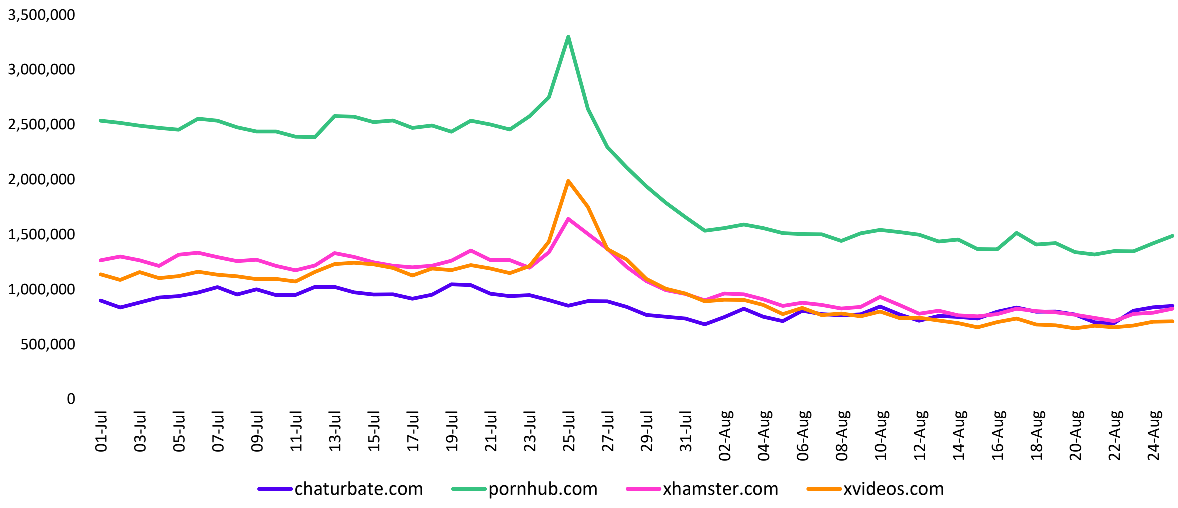
Aug 2025 Rank	Porn Service	Total website visitors in the month				Visit Share Aug 2025	Has Age Assurance?
		Aug 2023	Aug 2024	Aug 2025	Year-on-year change		
1	pornhub	11.9m	11.3m	9.8m	-1.5m	6%	Yes
2	xvideos	7.3m	6.3m	7.4m	1.2m	4%	Yes
3	chaturbate	5.1m	6.7m	7.4m	0.7m	4%	Yes
4	xhamster	6.0m	5.9m	7.3m	1.4m	3%	Yes
5	stripchat	7.1m	4.0m	6.8m	2.8m	2%	Yes
6	xnxx	5.0m	3.2m	5.0m	1.8m	2%	Yes
7	faphouse	4.1m	3.7m	4.2m	0.4m	2%	Yes
8	eporner	3.5m	4.5m	4.0m	-0.5m	1%	Yes
9	livejasmin	3.7m	4.1m	3.9m	-0.1m	1%	Yes
10	onlyfans	2.7m	3.1m	3.0m	0.0m	1%	Yes

Source: Similarweb. August 2025, August 2024, August 2023. Adult Sector, 21,269 services analysed, ranked by Aug 2025 visitors Age Assurance check by Ofcom

Figure 31 below shows how visitor numbers to the UK's largest four porn services changed following age assurance requirements coming into force on 25 July 2025. The spike in visitors on the 25 July is likely the consequence of repeated failed attempts to access sites, which temporarily increased the number of visitors to the front page of a service and aligns with similar events in US, France and Australia when age assurance measures have been implemented. Between July 2025 and August 2025 Pornhub unique visitors reduced by 31%, xHamster reduced by 28% and xvideos by 24%.[44] The decline in visitors to these services following 25 July may be due to visitors' unwillingness or inability to complete the age assurance check.

[44] Similarweb monthly web traffic as at November 5th 2025

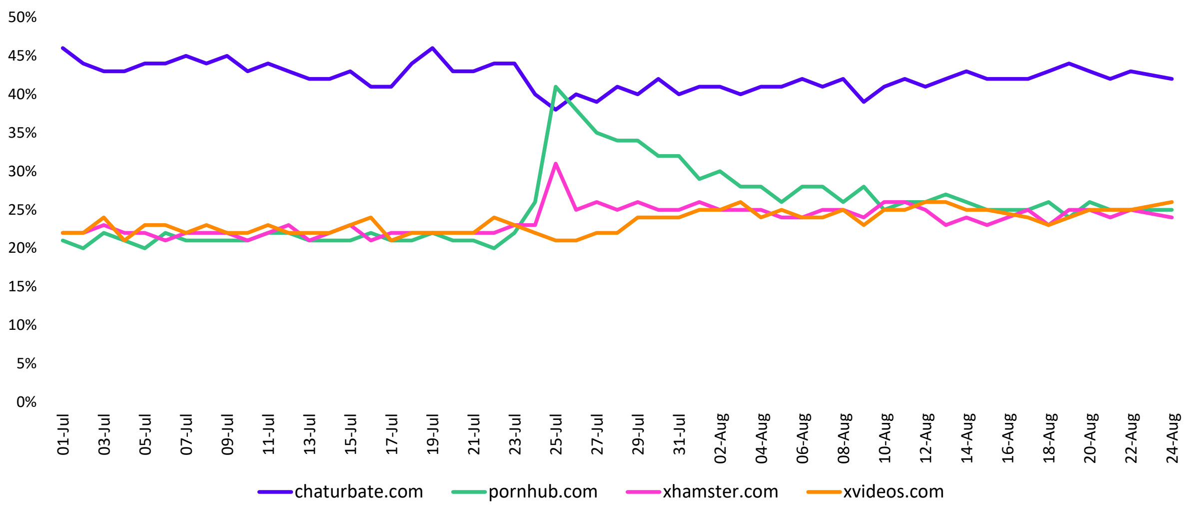
Figure 31: Daily unique visitors to a service between 1 July and 24 August



Source: Similarweb. Daily unique visitors.

Visitors to services with age assurance might not be completing an age assurance process. Figure X shows the 'bounce rate' - a measure of the percentage of visitors who leave a website after only viewing one page. The remaining visitors are considered to be 'engaged' visitors. After introducing age assurance, Pornhub had a higher bounce rate than other top porn services, however, by 24 August, bounce rates have returned to prior levels.

Figure 32: Daily bounce rates from a service between 1st June and 24th August

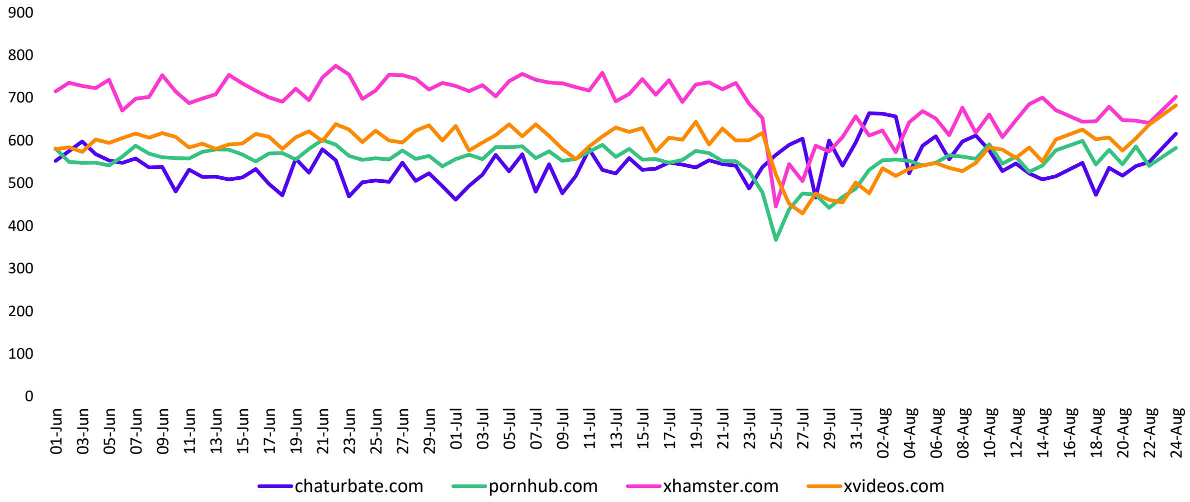


Source: Similarweb. Daily bounce rates.

User time online returns to previous norms after age assurance adoption

Figure 33 shows the average amount of time a visitor spends on each of the top four UK pornographic services during a session. This metric includes visits in which the visitor left after viewing only one page. During the period following the deployment of age assurance, we see an expected dip in time spent on top adult services. Time spent on adult services then recovered to previous levels.

Figure 33: Average visit duration in seconds between 1 June and 24 August 2025

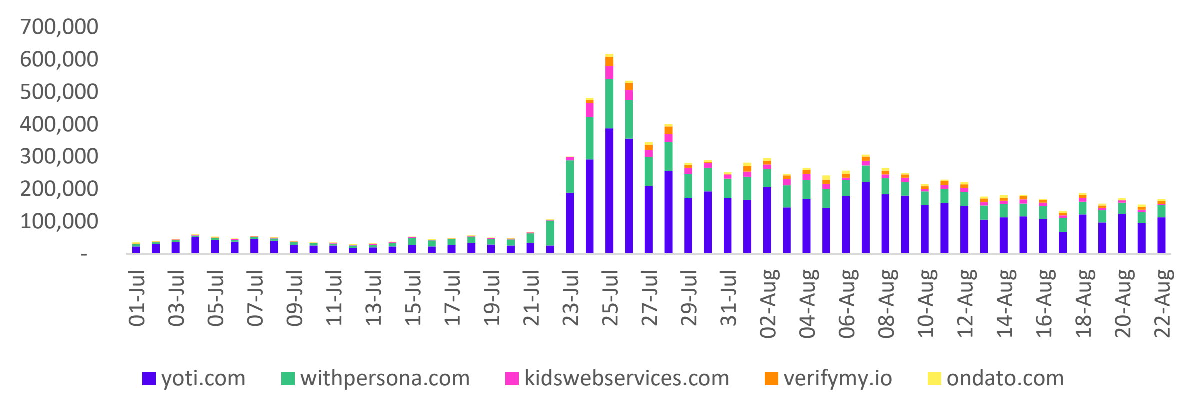


Source: Similarweb. Daily Average Visit Duration

Visitors to age assurance providers increased after 25 July

There were 7.5 million UK visits to the top five age assurance providers in the first four weeks following age assurance requirements coming into force on 25 July 2025, compared to under a million visits in June.[45] On average, every day based on analysis done up to 14 November 2025, 7.8 million visitors from the UK are accessing adult services who have deployed age assurance.

Figure 34: Daily website visits to the most-visited age assurance providers



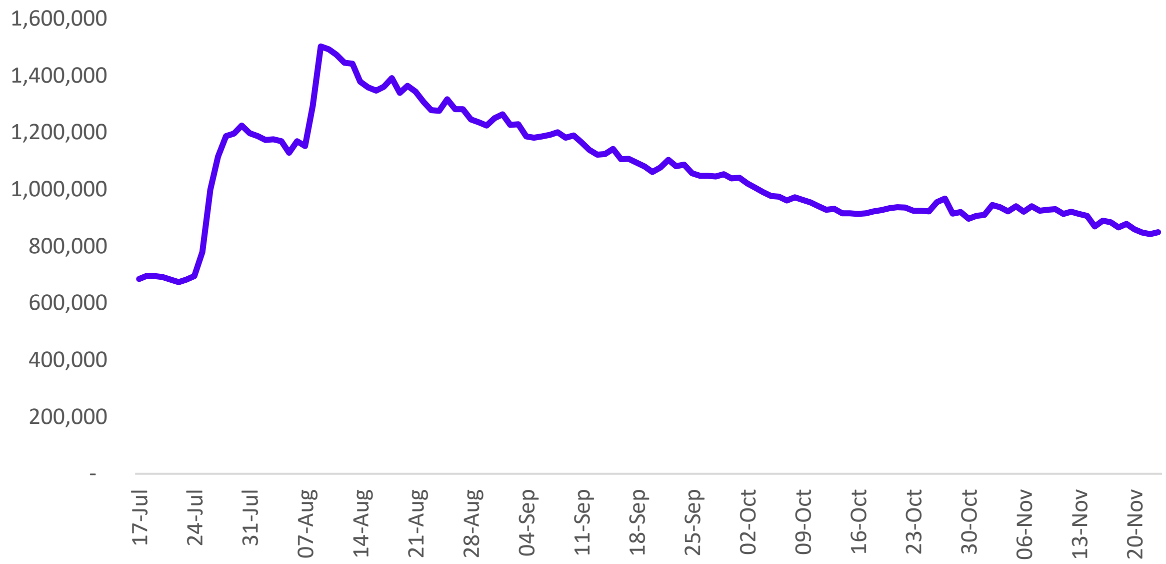
Source: Similarweb daily data for website visits. This reflects website visits to major age assurance vendors rather than the total number of age checks completed.

UK VPN usage more than doubled after 25 July

Use of a VPN can provide users with additional privacy and security. They can also be used to access sites with geographic restrictions by allowing the user to appear to be making the visit from another country, thereby enabling UK users to access pornography services without going through age assurance. From 25 July, VPN usage, shown below, more than doubled in the UK in two steps, once in late July and again in early August. Since August VPN usage has continued to steadily decline. The level of daily VPN use is much lower than user numbers for porn services.

[45] Ofcom Analysis: Daily Age Assurance Assessment process.

Figure 35: UK daily active VPN app users



Source: Apptopia data on daily VPN usage. These numbers only capture users who access VPN apps (i.e. mobile devices only) so do not include any desktop-based VPN users.

News

Online news services can be delivered by traditional broadcast or print news providers (e.g. BBC News, Daily Mail Online) while some are online-native (e.g. Huffington Post). There are also online intermediaries such as news aggregators (e.g. Apple News), social media and search engines which bring together news stories from multiple sources. Ofcom research found that six in ten UK adults (59%) said they used some form of online intermediary for their news consumption. Meta (40%) and Google (32%) are the most used intermediaries, reaching three-quarters of all adults. Four of the top ten individual news sources are now social media platforms (Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and X).[46]

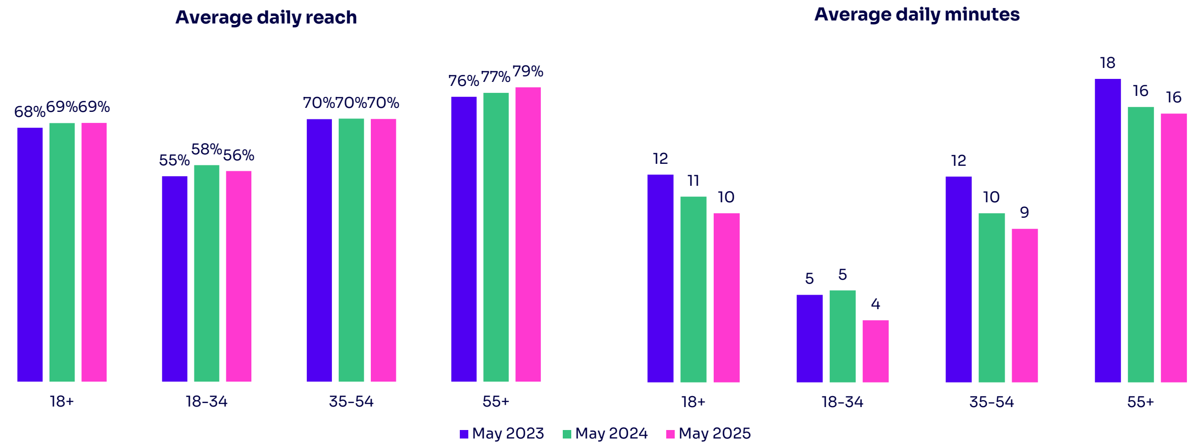
Daily reach of news services remains strong in May 2025

In May 2025, 97% of UK online adults (47.6m) visited a news service, spending an average of 10 minutes on these services per day, similar to May 2024 (97%, 11 minutes). Average daily reach for these services was also high, with on average almost seven in ten UK online adults (69%, 33.9m) visiting at least one news service per day in May 2025.

The average time spent by 18-34-year-olds visiting news services is gradually declining over time, down from 12 minutes in May 2023 to 10 minutes in May 2025, while average daily reach has remained fairly stable (56%). Older internet users aged 55 and over are more likely daily visitors to news services with 79% doing so in May 2025, and their time spent on these services is also higher at 16 minutes a day, although this has also declined slightly over time.

[46] Ofcom, News consumption in the UK: 2025

Figure 36: UK online adult daily use of online news services, by age group: May 2023/2024/2025



Source: Ipsos, Ipsos iris Online Audience Measurement Service, May 2023, May 2024 and May 2025, age: 18+, UK internet users, total tier 1 news category usage figures.

The BBC remains the most-visited news service, while the Guardian and Apple News increase audiences

The BBC had both the highest reach (77%, 37.6m) and the highest average daily audience (33%, 16.3m) in May 2025. The Sun remained the second-highest-reaching service among adults (45%, 22.0m) in May 2025, continuing a gradual decline in reach, losing 2.1 million adults since May 2023 (55%, 24.1m). The Guardian became third highest reaching news service (44%, 21.8m), up from fifth the previous year, increasing its monthly audience by 2.0 million adults since May 2024 (42%, 19.8m), it was also the service with the third highest daily reach (10%, 4.7m).

News aggregation app Apple News, alongside the Apple Weather app, continued to increase its audience, adding 1.8m adults since May 2024 (40%, 19.0m) and becoming the fifth highest-reaching service compared with eighth the previous year. Looking at Apple News only, reach increased year-on-year to 28% (13.6m) online adults (May 2024: 25%, 11.9m). Top publishers within Apple News included Sky News (10%, 5.1m), The Guardian (10%, 4.8m) and BBC News (9%, 4.6m).

Aggregated or distributed content – content which is shared or hosted externally to the news service's own sites and apps, via services such as Apple News, Bing News or Yahoo News – is playing an increasingly significant role in audience's use of news services. Of the total time spent with Mirror content in May 2025, 57% was via distributed content, as was 47% of time spent with the Independent and 39% of time spent with the Daily Express.

The BBC and The Sun were the only news services with top-five reach across all UK nations

The BBC and The Sun were the only two news services to appear in the top five in all UK nations, in May 2024 Mail Online also featured in the top five of all nations, but a 12% audience decline in Wales saw it lose its position.

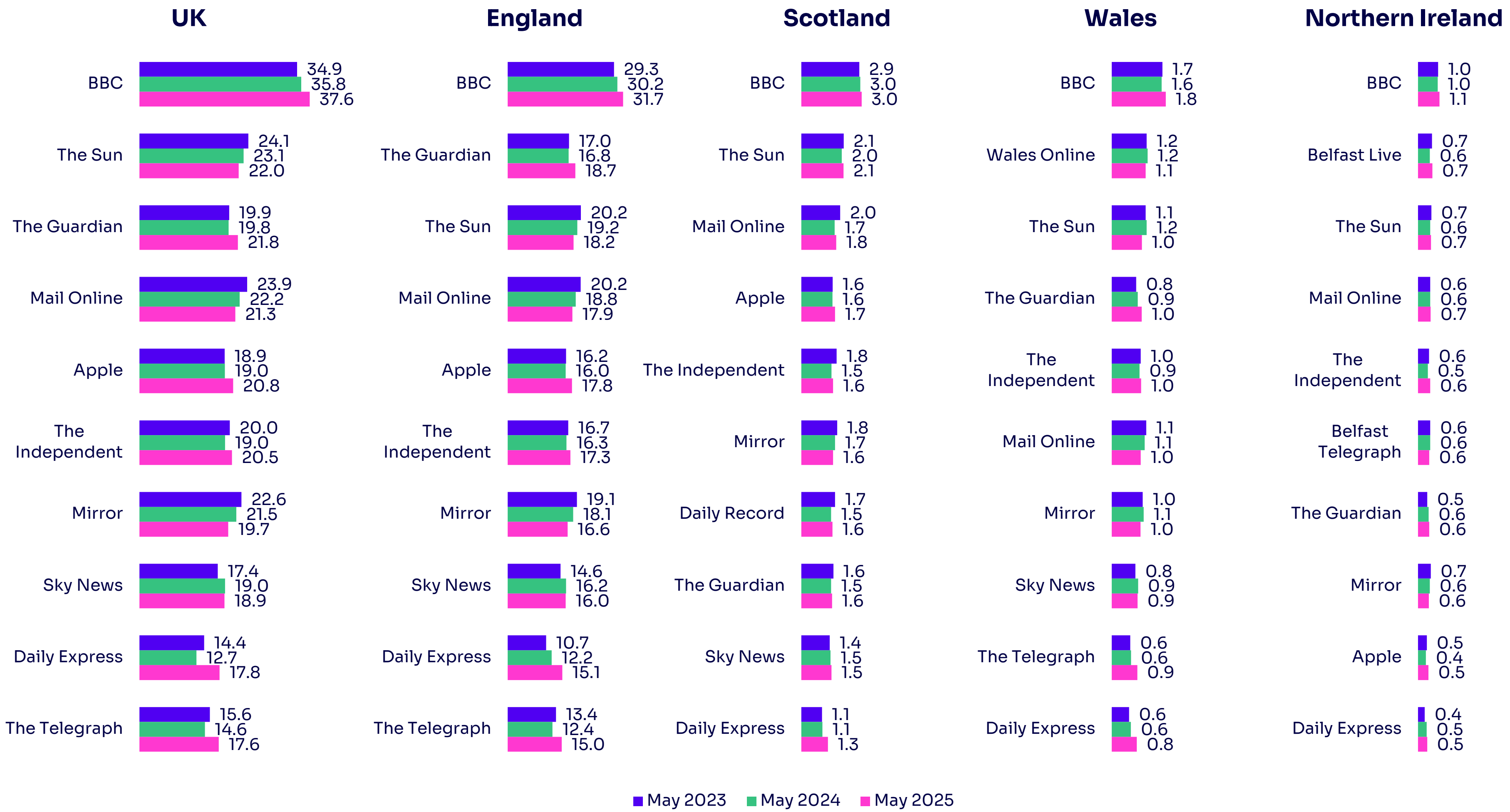
Although UK or international services dominated the top ten in all nations, Northern Ireland and Wales both featured national services prominently, with Belfast Live (55%, 0.7m) and Wales Online (50%, 1.1m) both reaching at least half of the online adult population in the respective nations within the month. In Scotland, the Daily Record also appeared in the top ten, remaining the seventh highest reaching news service, with a 4% year-on-year increase in audience taking it to 1.6m visitors (40%) within the month.

May 2025 was a generally positive year for the top ten news services in Scotland, with all but one service seeing a year-on-year growth in audience numbers compared with May 2024. The exception was the Mirror which experienced a 5% drop (May 2024: 1.7m, May 2025: 1.6m). The highest increase in both proportional and real terms was the Daily Express which added 267,000 additional visitors, a 25% increase compared to May 2024. Viewed in the context of general year-on-year declines in May 2024 however, only the BBC, (+4%), Apple (+7%), Sky News (+6%) and the Daily Express (+28%) had more visitors in May 2025 than they did in May 2023.

News services in Northern Ireland saw similarly positive changes in audience numbers, with only the Belfast Telegraph (-7%, -47k) and the Mirror (-8%, -50k) seeing a year-on-year fall in visitor numbers. The most significant increases came from Apple News (+30%, 125k), The Independent (+23%, 1129k) and Belfast Live (+22%, 132k).

In Wales, there was a less uniform trend, with half the top ten seeing positive audience changes and half seeing negative. Services with large year-on-year audience increases included The Telegraph (+31%, +204k), Daily Express (+30%, +192k) and the Guardian (+15%, +132k).

Figure 37: UK online adult reach of top ten online news services, by UK nation (millions): May 2023, 2024 and 2025



Source: Ipsos, Ipsos iris Online Audience Measurement Service, May 2023, May 2024 and May 2025, age: 18+, internet users. Note: Top ten based on 2025 news category ranking. News includes weather. Apple News includes Apple News and Apple Weather apps. Distributed Apple News content was categorised in October 2023 there may be incremental increases in reach in 2024 onwards for some services when comparing year-on-year data.

Additional sector snapshots

Gaming

Gaming is one of the most universal online activities, not just for 'gamers' or kids but for almost everyone with a smartphone, tablet, or PC. Whether it's playing quick puzzle games, exploring virtual worlds with friends, or watching others compete online, gaming is now part of everyday digital life. Visits to major gaming sites and apps continued to grow in 2024–25, despite a slowdown elsewhere in digital entertainment.

Roblox's audience has grown 26% between May 2025 and May 2024. Since January 2025, they've shipped new tools for age-based communications like Trusted Connections, Roblox Sentinel, a new open-source AI system that helps detect early signals of child endangerment, and continued improvements to their voice and text filters.[47] In November they announced the intent to use face recognition to access chat in all available market by January 2026.[48]

Browser based games continue to have a following, with Poki.com still having over half a million UK visitors in May 2025 (down 7% versus May 2024). Geoguessr.com with over two hundred and fifty thousand UK visitors grew 12% and pokemonshowdown.com grew 35% to almost one hundred thousand UK visitors.[49]

[47] Roblox Announces Ambitious Plan to Expand Age Estimation to All Users | Roblox
[48] https://cms-media.roblox.com/resize=width:1920,fit:max/kRG4CEbzSWemj3YAFsuZ
[49] Similarweb

Figure 38: Online Gaming: Roblox overtakes Candy Crush as leading UK App game.

