Drawing a line in digital spaces: Taking stock of current and proposed age-based restrictions for social media

SECOND EDITION

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Key messages

01 Global momentum has accelerated again, but most social media age restrictions are not fully implemented yet.

The number of jurisdictions considering age-based restrictions for social media has jumped from **almost 40 in March 2026 to 69 in August 2026**, across seven regions.[1] Of the 69, 60 (87 per cent) are still debating a measure or working on a bill that has not been adopted, three have passed laws not yet in force, and six are in the process of implementing one.

02 Children's views are not consistently considered in the development of proposals, and where children were asked, their answers were more nuanced than the measures adopted.

Only 13 of the 69 jurisdictions consulted children directly on the age question. Children's responses show broad support for the objective of social media age restrictions, but they are divided in their support for **a blanket restriction**. Across jurisdictions, children supported the restriction of **specific functions and design features**.

03 Different age thresholds are under consideration, from under 12 to under 18 years, and countries considering the same age threshold vary considerably in their exact design.

Six different age thresholds are under consideration, ranging from under **12 to under 18 years**. A further seven jurisdictions have not settled on an age. The clustering at 15 and 16 years accounts for 48 of the 69 jurisdictions, but the underlying design differs considerably among these. In some jurisdictions the age is an absolute bar that a parent cannot lift, whereas in others there is a consent gate allowing parents to provide access.

A growing group tapers the restriction across the years following the threshold, giving more graduated access, while others define the age by school cohort rather than by individual birthday. Comparisons drawn from the threshold alone can therefore be misleading.

04 Parental decision making is the least resolved dimension.

Only 15 of the 69 jurisdictions give parents a decision over access and 28 set a hard floor. In 26, the question is not answered at all, in most cases because the detail of the law has not yet been written. Where parents are entitled or required to make a decision, that power is designed in at least four different forms: (1) consent overriding the floor, (2) consent in a band above a floor, (3) parent-held account, and (4) consent within a risk class. Accordingly, the phrase 'parental consent' is used to mean materially different decision-making mechanisms. In France, the Constitutional Council recently weighed in on the question of parental consent and decided that the exclusion of a parental role in children's social media access means that the restriction is not in line with the Constitution.

05 Initial evaluation reports are emerging which can be considered as a first implementation update.

Australia's three-month evaluation found that the proportion of children aged 10-15 years holding a social media account fell from 52.4 to 42.1 per cent in the three months after the law came into effect in December 2025. The evaluation identified ineffective implementation of age assurance by platforms as the primary reason children continued to hold restricted accounts. In Indonesia, platforms report millions of accounts deactivated or closed since the law came into force in March 2026. In Malaysia, the age-verification requirement came into effect in June 2026 but is being implemented progressively over a period of up to six months. None of this yet provides any conclusive evidence of whether adopted social media age restrictions are effective or whether children are safer. Robust measurement and short- and long-term evaluation remain essential.

06 Investment in safety-by-design and preventative measures remains crucial.

The introduction of age restrictions alone will not keep children safe online, and may come with its own risks, such as leaving unchanged the design features which enable harm. In line with children's voices, investment in safety-by-design and preventative safety measures remains crucial. Regulatory interventions should therefore address issues driven by digital systems and environments.

A growing number of jurisdictions are pursuing more targeted approaches, including restrictions on specific functionalities such as livestreaming, contact with strangers, personalised recommender systems and infinite scrolling, as well as turning protections on by default for children. Whether a jurisdiction restricts access as a whole or targets design features, stringent enforcement of existing laws remains key.

Moreover, a sole focus on social media risks overlooking the broader question of digital product safety for children. Comparable risks can arise across a range of digital products and services, including AI companions or online games, highlighting the need for a broader and more integrated approach to protecting children in digital environments.

01
Introduction and overview

Over the last two years, global momentum to restrict social media access for children has accelerated markedly. **In total, 69 jurisdictions** are now discussing, proposing, adopting or implementing age-based restrictions. A further six examined a minimum age and did not adopt one, so the question has been considered in 75 jurisdictions in total. See **Annex 1** for the list of jurisdictions and their current status.

This brief provides a rapid analysis of current proposals and enacted legislation introducing age-based restrictions for social media. The analysis is limited to **whole-of-platform age limits** and excludes measures such as content-specific prohibitions (e.g. adult pornography), time-based limits (e.g. daily caps on gaming platforms), and location-specific restrictions (e.g. bans applicable only in schools). Measures that gate

the processing of a child's personal data rather than access to a service are outside the scope of this analysis. A general age of consent under data protection law is therefore not counted as a social media minimum age.[2] Functionality restrictions, such as blocks on livestreaming or on communication with strangers, and time-of-day restrictions are likewise outside the scope of this analysis. Nevertheless, they merit closer consideration as potentially valuable components of a wider package of measures to protect children online, whether alongside or as alternatives to whole-of-platform age restrictions.

This brief serves as a snapshot of the evolving landscape and should be read alongside UNICEF's policy brief 'Drawing a line in digital spaces: Age-based restriction of social media' (April 2025), which outlines **key considerations for legislators, policymakers, and other stakeholders considering age-based limits for social media**. Building on UNICEF's first rapid analysis (March 2026), this brief adds further analytical aspects such as the role of parental decision making and children's participation, as well as initial findings from countries which have implemented such restrictions. The analytical focus areas of the March 2026 rapid analysis, such as enforcement powers, age assurance, and situating age restrictions within broader online platform regulations, remains equally relevant and should be read alongside this brief.

1.1 Method and limitations

This brief draws on a rapid review of publicly available information, primarily media reporting and official sources, relating to legislation to introduce age-based restrictions for social media. While all reasonable efforts have been made to check accuracy, given the pace of development and reliance on media reporting in many jurisdictions, the analysis may not fully capture the scope or substance of proposals currently under consideration. The nature and status of discussions and proposals in several jurisdictions are subject to rapid change and may have evolved since the analysis was completed. Further, coverage is uneven across jurisdictions due to the availability and language of source material. **Readers are encouraged to verify jurisdiction-specific developments independently, particularly where legislative processes are ongoing.**

Research for this brief was conducted up to 26 August 2026 and updated thereafter for significant developments before publication in October 2026, so coverage may be more complete for some jurisdictions than for others.

1.2 Emerging trends

The rapid analysis points to the following emerging trends as of August 2026:

- **More and more jurisdictions are considering social media age restrictions:** 69 jurisdictions across seven regions now have a social media age restriction under discussion, proposed, passed or under implementation, compared with almost 40 in March 2026. Of the 69, 29 jurisdictions have a restriction under discussion, and 31 jurisdictions have proposed one, meaning that 60 jurisdictions (87 per cent) have not yet adopted a restriction. Three jurisdictions have passed a law that has not yet taken effect, namely Azerbaijan, Türkiye and the United Kingdom, and six are implementing one, namely Australia, Gabon, Indonesia, Malaysia, the United Arab Emirates and Viet Nam. Europe accounts for 30 of the 69 jurisdictions, almost half the total, yet no European jurisdiction has a minimum age in force. Every operative minimum age in the world sits outside Europe and the Americas.

- **Convergence is on an age band (15-16 years) rather than a specific age:** 62 of the 69 jurisdictions have named an age in the instrument currently before them, whether that instrument is under discussion, proposed, passed or under implementation. Seven have not yet indicated an age or the figure is contested. Of the 62, 31 jurisdictions specify under 16 years and a further 17 jurisdictions under 15 years. This means that 48, roughly three quarters of those that have named an age, sit within a 15- to 16-year age band. Regional pictures differ sharply: Central Asia and the Caucasus tentatively converge at 16 years and 10 of Asia-Pacific's 13 jurisdictions use 16 years, while Africa still spans five years from 13 to 18 years. Latin America and the Caribbean uses five different figures among only seven jurisdictions that name an age. Europe has the narrowest span of the larger regions, three years from 13 to 16 years, though it places 14 jurisdictions at 15 years against eight at 16 years.

- **The same age threshold does not mean the same approach:** Four different design approaches across the same age thresholds have been used: an absolute bar that parental consent cannot lift; a consent gate that a parent can open, either across the whole range below the threshold or only within a band sitting above an absolute floor; an account registered and held by the parent on the child's behalf; and a restriction that tapers across the years above the threshold. Two jurisdictions with a stated age of 16 may therefore operate opposite rules, highlighting the importance of examining the design of a restriction, not just the age threshold itself.

- **A new model determines access by school cohort rather than by birthday:** Norway and Sweden would define the age by school cohort rather than by birthday, permitting access from 1 January of the year in which a child reaches the threshold age, so that children in the same school year get access together regardless of their individual birthdays. Iceland has the same rule in a draft bill that has not been adopted. The practical effect is that some children gain access several months before reaching the nominal age.

- **Parental decision making is unresolved in more than a third of jurisdictions and has become a constitutional question:** Only 15 jurisdictions give parents a decision over access and 28 set a hard floor. In 26, the question is not addressed at all, in most cases because no instrument yet exists in text. In August 2026 the French Constitutional Council treated the exclusion of parental decision making as a ground of unconstitutionality of France's social media age restriction, the first time the removal of a parental role has been treated as a constitutional defect in the design of a restriction rather than as a policy choice.[3]

- **Age assurance remains the main implementation constraint, as discussed in the March 2026 rapid analysis:** Australia's evaluation identifies ineffective implementation of age assurance by platforms as the primary reason children continued to hold restricted accounts three months after the restriction entered into force. Malaysia's verification requirement is being implemented progressively over a period of up to six months. Developing rights-respecting, technically viable solutions for age assurance remains a key challenge.