Rank	App Game	Total adult audience in month			Average time spent per visitor in month (hours: minutes)		
		May 2024	May 2025	Year-on-year change	May 2024	May 2025	Year-on-year change
1	Roblox	1.9m	2.4m	27%	10:47	07:00	-35%
2	Candy Crush Saga	2.2m	2.0m	-11%	08:04	08:23	4%
3	MONOPOLY GO!	1.7m	1.9m	8%	12:58	12:05	-7%
4	Royal Match	1.9m	1.8m	-4%	06:08	08:16	35%
5	Pokemon GO	1.7m	1.7m	-1%	11:49	12:58	10%
6	Solitaire – Grand Harvest	1.3m	1.4m	6%	05:50	06:13	7%
7	Crossword Puzzle Redstone	0.9m	1.4m	55%	02:08	02:17	7%
8	Dominoes – Classic Edition	1.2m	1.3m	5%	00:06	00:06	-1%
9	Scrabble	0.6m	1.2m	96%	12:48	03:07	-76%
10	Coin Master	1.1m	1.1m	-1%	12:04	10:08	-16%

Source: Ipsos iris Online Audience Measurement Service, 18+, UK online adults, May 2024/25

Dating

In May 2025, 11% of UK online adults visited an online dating site, remaining at approximately the same level as the same month in the previous 3 years (10-11%). Time spent with these services has been dropping from a peak of almost four hours (3 hours 57 minutes) in the month of May 2023, down to three hours in May 2025. Visitors to online dating services remain disproportionately male, increasing from 65% (3.2m) of visitors in May 2024 to 68% (3.6m) of visitors in May 2025, an increase of 364K male visitors year-on-year, in comparison female visitors fell slightly 1.7m.[50]

Tinder remains the most visited service, however over the past three years audience reach has been gradually dropping, from 5.2% in May 2023, 4% in May 2024, and now to 3.1% in May 2025, only marginally ahead of nearest competitor Hinge (also 3.1%). The decline in reach comes primarily from Tinder's female audience, down from 735k (3.2%) in May 2024 to 384k (1.5%) in May 2025, with men now outnumbering women on the service three-to-one.[51] Tinder fell from being the highest-reaching dating service among women in May 2024 to third in 2025, behind Hinge (2.7%) and Bumble (1.6%), despite both of these services also seeing lower numbers of women compared to the previous year.

[50] Ipsos, Ipsos iris Online Audience Measurement Service, 18+, UK online adults. May 2022/23/24.
[51] Ipsos, Ipsos iris Online Audience Measurement Service, 18+, UK online adults, May 2024/25

Figure 39: Top ten dating services: May 2023/2024/2025

Rank	Messaging or call service	Total adult audience in month				UK online adult reach in May 2025	Average time spent by visitor in May 2025 (hrs:mins)
		May 2023	May 2024	May 2025	Year-on-year change		
1	Tinder	2.5m	1.9m	1.5m	-0.4m	3.1%	01:30
2	Hinge	1.5m	1.4m	1.5m	+0.2m	3.1%	02:10
3	Bumble	1.4m	1.1m	1.1m	-	2.3%	01:51
4	Grindr	0.9m	0.9m	0.9m	-	1.9%	06:27
5	Squirt	0.5m	0.4m	0.5m	+0.1m	1.1%	00:05
6	Badoo	0.5m	0.5m	0.5m	-0.1m	1.0%	01:30
7	PURE Hookup	0.3m	0.1m	0.4m	+0.3m	0.9%	00:06
8	Plenty of Fish	0.6m	0.4m	0.4m	-	0.8%	01:49
9	Ourtime	0.1m	0.1m	0.3m	+0.2m	0.5%	00:03
10	Match	0.2m	0.2m	0.2m	-	0.5%	00:22

Source: Ipsos, Ipsos iris Online Audience Measurement Service, May 2023, May 2024 and May 2025, age: 18+, UK internet users. Green boxes indicate May 2025 year-on-year increase, red boxes decrease, dash represents no significant change year-on-year.

Health & Wellbeing

In May 2025, 86% (42.1m) of UK online adults visited a health and wellbeing service. Reach is similar across age groups, with reach among 18-34s (85%) almost level with reach among those aged 55 and over (87%), daily reach is also very similar across ages groups (18-34s: 34%, 55+: 31%).52

However, it is the profile of health and wellbeing sites that provides contrast between younger and older audiences. Among audiences aged 18-34 it is health and fitness tracking sites and apps such as period tracker Flo (11%), Strava (10%), MyFitnessPal (8%) and Sweatcoin (7%) that populate the top ten highest reaching apps. Among those aged 55 and over, services offering health advice and access to medical care are more prominent, with services such as GP and pharmacy booking service PatientAccess (9%), Mail Online – Health (8%), BBC News – Health (7%) and National Institutes of Health (6%) that make up the top ten.[53]

One service that has high reach among all age groups (57%) is the NHS, visited by 28 million UK online adults in May 2025. Audience sizes have increased by at least 7% each year since May 2023. A key driver in this increase has been the number of visitors to the NHS app, which has increased by 12% (2.5m) since May 2023 (May 2023: 20.8m, May 2025: 23.3m).[54]

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[52] Ipsos, Ipsos iris Online Audience Measurement Service, 18+, UK online adults, May 2025, category: health.
[53] Ipsos, Ipsos iris Online Audience Measurement Service, 18-34 and 55+, UK online adults, May 2025
[54] Ipsos, Ipsos iris Online Audience Measurement Service, 18+, UK online adults, May 2023/24/25

Figure 40: Top ten health and wellbeing services: May 2023/2024/2025

Rank	Messaging or call service	Total adult audience in month				UK online adult reach in May 2025	Average time spent by visitor in May 2025 (hrs:mins)
		May 2023	May 2024	May 2025	Year-on-year change		
1	NHS	24.2m	26.1m	28.0m	+1.9m	57%	00:12
2	Healthline	7.4m	6.8m	5.4m	-1.4m	11%	00:01
3	Strava	3.3m	3.5m	4.1m	+0.6m	8%	01:12
4	Samsung Health	3.0m	3.0m	3.8m	+0.8m	8%	00:16
5	Fitbit	4.5m	3.9m	3.8m	-0.1m	8%	03:36
6	Apple Health	1.3m	2.2m	3.7m	+1.6m	8%	00:07
7	Mail Online	3.2m	2.6m	3.7m	+1.1m	8%	00:04
8	National Institutes of Health	4.3m	4.7m	3.2m	-1.5m	7%	00:01
9	Mayoclinic	3.5m	3.7m	3.1m	-0.6m	6%	00:01
10	BBC News - Health	2.7m	2.7m	2.7m	+0.1m	6%	<00:01

Source: Ipsos, Ipsos iris Online Audience Measurement Service, May 2023, May 2024 and May 2025, age: 18+, UK internet users. Green boxes indicate May 2025 year-on-year increase, red boxes decrease, dash represents no significant change year-on-year.

Retail

Online retail services allow users to purchase goods or services directly from a website or app. Users can typically browse, search, and pay for products through the service.

In line with the previous two years, 98% (32.2m) of UK online adults visited an online retail service in May 2025. Each visitor spent an average of 18 minutes per day with an online retail service, again stable with the previous two years (May 2023: 17 minutes, May 2024: 17 minutes).

Amazon remained the most visited retail service with 88% (43.2m) of UK online adults visiting within the month. Chinese-owned retail sites Temu and Shein have both seen considerable growth in recent years, Temu more than doubled its monthly audience from 13.8m in May 2023 to 28.4m in May 2025, and fast-fashion e-commerce platform Shein grew more than 45% (+4.4m) over the same period.

Online marketplace Vinted also saw sharp growth in visitors, up 4.9m (53%) in May 2025 compared to May 2023, reaching 29% of UK online adults, this remains less than half the monthly audience of competitor eBay (63%, 30.7m), however the larger site has not seen any significant audience growth over the previous two years.

Figure 41: Top ten retail services: May 2023/2024/2025

Rank	Messaging or call service	Total adult audience in month				UK online adult reach in May 2025	Average time spent by visitor in May 2025 (hrs:mins)
		May 2023	May 2024	May 2025	Year-on-year change		
1	Amazon	41.4m	41.5m	43.2m	+1.7	88%	02:15
2	eBay	30.5m	30.2m	30.7m	+0.5	63%	01:18
3	Temu	13.8m	20.1m	28.4m	+8.3	58%	01:10
4	Apple	20.9m	20.6m	22.7m	+2.1	46%	00:18
5	Tesco	18.4m	18.3m	19.4m	+1.1	39%	00:22
6	Argos	16.1m	17.4m	18.0m	+0.6	37%	00:10
7	ASDA	14.5m	15.2m	15.1m	-0.2	31%	00:14
8	Lidl UK	11.1m	12.8m	14.6m	+1.9	30%	00:22
9	Vinted	9.4m	11.4m	14.3m	+2.9	29%	02:42
10	Shein	9.6m	10.5m	13.9m	+3.5	28%	01:50

Source: Ipsos, Ipsos iris Online Audience Measurement Service, May 2023, May 2024 and May 2025, age: 18+, UK internet users. Green boxes indicate May 2025 year-on-year increase, red boxes decrease, dash represents no significant change year-on-year.

3. Adults' experiences online

Introduction

This chapter looks at adults' experiences of being online and focuses both on the positive and beneficial experiences people have, and on the potentially harmful content or behaviour they encounter.

A note on research methodology and terminology regarding 'potential harms'

Although being online provides people with many benefits, the online environment also has the potential to expose internet users to harm. Not all occurrences of potentially harmful content or behaviour online result in actual psychological (or financial) harm, so in this chapter they are referred to as 'potential harms'.

The data relating to type and prevalence of potential harm refers to responses from internet users encountering a 'potential harm' in the four weeks before completing Ofcom's Online Experiences Tracker (OET) survey. Further OET data relating to the location and impact of, and response to a potential harm relate to the 'most recently encountered potential harm', indicating the most recent potentially harmful content encountered by respondents in the four weeks before completing the survey. To capture this data, survey respondents are prompted with a list of potential harms, and their responses are based on their recall and judgement of the content and behaviours which they consider align with those listed in the questionnaire.

The list of harms in the OET questionnaire covers content that falls within the scope of the Online Safety Act, and also extends to other types of content and behaviour, in order to capture a wider range of experiences online.[55] The data is also based on users' own categorisations of platform type, so reference to platform type in this chapter may not align with the categorisation of platform type referenced in the earlier chapters or within the Online Safety Act. Differences explored among subgroups, compared to the average internet user or total, refers to UK internet users aged 18+. Unless otherwise stated, the data has been significance tested at a 95% or 99% confidence interval.

The Online Experiences Tracker also transitioned to an 18+ sample starting in Wave 8 this year (previously 13+)[56]. As a result, quotas and weighting have been updated for Wave 8 to reflect this change. While the overall impact on reported figures is modest, readers should be mindful when comparing trend data from Wave 8 to previous waves. See more here.

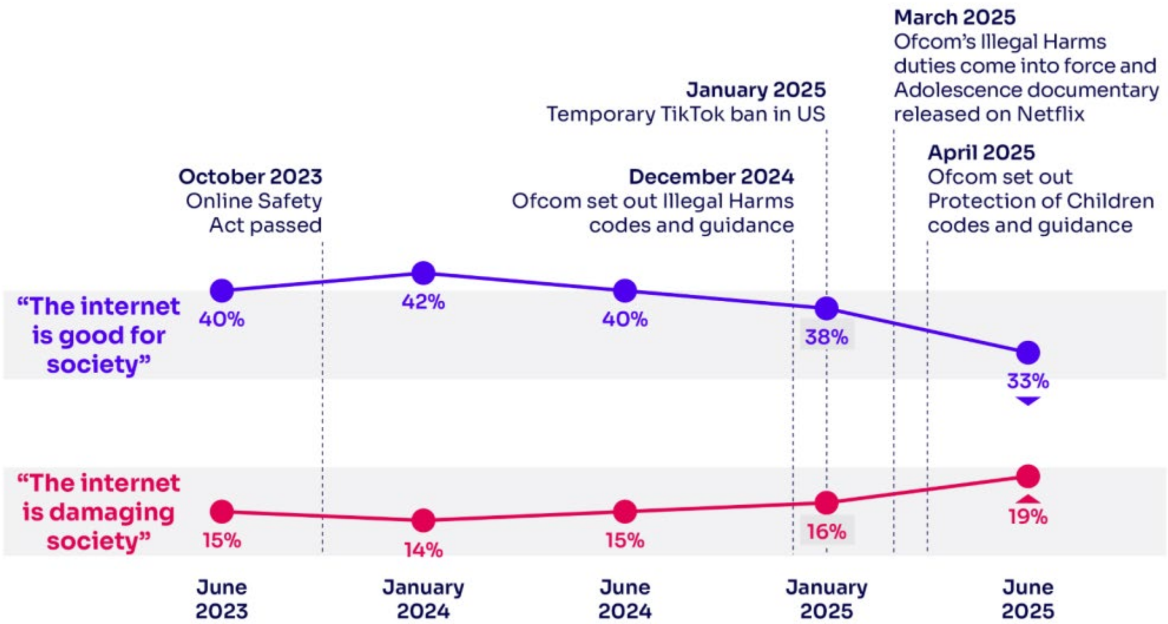
Lastly, in light of Ofcom's new dedicated Children's Online Safey tracker being introduced this year, children's online experiences are now reported separately in this document (see the next chapter for details).

[55] Ofcom, 2025. Online Experiences Tracker - Questionnaire (Wave 8, June 2025)
[56] Notification of changes to the Online Experiences Tracker as published on the Ofcom website.

Shifting perceptions of the internet: adults becoming less positive about its societal impact

In a year where the internet and its impacts have been the focus of intense media attention, adults are feeling somewhat less positive about the benefits it brings for them and the rest of society. With various Online Safety Act duties coming into force[57], individuals have shared personal stories and organisations have shared insights on harmful online content and behaviours.[58] The major Netflix drama, Adolescence, was released in March 2025 and was watched by millions in the UK, shining a spotlight on misogynistic online content.[59] Meanwhile, the threatened TikTok ban in the US stemmed from concerns over the data privacy of American users.[60] It is possible that some of this external commentary has contributed to a decline in sentiment overall.

Figure 42: Adult internet users' attitudes towards the positives and negatives of the internet for society: *'The internet is good for society'* vs. '*The internet is damaging to society'* with milestones:



Source: Ofcom, Online Experiences Tracker 2025. Q1. 'The internet is good for society vs. The internet is damaging to society.' Base: UK internet users, aged 18+ - June 2023: 13,205, January 2024: 7068, June 2024: 7280, January 2025: 3451, June 2025: 7340

[57] Key Online Safety compliance milestones include age assurance duties for Part 5 services coming into force on 17 January 2025, Ofcom's publication of the Illegal Content Codes of Practice (issued on 24 February and in force from 17 March 2025) and the Protection of Children Codes of Practice (issued on 4 July 2025 and in force from 25 July 2025) - *Source: Ofcom, 2025. Important dates for Online Safety compliance*

[58] BBC, 2024. Social media faces big changes under new Ofcom rules

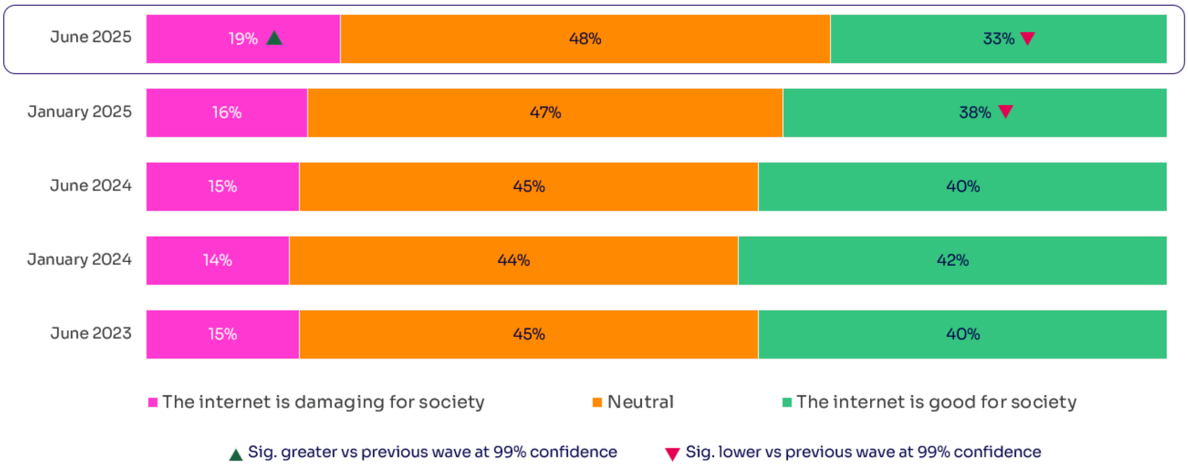
[59] BBC, 2025. Netflix hit should be 'wake-up call' for parents

[60] BBC, 2024. Trump claims a TikTok deal is done. Who would own it, and how would it work?

Despite personal benefits, fewer adults now believe the internet is good for society

As of June 2025, only a third (33%) of adults felt that the internet is good for society – despite two-thirds (65%) believing the benefits outweigh the risks for them personally. This was a significant decline from previous waves. Around one in five (19%) said that the internet is '*damaging society'* (a significant increase from previous waves), while 48% felt neutral on the subject.

Figure 43: Adult internet users' attitudes towards the positives and negatives of the internet for society: *'The internet is good for society'* vs. '*The internet is damaging to society'* by demographic: Wave-on-Wave comparison



Source: Ofcom, Online Experiences Tracker 2025. Q1. 'The internet is good for society vs. The internet is damaging to society.' Base: UK internet users, aged 18+ - June 2023: 13,205, January 2024: 7068, June 2024: 7280, January 2025: 3451, June 2025: 7340

Positive sentiment about the internet's societal impact has declined most among young adults. In June 2025, 33% of 18-34s selected 'The internet is good for society' compared to 42% in June 2024, a significant decline of -9pp. All age groups saw a decrease in the proportion those selecting that 'the internet is good for society': 35-54-year-olds saw a decline of -6pp (34% in June 2025 vs 40% in June 2024) and 55+ year-olds saw a decline of -4pp (34% vs 38%).

There was also a decline in parents of under 18s selecting that the 'internet is good for society' (34% in June 2025 vs 40% in June 2024). As noted above, this shift could be partly linked to increased media coverage of online content that is harmful to children. Views among non-parents of under-18s remained stable (39% in June 2025 vs 40% in June 2024).

Figure 44: Adult internet users' attitudes towards the positives and negatives of the internet for society: *'The internet is good for society'* vs. *'The internet is damaging to society'* by demographic: June 2025

Demographic groups		Internet is good for society	Neutral	Internet is damaging society
Total	Adults 18+	33%	48%	19%
Gender	Women	27%	51%	21%
	Men	40%	43%	17%
Age	18-24	32%	49%	19%
	25-34	33%	48%	19%
	35-44	35%	48%	17%
	45-54	32%	48%	20%
	55-64	33%	47%	20%
	65+	35%	46%	19%
Socio-Economic Group (SEG)	ABC1	35%	48%	17%
	C2DE	31%	47%	22%
Ethnicity	White	33%	48%	19%
	Minority ethnic	37%	45%	18%
Sexual orientation	Heterosexual	33%	47%	19%
	Gay or lesbian	40%	45%	15%
	Bisexual	35%	51%	14%
Limiting or impacting condition	Yes	29%	49%	22%
	No	37%	46%	17%

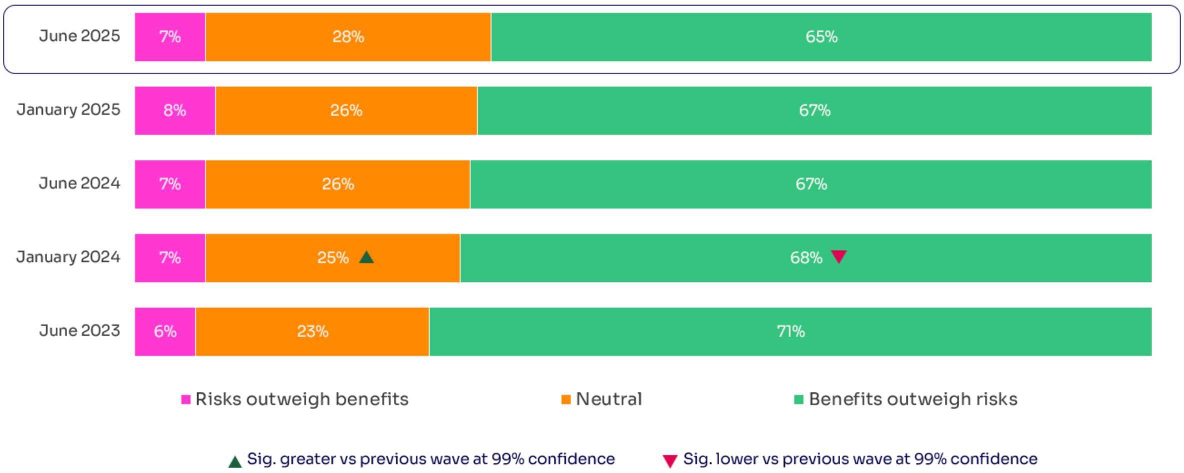
Sig greater than total at 95% confidence *Sig lower than total at 95% confidence*

Source: Ofcom, Online Experiences Tracker 2025. Q1. 'The internet is good for society vs. The internet is damaging to society.' Base: UK internet users, aged 18+ (7340).

Two-thirds of adults believe the benefits of being online outweigh the risks, although the proportion has continued to decline

When asked to consider the pros and cons of being online, Ofcom's Online Experiences Tracker (OET) found that nearly two-thirds (65%) of respondents felt the benefits outweighed the risks for them personally. Despite most respondents continuing to feel positive about their own internet use, there has been a steady decline in the proportion who feel this way (from 71% in June 2023, 68% in January 2024, 67% in June 2024 and January 2025, to 65% in June 2025). Instead, responses for those feeling 'neutral' on the topic has increased (from 23% in June 2023 to 28% in June 2025). Less than one in ten (7%) felt that the risks outweighed the benefits.

Figure 45: Adults' attitudes towards the personal benefits and risks of going online: 'The benefits of going online outweigh the risks' vs. 'For me personally, the risks of going online outweigh the benefits': Wave-on-wave comparison



Source: Ofcom, Online Experiences Tracker 2025. Q1. 'For me personally, the benefits of going online outweigh the risks' vs. 'For me personally, the risks of going online outweigh the benefits' Base: UK internet users, aged 18+ - June 2023: 13,205, January 2024: 7068, June 2024: 7280, January 2025: 3451, June 2025: 7340

In June 2025, demographic groups that were significantly less likely than the average to believe that the benefits outweigh the risks included women (61%) and C2DE (60%). Parents of under 18s were also significantly less likely to feel the benefits outweigh the risks (61%) compared to non-parents (66%).

Although only 7% felt the risks outweigh the benefits, respondents aged 18-34 were significantly more likely to select that they felt this way compared to the total sample (9% for both 18-24 and 25-34).

Figure 46: Adults' attitudes towards the personal benefits and risks of going online: 'The benefits of going online outweigh the risks' vs. 'For me personally, the risks of going online outweigh the benefits': June 2025

Demographic groups		Benefits outweigh risks	Neutral	Risks outweigh benefits
Total	Adults age 18+	65%	28%	7%
Gender	Women	61%	32%	8%
	Men	70%	23%	7%
Age	18-24	65%	26%	9%
	25-34	67%	24%	9%
	35-44	67%	27%	6%
	45-54	64%	29%	6%
	55-64	64%	29%	7%
	65+	63%	29%	7%
Socio-economic group (SEG)	ABC1	68%	25%	7%
	C2DE	60%	32%	7%
Ethnicity	White	68%	26%	6%
	Minority ethnic	60%	30%	10%
Sexual orientation	Heterosexual	64%	29%	7%
	Gay or lesbian	75%	20%	6%
	Bisexual	78%	15%	7%
Any limiting or impacting condition	Yes	64%	28%	8%
	No	68%	25%	7%

Sig greater than total at 95% confidence *Sig lower than total at 95% confidence*

Source: Ofcom, Online Experiences Tracker 2025. Q1. 'For me personally, the benefits of going online outweigh the risks' vs. 'For me personally, the risks of going online outweigh the benefits' Base: UK internet users, aged 18+ (7340).

Many adults find the internet to be a source of creativity and a helpful tool for learning new skills

UK adults continue to use the internet to upskill, increase their knowledge of world affairs, and spark creativity. Around three quarters of UK adult internet users (16+) agree that being online has helped them to broaden their understanding or view of the world (78%) and helped them to learn a new skill (73%).[61]

Nearly all UK adults are turning to the internet to provide them with information on various topics: 95% of adult internet users had searched for information online in the past three months. The top three topics searched for were information related to a potential purchase (71%), news about the UK (70%) and information related to a hobby or interest (58%).[62]

[61] Ofcom, Adults' Media Literacy Tracker 2024.
[62] Ofcom, Online research panel poll: [Searching information online](), March 2025, age: 16+, UK.

Social media also plays a role in fostering creativity, with over four in ten social media users (43%) agreeing that it makes them feel more creative. Male social media users are more likely to think that social media makes them feel more creative (46% vs. 40% of women).[63]

Compared to offline, men, users aged 25-44, those with a limiting or impacting condition and users identifying as LGB+ were more likely to report feeling able to express themselves and their views online

In June 2025, over a third (35%) of adults aged 18 and above agreed with the sentiment '*I can share my opinions and have a voice online more easily or effectively than I can offline'.* Demographic groups particularly likely to agree with this were men (40%), those aged 25-34 (41%) and 35-44 (38%), those with a limiting or impacting condition (39%) and users identifying as LGB+ [64] (44%).

However, when comparing June 2025 data against previous waves, the proportion of respondents agreeing with this statement has declined (35% vs 38% in January 2025, 39% in June 2024), with over one in four (28%) respondents actively disagreeing (an increase from 26% in January 2025 and 24% in June 2024).

Similarly, although one in four (25%) adults agree that they feel '*more free to be myself online',* this was a decrease from previous waves (29% in January 2025 and 30% in June 2024). Men were more likely to agree than women (30% vs 21% respectively). A higher proportion of adults actively disagreed with this sentiment than those who agreed (30% disagreeing vs. 25% agreeing), and women were much more likely to disagree than men by +9pp (34% vs. 25% respectively).

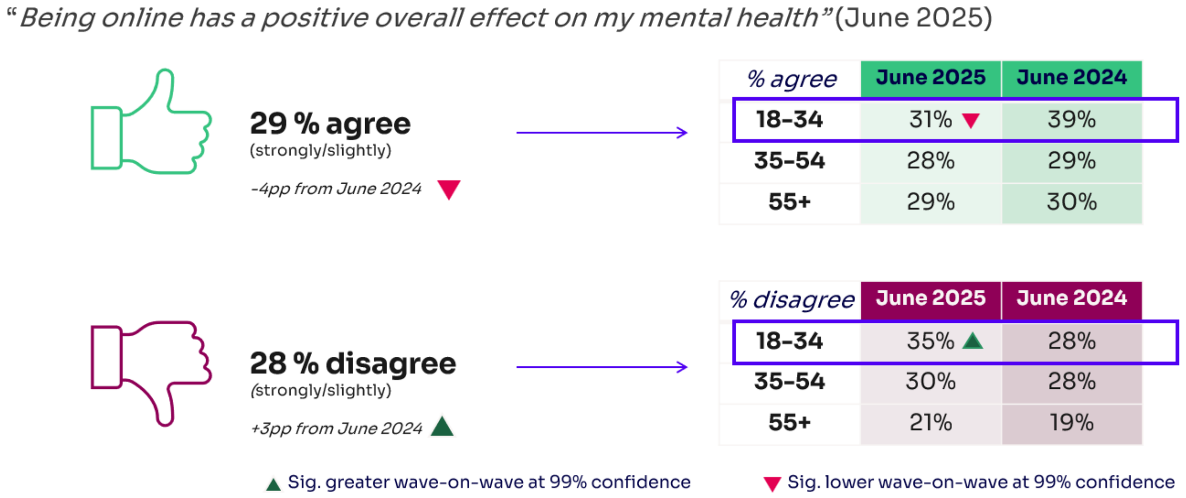
This year, for the first time, more young adults disagreed than agreed that the internet benefits their mental health

In June 2025, 29% agreed that that being online had a 'positive overall effect on their mental health', while a similar proportion (28%) actively disagreed. This represents a significant decline in agreement compared to both January 2025 and June 2024 (33% agreed in both previous waves).