- **A countertrend has appeared, with six jurisdictions examining a minimum age and not adopting one:** The six jurisdictions, namely Croatia, Fiji, Finland, Jamaica, Japan and South Africa, reached that position by different routes. Croatia's private member's bill was defeated and no alternative has been announced. Fiji's taskforce recommended a scaffolding model rather than an outright ban. Finland decided not to proceed nationally and expects the question to be addressed mainly through EU-level regulation and broader online safety measures. Japan's expert panel concluded that a uniform restriction may not be desirable because individual platforms carry different risks and called instead for stricter age verification and safe-use defaults. Jamaica and South Africa have not yet decided on concrete next steps. See the case study below.

02
Age restrictions by region and by status

In total, 69 jurisdictions across seven regions have a social media age restriction under discussion, proposed, passed or under implementation. Of these, nine have adopted a restriction: six are implementing one and three have passed a law that has not yet taken effect. The remaining 60, or 87 per cent, are discussing such a restriction or have proposed a bill.

Asia-Pacific leads on restrictions under implementation. It accounts for four of the six restrictions under implementation worldwide: Australia[4], Indonesia, Malaysia and Viet Nam[5]. The other two in force are Gabon and the United Arab Emirates (UAE)[6], so every operative minimum age in the world sits outside Europe and the Americas. Of the three laws passed but not yet in force, Azerbaijan's commences in August 2027 and Türkiye's in November 2026, while in the United Kingdom[7], the Government has announced a restriction to take effect in spring 2027.

Across all seven regions, most jurisdictions have not yet adopted a minimum age. Europe accounts for 28 of

the 60, more than the Americas, Africa, the Middle East and Central Asia and the Caucasus put together. France is among them. It adopted a law in July 2026 to protect children online, which included, among other things, an age restriction on access to social media. However, the provision prohibiting children under the age of 15 from accessing social media was declared unconstitutional by the Constitutional Council in August 2026 before it entered into force. The Government has commissioned a redraft that has not been published, so France has effectively returned to the drawing board.

While developing social media age restrictions at national level, European Union (EU) Member States also awaited guidance from the European Commission. The Commission introduced the draft EU KIDS Act on 17 September 2026, proposing social media age restrictions and safety-by-design measures (see Spotlight: A European approach to social media age restrictions).

Table 1.

Jurisdictions by region and status (under discussion, proposed, passed or under implementation)

Region	Jurisdiction	Status
Europe (30)	Belgium, Cyprus, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland	**Under discussion (14)**
	Austria, Bulgaria, Denmark, European Union, Greece, Hungary, Italy[8], Lithuania, Luxembourg, Montenegro, Norway, Portugal, Romania[9], Slovakia	**Proposed (14)**
	Türkiye, United Kingdom	**Passed (2)**
North America (3)	Canada, Mexico, United States	**Proposed (3)**
Latin America and the Caribbean (9)	Chile, Trinidad and Tobago	**Under discussion (2)**
	Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Paraguay, Uruguay	**Proposed (7)**
Africa (6)	Egypt, Nigeria, Rwanda, Zimbabwe	**Under discussion (4)**
	Morocco	**Proposed (1)**
	Gabon	**Under implementation (1)**
Asia-Pacific (13)	India, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Singapore, Thailand	**Under discussion (5)**
	New Zealand, Philippines, South Korea, Sri Lanka	**Proposed (4)**
	Australia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Viet Nam	**Under implementation (4)**
Middle East (4)	Oman, Saudi Arabia	**Under discussion (2)**
	Bahrain	**Proposed (1)**
	United Arab Emirates	**Under implementation (1)**
Central Asia and the Caucasus (4)	Armenia, Uzbekistan	**Under discussion (2)**
	Kazakhstan	**Proposed (1)**
	Azerbaijan	**Passed (1)**

Region	Jurisdiction	Status
Total (69)		**29 under discussion, 31 proposed, 3 passed, 6 under implementation**

Note: Statuses reflect the position at national or federal level. Croatia, Fiji, Finland, Jamaica, Japan and South Africa are excluded from this table, having examined a minimum age and not adopted one (see case study below). France is recorded as 'under discussion': the provision of the French law restricting access to social media for minors under the age of 15 was struck down by the Constitutional Council on 14 August 2026 before promulgation, with a redraft commissioned but not published. Türkiye's law came into effect on 1 May 2026, and the provisions related to age restriction will commence on 1 November 2026. Azerbaijan's law will take effect on 5 August 2027. Belgium, Mexico and the United States are recorded federally, although they also have legislation at state and regional level.



Spotlight: A European approach to social media age restrictions

Table 1 shows that 23 out of the 27 EU Member States (except for Croatia, Estonia, Finland and Latvia) are currently considering a social media age restriction at national level. On 17 September 2026, the European Commission introduced the **draft KIDS Act** to establish a coherent framework for the protection of children online across EU Member States, taking the child and their empowerment and fundamental rights as a starting point. The draft Act builds on the final report of the Special Panel on Child Safety Online published in July 2026 and applies to online services used by children, including social media, video-sharing platforms, online games, and AI companions and chatbots.

The proposal pursues the following specific objectives:

- **Delay children's access to social network services or video-sharing platforms:** Social network services and video-sharing platforms shall not allow children below the age of 15 to create an account. Providers of those services may allow guardians to set up accounts for children above the age of 13 with limited features to access the service. Where video-sharing platforms are specifically designed for children below the age of 13 and can demonstrate that they are a child-friendly service, they may exceptionally enable guardians to allow such children limited access through the guardian's own account.
- **Strengthen the protection of children through safety-by-design requirements:** The draft KIDS Act clarifies the obligations of digital services and certain systems, so that risks to children are addressed in the design and functioning of those services and systems.
- **Ensure reliable and fundamental rights-compliant age assurance mechanisms:** The draft KIDS Act establishes clear requirements and criteria for the use of age assurance systems to support both the access delay and the implementation of safety-by-design measures.
- **Ensure effective enforcement across the EU:** The draft KIDS Act establishes a robust and coherent regulatory and enforcement framework that enables timely and efficient implementation, making sure that children are protected quickly and effectively in practice.

Case study: Six jurisdictions examined a social media age restriction and did not adopt one

Croatia. A private member's bill, which would have restricted children's access to social media, was defeated in March 2026, after the Government declined to support it. The Government said the bill was too general and did not offer a clear categorisation of digital content or a precise recognition of the risks to which young people are exposed. No alternative policy has been announced.

Fiji. Fiji's Social Media Age Deferment Taskforce has recommended a scaffolding model rather than an outright ban. Drafting of the actual bill is planned to take place in October 2026. The decision was taken following consultations with children and after a review of different models being rolled out in different countries. The Government is also amending the Online Safety Act, aiming to move beyond a reactive complaints-based model towards a more comprehensive child protection framework, including stronger regulatory powers, improved responses to online exploitation and abuse, enhanced platform accountability, strengthened victim support pathways, and greater capacity for the Online Safety Commission to address emerging online risks.

Finland. The Government launched cross-ministerial preparations in February 2026 to protect children and young people from the harms of social media and to assess possible restrictions on minors' use of social media. A preliminary government report found that restrictions may help safeguard children's wellbeing, but evidence on their effectiveness remains limited. It also warned that overly strict national rules could push young people to less supervised platforms. At the September 2026 budget session, the Government decided not to proceed with a national social media age restriction for children under 15. Instead, the issue is expected to be addressed mainly through EU-level regulation and broader online safety measures.

Jamaica. In July 2026 the Minister of Health and Wellness presented the findings of a commissioned study examining the impact of social media on the Jamaican population to gauge public sentiment on the possibility of restricting social media access for children aged 16 and under. The study found in a survey of 1,027 adults that 90.2 per cent supported regulation of social media use for children and 87.5 per cent favoured mandatory age verification, but 66.3 per cent doubted it could be enforced and 87 per cent expected minors to circumvent it. The file has since moved to a working group in the Office of the Prime Minister tasked with developing further policy steps, rather than working on an age restriction.

Japan. In August 2025, a working group of the Children and Families Agency, comprising external experts and concerned ministries and agencies, published its final report, which set out the issues and challenges and advised the Government against a blanket social media age restriction. Follow-up discussions are ongoing at the ministries and agencies. An expert panel established by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications endorsed the working group's view. In its draft report published in June 2026, the expert panel suggested that a uniform age restriction may not be desirable, because individual platforms carry different risks. Instead, it called for stricter age verification and the incorporation of a system to enable children to safely use social media as a default setting.

South Africa. After considering age-restricting social media use in South Africa in February 2026, the Minister of Communications and Digital Technologies announced in July 2026 that he would not pursue this policy approach. He stated that social media age restrictions are unenforceable, citing Australia as an example. Instead, he would pursue mandatory age verification alongside digital literacy for schools and caregivers.

03

Determining the age threshold

As in the March 2026 rapid analysis, there is still no international consensus on the age at which a child should be permitted to use social media. Across the 69 jurisdictions, six different thresholds are in play, from under 12 to under 18, and a further seven have not yet settled on a figure at all. Every threshold in use falls somewhere between the ages of 12 and 18, but within that span the disagreement is wide, and it is as pronounced between neighbouring states as between regions.

Across the jurisdictions, two figures dominate: of the 62 jurisdictions naming an age, 31 jurisdictions specify under 16 years and a further 17 jurisdictions under 15 years in the instrument currently before them. This means that 48, roughly three quarters of those that have named an age, sit within a 15- to 16-year age band. Therefore, an international standard is emerging only at the level of a 15- to 16-year age band, not at the level of a specific age.