Young adults are more likely to disagree that being online is positive for mental health. In June 2025, 31% of 18-34s agreed that being online was positive for their mental health (down from 39% a year previously), lower than the 35% who disagreed (up from 28% in June 2024).

[63] Ofcom, Adults' Media Literacy Tracker 2024.
[64] Note: This group is a NET of sexual orientation codes in the Online Experiences Tracker, including lesbian, gay and bisexual, and does not cover gender identity. For brevity in this chapter, we refer to 'LGB+'.

Figure 47: Adults' agreement towards the impact of being online on mental health: 'Being online has a positive overall effect on my mental health': June 2025



Source: Ofcom, Online Experiences Tracker 2025. Q3. 'Being online has an overall positive effect on my mental health.' Base: UK internet users, aged 18+ (June 2025: 7340 – 18-34: 1755, 35-54: 2502, 55+: 3083, June 2024: 7280 – 18-34: 2327, 35-54: 2727, 55+: 2226).

One in five younger adults (18-34) do not feel that they have a good balance between their online and offline life

Despite a slight increase in negative sentiment towards being online, two thirds of adults are content with how much time they're spending online on their devices: 65% agree that they 'have a good balance between my online and offline life'. This was consistent with January 2025 (66%) and June 2024 (67%). On the contrary, just over one in ten (13%) did not feel that they had a good balance between their online and offline lives, and 21% felt neutral towards the statement. Again, younger age groups (18-34s) were less likely to agree they had a good balance (58%), with 1 in 5 actively disagreeing (20%). However, as we have already seen (figure 1), this age group are spending more time online each day than older adults - particularly 18–24-year-olds who are spending 6 hours 20 minutes online on average per day (compared to 65+ year-olds who spend 3 hours 20 minutes online).[65]

With higher screentime, younger adult internet users were more likely to be using tools or strategies to manage this. Other Ofcom research showed that in the last year, around a quarter of UK adult internet users aged 16+ had disabled notifications on their devices or used 'do not disturb' settings (28%), particularly prevalent among younger adults (aged 16-34: 42%). Others had taken a break from certain social media apps (23%) or deleted apps due to feeling they were spending too much time on them (19%) – again, this was more likely to be the case among younger adults. Further to this, more than 1 in 5 (22%) had chosen not to take their phones/tablets to bed with them – a strategy used across age groups, though particularly for 65+ year olds (28%).[66]

Users from ethnic minority groups were more likely to have positive attitudes on the impact of the internet

In June 2025, users from minority ethnic groups were significantly *less* likely than the average to believe that the benefits of being online outweighed the risks for them personally (60% compared to

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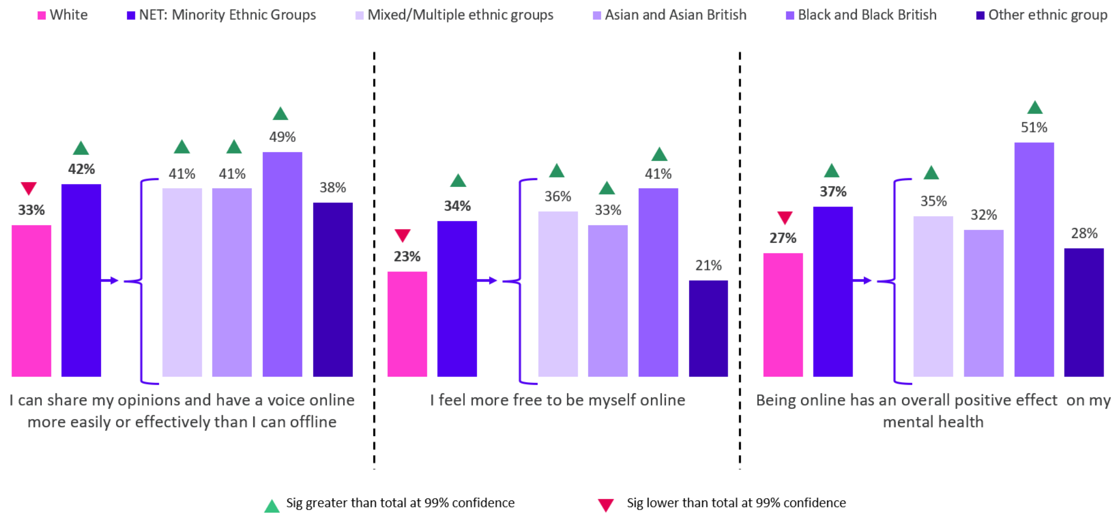
[65] Ipsos, Ipsos iris Online Audience Measurement Service, May 2025, age: 18+, UK internet users
[66] Ofcom, Adults Media Literacy Tracker 2024. (Q6)

68% for White respondents). This was particularly the case for users who identified as Asian and Asian British (58%), Black and Black British (58%) and 'other' ethnic groups (56%). Users who identified as Black and Black British were also more than twice as likely than the average to say that the 'risks outweigh the benefits' (15% vs 7% respectively).

Despite this, users from minority ethnic groups were more likely to feel that the internet is good for society than users who identified as White (37% vs 33% respectively), though this has declined in recent waves (42% in June 2024 vs 37% in June 2025). In addition, users from minority ethnic groups were also more positive about the internet being a place where they can express themselves more freely and be themselves, with a positive impact on their mental health.

Figure 48: Adults' attitudes towards sentiments about being online (% agreeing), by ethnicity: June 2025



Source: Ofcom, Online Experiences Tracker 2025. Q3. % agreeing with 'I can share my opinions and have a voice online more easily or effectively than I can offline', 'I feel more free to be myself online, Being online has an overall positive effect on my mental health' Base: UK internet users, aged 18+ (7340) – White: 5542, NET: Minority Ethnic Groups: 1512, Mixed/Multiple Ethnic Groups: 420, Asian and Asian British: 637, Black and Black British: 310, Other ethnic group: 145.

Adult internet users' encounters with potential harm online

Adult internet users were most concerned about child sexual abuse content, extremism and human trafficking, with concern higher than last year for each

98% of adult internet users were concerned about at least one of the potential online harms that we asked them about in June 2025, consistent with January 2025 and June 2024 (97% for both waves).

Child sexual abuse content continues to give rise to the highest levels of concern. In addition, compared to June last year, internet users have higher levels of concern about content which encourages extremism, facilitates human trafficking, promotes self-harm, promotes female genital mutilation (FGM) and shows animal cruelty.

Figure 49: The ten potential harms with the highest levels of concern among adult internet users, based on the percentage who rated their concern level as 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale. Ranked in order of June 2025 data.

Adults' concerns, top 10	Jun 2024	Jan 2025	Jun 2025
Content depicting the sexual abuse or exploitation of children	88%	89%	90%
Content encouraging extremism	81%	82%	84%
Content facilitating human trafficking	81%	81%	84%
Content promoting self-harm	79%	78%	81%
Promotion of female genital mutilation (FGM)	79%	78%	80%
Scams, fraud or phishing	80%	80%	80%
Content depicting animal cruelty	79%	78%	80%
Content promoting suicide	81%	78%	79%
Sharing of intimate images e.g., 'revenge porn'	78%	77%	79%
Collection or use of my data without my knowledge	78%	76%	77%

Sig greater vs previous wave at 99% confidence (green: Jun 2025 values 84%, 84%, 81%, 80%, 80%) *Sig lower vs previous wave at 99% confidence* (red: Jan 2025 values 78% for content promoting suicide, 76% for collection of data)

Source: Ofcom, Online Experiences Tracker 2025 Q7. Below is a list of things that someone may come across on the internet. Please tell me on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means 'mildly concerned' and 5 means 'very concerned', A net was created combining 4 and 5 to demonstrate high concern. Base: UK internet users 18+ (June 2025: 7340, January 2025: 7378, June 2024: 7280)

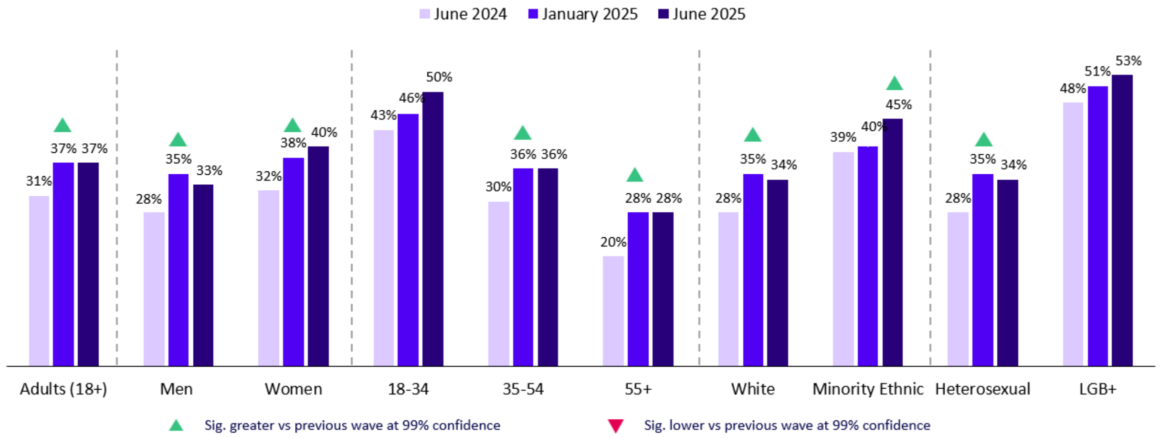
Outside of this list, concern around fake or deceptive images/videos, e.g., 'deep fakes' has increased this wave to 74% in June 2025 from 71% in June 2024. Concern has been increasing since tracking began in 2023 (67%). Women were particularly likely to be concerned in June 2025 (80% vs 68% for men).

Along with a decline in sentiment towards the internet, there has been an increase in people saying they have something upsetting online

In 2025, 37% of UK adult internet users said they had seen something (unspecified at this stage in the survey) in the last four weeks that made them feel uncomfortable, upset or negative, a significant increase of 6pp from June 2024 (31%). It's possible that this rise may reflect a growing sensitivity to online harms, potentially influenced by media coverage around the Online Safety Act and reports of harmful online experiences. Regardless, these responses highlight the negative emotional impact certain online experiences have had on UK users.

When examining differences across different groups of users, this year, those aged 18-34 (50%) and LGB+ users (53%) were the most likely to say that they had seen something upsetting when compared with the average (37%). Women were also +7pp more likely than men to say this, while those with any limiting and impacting conditions were +11pp more likely than those without (44% vs 33%).

Figure 50: Proportion of UK users who had encountered something uncomfortable, upsetting or negative online in the last four weeks (unprompted), wave-on-wave by demographic



Source: Ofcom, Online Experiences Tracker 2025. Q6a Thinking back over the last 4 weeks, did you come across anything on the internet that made you feel uncomfortable, upset or negative in any way? Base: UK internet users 18+ (June 2024: 7280, January 2025: 7378, June 2025:7340).

However, the proportion of users who self-reported that they had encountered at least one of the potential harms shown in the survey has declined

While UK users may be more aware of the potential risks online, the prevalence of UK users saying that they have encountered at least one of a type of potentially harmful online content from a pre-defined list has declined slightly in June 2025.

Moving from claimed encounters with unspecified 'uncomfortable, upsetting or negative' potential harms to claimed encounters with 41 potential harms from a pre-defined list, two-thirds (66%) of adult internet users said they had encountered at least one potential harm in the past four weeks, a decline from recent waves (69% in January 2025, 68% in June 2024).

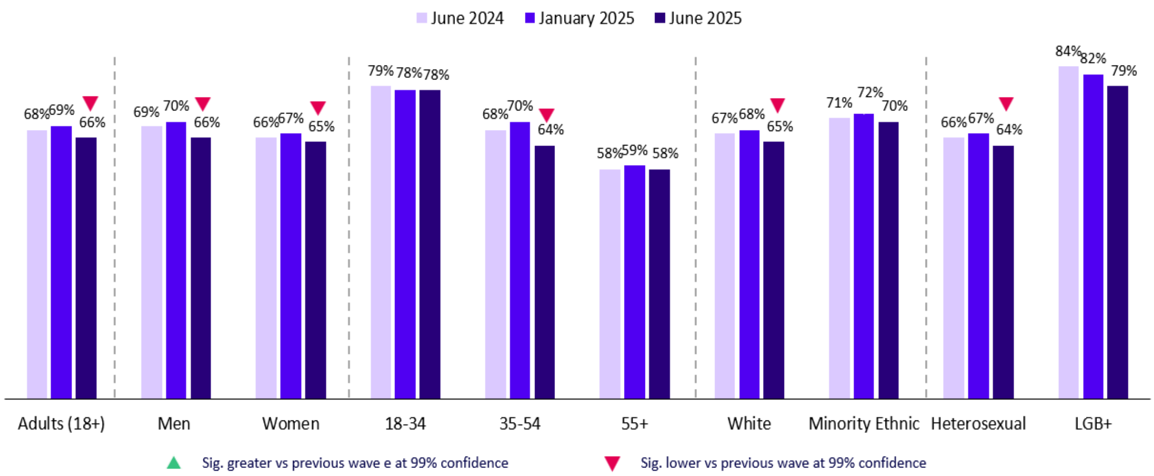
Compared to last year, men and women, users aged 35-54, White and heterosexual users were the demographic groups significantly less likely to have encountered at least one potential online harm in June 2025. No demographic group saw an increase for this metric in June 2025 compared to January 2025 or June 2024.

With regards to demographic groups more or less likely to have indicated exposure to at least one potential online harm, older users aged 55+ were the group least likely to have self-reported this, consistent with previous waves. Though it is worth noting that users in this age group spend less time online each day compared to younger age groups (3hours 56 minutes per day for 55-64-year olds and 3 hours 20 minutes per day for 65+ year-olds, compared to 6 hours 20 minutes for 18-24 year-olds).[67]

[67] Ipsos, Ipsos iris Online Audience Measurement Service, May 2025, age: 18+, UK internet users

Those aged 18-34 and users identifying as LGB+ were among the demographic groups most likely to have indicated an exposure to at least one potential online harm (78% for 18–34-year-olds and 79% for LGB+).

Figure 51: Proportion of UK internet users who had encountered any of a list of potential harms online in the past 4 weeks (prompted), wave-on-wave by demographic



Source: Ofcom, Online Experiences Tracker 2024. Q8 Which, if any, of the following have you seen or experienced online in the last 4 weeks? This includes any images, videos, audio or text, either comments, posts or messages you have seen and/or those shared directly to you. Please select all that apply. Base: UK internet users 18+ (June 2024: 7280, January 2025: 7378, June 2025:7340).

Misinformation remains the most prevalent potential online harm, encountered by four in ten adult internet users, followed by scams, fraud or phishing

In June 2025, misinformation remained the most-encountered potential online harm, seen by around four in ten adult internet users, followed by scams and fraud and offensive language. 1 in 4 (26%) reported encountering hateful content in the past four weeks, consistent with previous waves. Among the top ten most prevalent potential harms, more adult internet users reported encountering fake or deceptive images/videos in 2025 compared to previous years. Reported experiences for all other potential online harms had remained stable or decreased compared to a year ago.

Figure 52: Proportion of UK adult internet users who encountered the ten most prevalent potential online harms, ranked in order of June 2025 data

Potential harm	June 2024	January 2025	June 2025
Misinformation	39%	42%	41%
Scams, fraud or phishing	34%	34%	34%
Generally offensive or 'bad' language	35%	35%	33%
Hateful, offensive or discriminatory content	26%	27%	26%
Unwelcome friend or follow requests	28%	26%	25%
Fake or deceptive images/videos	18%	21%	22%
Trolling	22%	24%	21%
Misogynistic Content	22%	23%	20%
Content stigmatizing certain body types	18%	18%	17%
Paid for or sponsored content not marked as such	18%	17%	16%

Sig greater vs previous wave at 99% confidence (green) *Sig lower vs previous wave at 99% confidence* (red)

Source: Ofcom, Online Experiences Tracker 2025. Q8 Which, if any, of the following have you seen or experienced online in the last 4 weeks? Base: UK internet users 18+ (June 2025: 7340, January 2025: 7378, June 2024: 7280). The OET prompted participants with a list of 41 harms, this table shows the top 10.

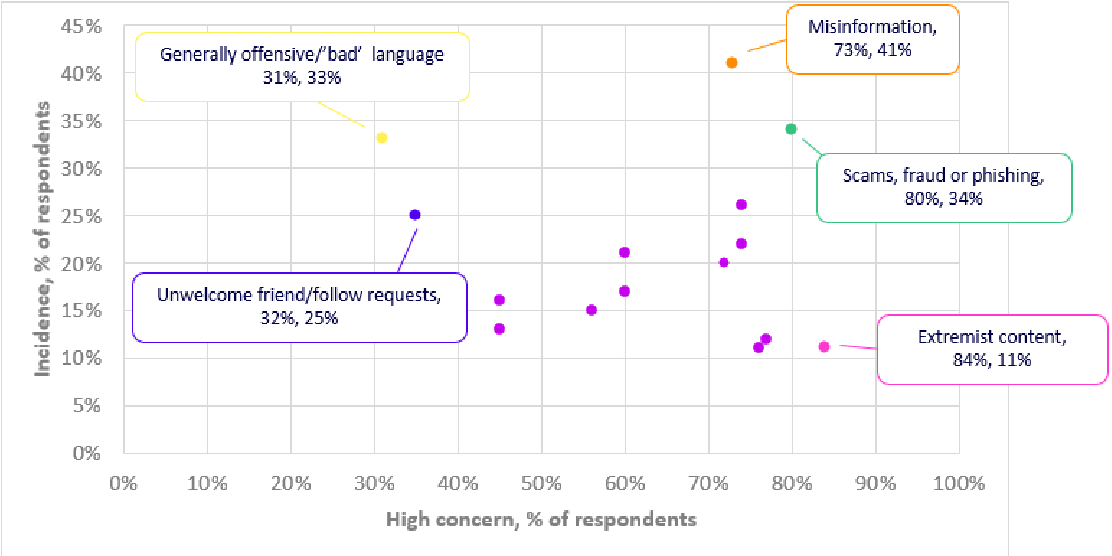
Men and women continue to encounter potential online harms differently. Women were more likely to encounter unwelcome friend/follow requests, misogynistic content and body stigma content than men. Whereas men were more likely than women to self-report encountering misinformation, scam content and fake or deceptive content.

Users who identify as LGB+ are more likely to self-report encountering each of the top 10 potential harms than heterosexual users, including being twice as likely to have encountered hate content (49% vs 23% for heterosexuals), trolling (37% vs 19%), misogynistic content (39% vs 18%) and body stigma content (31% vs 15%). It is worth noting that half of those who identified as LGB+ (49%) were aged 18-34 in June 2025, compared to only 23% of those identifying as heterosexual. Therefore, age is likely to have played a contributing factor in these differences, as users aged 18-34 were +14pp more likely than 35–54-year-olds and +20pp more likely than 55+ year-olds to have experienced a potential online harm in June 2025.[68]

When looking at levels of concern about different types of content by how often they had been encountered, we see that while misinformation is the most encountered, adult internet users also have high levels of concern about it (73%). It is a similar story for scams, fraud or phishing content, where a third had encountered it in the past four weeks and 8 in 10 (80%) of all adult users had high levels of concern. Conversely, 1 in 4 had experienced unwelcome friend requests (25%) in June 2025, but only a third (32%) had high levels of concern about it happening.

[68] From a pre-defined list of potential online harms

Figure 53: High concern (score of 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale) vs incidence of types of potential online harms for adult internet users, June 2025



Source: Age 18+, Ofcom, Online Experiences Tracker, Q7. Below is a list of things that someone may come across on the internet. Please tell me on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means 'mildly concerned' and 5 means 'very concerned', how concerned are you about the below existing online? % selecting 4/5 (x axis) compared to Q8 Which, if any, of the following have you seen or experienced online in the last 4 weeks? (y axis). ***Only shown for top 15 most prevalent harms at Q8.*** *Base: Adults 18+ (7340).*

Political and war/conflict related content were the most common types of misinformation encountered

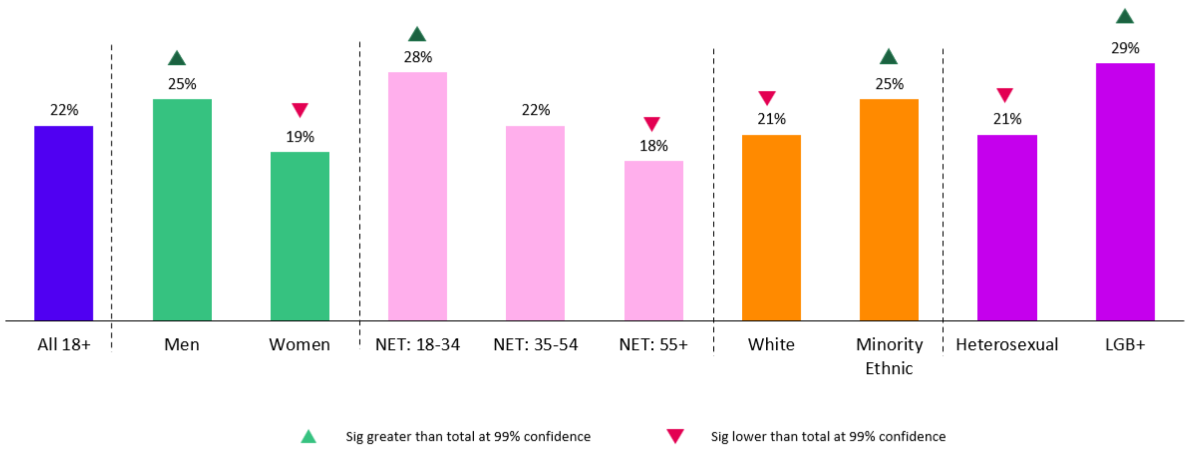
Misinformation continues to be the most prevalent potential online harm, with four in ten UK adult internet users (41%) encountering this in the four weeks prior to being surveyed. Older internet users (55+) have seen the biggest increase in reported experiences of misinformation online, steadily increasing from 30% when tracking began in June 2023 to 36% in June 2025 (+6pp).

Types of misinformation most commonly encountered included political or electoral misinformation (29%) and misinformation related to conflicts/wars (25%). There was a significant increase in both instances compared to June 2024 (political misinformation: 26% in June 2024 and 29% in June 2025; conflict/war misinformation: 16% in June 2024 and 25% in June 2025). Those who encountered this misinformation most recently were most likely to say it came from someone they didn't know, e.g., a stranger on social media (43%).

As AI usage continues to grow, over 1 in 5 (22%) of internet users now report encountering fake or deceptive images or videos online

Amid growing concern about deep fake content, adults have been increasingly reporting seeing fake or deceptive images and/or videos (+4pp from June 2024), making it the sixth-most encountered harm (22%) in June 2025, ahead of trolling (21%). A third (32%) of those aged 18-34 self-reported encountering this content in June 2025, as well as a quarter of male internet users (25%).

Figure 54: Proportion of UK adult internet users who encountered who had encountered '*fake or deceptive images/videos, e.g., deep fakes*' content online in the past 4 weeks by demographic: June 2025



Source: Ofcom, Online Experiences Tracker 2025. Q8 Which, if any, of the following have you seen or experienced online in the last 4 weeks? Base: UK internet users 18+ (June 2025: 7340, Men:3310, Women: 3902, 18-34: 1755, 35-54: 2502, 55+: 1807, White: 5542, minority ethnic groups: 1512, heterosexual: 6323, LGB+: 811).

The majority of users who most recently encountered fake or deceptive images/videos online came across it on social media (69%), followed by a video-sharing platform (15%). Over half saw it while scrolling their recommended feed (53%), 31% saw it while watching content (either selected by themselves or by autoplay), and one in ten (11%) saw it in an advertisement.

Other Ofcom research found that adults are reporting that AI-generated content is becoming more prevalent on social media and that it is increasingly difficult to know what's 'real'. One 24-year-old participant in our Adults' Media Lives study said, "Sometimes you see some TikToks or videos on Facebook, or photos on Facebook, and you can sort of tell. Well, sometimes you can, sometimes it's hard to tell if they're AI." [69] Another Ofcom study found that almost half (47%) of UK adults aged 16+ had never seen tools, labels or visible icons that had helped them to understand if content was made or edited using AI, despite the vast majority (85%) feeling that it is important for online platforms to make them aware of this.[70]

In fact, fake or deceptive content was only one of three potential harms that saw any increase in the proportion of users who reported experiencing it compared to June 2024: others were content encouraging extremism (11% in June 2025, +2pp) and content encouraging or assisting suicide (4% in June 2025, +1pp).