However, even the convergence around a 15- to 16-year age band should be approached with caution. **Jurisdictions with the same age threshold can operate very different rules**. In one group the bar is absolute and parental decision making cannot change the set bar (e.g. Türkiye, United Arab Emirates, Kazakhstan). In another the age operates as a consent gate, either for a specific age group (e.g. 13-15 years) or for the full age threshold, meaning that a child below the threshold may use the service with a parent's permission. A new model has emerged in three Nordic jurisdictions which define the age by school cohort rather than by birthday. Iceland, Norway and Sweden would permit access from 1 January of the year in which the child reaches the threshold age, rather than on the birthday itself. This aims to ensure that children within the same school year cohort cross the threshold together, regardless of their individual birthdays. The practical effect is that some children gain access several months before reaching the nominal age. Another approach, taken in the UK and in the UAE, sets a minimum age but in addition requires services to turn on restrictions by default for the older age group (e.g. minimum age at 16, restrictions for 16 and 17). This aims to prevent a 'cliff-edge' at the cut-off age. This demonstrates that two jurisdictions with a stated age of 16 may follow fundamentally different approaches, and comparisons drawn from the threshold alone might mislead unless the exact design of the age threshold is considered alongside it.

Under 16 is the most common threshold in four of the seven regions. However, in Europe, 14 jurisdictions are at 15 years against eight at under 16 years. Only Central Asia and the Caucasus tentatively converge at 16 years. The Middle East is split equally, with two countries at 15 years and two at 16 years, and 10 of Asia-Pacific's 13 jurisdictions use 16 years. Africa spans five years, from Egypt at 13 to Zimbabwe at 18 years, across five jurisdictions that have named a figure. Latin America and the Caribbean uses five different figures among only seven jurisdictions. Europe has the narrowest span of the larger regions, three years from 13 to 16.

Table 2.

Jurisdictions by age threshold (includes laws under discussion, proposed, passed and under implementation)

Threshold	Jurisdictions[10]	Count	Share
Under 12	Trinidad and Tobago	1	1.4%
Under 13	Ecuador, Egypt, Hungary, Luxembourg, Mexico, Montenegro, Singapore, United States	8	11.6%
Under 14	Austria, Costa Rica, South Korea	3	4.3%

Threshold	Jurisdictions[10]	Count	Share
Under 15	Bahrain, Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, European Union, France, Greece, Iceland, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Türkiye, United Arab Emirates, Uruguay	17	24.6%
Under 16	Armenia, Australia, Azerbaijan, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Colombia, Gabon, Indonesia, Ireland, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Malaysia, Morocco, New Zealand, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Philippines, Portugal, Romania, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Thailand, United Kingdom, Uzbekistan, Viet Nam	31	44.9%
Under 18	India, Zimbabwe	2	2.9%
Not indicated or contested	Argentina, Chile, Czech Republic, Germany, Malta, Nigeria, Switzerland	7	10.1%
Total		69	100%[11]

Note: Some jurisdictions are debating bills or proposals with different age thresholds. For the purposes of this table, this brief includes the most procedurally advanced instrument, so the distribution should be read as a snapshot of where each process currently stands rather than as a settled national position. Only legislative instruments at the national or federal level are included.

04

The role of parental decision making

Only 15[12] out of 69 jurisdictions give parents some form of decision-making power over children's access to social media. A further 28[13] of the 69 jurisdictions set a hard floor, meaning an age below which a parent cannot admit a child by any route. In the remaining 26 jurisdictions[14] the question has not yet been answered, possibly because the relevant legal instruments do not yet exist in text.

In the 28 hard-floor jurisdictions, a parent's 'consent' does not enable a child's access to a platform or service. For example, the United Arab Emirates provides that parental approval cannot override the prohibition and that there is no exemption even with parental approval. Australia places the obligation on the platform to take reasonable steps to prevent under-16s holding an account and provides no consent route by which a parent can admit a child. However, this does not mean that parents have no control whatsoever over their children's social media use. Where the child is above the age threshold, parents might be able to control *how* a child uses social media (e.g. through parental control tools). A parental control tool and a parental consent gate should therefore not be conflated.

In the 15 jurisdictions giving parents a decision, that decision takes four forms: (1) consent that overrides the age floor altogether, (2) consent that gates a band sitting above an absolute floor, (3) an account registered and held by the parent on the child's behalf, or (4) consent that operates only within a permitted risk class. For example, Romania's bill allows parental consent to grant full access to children of any age below 16. Other jurisdictions divide access restrictions into tiers: a lower band where access is prohibited regardless of what a parent decides, a middle band where parental consent is the condition of access, and an upper band of free access. For example, Paraguay and Azerbaijan both bar accounts below 16 outright while requiring verified guardian consent for 16- and 17-year-olds, so consent applies exclusively to children the law already permits to be online. Another

parental decision-making mechanism has been set forth in Viet Nam. Viet Nam does not require parental consent; instead, it requires the parent to hold the account. A person under 16 may not register a social media account on their own. Instead, a parent or guardian registers it using their information and remains responsible for supervising what the child accesses, posts and shares. The last category is illustrated by Indonesia, where 16- and 17-year-olds can access a designated high-risk product such as social media with parental consent, but where consent cannot move a child across risk classes, so it cannot lawfully admit a 13-year-old to the same service. The draft EU KIDS Act combines two of these forms. It bars providers of online social networking and video-sharing platform services from allowing minors below 15 to create an autonomous account, but permits guardians to set up accounts for minors above 13 with limited age-appropriate features. This diversity in parental decision making shows that the exact design of the mechanisms leads to very different outcomes. Two jurisdictions can both be described as requiring parental consent, while one permits a parent to admit a nine-year-old and the other permits a parent only to authorise a 17-year-old.