Amid intensifying immigration debates in the UK, those who say they encountered hate, bullying or abusive content most recently were significantly more likely to say the content was directed towards asylum seekers

Users who encountered hate speech, bullying, abusive behaviour or threats were asked about which groups or characteristics of people in society this targeted. Responses to this have seen variation across the waves, likely influenced by shifts in media attention. In June 2025, the proportion of users who said the victims of this content were targeted due to their 'ethnicity' was significantly higher

[69] Ofcom, Adults' Media Lives 2025. P38
[70] Ofcom, Online research panel survey: AI labels, December 2024, age: 16+, UK

than a year previously (48% in June 2025 vs 35% in June 2024), with similar increases for 'asylum seekers' (30% in June 2025 vs 19% in June 2024) and 'nationality' (25% in June 2025 vs 18% in June 2024). This correlates with UK immigration debates being highly active in the media in the months before and during fieldwork, including reporting on events such as nationwide hotel protests. [71]

Experiences of encountering content which may be perceived to be illegal content has remained stable or decreased in all surveyed cases, with no significant increases observed

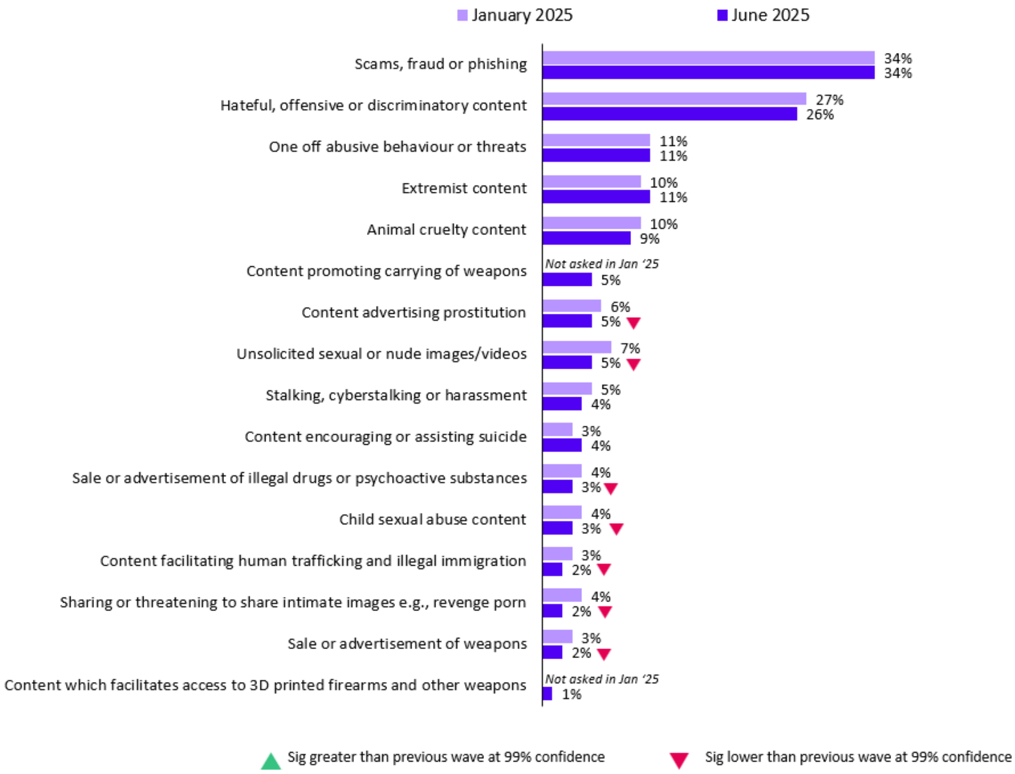
Since 17 March 2025, under the Online Safety Act, online providers have been required to protect users from illegal content and activity (where this was assessed to potentially exist on their service).[72] Illegal content is defined under the Online Safety Act as 'content that amounts to a relevant offence'.[73] Relevant offences are explained further in Ofcom's Illegal Content Judgments Guidance.[74]

The definition of illegal content is complex. Our research does not ask respondents if they've encountered illegal content, instead, the survey captures self-reported experiences of many types of potentially harmful content. Most potential harms are broader and not perfectly aligned with the Online Safety Act, though some may overlap with the definitions it sets out (see potential harms in the chart below that could be perceived to be illegal).

When looking at potential harms being encountered before and after 17 March 2025 (when the illegal content duties came into force), we saw that all surveyed potential harms had either remained stable or had decreased. Declines in exposure to potential harms included: content advertising prostitution; unsolicited sexual or nude images/videos ('cyberflashing'); sale or advertisement of illegal drugs or psychoactive substances; child sexual abuse content; content facilitating human trafficking and illegal immigration; sharing or threatening to share intimate images ('revenge porn') and the sale or advertisement of weapons.

[71] BBC, 2025. Man faces jail for 'vile' call to burn hotels
[72] Ofcom, 2025. Statement: Protecting people from illegal harms online
[73] Section 59 of the Act. See also sections 192 and 193 for how such judgements should be made.
[74] Illegal Content Judgements Guidance.

Figure 55: Proportion of UK adult internet users who had encountered online content which may be perceived to be illegal in the past 4 weeks: pre (Jan 2025) and post (June 2025) implementation of illegal content codes of practice



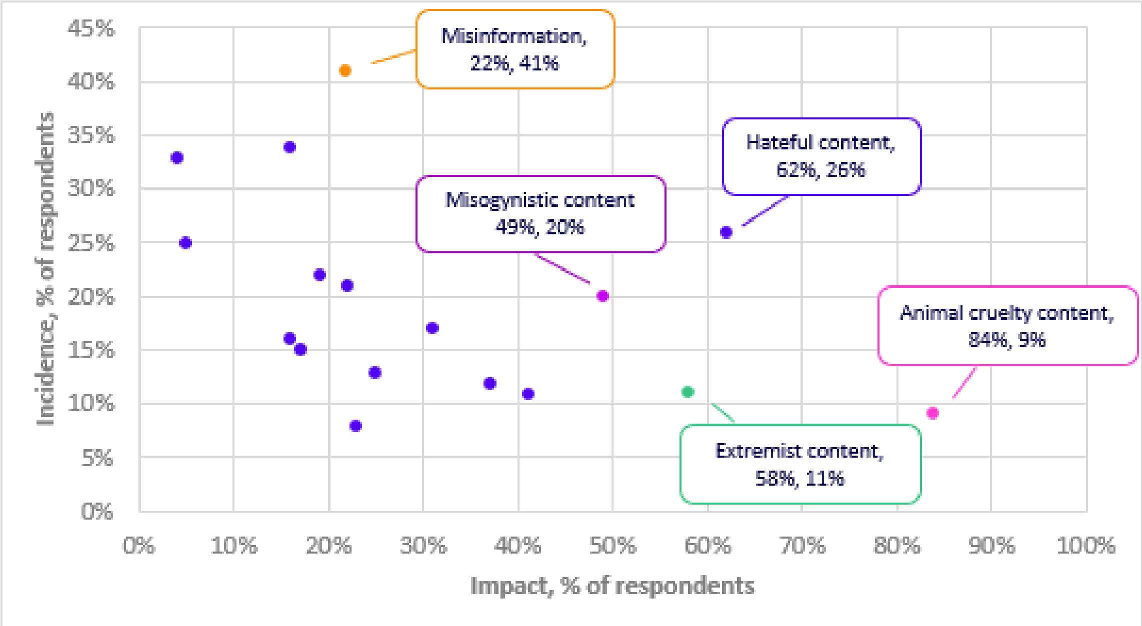
Source: Ofcom, Online Experiences Tracker 2025. Q8 Which, if any, of the following have you seen or experienced online in the last 4 weeks? Base: UK internet users 18+ (June 2025: 7340, January 2025: 7378).

One in four UK (25%) adult internet users had strong negative reactions to the most recent potential harm they encountered online.

A quarter of adult (25%) users were 'really bothered or extremely offended' by their most recent encounter with a potential harm online in June 2025, slightly less than January 2025 (27%) but consistent with June 2024 (25%). Women were more likely to be really bothered or extremely offended than men (30% for women vs 20% for men), and those with a limiting or impacting condition were more bothered/offended than those without (30% vs 22%). Users identifying as LGB+ were more likely to be offended than heterosexual users (34% for LGB+ users vs 24% for heterosexual users).

Looking at the impact of potential harms when compared with the incidence of encountering them, animal cruelty content had the highest emotional impact (84% of those who saw it most recently reported being really bothered or extremely offended), but was seen by fewer than one in ten users (9%) in the past four weeks. Hate content also had a strong impact (62%) and was more prevalent, encountered by a quarter of UK users (26%). In contrast, misinformation was the most commonly-encountered potential harm (41%), but had a lower emotional impact, with 22% of users saying it negatively impacted them.

Figure 56: High psychological impact (score of 3 on a 3-point scale) vs incidence of types of potential online harms for adult internet users, June 2025



Source: Age 18+, Ofcom, Online Experiences Tracker, Q14b We would like you to think again about the last time you saw or experienced [potential harm]. On a scale of 1 to 3, where '1' means 'It didn't bother me at all/It didn't offend me' and '3' means 'It really bothered me/I found it extremely offensive', when you last saw or experienced [potential harm]: % selecting 3 (x axis) compared to Q8 Which, if any, of the following have you seen or experienced online in the last 4 weeks? (y axis). ***Only shown for harms where base size was n=50 or above at Q14b.*** *Base: Adults 18+ Q14b (4482) and Q8 (7340).*

Concern about hate content is increasing significantly among users from minority ethnic groups

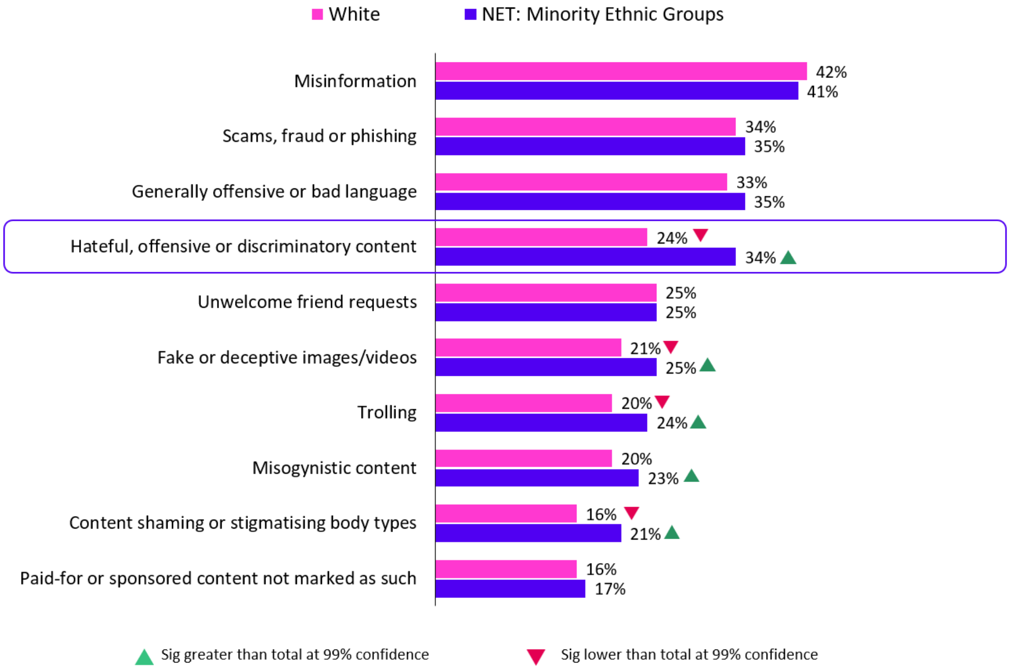
Compared to White users, users from minority ethnic groups were significantly more likely to have high levels of concern about hate or discriminatory content (79% vs 73%). Users who identified as Black and Black British had highest levels of concern (84%). Concern has significantly increased compared to last year (79% in June 2025 vs 75% in June 2024) and is at the highest level since tracking began in 2023.

Users from minority ethnic groups were also significantly more likely to say that they had seen something (unspecified at this stage in the survey) in the last four weeks that made them feel uncomfortable, upset or negative (45%, +11pp compared to users who identified as White).

In addition, when prompted with a list of pre-defined potential online harms, seven in ten users from a minority ethnic group (70%) claimed to have encountered at least one in the four weeks prior to completing the survey. This was significantly higher than for White users (65%). Users who identified as mixed/multiple ethnic groups and Black and Black British were the most likely to report this (74%). Unlike the average, there has been no significant changes in the proportion of those encountering online harms (when prompted) across waves, though it is at the lowest level since tracking began (70%).

Looking at specific potential online harms encountered, users from minority ethnic groups were +10pp more likely to have experienced hateful content specifically targeting a group or person based on specific characteristics (34% vs 24% for White users – significantly higher across all minority ethnic groups). In addition, users from minority ethnic groups were also significantly more likely than the average to have self-reported encountering deep fake content, trolling, misogynistic content and body shaming content.

Figure 57: Proportion of UK internet users who had encountered top 10 potential online harms, by ethnicity



Source: Ofcom, Online Experiences Tracker 2024. Q8 Which, if any, of the following have you seen or experienced online in the last 4 weeks? This includes any images, videos, audio or text, either comments, posts or messages you have seen and/or those shared directly to you. Please select all that apply. The OET prompted participants with a list of 41 potential harms, this chart shows the top 10. Base: UK internet users, aged 18+ (7340) – White: 5542, NET: Minority Ethnic Groups: 1512

29% of adult internet users from minority ethnic groups were ‘really bothered or extremely offended’ by their most recent encounter with a potential harm online in June 2025, significantly higher than the proportion of White users selecting this (24%). Users who identified as Black and Black British and other ethnic groups were particularly likely to have been offended (31% and 37% respectively).

Platforms and services where users reported encountering potential harms

Social media remains the service type where users were most likely to encounter potential harms

In June 2025, almost three in five (59%) of UK internet users say they encountered their most recent potential online harm on a social media service. Social media has been the most common source for this since tracking began in June 2023, peaking in January 2025 at 61%. Social media is widely used, with Ofcom research finding that nine in ten adult internet users (aged 16+) use social media, with Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, X and Snapchat being the most common.[75]

Although much less prevalent, there has been an increase in those who say they encountered their most recent potential harm on a video-sharing platform (9% in June 2025 vs 8% in June 2024).

Figure 58: Sites and services where adult internet users had their most recent potentially harmful encounter online, ranked in order of June 2025 data

Top ten services where users encountered harm, (based on most recent harm encountered)	June 2024	January 2025	June 2025
Social media website or app	57%	61%	59%
Video sharing platform (VSP)	8%	8%	9%
Email	9%	8%	8%
Instant messenger website or app	5%	5%	5%
News website or app	4%	3%	4%
Search engine	2%	2%	2%
In-game chat/ chat room	1%	1%	1%
Online gaming website or app	1%	1%	1%
Retail shopping	1%	0%	1%
User-to-user marketplace	1%	0%	1%

Sig greater wave-on-wave at 99% confidence *Sig lower wave-on-wave at 99% confidence*

Source: Ofcom, Online Experiences Tracker 2025. Q21. What type of site or services were you using when you most recently experienced? Base: UK internet users 18+ (June 2025: 4482, January 2025: 4752, June 2024: 4613).

Across age groups, older adults (55+) were over four times more likely to have reported encountering their most recent potential harm via email than young adults (14% vs 3% for 18-34 year olds), and were less likely than other age groups to have encountered the harm on social media (51% vs 32% for 18-34s and 62% for 35-54s) and video sharing platforms (8% vs 12% for 18-34s). However, the proportion of older adults (55+) who say they encountered their most recent potential harm via email has decreased across waves (14% in 2025, compared to 22% in 2023).

[75] Ofcom, Adults Media Literacy Tracker 2024

Figure 59: Sites and services where adult internet users had their most recent potentially harmful encounter online by age groups: June 2025

Top ten sites where users encountered harm, (based on most recent harm encountered)	18-34	35-54	55+
Social media website or app	63%	62%	51%
VSP	12%	8%	8%
Email	3%	7%	14%
Instant messenger website or app	4%	4%	6%
News website or app	2%	4%	5%
Search engine	2%	2%	3%
In-game chat/ chat room	1%	1%	0%
Online gaming website or app	2%	1%	0%
Retail shopping	0%	1%	1%
User to user marketplace	1%	1%	1%

Sig greater than total at 95% confidence *Sig lower than total at 95% confidence*

Source: Ofcom, Online Experiences Tracker 2025. Q21. What type of site or services were you using when you most recently experienced? Base: UK internet users 18+ in June 2025 (18-34s: 1282, 35-54: 1523, 55+: 1677).

Adult users were most likely to report encountering their most recent online potential harm on Facebook, followed by Instagram

Facebook continues to be the platform on which adult internet users are most likely to report encountering their most recent potential harm, remaining consistent with previous waves (27% in January 2025 and 29% in June 2024). The proportion of adult users who reported encountering their most recent potential harm on Instagram has increased in 2025 (13% in January vs 16% in June 2025), while the proportion who said this happened on X (formerly Twitter) declined in June 2025 (14% in June 2025 vs 21% for January 2025 and 18% for June 2024).

Figure 60: Most reported sites and services where adults had their most recent potentially harmful encounter online *(services with above 1% selecting)*.

	1 Facebook	2 Instagram	3 X	4 TikTok	5 YouTube	6 Facebook Messenger	7 WhatsApp	8 Reddit	9 Google
June 2025	**29%**	**16%** ▲	**14%** ▼	**11%** ▲	**6%**	**4%**	**2%**	**2%**	**2%**
January 2025	27%	13%	21% ▲	9%	5%	5%	2%	3%	2%
June 2024	29%	15%	18%	9%	4%	5%	2%	3%	2%

▲ Sig. greater vs previous wave at 99% confidence ▼ Sig. lower vs previous wave at 99% confidence

Source: Ofcom, Online Experiences Tracker 2025. Q22_Q30. Platforms/apps combined. Base: UK internet users 18+ (June 2025: 3409, January 2025: 3691, June 2024: 3409).

Changes in where people come across potential harms is correlated with change in use of platforms. Total monthly visitors to Instagram has increased in 2025 compared to 2024 (+7%), as well as time spent on the app per day. Similarly, TikTok's monthly visitors has increased +14% this year, with users spending an average of almost half an hour (28 mins) in the app per day. X visitors had declined by -13% in 2025, with time spent in the app declining too.[76]

Women were more likely than men to encounter potential harms on Facebook (32% vs 25% respectively), Instagram (18% vs 13%) and TikTok (15% vs 7%). Men were more likely than women to encounter their most recent potential harm on X (20% vs 10% respectively) and YouTube (8% vs 4%). Audience analysis shows that 60% of TikTok's audience is male.[77]

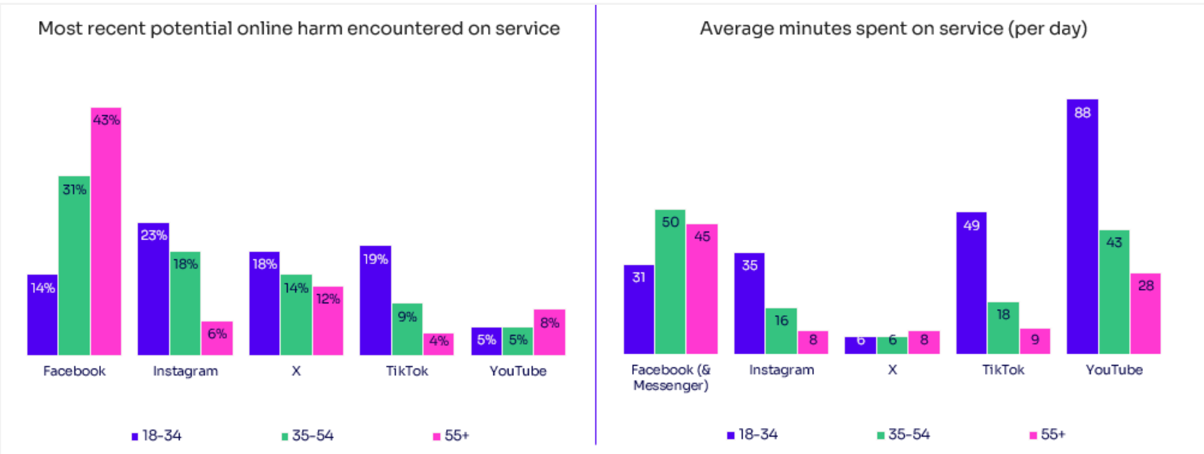
The likelihood of Facebook being the platform where potential harm was most recently encountered increases with age. Only 6% of those aged 18-24 reported Facebook as the source of their most recent potential online harm, compared to 43% for those aged 55+. 18–24-year-olds and 25–34-year olds were most likely to report encountering their recent potential harms on Instagram (24% and 22% respectively). Almost a quarter (23%) of 18–24-year-old internet users reported TikTok as the service where they experienced their most recent potential online harm.

X shows disproportionate reporting of most recent harm relative to time spent per day on the platform

Younger users (aged 18-34) who spend the most time on Instagram and TikTok out of all age groups were also the most likely to say they had encountered their most recent potential harm on these platforms.

In contrast, despite all age groups spending the least amount of time per day on X (among the top 5 services), it was still the third most commonly-selected platform for recent potential online harm. Meanwhile, 18-34 year-olds spend around 88 minutes per day on YouTube (far more than on other platforms), yet only 5% reported encountering their most recent potential harm there.

Figure 61: Services where most recent potential online harm was encountered and average minutes spent on service per day (by top 5 services % encountered), by age: June 2025



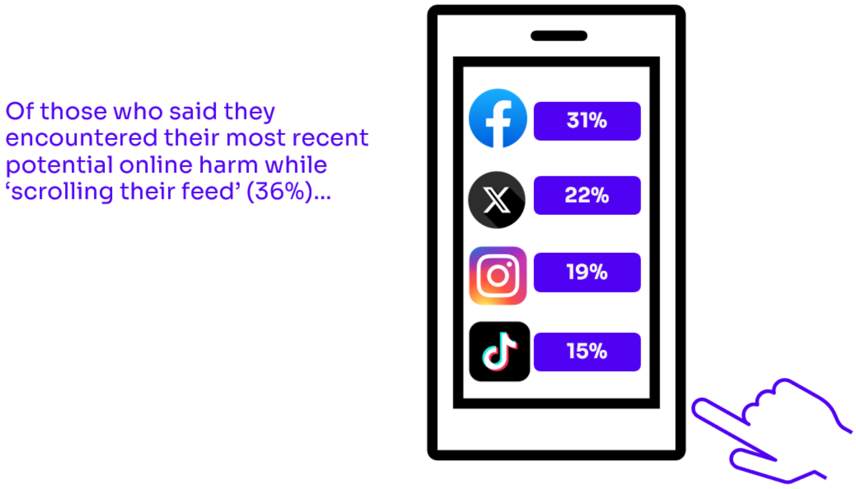
[76] *Source: Ipsos, Ipsos iris Online Audience Measurement Service, May 2025, age: 18+, UK internet users. Note: Time spent based on monthly average time per visitor in month divided by number of days in month. Time spent across smartphone, tablets and computers only.*
[77] *Source: Ipsos, Ipsos iris Online Audience Measurement Service, May 2025, age: 18+, UK internet users.*

Source (chart on the left): Ofcom, Online Experiences Tracker 2025. Q22_Q30. Platforms/apps combined. Base: UK internet users 18+ (June 2025: 3409, January 2025: 3691, June 2024: 3409).
Source (chart on the right): Ipsos, Ipsos iris Online Audience Measurement Service, May 2025, age: 18+, UK internet users. Note: Time spent based on monthly average time per visitor in month divided by number of days in month. Time spent across smartphone, tablets and computers only.

Over a third of adult users encountered their most recent potential harm while passively scrolling on their feed, increasing to around a half of younger adults

User feeds or 'For You' pages were the functionality where adult internet users were most likely to have said they encountered their most recent potential online harm (36%), consistent with previous waves. In June 2025, Facebook, X, Instagram and TikTok were the platforms where users were most likely to have been scrolling their feeds when they encountered their most recent potential online harm.

Figure: 62: Services where most recent potential online harm was encountered by those who said they encountered harm while 'scrolling their feed': June 2025



Source: Ofcom, Online Experiences Tracker 2025. Q22_Q30. Platforms/apps combined filtered by those who selected 'Scrolling through your feed / the 'For You Page' at Q21a. You said you experienced [insert harm], how did you come across this?. Base: UK internet users 18+ (June 2025: 1450)

Comment threads were the next most likely functionality where over one in five (22%) of adult internet users encountered the potential harm while reading them, followed by while watching content that they had chosen to watch (11%).

Figure: 63: Top 10 activities being undertaken when adult internet users had their most recent potentially harmful encounter online, ranked in order of June 2025 data

Top ten activities where users encountered potential harm, (based on most recent potential harm encountered)	June 2024	January 2025	June 2025
Scrolling on a feed or the 'For You Page'	35%	39%	36%
Commenting, replying to a post/article/video	22%	23%	22%
Watching content selected by the user	10%	10%	11%
Reading articles/reviews	9%	9%	9%
Reading emails	8%	8%	8%
Watching content selected by autoplay	7%	7%	8%
Advertisement	6%	5%	6%
Private or direct message	7%	6%	5%
Group chat	4%	4%	3%
Searching on a search function	3%	3%	3%

Sig greater vs previous wave at 99% confidence *Sig lower vs previous wave at 99% confidence*

Source: Ofcom, Online Experiences Tracker 2025. Q21a. Activity on site when experienced harm Base: UK internet users 18+ (June 2025: 4313, January 2025: 4570, June 2024: 4421).

Younger adults aged 18-34 were almost twice as likely to encounter their most recent potential online harm while scrolling on their feeds compared to older adults aged 55+ (47% vs 26% respectively). Nevertheless, this was still the functionality where adults aged 55+ were most likely to have said they came across the potential harm. 18–34-year-olds were also significantly more likely than the average to have come across their most recent potential harm when watching content they had selected themselves, when watching content selected for them by autoplay and in messages (both direct and group chats). Older adults (55+) were more likely to experience it while reading articles and reviews (12%) and while reading emails (14%).

Figure 64: Activities being undertaken when adult internet users had their most recent potentially harmful encounter online by age groups: June 2025

Top ten activities where users encountered potential harm, (based on most recent potential harm encountered)	18-34	35-54	55+
Scrolling on a feed or the 'For You Page'	47%	37%	26%
Commenting, replying to a post/article/video	24%	24%	19%
Watching content selected by the user	14%	8%	10%
Reading articles/reviews	6%	8%	12%
Reading emails	3%	7%	14%
Watching content selected by autoplay	9%	8%	6%
Advertisement	5%	6%	6%
Private or direct message	7%	5%	3%
Group chat	4%	4%	2%
Searching on a search function	4%	3%	3%

Sig greater than total at 95% confidence *Sig lower than total at 95% confidence*

Source: Ofcom, Online Experiences Tracker 2025. Q21a. Activity on site when experienced harm. Base: UK internet users 18+ in June 2025 (18-34s: 1231, 35-54: 1470, 55+: 1612).

Users from minority ethnic groups were most likely to have encountered their most recent potential harm on Instagram

Adults from minority ethnic groups were most likely to report encountering their most recent potential online harm on Instagram (20%), followed by Facebook (18%). This was significantly different to White users, who were most likely to have encountered the potential online harm on Facebook (32%) above Instagram (14%). Users from minority ethnic groups were also significantly more likely to say they had seen their recent potential harm on TikTok compared to White users (13% vs 10% respectively), and this has been increasing wave-on-wave since January 2024 (7%).

In terms of the activity that users were doing on the services where they encountered their most recent potential harm, users from minority ethnic groups were equally as likely to say they had been passively scrolling their feed as White users (37% vs 36% respectively) – with the exception of those who identified as mixed ethnicity/multiple ethnic groups who were significantly more likely to say they had been passively scrolling their feed (46%). In addition, the proportion of users from minority ethnic groups who say they encountered their most recent potential harm while passively scrolling a recommended feed has been increasing across most waves: 34% in June 2023, 31% in January 2024, 32% in June 2024, 37% in January 2025 and 37% in June 2025.

Users from minority ethnic groups were also more likely than White users to say they had been watching content that they had chosen to watch when they experienced the potential harm (13% vs 10% respectively), particularly for users identifying as Black and Black British (18%).

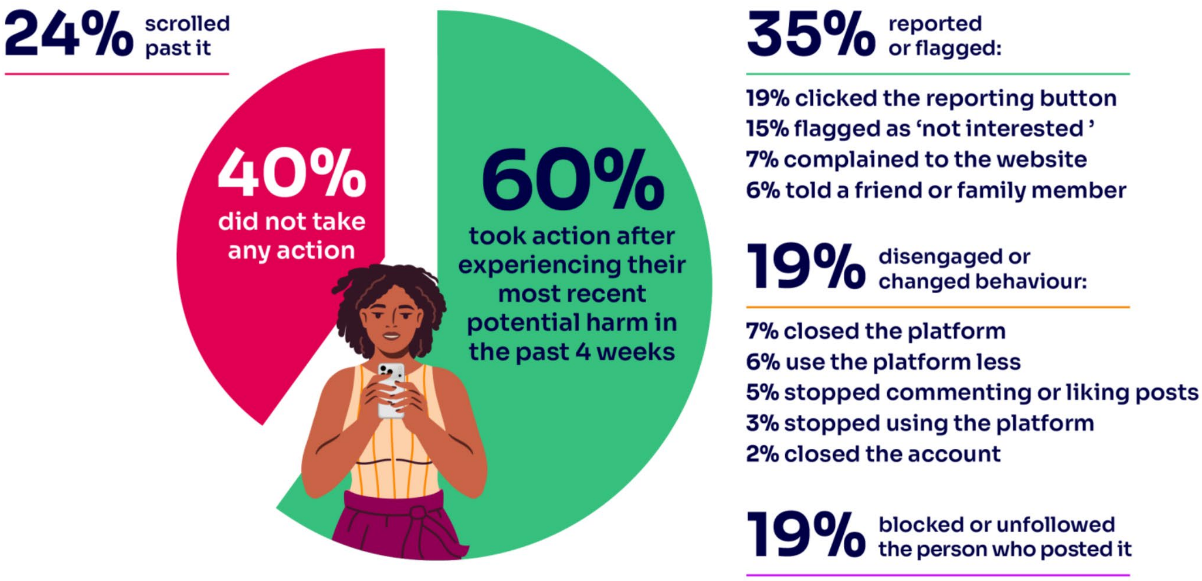
Internet users' response following exposure to potential harm

Three in five adult users self-reported taking some kind of action in response to experiencing a potential harm online, with older adults most likely to respond

In June 2025, 60% of adult internet users who had experienced a potential harm online in the past four weeks (and who could recall their most recent experience) took some kind of action in response, consistent with previous waves. Those with a limiting or impacting condition were particularly likely to have acted (64% compared to 56% for those without). A third of users said that they reported or flagged the content (35%). In 2025, there was an increase in those who chose to disengage or change their engagement behaviour, and this peaked in January (22% in Jan 2025, 19% in June 2025 vs 18% in June 2024, 17% in Jan 2024).

Conversely, four in ten users (40%) said that they either just scrolled past the content or didn't take any action following exposure. Younger adults (aged 18-34) were particularly likely to have scrolled past/not taken any action (49% for 18-24 and 42% for 25-34 vs 36% for 55+ year olds).

Figure 65: User responses to experiencing potential harm in the past four weeks: June 2025



Source: Ofcom, Online Experiences Tracker. Q15. When you saw [potential harm] on that occasion, which of the following actions did you take, if any? Base: Users 18+ (June 2025: 4482)

Women and adult users aged under 55 were more likely to be dissatisfied with the reporting process

Overall, similar proportions were satisfied and dissatisfied with the process of reporting an online harm. Of those who had reported or complained about their most recently encountered potential online harm, In June 2025, a third (36%) said they were dissatisfied (with 20% being 'very' dissatisfied), consistent with previous waves, while a similar proportion (34%) said they were satisfied.

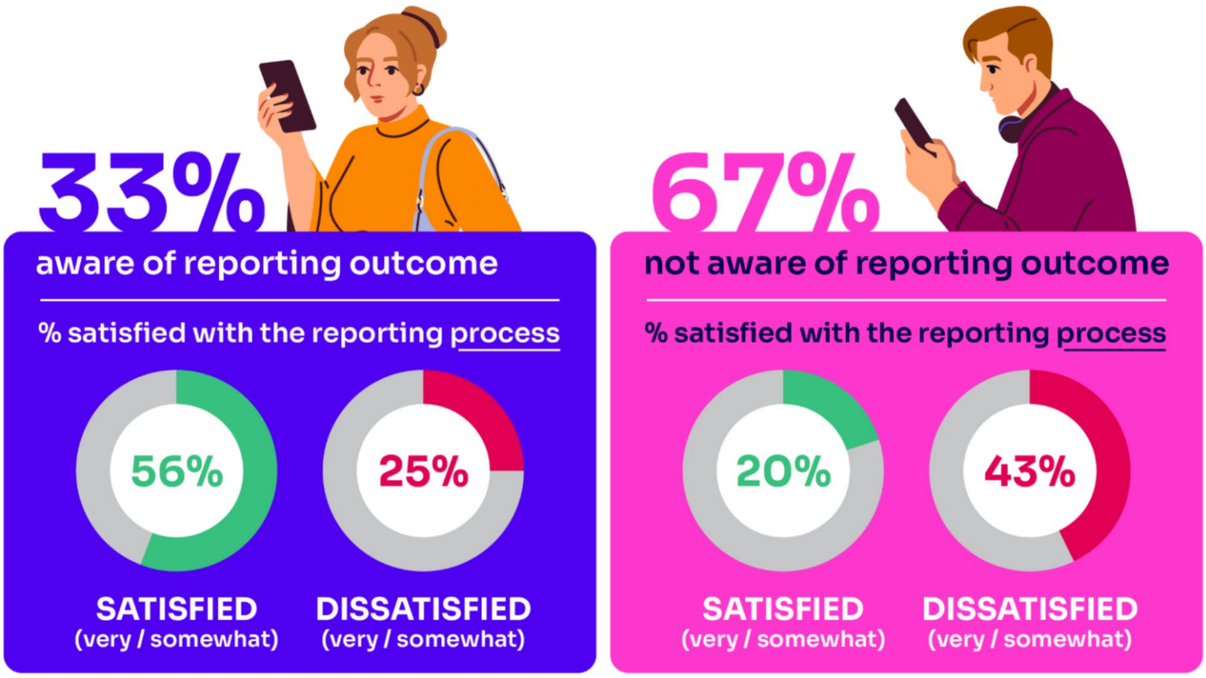
Women were less likely to be satisfied with the process than men (33% vs 37% respectively) and were significantly more likely to be 'very' dissatisfied (23% vs 15% for men). Across age groups, adults aged between 35 and 54 had the lowest levels of satisfaction, with 25% being 'very dissatisfied'; significantly higher than the 18-34 and 55+ age groups (20% and 14% respectively).

Only a third of those who reported or complained about their most recently encountered potential online harm were aware of the outcome of their report

In June 2025, a third (33%) of adults who chose to report or complain about the potentially harmful content or behaviour they had most recently encountered online were *aware* of the outcome of this report at the time of the survey. Half (52%) of adults said that 'nothing yet' had happened as a result of their reporting, while 15% said they 'don't know' what had happened. One in five (19%) said that the content had been removed, consistent with previous waves, and less than one in ten (9%) said they'd had a written response.

There was a correlation between those aware of the outcome of their report and satisfaction with the overall reporting process. In June 2025, more than four in ten (43%) of those who were *unaware* of the outcome of their report were dissatisfied, compared to only a quarter (25%) of those who were *aware* of the outcome. Those who were aware of the outcome of their report were more than twice as likely to say they were satisfied with the process (56% vs 20% for those who were unaware of the outcome).

Figure 66: Satisfaction with the reporting process by those aware/unaware of the outcome of their report: June 2025



Source: Ofcom, Online Experiences Tracker. Q17. You mentioned you reported/complained about the [insert harm]. What happened as a result? And Q18. Overall, how satisfied were you with the reporting/complaints process? Base: Users 18+ , June 2025 (Those aware of reporting outcome n=338, those unaware of reporting outcome n=523)

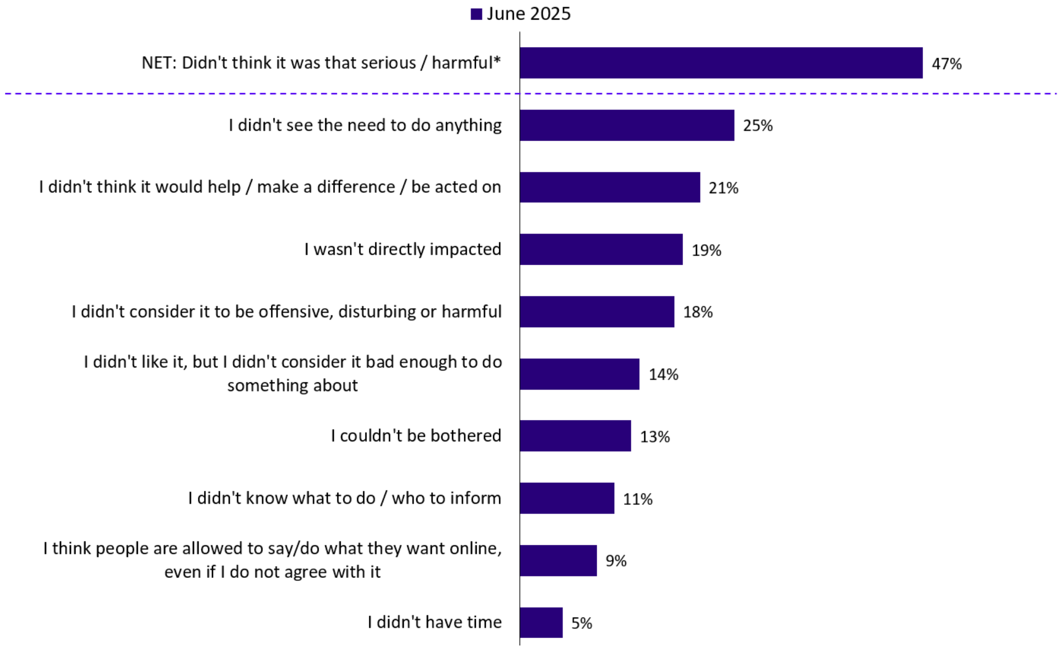
One in five who didn't take any action following their encounter with a potential harm believed that taking action wouldn't make any difference or be acted on

After encountering their most recent potential online harm, four in ten (40%) of adult internet users didn't take any action or just scrolled past it, consistent with previous waves. For about half of users (47%), this was because they didn't consider it to be serious or harmful enough to see the need to do anything about it (+3pp from June 2024).

In June 2025, one in five (21%) of those who didn't take any action reported this was because they didn't believe it would help, make a difference or be acted on. Those with a limiting or impacting condition were more likely to think that taking any action would not make a difference (25% vs 19% for those without).

Lack of awareness of the reporting process was also a contributing factor. One in ten (10%) reported that this was because they didn't know what to do or who to inform. This was particularly prevalent for older users aged 55+: 15% of those aged 55+ selected 'I didn't know what to do / who to inform'.

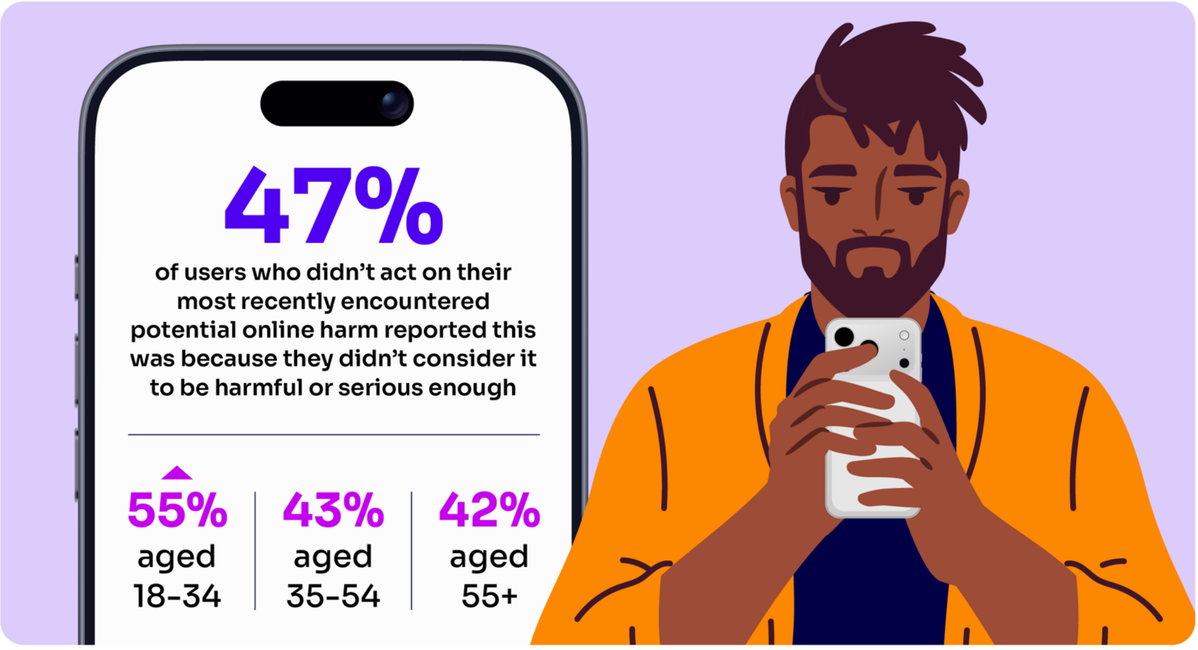
Figure 67: Reasons why adults did not take any action when they came across a potential harm online: 2024-2025, ranked by June 2025 data



*Source: Age 18+, Ofcom, Online Experiences Tracker, Q16. You mentioned you did not take any action. Why was this? Base: Users 18+ (June 2024: 673).*Note - 'NET: Didn't think it was that serious/harmful' includes the following codes: 'I didn't see the need to do anything', 'I didn't consider it to be offensive, disturbing or harmful' and 'I didn't like it, but I didn't consider it to be bad enough to do something about it'*

Younger adults appear to have a higher emotional threshold for tolerating potentially harmful content online. They are the least likely group to have been offended enough to have acted on their most recent encounter with such content. Among 18-24 and 25-34-year-olds who chose not to act, over half (55%) reported this was because they didn't consider the content to be serious or harmful enough. This compares to 43% of 35-54-year-olds and 42% of those aged 55 and over.

Figure 68: Those who didn't act on most recent potential online harm as they didn't consider it to be harmful or serious enough, by age groups: June 2025



Source: Age 18+, Ofcom, Online Experiences Tracker, Q16. You mentioned you did not take any action. Why was this? (Those who selected 'NET: Didn't think it was that serious/harmful which includes the following codes: 'I didn't see the need to do anything', 'I didn't consider it to be offensive, disturbing or harmful' and 'I didn't like it, but I didn't consider it to be bad enough to do something about it') Base: Users 18+, June 2025 (18-34: 673, 35-54: 705, 55+: 723).

Those in minority ethnic groups were more likely to take action on the content they had encountered, particularly those identifying as Black or Black British

In June 2025, almost two thirds (64%) of users from minority ethnic groups reported taking some kind of action in response to experiencing a potential harm online in the past four weeks, significantly higher than White users (58%). Users who identified as Black and Black British were the most likely to have taken action (74%), with 43% who say they reported or flagged the content and 22% who unfollowed/blocked/muted the person posting or sending it.

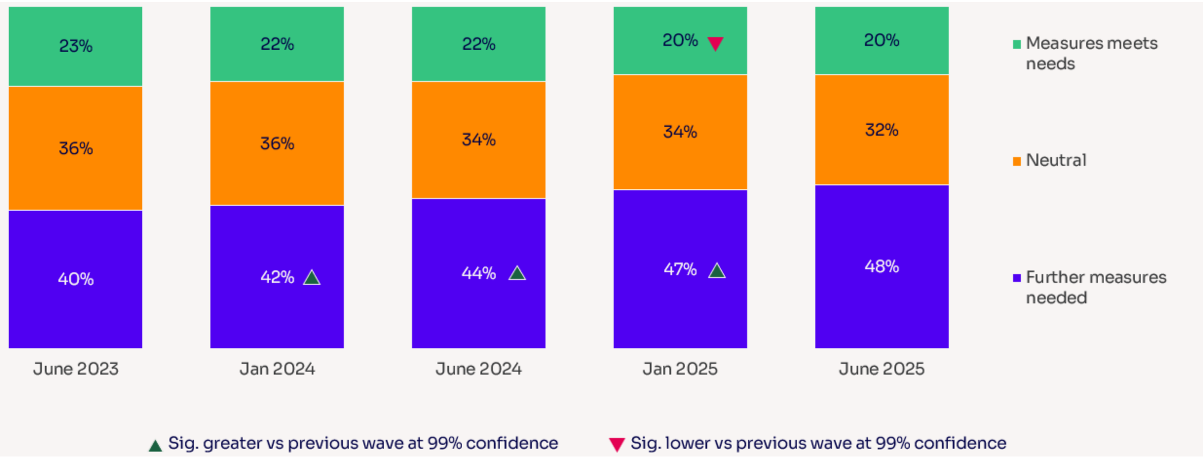
Among those who did report or complain about the content, users who identified as Black and Black British were significantly more likely to have said they were aware of the outcome of that report (64% compared to 38% for users from all minority ethnic groups and 32% for White users). Users from minority ethnic groups reported greater satisfaction with the reporting process overall: 42% vs 32% for White users, but an equal proportion remained dissatisfied (34% vs 36% for White users).

User attitudes and approaches to staying safe online

Amid a decline in positive sentiment towards the internet, half of adult internet users would like to see more safety measures in place on platforms

In June 2025, almost half (48%) would like to see more safety measures in place on platforms – a sentiment that has been steadily increasing since tracking began in June 2023 (40% in June 2023 to 48% in June 2025). It is perhaps unsurprising the UK adults are increasingly feeling this way when, as set out above, there has been a decrease in positive sentiment towards being online.

Figure 69: Response to attitudes to on-platform safety measures, wave-on-wave data:

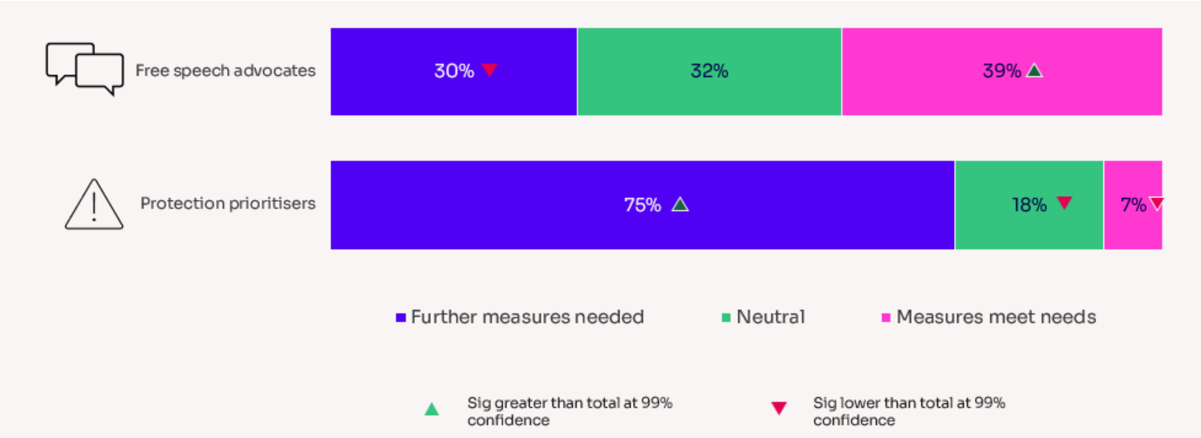


Source: Age 18+, Ofcom, Online Experiences Tracker Q1. There are enough online safety measures in place vs. There should be more online safety measures in place. Base Adults 18+ (June 2025: 7340, Jan 2025: 7378, June 2024: 7280, Jan 2024: 7068, Jun 2023: 13205)

Women were much more likely than men to feel that more safety measures are needed (57% vs 38% for men). Women were also significantly more likely to feel this way compared to a year ago (53% in June 2024 compared to 57% in June 2025), with the proportion increasing wave-on-wave since tracking began in 2023.

Users' views on free speech vs censorship on online content were also likely to impact responses to this question. Users who advocated more for free speech were divided as to whether more safety measures are needed on platforms; whereas those who felt it was important for sites to monitor and delete offensive views were overwhelmingly of the opinion that further online safety measures are needed.

Figure 70: Response to attitudes to on-platform safety measures by users views on free speech: June 2025



Source: Age 18+, Ofcom, Online Experiences Tracker, Q1. There are enough online safety measures in place vs. There should be more online safety measures in place by those selecting 'The internet has an important role in supporting free speech' (Free speech advocates) and 'It is important for sites to monitor and delete offensive views' (Protection prioritisers) at Q1. Base Adults 18+ (June 2025: 7340, Free speech advocates n=2667 and Protection prioritisers n=2051)

More than half of adult internet users feel confident in their own ability to stay safe online

In terms of individuals' own confidence in their ability to stay safe online, three in five adult internet users (61%) in June 2025 said they were confident compared to 12% who said they were not confident – consistent with previous waves. Only just over half of internet users aged 55+ said they felt confident in their ability to stay safe online (54% compared to 68% for 18-34 and 63% for 35-54-year-olds).

Men were more likely to be confident in their ability than women (67% vs 55%), ABC1 more likely than C2DE (62% vs 58%), users identifying as LGB+ more likely than heterosexual users (71% vs 60%) and those without a limiting or impacting condition more likely than those with (64% vs 56%).

When it comes to avoiding harmful or offensive content online, in June 2025, more than half (56%) of UK adult internet users felt that using common sense while online is usually enough to prevent them from encountering this, consistent with previous waves (54% in January 2025, 56% in June 2024). Conversely, only around one in ten (13%) felt that it was completely impossible to avoid seeing harmful or offensive content when online.

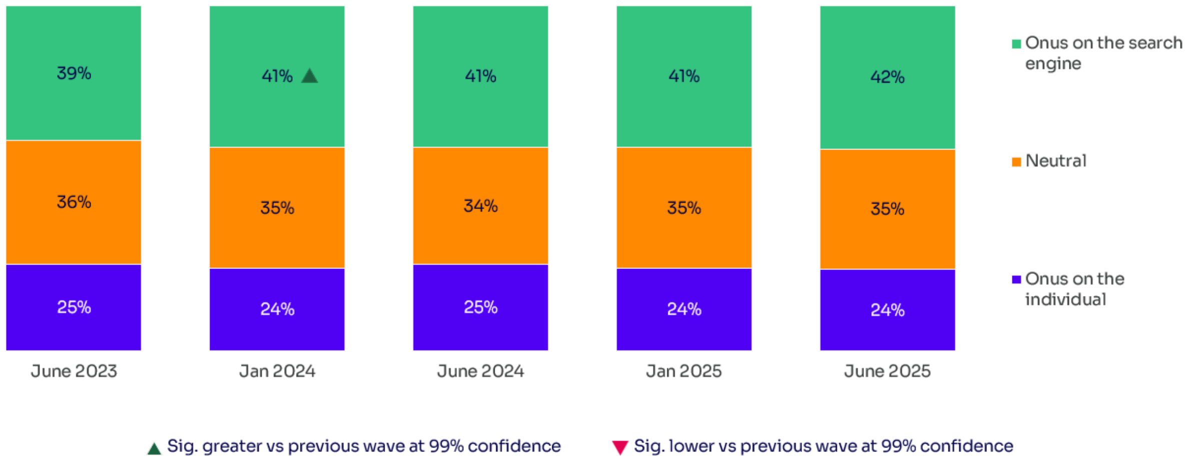
More feel that the onus should be on the platforms to ensure that content shared is appropriate – rather than the individuals posting or searching

In June 2025, when UK internet users were asked whether the onus should be on the platform or the individual to have responsibility for ensuring that what they post is appropriate for other users, over a third (37%) felt the responsibility should lie with the platform. This was a decrease from June 2024, where 39% of users felt this way. Only one in five (21%) feel that the responsibility should lie with the individual posting, a perception steadily increasing over waves (19% in 2023, 20% in 2024 waves). This view was more likely to be common among men (25%) and those aged over 65 (26%).

Other Ofcom research found that a third (34%) of UK internet users (18+) would prefer more restrictions when using online services in terms of what types of content can be shared. This was particularly the case for women (40% vs 27% of men). Only 1 in 5 (22%) would like to see fewer restrictions.[78]

When it came to results on search engines, more UK users in June 2025 felt that the onus should be on the search engine to control what is posted in search results (42%), a perception that has increased since tracking began in June 2023 (39%). This was opposed to the responsibility lying with individuals to ensure that they have settings in place so that content displayed in search results is appropriate for them (24%).