The role of parents in children's social media access can also include parental responsibility and liability. Gabon's law, which sets a hard floor of 16 years[15], provides that the person exercising parental authority bears responsibility for all acts committed on a social network or online digital platform by a child under 16. Uruguay's bill goes in the opposite direction, reportedly providing that there will be no civil, administrative or criminal liability for parents or guardians, with responsibility for compliance resting on providers.

France's Constitutional Council on the role of parental decision making in social media age restrictions

When the French Constitutional Council struck down the under-15 age restriction on 14 August 2026, the absence of a parental decision-making mechanism was itself among the grounds of unconstitutionality.

The Council held that the exclusion of parental oversight as a mechanism to override or limit the ban undermines the right to freedom of expression. This exclusion of parental participation in the child's social media consumption leads to a complete disregard of the individual risk to a minor, *'taking into account in particular his or her age, degree of maturity and family situation, as well as the nature of the service concerned.'* The Council underlined that legal guardians should be able to *'decide to lift the ban, to limit its scope or to authorize access to certain services'* in the interest of the child.

This appears to be the first occasion on which a court has treated the removal of parental decision making in social media age restrictions as a constitutional defect rather than a policy choice. The decision therefore underscores the constitutional importance of allowing the circumstances of individual children and the nature of the services concerned to be considered when legislating on age-based restrictions, including through an appropriate role for parents or legal representatives.

05
Children's views on social media age restrictions

Across the 69 jurisdictions in this review, public records show that only 13 jurisdictions[16] consulted children directly on their views on social media age restrictions.[17]

Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child requires that children's views be given due weight in decisions affecting them, and the authoritative interpretative guidance of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in General Comment No. 25 applies that obligation directly to the digital environment:

> 'When developing legislation, policies, programmes, services and training on children's rights in relation to the digital environment, States parties should involve all children, listen to their needs and give due weight to their views.'[18]

In the context of social media age restrictions, consultation with children seems to be the exception. Even where such consultation took place, it did not always occur before a regulatory decision was taken. Further, the weight a consultation carries within the law- and policy-making process differs considerably across jurisdictions. Children might be consulted directly or indirectly as part of parliamentary evidence-taking, through children's commissioners, statutory youth councils, government-commissioned surveys and non-governmental consultations. Where children are consulted, their views should be made public, to ensure their views can be weighed by all relevant parties.

Survey design also significantly impacts how children can engage with the topic. Some countries asked children whether they support social media age restrictions in general, while others only asked them which age is most appropriate for such a restriction, not whether they recommend a restriction as such.

The snapshot below provides some insight into children's views on social media age restrictions across different jurisdictions. The views presented here are only excerpts and do not represent the full range of views provided by children participating in the consultations:

A snapshot of children's views on social media age restrictions

- In France, seven out of 10 children say that setting the digital age of majority at 15 is a good idea. Some 67 per cent of 10- to 14-year-olds say they are determined to comply with the law, while the rest are considering finding ways to circumvent it in order to continue using social media, for example by providing a false date of birth. This is the most frequently cited workaround. If access to social media and video-sharing platforms were prohibited, 70 per cent of children believe they would spend more time engaging in cultural or sports activities. Finally, 44 per cent of children who use social media and AI say they could spend more time interacting with AI services instead of spending that time on social media, representing 29 per cent of social media users.

- In Sweden, the Swedish Internet Foundation surveyed children aged eight to 19 on the proposal to bar children under 15 from social media. Children were considerably more sceptical than their parents. Only 24 per cent saw the proposal as mainly good, against 58 per cent of parents of children in the same age range. The largest group, 41 per cent, saw it as both good and bad, and 25 per cent saw it as mainly bad.

- An EU Kids Online survey including children across 19 European countries found that children and young people are highly ambivalent regarding how they anticipate or might experience age-based restrictions on social media. One third of children somewhat or strongly agree that this would make them safer, while almost half disagree with this statement. Children's greatest concern is that such restrictions would make it difficult for them to stay in touch with their friends. A fair proportion are also concerned about restrictions on their freedom and rights, their responsibility to decide for themselves, and adverse consequences for their civic engagement and schoolwork.