Figure 71: Response to attitudes on search engine vs individual responsibility, wave-on-wave data



Source: Age 18+, Ofcom, Online Experiences Tracker, Q1. It is the responsibility of the search engine to control what is presented in search results vs. It is the responsibility of the individual to ensure they have the correct settings in place to only be presented with content appropriate for them. Base Adults 18+ (June 2025: 7340)

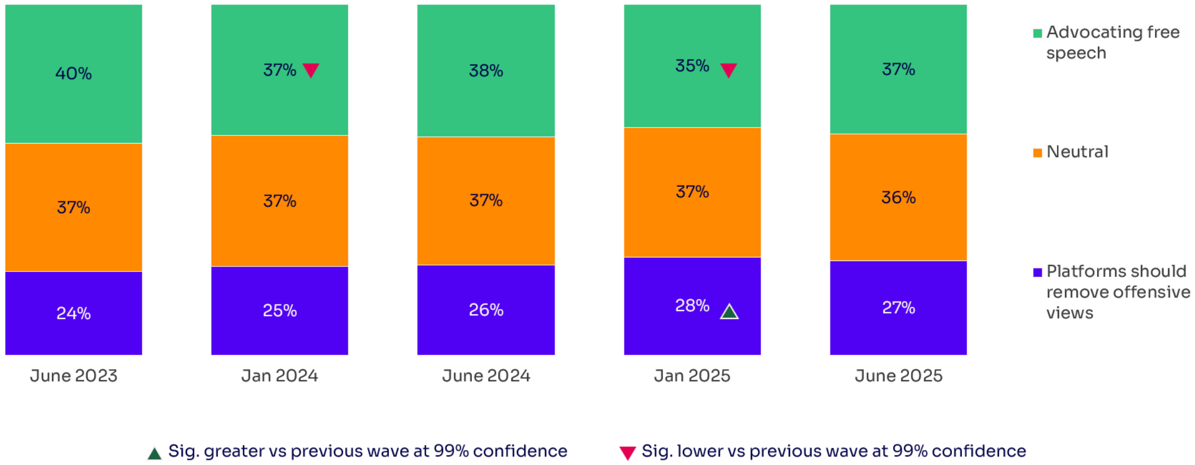
There are still more adults who lean towards supporting free speech compared to platforms removing offensive views – but the gap is narrowing

In June 2025, adult internet users were asked if their agreement lies more with the statement 'The internet has an important role in supporting free speech, even when some users might find content offensive' or if they agreed more with the statement "It is important for sites to monitor and delete offensive views to protect other users". Overall, users were divided on this topic: slightly more adults were advocates for free speech (37%), though over 1 in 4 (27%) felt that platforms should be removing offensive views, and a sizeable proportion felt neutral (36%).

Opinions on this have changed since tracking began in 2023, with UK users increasingly feeling that platforms should be monitoring and removing offensive views. Men were more likely to favour free speech (47%).

[78] Ofcom, Online research panel poll: User perspectives on content moderation, December 2024, age: 18+, GB

Figure 72: Response to attitudes on supporting free speech vs platforms deleting offensive views, wave-on-wave data



Source: Age 18+, Ofcom, Online Experiences Tracker, Q1. The internet has an important role in supporting free speech, even when some users might find the content offensive vs. It is important for sites to monitor and delete offensive views to protect other users . Base Adults 18+ (June 2025: 7340, Jan 2025: 7378, June 2024: 7280, Jan 2024: 7068, Jun 2023: 13205)

Other Ofcom research shows that 40% of adult internet users feel that platforms have become less tolerant to a range of viewpoints, higher among men compared to women (44% vs 36%).[79]

We see that adult internet users' opinions are fairly evenly split on this, however, the majority of internet users would still appear to be in support of online platforms doing *some* form of monitoring for offensive content in public spaces on their sites. Three quarters (74%) of UK adult internet users think platforms 'should' monitor for this content. When asked if they think sites should delete or remove offensive content, just over half agreed (57%), with one in four disagreeing (26%) and others unsure (17%). Consensus was strong when it came to illegal content, with nine in ten adults (90%) agreeing it should be monitored for in public spaces and 86% agreeing it should be removed.[80]

Almost one in five minority ethnic users feel that it's impossible to avoid seeing harmful content online, and over half think more safety measures are needed

As well as being more likely to self-report encountering potential harms online, users from minority ethnic groups are also more likely to think that there should be more online safety measures in place (52%), significantly higher than for White users (47%). This was particularly the case for users identifying as Black and Black British (58%) who were the most likely to have encountered at least one potential harm compared to other ethnic groups. As positive sentiment towards the internet has declined over recent waves, the desire for increased safety measures has increased among all users, but particularly for minority ethnic groups.

[79] Ofcom, Online research panel poll: User perspectives on content moderation, December 2024, age: 18+, GB.
[80] Ofcom, Online research panel poll: User perspectives on content moderation, December 2024, age: 18+, GB.

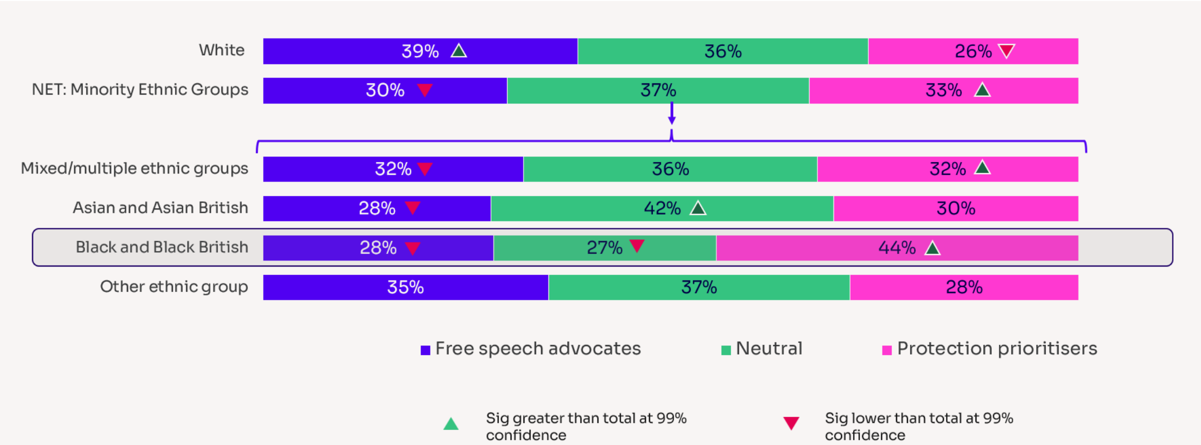
Figure 73: Response to attitudes to on-platform safety measures by ethnicity: June 2025

Source: Age 18+, Ofcom, Online Experiences Tracker, Q1. There are enough online safety measures in place vs. There should be more online safety measures in place. Base Adults 18+ (June 2025 – White: 5542, NET Minority Ethnic Groups: 1512, January 2025 – White: 5271, NET Minority Ethnic Groups: 1824, June 2024 – White: 5099, NET Minority Ethnic Groups: 1761, January 2024 – White 5197: NET Minority Ethnic Groups: 1584, June 2023 – White: 11791, NET Minority Ethnic Groups: 955)

In addition, users from minority ethnic groups were less likely to feel that just using common sense when online usually prevents you from seeing harmful content (45% vs 60% for White users), consistent with previous waves. In fact, one in five (19%) believe that it is impossible to avoid harmful or offensive content when online – increasing to a quarter (26%) among Black or Black British users. Users from minority ethnic groups were also significantly less likely to feel confident in their own ability in keeping themselves safe online; 58% said they felt confident compared to 62% of White users.

When considering the role of free speech vs protecting users from offensive views, as with other metrics around online safety, users from minority ethnic groups tended to lean more towards safety being a priority and were more likely than White users to want sites to monitor and remove offensive content (33% for users from minority ethnic groups vs 26% of White users respectively). Again, this was particularly the case for Black and Black British users (44%):

Figure 74: Response to attitudes on supporting free speech vs platforms deleting offensive views, by ethnicity (June 2025)



Source: Ofcom, Online Experiences Tracker, Q1. The internet has an important role in supporting free speech, even when some users might find the content offensive vs. It is important for sites to monitor and delete offensive views to protect other users. Base: UK internet users, aged 18+ (7340) – White: 5542, NET: Minority Ethnic Groups: 1512, Mixed/Multiple Ethnic Groups: 420, Asian and Asian British: 637, Black and Black British: 310, Other ethnic group: 145.

4. Children's experiences online

Introduction

This chapter looks at children's experiences of being online, both on the positive and beneficial experiences they have, and on the potentially harmful content or behaviour they encounter.

A note on terminology regarding harmful experiences online and research methodology

Although being online provides children with many benefits, the online environment also has the potential to expose child users to harm.

The Online Safety Act (OSA) places specific obligations on services to protect children (under 18's) from content that is harmful to children and defines harm as physical or psychological harm. Some of the research in this chapter focuses specifically on content that falls within the scope of the OSA (for example, from our Children's Online Safety Tracker), when referencing these projects, we refer to 'content harmful to children'. However, other research projects included in this chapter explore content and behaviour that falls outside of the scope of the OSA (for example, our research into how persuasive design features could lead to potential financial harms for children). In these instances, we refer to 'potential harms'.

All of the data in this chapter was collected before Ofcom's Protection of Children Codes of Practice[81] came into force[82]. It therefore provides the baseline measure for the proportion of children saying they have been exposed to content harmful to children and experiencing 'potential harms'. Data in this chapter is therefore **not indicative of the effectiveness of the Protection of Children Codes measures**. Data and analysis on the impact of Ofcom's Protection of Children Codes of Practice will be published by May 2026.

Because this chapter draws on multiple research sources, the ages of the children referenced varies. We state these clearly in each section. For more detail on methodology for each of our data sources, please see the annex section.

[81] Statement: Protecting children from harms online

[82] For The Children's Online Insight Panel, one online diary fell after the Protection of Children Codes of Practice came into force.

Children's time spent online

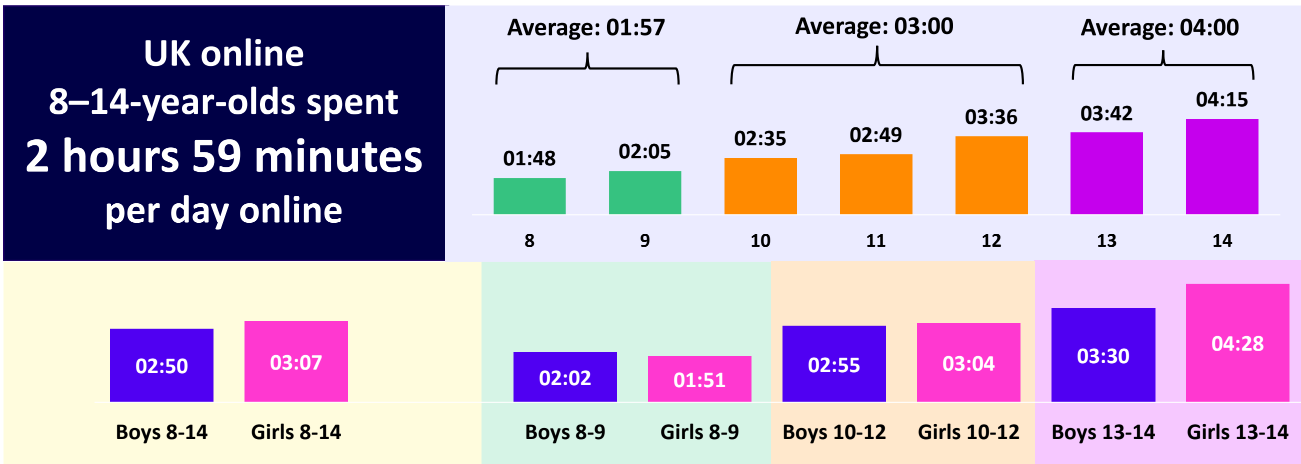
UK child internet users aged 8-14 spend nearly 3 hours online each day, which increases to 4 hours among 13-14-year-olds

Ofcom's Children's Passive Online Measurement (CPOM)research[83] shows that UK child internet users aged 8-14 go online almost every day on the devices which were monitored: smartphones, tablets, laptops and computers. The research found that as the child age increases, so too does the amount of time they spend online, with those aged 8-9 in the sample going online for 21 out of the 28 days measured, on average. This increases to an average of 25 days for both 10-12-year-olds and 13-14-year-olds.

Not only are older children more likely to spend more days online than younger ones, but they are also more likely to spend longer during those days online. Children aged 8-9 spent an average of 1 hour 57 minutes a day online, while 10-12s spent 3 hours and 13-14s spent 4 hours. In separate research conducted by Ipsos Iris among older age groups, this increased to 6 hours and 20 minutes among 15-17s.[84]

Girls aged 8-14 spent an average of 17 minutes longer online each day than boys of the same age. However, this gender difference is most significant among the oldest age group, with girls aged 13-14 spending nearly an hour longer online each day than boys aged 13-14 (4 hours 28 minutes vs. 3 hours 30 minutes). In the section below, we note that boys are much more likely than girls to go online via games consoles, which are not included within the CPOM research. This exclusion may be driving the observed gender difference in overall time spent online via this study.

Figure 75: Average time spent online on smartphones, tablets and computers, per UK visitor per day: by age (hours: minutes)



Source: Ofcom's Children's Passive Online Measurement 2025

[83] [3] Ofcom's Children's Passive Online Measurement 2025. UK representative sample of 692 children aged between 8-14 years old who go online. Fieldwork conducted between 10th November 2024 – 20th March 2025. Data collected via VPN/App loaded onto mobile phone, tablet or computer. See full report for more details Children's Passive Online Measurement report

[84] Ipsos, Ipsos iris Online Audience Measurement Service, May 2025, age: 15-17, UK, internet users. Note: Custom data supplied by Ipsos

Boys are more likely to go online via a games console than girls

As discussed above, while Ofcom's CPOM data shows differences between boys and girls in terms of time spent online, it is important to note that this only includes time spent on smartphones, tablets and computers. Ofcom's Children and Parents' Media Literacy Tracker 2024 shows that online gaming also plays a significant role in children's lives, with 60% of children aged 3-17 gaming online. However, there are significant differences by gender, with more boys aged 3-17 gaming online than girls of the same age (71% vs. 58%).[85] So, while CPOM indicates that girls typically spend more time online via the devices measured within that research, if we were to consider the full scope of devices that children use to go online, the picture may be different. What is clear, however, is that children's online activity varies by gender.

YouTube and Google Search used by almost all 8-14s

YouTube and Google search had the highest reach among children, with almost all 8-14-year-olds using them both (96% and 95% respectively). Social media sites/messaging services also made it into the top 10 services used among this this age group, including WhatsApp and TikTok. The gaming service, Roblox, as well as audio streaming sites Apple Music and Spotify were visited by a significant proportion of children aged 8-14. The data also shows that over half of children also visited Amazon and Apple iCloud.

YouTube and Snapchat account for over half of the time 8-14s spend online

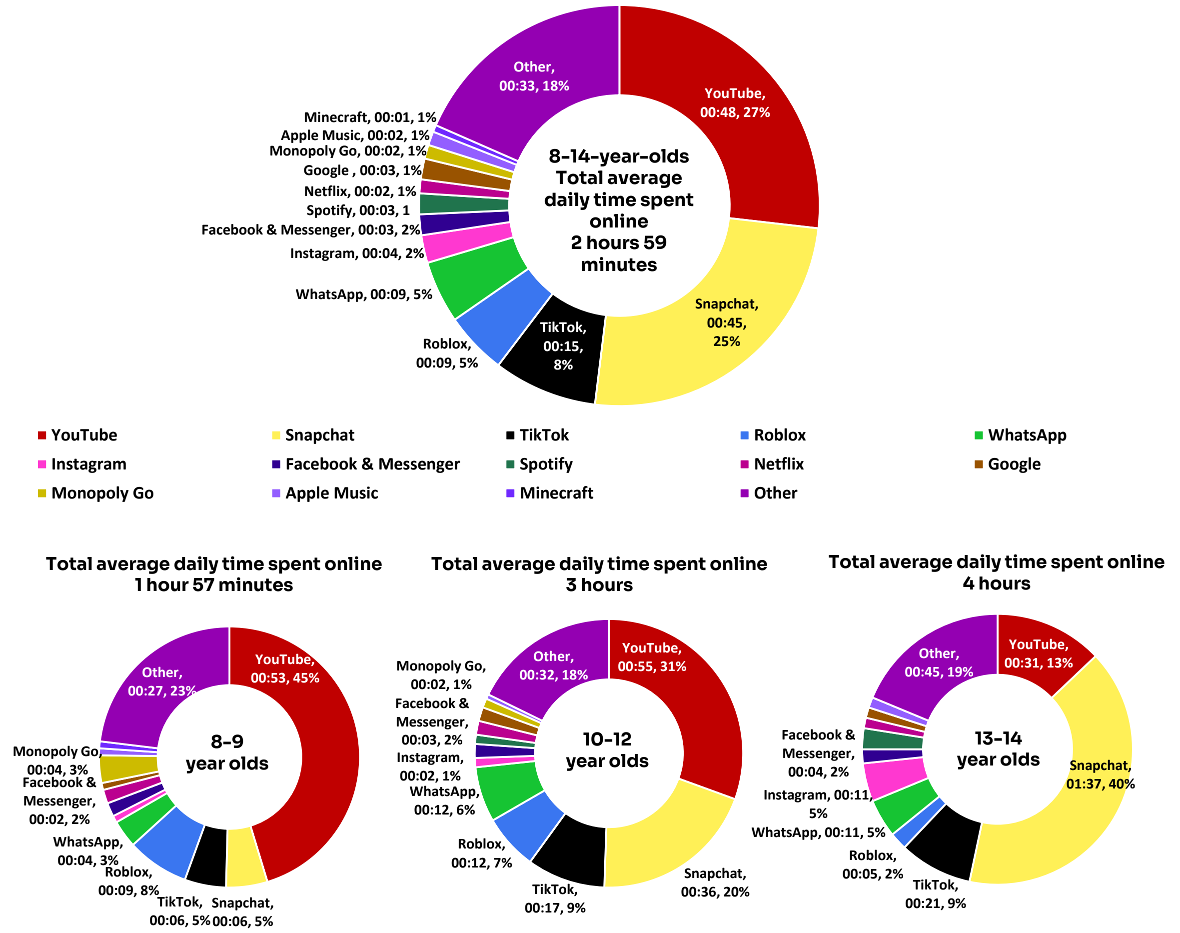
YouTube and Snapchat are the leading services in terms of time spent online – combined, they accounted for around half (52% or 1 hour 32 minutes) of the average time spent online among 8-14s.

Use of YouTube is widespread among all age groups; however, time spent using the video-sharing service accounts for a smaller share of overall time spent online among older age groups. This may be because online activity typically becomes more varied as children get older. The youngest age group, the 8-9-year-olds, spent an average of 53 minutes each day using YouTube (or 45% of their total daily time spent online), while 10-12s spent 55 minutes (accounting for 31% of their time online) and 13-14s spent 31 minutes (13% of their online time).

The opposite was true for Snapchat, where the service accounts for 5% of 8-9s time online (6 minutes) and increases to 20% for 10-12s (36 minutes) and 40% for 13-14s (1 hour 37 minutes). While this is based on all children included in the research, when we specifically look at users of Snapchat aged 13-14, time spent on the app significantly increases to 2 hours 13 minutes per day. On average, an 8–14-year-old Snapchat user visited the service 841 times during a month.[86]

[85] Ofcom Children and Parents' Media Literacy Tracker 2024
[86] Ofcom's Children's Passive Online Measurement 2025

Figure 76: Share of average time spent online per day by UK online children aged 8-14, by service (hours: minutes): by age



Source: Ofcom's Children's Passive Online Measurement 2025. Note: TV set, games consoles and smart speaker/display use not measured. Average time by internet user is based on all online 8-14-year-old children whether they visited the service. Facebook & Messenger includes visits to any of the following services – Facebook website, Facebook app or Messenger app. App time spent is only measured when app is open, e.g. audio play when Spotify app is closed is not measured and video plays while in picture-in-picture mode are not measured.

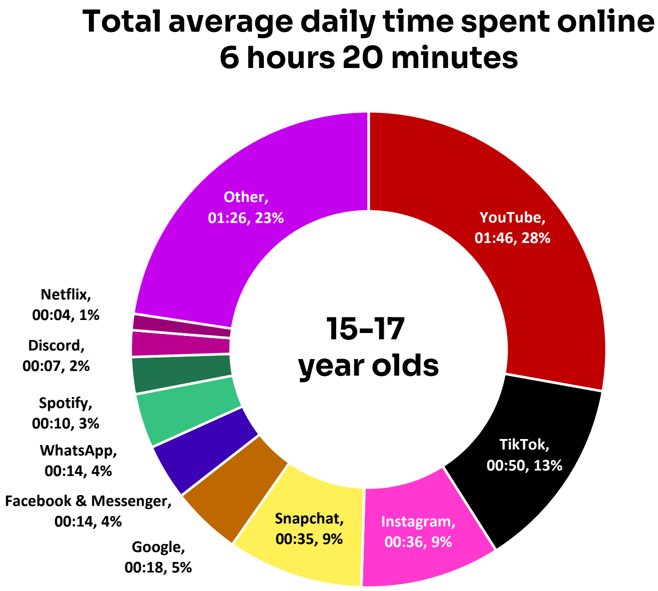
Time spent using Snapchat decreases significantly past the age of 14

While the average 13–14-year-old spent an average of 1 hour 37 minutes using Snapchat each day (40% of their total time spent online), Ipsos iris research (which although a different data source to CPOM, has a comparable methodology), gives a much lower estimate for Snapchat use among 15-17s of 35 minutes per day.

YouTube once again accounts for the largest share of online time among 15-17s (28% of total time online or 1 hour 46 minutes), while Snapchat is overtaken by Instagram and TikTok (15-17s spend an average of 36 minutes on Instagram and 50 minutes on TikTok).[87]

[87] Ipsos, Ipsos iris Online Audience Measurement Service, May 2025, age: 15-17, UK, internet users. Note: Custom data supplied by Ipsos

Figure 77: Share of average time spent online per day by UK online 15–17-year-olds, by service (hours: minutes)



Source: Ipsos, Ipsos iris Online Audience Measurement Service, organisations, time on smartphones, tablets and computers only, May 2025, age 15-17, UK internet users. Other includes services outside the top 10. App time spent is only measured when app is open, e.g. audio play when Spotify app is closed is not measured and video plays while in picture-in-picture mode are not measured.

Children are generally happy with the amount of time they spend online

More than eight in ten (85%) children aged 8-17 said they were happy[88] with the amount of time they spend online, and just over three in ten said they felt this way 'always' (35%). There were some demographic differences in children's levels of happiness about the time they spend online. Those from a minority ethnic background were less likely overall to be happy about this (82%) than White children (86%), particularly when it came to feeling this way 'mostly' (45% vs 51% for White children). Children with a health condition were less likely to be happy with the amount of time they spend online (81%) compared to those with no health condition (87%). There was little difference across age groups, however, among the pre-teen group, those aged 10-12 were more likely than the youngest (8-9s) to express that they were happy with their time spent online (87% vs 82%).[89]

However, children recognise the negative impact of endlessly scrolling online

Despite most children feeling happy with the time they spend online, some of the children in Ofcom's qualitative Children's Media Lives research reflected on the negative impact they experienced when they had spent a long time on their device (typically a smartphone).[90] A girl aged 11 described the difficulties in getting off her screen:

> *"What I've been told is that when I get off my screen, I'm less fun to be around. Like I can just be not interested. And I guess I can kind of tell because when I've been on my screen for five hours, and I get up I'm like oh my gosh, the world is*

[88] 'Happy' includes children who said they were 'mostly happy' and 'always happy'
[89] Ofcom Children's Online Safety Tracker 2025: Wave 1
[90] Ofcom Children's Media Lives 2025

spinning. I want to go back to my iPad, and I want to stay there forever. And like I can also feel angrier for like no reason."

Girl, aged 11

This feeling of excessive time wasted online can be linked to one of the key themes from our qualitative Children's Media Lives research this year. Some children in the study used the term 'brain rot' to describe both a genre of content and the feeling that spending hours on their devices left them with. Brain rot content is characterised by its frenetic, choppy, and nonsensical nature, leaving viewers feeling overstimulated and sometimes disoriented. Some of the children expressed negative feelings associated with spending excessive time online and engaging with this type of content.[91] A girl aged 13 reflected on the negative impact excessive scrolling on TikTok had:

"I find it really hard to watch movies. […] So normally if I'm watching something on Netflix, I get really bored of it and I just go on my phone and I don't even realise it, I'm just scrolling on TikTok then I look at the time and I'm like, 'what the hell, I need to go to bed'. My head of year said something about it the other day. He said it's because we all watch TikTok. Like our brains aren't used to watching really long things. That our brains aren't stimulated enough by it or something. I actually think that's true, because I can watch TikTok for hours and hours and hours and not get bored. But as soon as I put on a movie, I get bored, and then just go back on my phone."

Girl, aged 13

Interestingly, despite children recognising the negative impact that excessive 'wasted' time online can have on them, our COST research showed that children who use more apps and sites online are more content with how much time they spend there. A quarter (26%) of children who were happy[92] with how much time they spend online said they used seven or more apps/sites; compared to almost two in ten (19%) who said they used only one or two apps/sites.[93]

Just under two-in-three children access the internet late at night

Use of devices late at night by children is not unusual. Data from children's devices in CPOM showed that 64% of 8-to-14-year-olds used their smartphone, tablet and/or computer between 11pm and 5am, which we term 'late at night', at least once over a four-week period. Around eight in ten (79%) children who visited Snapchat over the four-week fieldwork period used it late at night, compared to 69% for WhatsApp, 52% for YouTube, 51% for TikTok and 46% for Instagram. This suggests a mixture of social media use, but also communication with others (e.g. via WhatsApp) who are also online at this time.

[91] Ofcom Children's Media Lives 2025
[92] Happy' includes children who said they were 'mostly happy' and 'always happy'
[93] Ofcom, Children's Online Safety Tracker 2025: Wave 1

Across four of the main services used by children - YouTube, Snapchat, TikTok and WhatsApp – 15-24% of the time spent for the whole 8-14 age range is spent between 9pm and 5am and 4-10% of the time is late night 11pm-5am, depending on the platform[94].

Older children were more likely to use the internet late at night: for each of these services, the proportion of platform users who used it during this time was higher for 13–14-year-old users than those aged under 13. Additionally, the usage levels for those children who did use services late at night was not typically just once or twice over the four weeks, rather it was an average of 5-11 days over 28 days for each service among 8-to-14-year-olds.[95]

How children feel about their online lives

There are both positives and negatives to being online, experienced by all users, and in particular by children. The pull of both can cause conflicting emotions among users, with many recognising the benefits to being online while potentially also seeing the detrimental side, especially when encountering content harmful to children.

Lower levels of happiness with online activities and how children felt about themselves were reflected in higher exposure to content harmful to children

Overall, nine in ten (91%) children aged 8-17 said they were happy[96] with **the things that they do online**, while eight in ten (81%) said they were happy **that the things they see online are 'appropriate for their age'**. However, some groups were notably less likely to feel this way. Three in ten (31%) children aged 8-17 said that they were 'always' happy that what they see online is appropriate for their age.