- In Türkiye, the 26th National Children's Forum took place in November 2025 under the theme 'Children's Rights in the Digital World'. Members of the Provincial Child Rights Committees representing all 81 provinces called for a rights-based and supportive rather than prohibitive approach to children's engagement with the digital environment. Among other priorities, children emphasized the need to conclude the ongoing assessments concerning social media use and develop age-appropriate guidance for different age groups. They also called for stronger digital and AI literacy education, accessible support and reporting mechanisms for online violence and abuse, greater awareness among parents and professionals, equitable access to digital opportunities, and children's meaningful participation at all appropriate stages of digital policy development.

- In Egypt, children recommended following a 'graduated access' model. Children below the age of 13 should only have access to educational platforms, and children aged 13-16 should have access to social media accounts with parental consent and safeguarding measures (such as content filtration, preventing strangers from sending messages to children) set as default. They also recommended that age verification should be implemented through a central government portal to prevent companies from having access to children's data such as

national IDs and biometrics. They also called for further promoting digital safety awareness programmes among children and families.

- In Australia, children interviewed in the month before commencement of the social media age restriction broadly supported the intention of the restriction. Some children felt excited, relieved or ambivalent, while others felt frustrated and unfairly punished. For many, the perceived benefits of social media were felt to outweigh the potential harms.

  In New Zealand, some children supported a social media age restriction set at 13, 16 or 18 years. Others felt that banning them from social media was unfair and unrealistic, and would be ineffective in preventing them from experiencing harm online. Children experiencing isolation because of their sexual orientation, geographic location or neurodivergence reported that social media enabled vital connection with identity-affirming spaces, and access to communication in ways that are both welcoming and safe. Instead of an access restriction, they advocated for stronger regulation and accountability for tech companies, educating children and adults on online safety and providing real alternatives to social media.

06
Monitoring and evaluating impact over time

Six countries are in the process of implementing social media age restrictions, namely Australia, Gabon, Indonesia, Malaysia, the UAE and Viet Nam. As set out in the March 2026 rapid analysis, metrics and evaluation frameworks must be developed alongside social media age restrictions to assess whether they meet their intended goals and outcomes. Evaluation findings are only available in Australia, with media reports indicating some progress in Malaysia and Indonesia.

Australia published its first evaluation report on 31 July 2026, presenting findings from the three-month follow-up survey after the social media age restriction came into force in December 2025. At the three-month follow-up, the evaluation found that the proportion of children aged 10-15 years holding a social media account declined from 52.4 per cent at baseline to 42.1 per cent. The evaluation also found that most under-16s who held an account before commencement had either retained it or created a new one. According to the evaluation, the primary reason children continued to hold age-restricted social media accounts at three months appeared to be ineffective implementation of age assurance measures by platforms. Further, the evaluation recorded early signals of redistribution of online activities, including a statistically significant increase in the frequency with which children reported using messaging platforms and online video games. A potential unintended consequence emerged three months after commencement of the age restrictions: a statistically significant decline in parental awareness of children's social media use. The report notes, however, that it offers only insights into initial patterns of access, behaviour, and emerging signals of change and cannot determine the long-term effectiveness of the policy.

Some media reports suggest that compliance with recently instituted social media age restrictions in Indonesia and Malaysia is progressively increasing. In Indonesia, news outlets report that TikTok has deactivated 4.1 million accounts and YouTube has closed 600,000 accounts belonging to children under the age of 16 since the social media age restriction entered into force in March 2026. Further, the Government has already classified 22 services as high risk, including social media, video streaming, e-commerce and gaming, meaning that these services must implement stronger child protection measures. In-scope services have until 31 December 2026 to complete and submit their self-assessments to the Government. Services that fail to comply may receive a risk classification assigned directly by the Government.

While age verification requirements took effect on 1 June 2026 in Malaysia, the regulator indicated that implementation for existing users would occur progressively over a period of up to six months. As of August 2026, the Government reported that it was still monitoring implementation and had issued written notices to social media providers requiring explanations regarding non-compliance and measures taken to implement age verification mechanisms, suggesting that implementation remained ongoing.

Case study: Children and youth participation in the evaluation of Australia's social media age restriction

Six members of the eSafety Youth Advisory Council, aged 14 to 23, are participating as peer researchers in the evaluation. In this capacity, they contribute to the co-design and delivery of engagement strategies, qualitative research activities, and the interpretation and dissemination of findings. Their involvement ensures the study is relevant to children and young people, is age-appropriate and reflects their diverse experiences.

Peer researchers are trained and mentored in safe and ethical research practices and work alongside eSafety staff. All peer researchers are financially remunerated for their time and contributions as appropriate. They also benefit from hands-on research experience, skills development, authorship opportunities, professional mentoring, and from making meaningful contributions to research that informs government policy affecting children and young people.

07
Looking ahead

This analysis points to the growing use of social media age restrictions as a policy measure intended to create a safer digital environment for children. With only a few age restrictions in force, robust measurement and short- and long-term evaluation remain essential. Any age restriction legislation should include a robust evaluation framework to assess its impact on children's safety, wellbeing and other children's rights such as freedom of expression and privacy. Children should be meaningfully involved in evaluations, not merely studied as their subjects.