When asked about the impact being online had on how they felt about themselves, more children considered that being online had a mostly good effect (56%) than a mostly bad effect (3%). But a significant minority (34%) said it could be both.

Typically, younger children were happier with their online lives than older ones, both in terms of what they do and what they see online. In particular, the youngest group (8-9s) were more likely to 'always' be happy with what they do online than older children.[97] Compared to the oldest, the youngest age group were also more likely to agree that being online had a good effect on how they felt about themselves. 'Happiness' with what children see online declines among 13-15s[98], this being the age at which many more teenagers join social media.[99] Data from the same research indicates this is where children are more likely to be exposed to content inappropriate for their age.[100]

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[94] This analysis focused on children being online late at night/into the morning and the impact that would have on their ability to get a full night's sleep. Including from 9pm onwards is for full context on nighttime use. However, a 9-10pm bedtime would be common for some of the children, so we have included a 'late night' analysis too which is defined as 11pm – 5am

[95] Ofcom's Children's Passive Online Measurement 2025

[96] Ofcom, Children's Online Safety Tracker 2025: Wave 1. 'Happy' includes children who said they were 'mostly happy' and 'always happy'

[97] A reminder that this data was obtained pre-implementation of Ofcom's Code of Practice, and so proportions expressing levels of happiness may change following Ofcom's Guidance to services that children use

[98] Ofcom, Children's Online Safety Tracker 2025: Wave 1

[99] Ofcom, Children and Parents' Media Literacy Tracker (2024) research found that 55% of 3-12s are reported to use social media apps compared to 96% of 13-17s

[100] Ofcom, Children's Online Safety Tracker 2025: Wave 1 data tables see M2.Q5 for where content harmful to children was experienced

There are some demographic differences in terms of stated happiness among children, illustrated in Figure 78 below. Lower happiness and likelihood of feeling good about themselves for some groups corresponded with higher exposure to content harmful to children. This may indicate exposure plays a role in these differences. Children with a health condition were less likely to be happy with what they do *and* see online and less likely to say that being online had a good effect on how they feel about themselves compared with children with no health conditions. The increased negative feelings correspond with greater exposure to content harmful to children among 11-17s (79% of those with a health condition versus 67% without).

In a similar vein, children aged 13+ who identified as Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Pansexual or Queer were less likely to say they were always happy with what they see online than heterosexual children.[101] This group were also less likely to say that being online had a mostly good effect on how they felt about themselves (40% vs. 57% for heterosexual children). Again, the increased negative feelings correspond with greater exposure to content harmful to children among 11-17s (82% Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Pansexual, Queer children versus 69% for heterosexual children).[102]

White children were more likely than those from ethnic minority groups to say they were happy that what they see online is appropriate for their age. However, children from ethnic minority groups were more likely than White children to say that what they did online had a good effect on how they feel about themselves (62% vs 55%), while White children were more likely to feel it had both good and bad effects on this (36% vs 28%).

Gender differences were less marked: both girls and boys reported similar levels of happiness with what they do and see online, although boys were more likely than girls to 'always' be happy (47% vs. 40%) with what they do online. Furthermore, boys were more likely than girls to say what they did online had a mostly good effect on how they feel about themselves (59% vs. 53%).

A small, but important, minority of children did not feel happy with their online activities. Less than 1% claimed they were 'never' happy with what they do online, and 2% said they were 'never' happy that what they see online is appropriate for their age.[103]

Figure 78: Children's happiness with online activities, impact on self and experience of content harmful to children

	What children DO online	What children SEE online	Effect on how being online makes children feel about themselves	Experience of content harmful to children (aged 11-17)

[101] In the COST survey, children aged 13 and above were first asked if they would consent to answering a question about their sexual orientation; if they consented then they were asked "Which of the following do you consider yourself to be: Heterosexual or straight, Gay or lesbian, Bisexual, Pansexual, Queer, Prefer to use another term, I don't know, I don't want to answer this." Note that the sample for 'Gay or lesbian, Bisexual, Pansexual, Queer children' within the COST survey overall was 97, therefore as this is under 100 the data should be treated as indicative.
[102] Note that the sample for 'Gay or lesbian, Bisexual, Pansexual, Queer children' who answered Module 2 (online harms) was 58, therefore as this is under 100 the data should be treated as indicative.
[103] Ofcom, Children's Online Safety Tracker 2025: Wave 1

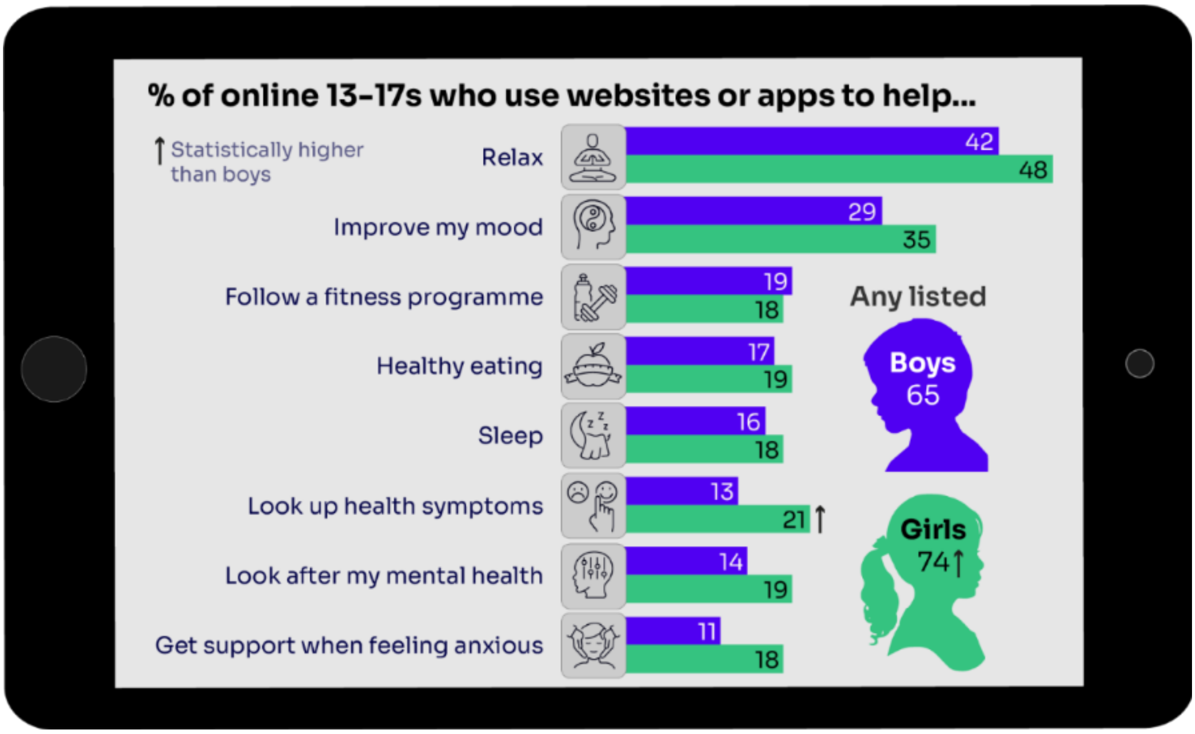
	Always/ Mostly happy	Always happy	Always/ Mostly happy	Always happy	Good effect	Seen or heard content harmful to children
All children aged 8-17	91%	44%	81%	31%	56%	70%
Boys 8-17	92%	47%	82%	33%	59%	70%
Girls 8-17	90%	40%	80%	29%	53%	70%
8-9s	95%	51%	84%	34%	60%	N/A
10-12s	92%	44%	82%	31%	56%	69%
13-15s	90%	42%	79%	31%	56%	72%
16-17s	90%	42%	81%	30%	54%	69%
White	92%	44%	82%	31%	55%	69%
Ethnic minority	90%	46%	77%	32%	62%	77%
Heterosexual/ straight	92%	45%	82%	32%	57%	69%
Gay/lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, queer	79%	32%	74%	22%	40%	82%
Any health conditions	87%	40%	75%	26%	46%	79%
No health conditions	93%	46%	83%	33%	60%	67%

Many children see the online world as a way to aid their mental or physical wellbeing

One aspect where being online can have a positive impact on how children feel about themselves and their lives in general is in relation to their mental and physical wellbeing. Ofcom's Children's and Parents' Media Literacy research asked children aged 13-17 who go online whether they use websites, apps or other online services to help with various aspects of their wellbeing, and overall, 69% said they did so. The most likely reasons were to help them relax (45%) or improve their mood (32%).[104] More teenage girls were using apps or online services to aid their wellbeing than teenage boys (74% vs 65% overall). This includes a higher proportion of girls who were using apps to look up health symptoms (21% vs 13% of boys), look after their mental health (19% vs 14%) and/ or get support when they are feeling anxious (18% vs 11%).

[104] Ofcom, Children and Parents' Media Literacy Tracker 2024

Figure 79: Proportion of 13-17s who use websites or apps to help with aspects of their personal wellbeing



Source: Ofcom Children and Parents' Media Literacy Tracker 2024

Ofcom conducted specific research into children's use of Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response (ASMR) and self-improvement (SI) content. It found that for children who watched or listened to ASMR, the primary benefit was relaxation, while users of SI content saw the primary benefit to be improved self-motivation and/or to help them feel better about themselves.[105]

What is Self-Improvement (SI) content?	What is ASMR content?
Self-improvement covers a range of different content related to physical health and fitness, mental health and mindfulness, motivation and relationships. It can range from instructional and functional videos to motivational style content and take many formats. Some of this content may have a commercial angle, linking users to products or services, promoted by the content creator.	*ASMR (autonomous sensory meridian response) is content that usually involves sensory themes like watching hands playing with slime with very crisp audio of the resulting sounds. Other examples might be natural sounds, food-based sounds, whispering, crinkling or tapping. It is intended to produce a tingling sensation in the scalp and neck, which some people find relaxing.*

[105] Definitions provided for ASMR and SI were developed by Ofcom for the purposes of the research: Ofcom Understanding children's use and perceptions of ASMR and self-improvement content 2025. Some types of self-improvement content may overlap with body stigma content, a category of Non-Designated Content defined in the Children's Register of Risk

Around three-quarters of 11-17-year-olds said they had used ASMR or SI content (74% and 77%, respectively), and just over half (53%) of ASMR users said that this content helped them to relax. The most-used types of ASMR content were chill music (38%) and relaxing sounds (28%). Participants in the qualitative component of the research who used ASMR also said that it helped them to relax and manage their moods and feelings – including a sense of anxiety and/or over-stimulation, and some said it could offer a sense of escapism from their busy lives: [106]

"It just calms me down and stops me from overthinking, which is really helpful in stressful situations like homework and test preparation because, you know, I have a GCSE coming up in three weeks' time for the RE short course"

Girl, 14

In addition, Ofcom's Media Literacy research showed that children use the internet to look for advice and support with health concerns. Around two-fifths used the internet for fitness, healthy eating, and looking after their mental health.[107] This is echoed in our ASMR/SI study which showed that fitness, self-care and mental health were the top three types of self-improvement content to be watched or listened to by 11 to 17 year olds (32%, 28% and 27% respectively).[108]

Both studies indicated gender differences. As noted above, our media literacy study showed that more girls aged 13-17 were using apps or online services to aid their wellbeing than boys the same age.[109] In the ASMR/SI study, girls aged 11-17 were also more likely than boys to watch or listen to ten of the eleven sub-genres of ASMR or SI content. The only exception to this, was that boys were more likely to seek and watch gym and fitness content. [110]

*"If I want to try like a new exercise, I'l*l look up and see how to do it and stuff like that"

Boy, 14

Although not all aspects of 'wellbeing content' are positive and in some cases, can be potentially damaging

Use of ASMR and SI generally had either a positive or a neutral effect on how children felt. Nearly half (46%) of ASMR users said that viewing ASMR content had made them feel better, and 42% of those that watched or listened to SI content said it often made them feel more positive about themselves. However, just over half (52%) of 11-17s who used ASMR disliked at least one thing about it. These dislikes ranged from finding ASMR content boring (20%) to it making them feel scared or uncomfortable (14%) or feeling that it was inappropriate for their age group (10%).

[106] Ofcom Understanding children's use and perceptions of ASMR and self-improvement content 2025
[107] Ofcom Children and Parents' Media Literacy Tracker 2024
[108] Ofcom Understanding children's use and perceptions of ASMR and self-improvement content 2025
[109] Ofcom Children and Parents' Media Literacy Tracker 2024
[110] Ofcom Understanding children's use and perceptions of ASMR and self-improvement content 2025

> *"Sometimes it can come up with things that are a bit inappropriate, like swearing sometimes, which isn't good, and I just have to, like, quickly skip through the video"*
>
> ***Girl, 12***

The proportions were higher among those 11-17s who used SI content, with 70% saying they disliked at least one thing about it. For example, 40% of users of SI said this content made them feel bad about themselves, pressured or led them to overthink or be obsessive, 33% did not always trust what the content creators said or agree with their views and 15% felt that the content was inappropriate for their age group.[111]

Some children, as young as ten, had seen challenges online involving significant weight loss

Ofcom's Children's Online Insight panel has found that many panellists engaged with self-improvement content, ranging from advice to body-image related content.[112] One panellist, aged 10 had seen challenges relating to significant weight loss. The panellist described how they had seen Mr Beast's 'weight loss challenge which involved influencer, 'Mr Beast' running a series of challenges which involve participants losing a significant amount of weight (e.g. 100 pounds) for a financial reward.

Panellists in this research spoke about seeing large quantities of self-improvement content on the platforms they use. Even when not feeling directly impacted by this content, some noted that it had led to conversations around body image and body dysmorphia among their friendship groups.[113]

Children use the internet to learn and develop skills, with AI services playing an increasing role

Overall, nearly all (99%) 13-17s said that they see at least one benefit to being online. This can be grouped into 3 broad areas: information gathering, skills development, and social connection.[114]

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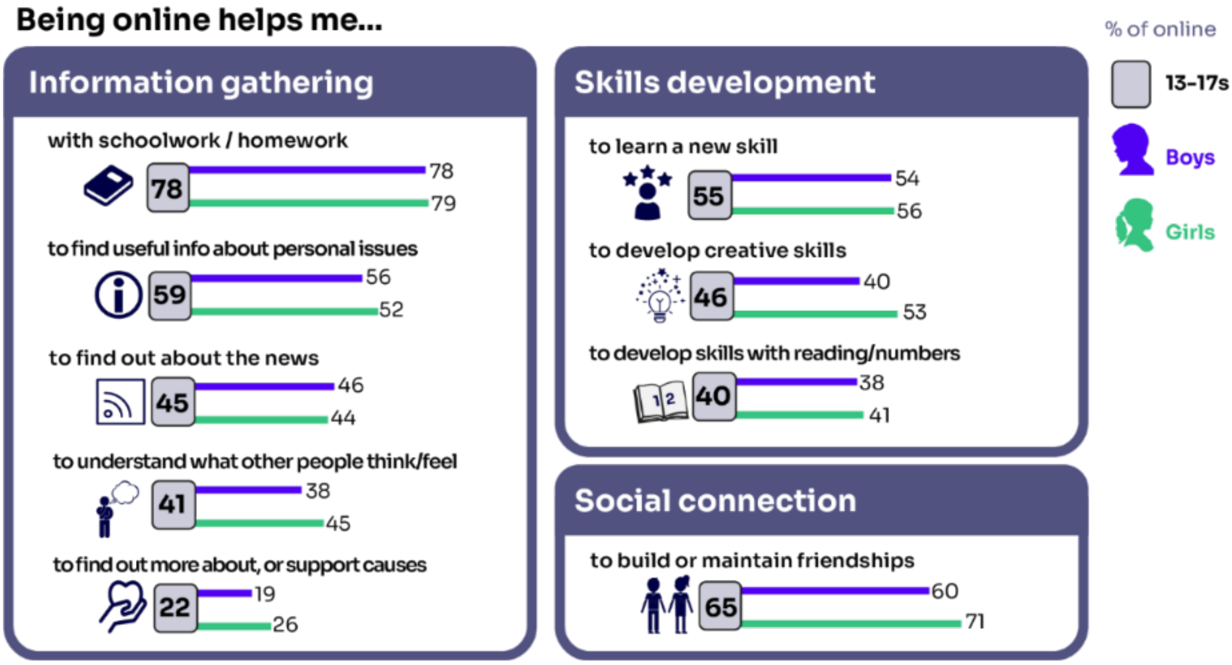
[111] Ofcom Understanding children's use and perceptions of ASMR and self-improvement content 2025

[112] Panellists in the Children's Online Insight Panel are recruited on the basis of being actively engaged online users. This insight is derived from this sub-group of users and may not be reflective of the 'average' child online user.

[113] Ofcom, 2025. The Children's Online Insights Panel: Waves 1 and 2

[114] Ofcom Children and Parents' Media Literacy Tracker 2024

Figure 80: Proportion of 13-17s that see a benefit to being online



Most children and parents see the internet as a valuable educational tool. Nearly eight in ten (78%) 13-17s and over seven in ten (72%) parents say it helps with schoolwork. Ofcom's CPOM research[115] found three-quarters (76%) of 8-14s visited an education-related service over a month. Popular platforms include Duolingo (visited by 21%), Wikipedia (17%), and Sparx (17%). AI tools are becoming influential for learning too: Gauth AI study companion was visited by 22% of 13-14s and 8% of 10–12-year-olds during the month of measurement, and ChatGPT was visited by 9% of 8–14-year-olds.

Beyond schoolwork, children go online to learn new skills (55%) and develop creative skills (46%). Furthermore, four in five 3-17s (80%) engage in creative activities online, such as watching tutorials or game walkthroughs (44%) and watching online tutorials for hobbies (39%). Parents also agree, with over half saying that being online helps children be creative (56%) and learn a new skill (51%).

Children also use the internet to find information; from problems or issues (59%) to news (45%) and understanding others' views (41%). Again, parents agree that these are beneficial aspects to their child being online, in particular, for finding information about personal issues (35%) and for hearing about the news (31%).

Being online can facilitate social connections

Two-thirds (65%) of 13–17-year-olds say being online helps them build and maintain friendships, especially among girls (71% vs. 60% of boys). Social media and messaging apps are central to this; 72% of this age group using them to feel closer to friends[116], and COST research shows that 63% of 8-17s were added to a group chat in the past four weeks.[117] Ofcom's Children's Media Lives research

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[115] Ofcom's Children's Passive Online Measurement 2025. UK representative sample of 692 children aged between 8-14 years old who go online. Fieldwork conducted between 10th November 2024 – 20th March 2025. Data collected via VPN/App loaded onto mobile phone, tablet or computer. See full report for more details [Children's Passive Online Measurement report]

[116] Ofcom Children and Parents' Media Literacy Tracker 2024

[117] Ofcom, Children's Online Safety Tracker 2025: Wave 1

highlighted how important children feel Snapchat and WhatsApp are in facilitating social interactions:[118]

"We've got big [Snapchat] group chats with everyone in them. Like, it's all people from my year. I've got ones with just my close friends in them. I've got ones where, like, it's all the girls in my year. […]."

Girl, aged 13

"I use WhatsApp to talk to my friends [from his current and previous schools]. I would say 95% of the time I'm talking to my friends."

Boy, aged 13

Children are generally positive about the impact of being online on relationships: 64% say being online had a mostly good effect on their friendships, compared to 57% for family relationships. Only a small minority felt it had a bad effect on relationships with friends (2%) or family (4%)[119].

While girls are more likely than boys to <u>use</u> the social aspects of being online[120], COST found that boys are more likely than girls to feel that being online had a mostly <u>good effect</u> on their relationship with their friends (67% vs 62%).[121] This may be due to boys often using gaming to connect; boys are more likely than girls to communicate with others while gaming (81% of 8-17 boys who game online vs 66% of girls in the same age group)[122].

Children aged 13-15 were also more positive than those aged 10-12 to feel that being online had a mostly good effect on their friendships (67% vs 62%). Younger teens tend to use messaging services (99% vs 94% respectively) and social media (95% vs 81% respectively) more than 10-12s.[123]

Online bullying is a concern among children; however, some are taking action by blocking and muting

While the internet is a great resource for social connections, it can also bring the negatives of offline relationships to the online world, such as bullying.[124] Overall, nine in ten children aged 8-17 (91%) who said that someone had been 'nasty or hurtful' to them said it had happened via some form of communications technology. The most likely place was via a text or messaging app (like WhatsApp) – with 43% claiming this; as likely as those who said it was via face-to-face encounters (43%).[125] Some

[118] Ofcom Children's Media Lives 2025
[119] Ofcom, Children's Online Safety Tracker 2025: Wave 1
[120] Ofcom Children and Parents' Media Literacy Tracker 2024
[121] Ofcom, Children's Online Safety Tracker 2025: Wave 1
[122] Ofcom Children and Parents' Media Literacy Tracker 2024
[123] Ofcom, Children's Online Safety Tracker 2025: Wave 1
[124] COST data found that 58% of children have seen or heard some type of bullying online. Ofcom, Children's Online Safety Tracker 2025: Wave 1
[125] Ofcom Children and Parents' Media Literacy Tracker 2024

panelists in the Children's Online Insights Panel discussed how their school had encouraged them not to be part of group chats for this reason.[126]

*"Luckily, I wasn't involved but some people in a group chat were being so mean to a girl in our school…it was really bad. The teachers called the whole year into an assembly and said they'll go to the police about it if it doesn't stop….I haven't been i*n as many group chats since"

Girl, 12 years-old

A few of the panellists also said how group chats can sometimes feel overwhelming and do not always include people they know in real life. Several described being a part of either many groups, or groups that are inundated with lots of messages. This can include messages from people they do not know.[127]

"There's 'add everyone you know' groups and I just leave them straight away sometimes, because everyone spams them. It works like one person will add lots of people they know, then the next person, it could be up to 1,000 people in a group"

Girl, 12 years-old

A third (34%) of children aged 8-17 have blocked someone online. Teenagers, aged 13-17, are more likely to have done this (37%) than pre-teens aged 8-12 (31%). Children in minority ethnic groups are more likely to have blocked someone (42%) than White children (32%); as are children with a health condition compared to those without (45% vs 30%).[128]

Ofcom's research into ASMR and SI content found that several children felt comfortable using different service's tools to block creators that they did not want to see appear in their feeds.[129]

"Honestly, I just block everybody that I don't want to watch, like, on [service] for example"

Girl, 16 (ASMR/SI study)

[126] Ofcom, 2025. The Children's Online Insights Panel: Waves 1 and 2
[127] Ofcom, 2025. The Children's Online Insights Panel: Waves 1 and 2
[128] Ofcom, Children's Online Safety Tracker 2025: Wave 1
[129] Ofcom Understanding children's use and perceptions of ASMR and self-improvement content 2025

It’s a similar story when looking at children's use of muting, although children are less likely to use this functionality than blocking. Almost three in ten (28%) children have muted another user online on at least one of the services they use. In contrast to the use of blocking, gender appears to be a factor in children’s use of muting, with boys being more likely to have muted someone compared to girls (31% vs 26%).

However, as seen with blocking, children from minority ethnic groups were more likely to use the muting functionality than white children (36% vs 27%); as were those with a health condition compared to those without a condition (34% vs 26%). [130]

Persuasive design features on platforms can influence children’s online purchases, leading to regret

Ofcom’s research[131] into how persuasive design features could lead to potential financial harms, found that almost six in ten (58%) children aged 8-17 said they had spent money online in the past month (at the time of fieldwork), whether on social media sites, video-sharing platforms, or while they were gaming. However, a significant minority experienced regret about this spending. A third (32%) of those who reported spending money whilst gaming regretted purchases, and 43% of those who spent money in social environments regretted purchases made on social media sites and apps (including video sites). Additionally, 42% found it unclear what they were buying in games, and 41% say they often overspend in games.[132]

In Ofcom’s qualitative research, some older teenagers discussed spending they had regretted when younger, such as on cosmetic upgrades like ‘skins’, which they had felt under pressure to have. In retrospect, they acknowledged that they were often embarrassed to admit their regret at the time.[133]

“I probably would [buy cosmetic items in a game] if I was younger. I mean, I'm quite hard now but probably a couple years back, I would have bought it, like just not even thinking, right? And just at the time wanting it, but then later on thinking it's just a waste.”

[130] Ofcom, Children’s Online Safety Tracker 2025: Wave 1
[131] This research was conducted under Ofcom’s duties to promote and research media literacy. As part of our ongoing effort to deepen understanding of user expectations, we committed to examining specific issues including the potential impact of persuasive design on children. This programme of research was commissioned to explore how persuasive design features could lead to potential financial harms for children. It should be noted that in the qualitative research, participants defined ‘financial harm’ by identifying the ways in which children are adversely affected when encouraged by persuasive platform features to spend money, rather than using a predefined list of harms. It therefore differs from how Ofcom uses the term in reference to those harms defined in the Online Safety Act. The experiences considered harmful by participants included financial losses, overspending and shifts in children’s perceptions of money deemed negative. Additionally, participants highlighted broader negative effects such as feelings of disappointment or regret, as well as the loss of autonomy imposed by parents as a consequence.
[132] Ofcom, 2025. Children's online spending and potential financial harm Quantitative research
[133] Ofcom, 2025. Persuasive design features and potential child financial harms report

Year 9 pupil

There are different influences or persuasive features within these services that encourage children to spend. The quantitative research found that, among those who had bought something whilst gaming, key drivers to spend money included character customisation (30%), special offers (22%), limited-time deals (21%), and to make quicker progress in the game (20%). Within the social media environment, key drivers included adverts (27%), recommendations from friends or family (23%) and influencer content (22%).[134]

In-game purchases which introduce elements of chance and surprise, and lack transparency and fairness, were seen to encourage gambling-like behaviour, according to the qualitative research. By encouraging risk-taking behaviours, these purchases can promote repeated spending. In many cases participants reported platforms not disclosing the exact odds of obtaining rare items, exacerbating the issue further. And even where the odds were disclosed, they were not necessarily displayed in a way that children fully understood. This lack of transparency led to players, particularly early secondary-school-aged children (11-13), becoming caught in a cycle of spending in the hope of obtaining rare and valuable items.[135]

"You could spend £20 to buy a player pack, you don't know what you're going to get…it's terrible because it's not guaranteed. You could spend 3000 points but get a bronze card."

Year 9 pupil

This study also found a connection between time spent online and higher incidence of children spending money in gaming or social media environments. Three-quarters (76%) of children (aged 8 - 17) who said they spend over 6 hours per day online (on a weekday) reported spending money in the last month, compared to 42% of light users (2 hours or less).[136] Teenagers in the qualitative research reported feeling a sense of loss and regret when they lost something that they had built up on a platform over time (e.g. a streak). To avoid this loss, some reported spending more time on the service in an attempt to protect and reclaim their lost progress. Some noted that, because the cost to restore lost progress is relatively small, they often make impulsive purchases—especially in time-sensitive situations where the threat of loss feels immediate.[137]

[134] Ofcom, 2025. Children's online spending and potential financial harm Quantitative research
[135] Ofcom, 2025. Persuasive design features and potential child financial harms report
[136] Ofcom, 2025. Children's online spending and potential financial harm Quantitative research
[137] Ofcom, 2025. Persuasive design features and potential child financial harms report

Harmful online experiences

The following section explores children's encounters with content harmful to children, focusing on Primary Priority Content (PPC)[138] and Priority Content (PC)[139] as defined in the Online Safety Act (OSA). Non-Designated Content (NDC)[140] is also included within the OSA as content that is harmful to children, however data measuring exposure to this was not included in wave 1 of COST and is therefore not available in this report. However, NDC will be included from wave 2 onwards.

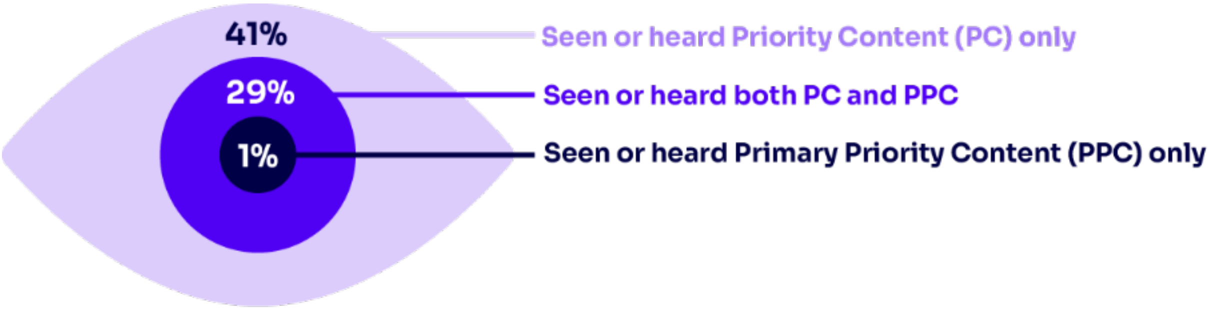
Seven in ten 11-17s have seen or heard content harmful to children online; the most likely types being bullying and hate content[141]

The data in this section is from the first wave of the COST[142], which was collected before Ofcom's Protection of Children Codes of Practice[143] came into force. It provides the baseline measure for the proportion of children saying they have been exposed to content harmful to children. Therefore, data in this section (and the rest of the report) is not indicative of the impact of the POC codes measures. The second wave of the COST (fieldwork November/December 2025) will measure any changes.[144]

Seven in ten 11-17-year-olds had seen or heard some form of content harmful to children in the last four weeks, at the time of fieldwork.[145] Nearly all this group had seen or heard PC content, and three in ten had seen or heard a form of PPC (suicide, self-harm, pornography and/or eating disorder content online), largely in addition to PC.

[138] Primary Priority Content (PPC) which is content that children of any age should be prevented from encountering. This includes pornographic content; suicide content; self-harm content; and eating disorder content.
[139] Priority Content (PC) which is content that children in age groups judged to be at risk of harm from the content should be protected from encountering. This includes content that is abusive on the basis of certain characteristics; content inciting hatred; violence towards both humans and animals; bullying; dangerous stunts and challenges; and self-administering harmful substances.
[140] Non-Designated Content (NDC) includes types of content that do not fall within the PPC or PC categories, and that present a material risk of significant harm to an appreciable number of children in the United Kingdom.
[141] Cognitive testing for the COST survey found that children were confused about the meaning of "abuse" when asking about "hate and abuse" as defined in the OSA. Therefore, the survey asked about "hate" only as we found this was a more accessible term when children were considering the kinds of content they were thinking about.
[142] COST Wave 1 fieldwork was conducted March-April 2025.
[143] Statement: Protecting children from harms online
[144] The data from this second wave will be available in May 2026.
[145] The NET figure for PPC harms does not include responses to two specific codes (suicide and self-harm) for respondents below Year 8 (England and Wales) S1 (Scotland) Year 9 (Northern Ireland) as these questions were not asked of this group. Therefore, the NET figure may underrepresent instances where younger respondents encounter this content.

Figure 81: Proportion of 11–17-year-olds who have experienced PPC/PC online in last 4 weeks

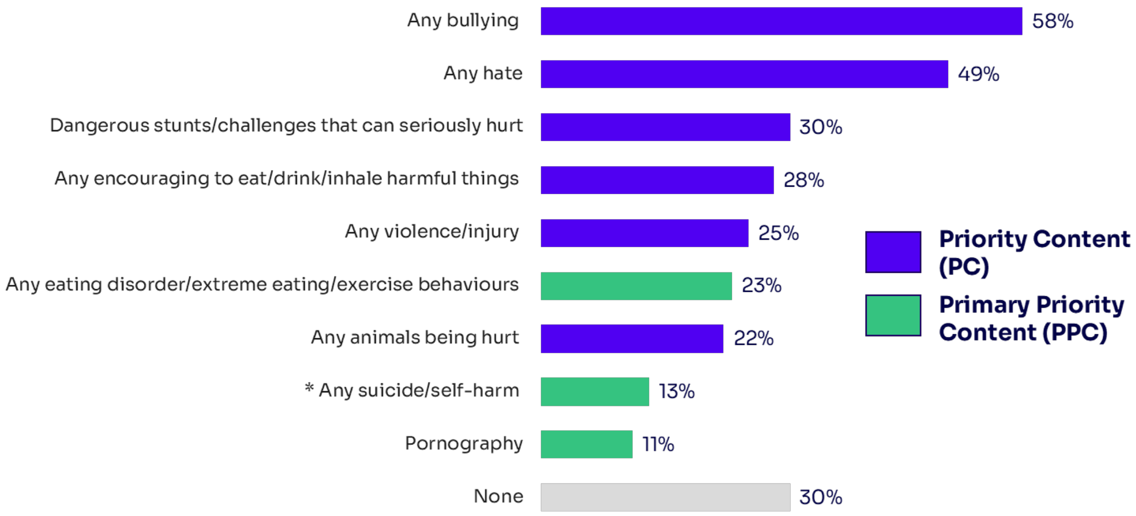


Ofcom, Children's Online Safety Tracker.2025: Wave 1. Base: All children aged 11-17 at secondary school or above.

Of the content harmful to children encountered, content related to bullying was the most likely to be seen, by almost six in ten children (58%). Half (49%) saw content related to hate, and three in ten said they saw content encouraging them to do dangerous stunts or challenges (30%), or content relating to eating/drinking/inhaling harmful substances (28%). Each of these types of content are PC content.[146]

Within the PPC category of content, almost a quarter (23%) of children saw eating disorder content[147]; and just over one in ten saw suicide or self-harm content (13%)[148] or pornographic content (11%).[149]

Figure 82: Proportion of 11–17-year-olds who have experienced types of PPC/ PC in the past 4 weeks



[146] Harmful content was categorised into themes, some of which included multiple types of harms (e.g. content related to bullying included bullying online, online trolling, griefing in online games, and people excluding others from being part of games or chats).

[147] Eating disorder content includes 11% seeing content showing someone with an eating disorder or encouraging it, and 15% seeing content showing or encouraging extreme eating or extreme exercise behaviours.

[148] Ofcom, Children's Online Safety Tracker.2025: Wave 1. Children aged 12 and above were asked about suicide (seen by 5%) and self-harm content (seen by 9%); the other harms were asked of all 11-17s.

[149] Ofcom, Children's Online Safety Tracker.2025: Wave 1

*Ofcom, Children's Online Safety Tracker.2025: Wave 1. Base: All children aged 11-17 at secondary school or above, (1396). * All children aged 12-17 who have given their consent to be asked about these harms.*

Demographic groups reporting greater exposure to content harmful to children, also tend to report lower levels of happiness online

In relation to exposure to content harmful to children, there were significant differences within demographics, particularly when seeing PPC. Exposure was more likely among older children aged 13-17 (including 33% of 13-15s and 35% of 16-17s) than the youngest age group of 11-12s (19%); among those from a minority ethnic background than White children (47% vs 32%); and among those with a health condition compared to those with no condition (44% vs 31%).

There were fewer demographic differences among children who had seen PC. Children with a health condition were more likely to encounter PC compared to those without a condition (79% vs 66%). Among those aged 13+, children who identified as Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Pansexual or Queer were more likely to encounter PC than heterosexual children (81% vs 68%).[150] The groups that are more likely to report seeing content harmful to children, also tend to report lower levels of happiness with their online activities (see section above: 'How children feel about their online lives').[151]

Children dissatisfied with their lives, and those less likely to say they feel safe online were more likely to see content harmful to children

Encountering content harmful to children can have a detrimental effect on a child's wellbeing. Below we consider three aspects of children's wellbeing: satisfaction with life in general; happiness that the content they see is appropriate for their age; and how safe they feel online.

Of the 6% of children aged 11-17 who said they were dissatisfied with their life, most (90%) had seen content harmful to children online, compared to seven in ten (69%) who said they were satisfied. Most (90%) of those dissatisfied with their life said they had seen PC, and almost half (47%) had seen a PPC as well. None had only been exposed to PPC.[152]

Exposure to content harmful to children also correlates with their attitudes towards what they see online. Nearly a fifth (18%) of children this age said they were 'never' or 'sometimes' happy that what they see online is appropriate for their age and almost nine in ten (86%) of these had been exposed to PC, and around half (46%) PPC. This compares to 66% and 26% seeing content harmful to children among those who were always or mostly happy with the content they see online being appropriate.

This trend is also reflected in levels of happiness with their online safety among children aged 11-17. Of the 14% that said they were 'never' or 'sometimes' happy with their level of safety online, 83% had seen PC and 43% PPC – higher than among those children who were always or mostly happy (68% and 27%).

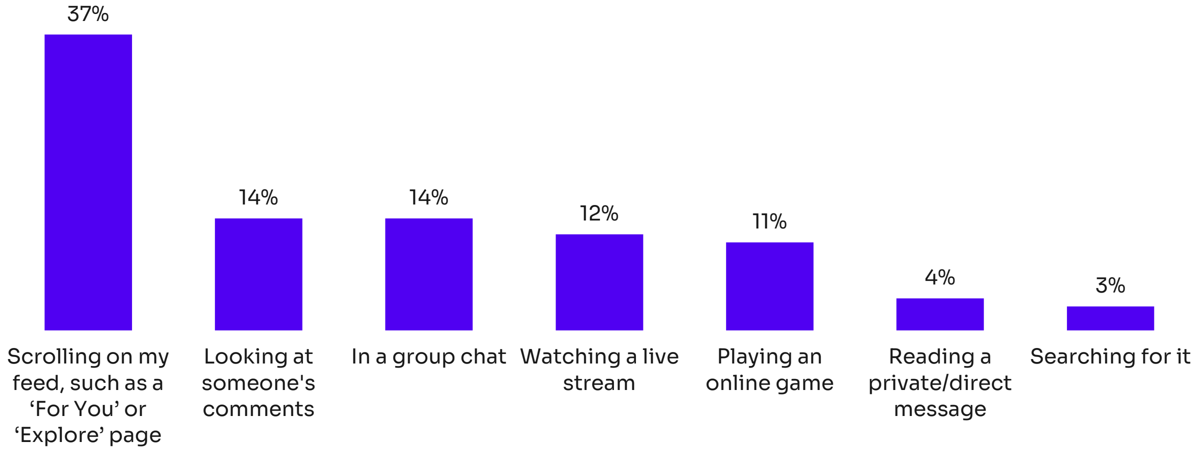
[150] Note that the sample for 'Gay or lesbian, Bisexual, Pansexual, Queer children' who answered Module 2 (online harms) was 58, therefore as this is under 100 the data should be treated as indicative.
[151] Ofcom, Children's Online Safety Tracker.2025: Wave 1
[152] Note that the sample for those who were overall dissatisfied with their life and who answered Module 2 (online harms) was 81, therefore as this is under 100 the data should be treated as indicative.

Content harmful to children was most likely to be encountered when scrolling on a feed

When asked what functionality[153] they were using when they last encountered content harmful to children, almost four in ten (37%) children aged 11-17 said it was when 'scrolling on their feed'. This was more likely to be the case for the older children aged 16-17 (44%) than the youngest age group of 11-12-year-olds (26%).

More than one in ten children said they had seen the content when they were looking at someone's comments online or in a group chat (both 14%), when watching a live stream (12%) or when playing an online game (11%). A small minority of children who said they encountered content harmful to children said this was through reading a private or direct message (4%) or searching for it (3%).

Figure 83: Functionality that 11-17s were using when content harmful to children was encountered



Ofcom, Children's Online Safety Tracker.2025: Wave 1. Base: All children aged 11-17 who have seen/heard inappropriate content in last 4 weeks and were asked follow up questions on a specific content and the service they last saw it on (896) (6% I don't know/ I can't remember; 0% I do not want to answer this)

Two thirds of children took some form of action after seeing content harmful to children

Children aged 11-17 responded to encountering content harmful to children in different ways. Overall, two thirds of children did take some form of action. This included both making use of functionalities on the service and taking action offline. However, the most common response was to ignore the content (30%).

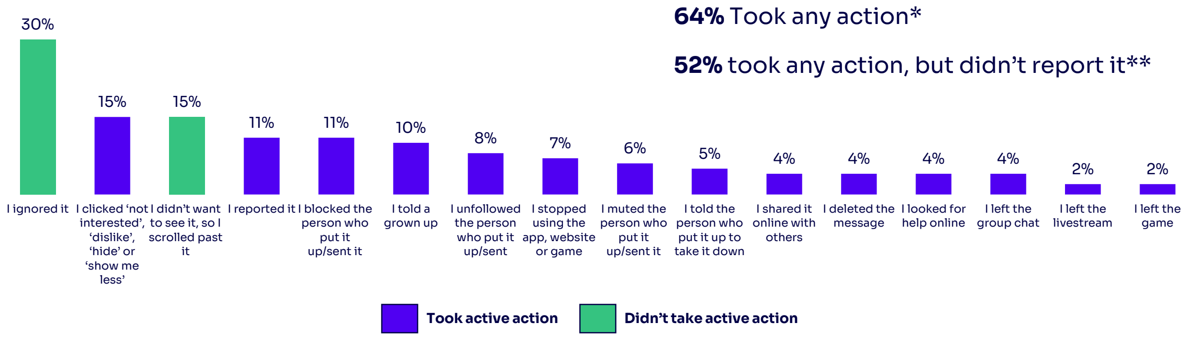
There are various ways that children, and adults, can make it known to an online service that they do not wish to see certain types of content again. On some online services, users can actively let the service know that they do not like or want to see the content that is presented to them, via negative

[153] Ofcom, Children's Online Safety Tracker.2025: Wave 1 At this point in the survey (from M2Q6-M2Q14), the sample were split via a 'least-fill quota' basis by type of content harmful to children encountered, to ensure that we maximised the potential sample size for each type of content harmful to children experienced. Additional weighting was then applied to the data from M2Q6-M2Q14 to reflect the true proportion on type of content harmful to children encountered.

sentiment tools. These include ‘Dislike’, ‘Not interested’, ‘Show me less’ or ‘Hide’ buttons; 15% of children aged 11-17 made use of a tool like this.

Around one in 10 children aged 11-17 chose to report the content (11%), blocked the person who put it up or sent it to them (10%), and told a grown up about their experience (10%).

Figure 84: Action taken after seeing content harmful to children



*Ofcom, Children’s Online Safety Tracker 2025: Wave 1. Base: All children aged 11-17 who have seen/heard inappropriate content in last 4 weeks and were asked follow up questions on a specific content and the service they last saw it on (896) (2% I don’t know/ I can’t remember; 0% I do not want to answer this). * Took any action’ net includes all actions except ‘’I ignored it’ and ‘I didn’t want to see it so I scrolled past it’ ** Took any action, but didn’t report it’ net includes all actions except ‘’I ignored it’, I’ didn’t want to see it so I scrolled past it’ & ‘I reported it’*

Annex

Ofcom research sources

Adults research sources

Online Experiences Tracker (OET)

The Online Experiences Tracker is a quantitative tracking survey that examines people's attitudes to, and experiences of using online services. The research is conducted twice a year using an online panel to sample over 7,000 UK internet users. All respondents who took part in the research were drawn from the YouGov panel.

From Wave 8 in 2025 (Jun), the sample age range changed from 13+ to 18+ years. As a result, quotas and weighting have been updated for Wave 8 to reflect this change. While the overall impact on reported figures is modest, readers should be mindful when comparing trend data from Wave 8 to previous waves. See more here.[154]

Although being online provides people with many benefits, the online environment also has the potential to expose internet users to harm. Not all occurrences of potentially harmful content or behaviour online result in actual psychological (or financial) harm, so in this report they are referred to as 'potential harms'.

The data relating to type and prevalence of potential harm refers to responses from internet users encountering a 'potential harm' in the four weeks before completing the OET survey. Further OET data relating to the location and impact of, and response to a potential harm relate to the 'most recently encountered potential harm', indicating the most recent potentially harmful content encountered by respondents in the four weeks before completing the survey. To capture this data, survey respondents are prompted with a pre-defined list of potential harms, and their responses are based on their recall and judgement of the content and behaviours which they consider align with those listed in the questionnaire.

The list of harms in the OET questionnaire covers content that falls within the scope of the Online Safety Act, and also extends to other types of content and behaviour, in order to capture a wider range of experiences online. The data is also based on users' own categorisations of platform type, so reference to platform type in this chapter may not align with the categorisation of platform type referenced in the earlier chapters or within the Online Safety Act. Differences explored among subgroups, compared to the average internet user or total, refers to UK internet users aged 18+.

Video-Sharing Platform (VSP) Tracker

The VSP Tracker is a quantitative survey that serves to understand and track VSP users' awareness, perceptions and claimed experiences of the safety measures and tools available on VSPs, within the broader context of their use of VSPs. A total of 1,155 online interviews among children and adults aged 13+ were conducted by YouGov in Wave 6. Wave 6 fieldwork took place in August 2024.

[154] Ofcom, 2025. Notification of proposed change for OET – wave 8.

Technology Tracker

The Technology Tracker is an annual survey conducted among UK people aged 16+, which collects information about people's ownership and use of technologies, including TV, radio, mobile phones, the internet and smart technology. In 2025, the fieldwork was conducted by BMG Research with 4,045 people between January and April, and was a mix of 80% face-to-face and 20% online surveys which were via a postal invitation.

Adults' Media Literacy Tracker

The Adults' Media Literacy Tracker is an annual survey providing evidence on media use, attitudes and understanding among UK people aged 16 and over.

Online Research Panel

Ofcom works with YouGov Plc UK on the Online Research Panel project, which allows Ofcom to conduct online interviews administered to members of the YouGov UK panel of 2.5 million+ individuals who have agreed to take part in surveys. Emails are sent to panellists selected at random from the base sample. The email invites them to take part in a survey and provides a generic survey link. Once a panel member clicks on the link, they are sent to the survey that they are most required for, according to the sample definition and quotas. Invitations to surveys do not expire and respondents can be directed to any available survey. The responding sample is weighted to the profile of the sample definition to provide a representative reporting sample.

News Consumption Survey (NCS)

The News Consumption Survey (NCS) is a bi-annual survey with fieldwork for 2024 taking place across two waves: from 6th November – 3rd December 2023 and 26th February – 23th March 2024, reaching a sample of 5,466 nationally representative UK individuals aged 16+.

The aim of the News Consumption Survey is to help us understand:

• News consumption across the UK and within each UK nation

• The sources and platforms used for news

• The perceived importance of different outlets for news

• The attitudes towards individual news sources, and local news use

Children's research sources

Children's Online Safety Tracker (COST)

The Children's Online Safety Tracker (COST) is a new quantitative tracking study with fieldwork twice a year, designed to deepen understanding of UK children's (8-17) online experiences. This includes their awareness and use of online safety tools and their exposure to content harmful to children (CHC) online.

This tracker replaces measurement of children's exposure to CHC online via Ofcom's Online Experiences Tracker (OET), which previously included children aged 13-17 in its sample. As of June 2025 (Wave 8) the OET covers adults (aged 18+) only and the COST survey will be Ofcom's source of data on children's exposure to CHC and online safety tools. Due to different methodologies, sample make-up and fieldwork timings, direct comparisons between OET data and COST data are not possible.

COST uses a hybrid methodology, combining participation from children recruited through an online panel (via their parents) and from children recruited through a schools panel. Children recruited via schools complete the survey within school time to benefit from existing safeguarded environments. At Wave 1, the in-school component was carried out as a pilot to test the methodology before full roll out. As a result, Wave 1 data included in this report is solely comprised of online panel data.

Fieldwork was conducted between 14th March to 9 April 2025, prior to Ofcom's Protection of Children Codes of Practice came into force on 25 July, therefore it should not be considered reflective of implementation of our codes measures. COST uses a modular approach, meaning children either completed module 1 (use of safety tools) or module 2 (experiences of CHC). The total sample achieved at wave 1 was 3,142 children aged 8-17. The sample achieved for module 1 was 1,746 children aged 8-17 and 1396 children aged 11-17s for module 2.

In line with our safeguarding policies, primary age children only compete module 2 in a school environment. Therefore, data collected from Wave 1 for module 2 comprises secondary age children only (11+).

Survey responses are based on children's recall of a 4-week period prior to survey completion. Responses are based on respondents own recall and judgement.

At Wave 2 COST will continue to capture data on children aged 8-17s experiences of CHC and, in addition, will ask about their experiences of Non-Designated Content (NDC).

Further information about the COST methodology and data captures can be accessed here.

Fieldwork for Wave 2 was conducted in November and December 2025. Data and analysis for this wave will be published in May 2026.

Children's Online Insights Panel

The Children's Online Insights Panel aims to provide Ofcom with regular, ongoing insights into children's online experiences, using a combination of online digital diaries and in-depth interviews. There are 4 waves per year, each spanning 3 months. A wave consists of 3 monthly online diaries (lasting for 3 days each) and 1 online in-depth interview These touchpoints allow the research agency to explore the latest apps the panellists are using, the online activities they're engaging in, and any new trends that are emerging. This approach helps us to identify potential risks early and deepen understanding of the digital lives of young people from their own perspective.

The panel is made up of fifteen children and young people from the UK aged 8 to 17 with diversity across demographics. We intentionally recruited actively engaged online users to capture a broad range of platforms, features, functionalities and content the panellists are likely to have encountered or engaged with. As a result, the findings in this report may not fully represent the experiences of the 'average' child online user.

Insights included in this chapter are drawn from the first two waves of research (March – August 2025). Quotations included in this chapter are taken from the in-depth interviews with the panellists and from their online diary entries. Panellists' names have also been pseudonymised to maintain anonymity. Key findings from these waves have been published online here. A full report will follow in 2026 after the fourth wave.

Children's Passive Online Measurement (CPOM)

The requirement of the study was to measure a robust UK representative sample of online children aged 8-14s' use of websites and apps across smartphones, tablets and computers. The measurement includes the websites and apps that were visited on the device(s) used by the child panellist and how long was spent on the services visited.

- To collect this data the recruited children had passive monitoring software installed on the devices they used to go online, with the data being reported back anonymously.
- The children's internet use was measured over a period of 28 consecutive days for each panellist between November 2024 and March 2025, which means that all results reflect usage patterns over that period, but are not necessarily representative of their use over, for example, a whole year.
- This study used a single source sample where each panellist has one or more devices tracked (typically just one), rather than multiple panels based on each device type (smartphone, tablet and computer), with the panels subsequently fused together to provide the final sample results. The single source method used favours more accurate deduplicated reach figures for the devices tracked. See published report[155] for more details.

Children's and Parents' Media Literacy Tracker

The Children's and Parents' Media Literacy Tracker provides evidence on media access, use, attitudes and understanding among children and young people aged 3-17. The survey also asks parents' views about their children's media use, and how parents of children and young people aged 3-17 monitor and manage their children's use.

Children's Media Lives

The Children's Media Lives project follows, as far as possible. the same group of 21 children aged 8 to 17, conducting filmed interviews each year to learn about their media habits and attitudes. This research began in 2014 as a way of providing a small-scale, rich and detailed qualitative complement to Ofcom's quantitative surveys of media literacy.

It provides evidence about the motivations and the context for media use, and how media is a part of their daily life and domestic circumstances. The project also provides rich details of how children's media habits and attitudes change over time, particularly in the context of their emotional and cognitive development.

Third-party research sources

Ipsos iris audience measurement service

- Launched in early 2021, Ipsos iris is the UKOM (UK Online Measurement)-endorsed currency for the measurement of audiences of online content of UK adults aged 15+ who use the internet at least once a month.
- Ipsos iris uses a hybrid methodology with several data sources including:

[155] Children's Passive Online Measurement report

- A passive single-source panel of over 10,000 adults who use the internet. Panellists install passive tracking software onto personally used digital devices and in some instances those who also use their device for work (smartphones, computers, and tablets) which access the internet, with data collected continuously. The panel is recruited to be representative of the internet population demographically, geographically and by device type use.
- Census measurement of publisher websites and apps to collect visit measures for time spent and page views at a total level.

Similarweb

Similarweb is a digital-market intelligence platform that offers real-time insights into how websites and apps perform in terms of traffic, engagement, channels and audience behaviour. It works by aggregating and anonymising billions of device signals from sources such as direct measurement from partner sites/apps, a contributory network of consumer products, partnerships and public data extraction, which are then cleaned and modelled using machine-learning algorithms to estimate digital behaviour. Clients use it to benchmark their digital presence, perform competitor analysis, identify new growth opportunities, optimise marketing mix across channels and back strategic decisions with data-driven insights.

One of the primary use cases by Ofcom in this report and generally is use of daily and monthly visitor metrics built from their UK of panel device monitoring and delivered as aggregated anonymised data. Other traffic metrics include visits, bounce rates, time spent and referral data.

Apptopia

Apptopia is a mobile-app market intelligence provider that offers users global, real-time (and historical) data on app performance, usage, revenue, downloads, and engagement across iOS and Android for millions of apps and publishers worldwide.

Their platform draws on a large proprietary dataset for behavioural data including a user device panel. Apptopia’s suite also includes tools like SDK recognition (to see what third-party tools apps are using) and review/sentiment analysis aimed at giving publishers, investors, analysts, and marketers actionable insights into the mobile-app ecosystem.