Several aspects not examined in detail in this analysis will contribute to the effectiveness of social media age restrictions in practice. Age restrictions do not operate in isolation but interact with wider regulatory frameworks such as data protection, platform regulation, consumer protection and AI regulation. Additionally, the introduction of age restrictions should not reduce incentives for companies to invest in safer platform design and effective content moderation for all users. In this context, a growing number of jurisdictions are pursuing more targeted approaches including restrictions on specific functionalities such as livestreaming, contact with strangers, personalised recommender systems and infinite scrolling, as well as turning protections on by default for children. Whether a jurisdiction restricts access as a whole or targets design features, stringent enforcement of existing laws remains key. In practice, enforcement depends on regulatory powers and institutional capacity, including human and financial resources, which vary considerably across jurisdictions.

Further, age-based restrictions are built around risks encountered by an individual child using a service, such as exposure to illegal content, contact with strangers, or patterns of use that affect wellbeing. They are not designed to address technology-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse, including the production, distribution and sale of child sexual abuse material, grooming and sexual extortion. Those harms move across services and across the boundary between online and offline life, and they are not mitigated by preventing a child from opening an account on a specific service. The measures that do address them, including reporting obligations, investigative and victim identification capacity, support for victims and survivors, and international cooperation, sit alongside age restrictions rather than being substituted by them. A strategy that treats a minimum age as the principal response to children's safety online therefore risks leaving an entire category of serious harm unaddressed.

Finally, a sole focus on social media risks overlooking the broader question of digital product safety for children. Comparable risks can arise across a range of digital products and services, including AI companions or online games, highlighting the need for a broader and more integrated approach to protecting children in digital environments.

Annex 1

Overview of age-based restrictions for social media around the world

Information on jurisdictions included in this brief has been cross-checked against primary sources where available and with UNICEF Country Offices and National Committees where possible. While all reasonable efforts have been made to check accuracy, given the pace of developments in this area and the reliance on media reporting in many jurisdictions, this list may not fully capture the scope or substance of proposals currently under consideration.

The information presented reflects what was available as of **26 August 2026**. The analysis was updated thereafter for significant developments before publication in October 2026, so coverage may be more complete for some jurisdictions than for others. Readers are encouraged to verify jurisdiction-specific developments independently, particularly where legislative processes are ongoing.

Legend

Under discussion

A policy idea or legislative proposal is actively debated by government, parliament, or relevant authorities but has not yet been formally introduced as a draft law or bill.

Proposed

A draft law or bill that has been formally introduced into the legislative process but has not yet been voted on or adopted by the relevant legislative body.

Passed

A law that has been adopted by the relevant legislative body and has received any required executive assent or promulgation, giving it legal force on the statute book.

Under implementation

A law that is in force and being actively applied and enforced, including where any necessary secondary legislation, regulatory infrastructure, or transitional periods required for its practical operation are in place.

Region	No.	Jurisdiction / country	Age threshold	Current status
Europe	1	Belgium	Under 15	Under discussion
	2	Cyprus	Under 15	Under discussion
	3	Czech Republic	Not indicated or contested	Under discussion
	4	France	Under 15	Under discussion
	5	Germany	Not indicated or contested	Under discussion
	6	Iceland	Under 15	Under discussion
	7	Ireland	Under 16	Under discussion
	8	Malta	Not indicated or contested	Under discussion
	9	Netherlands	Under 15	Under discussion
	10	Poland	Under 15	Under discussion

Region	No.	Jurisdiction / country	Age threshold	Current status
Europe	11	Slovenia	Under 15	Under discussion
	12	Spain	Under 16	Under discussion
	13	Sweden	Under 15	Under discussion
	14	Switzerland	Not indicated or contested	Under discussion
	15	Austria	Under 14	Proposed
	16	Bulgaria	Under 16	Proposed
	17	Denmark	Under 15	Proposed
	18	European Union	Under 15	Proposed
	19	Greece	Under 15	Proposed
	20	Hungary	Under 13	Proposed
	21	Italy	Under 15	Proposed
	22	Lithuania	Under 16	Proposed
	23	Luxembourg	Under 13	Proposed
	24	Montenegro	Under 13	Proposed
	25	Norway	Under 16	Proposed
	26	Portugal	Under 16	Proposed
	27	Romania	Under 16	Proposed
	28	Slovakia	Under 15	Proposed
	29	Türkiye	Under 15	Passed
	30	United Kingdom[19]	Under 16	Passed
North America	31	Canada	Under 16	Proposed
	32	Mexico	Under 13	Proposed
	33	United States[20]	Under 13	Proposed
Latin America and the Caribbean	34	Chile[21]	Not indicated or contested	Under discussion
	35	Trinidad and Tobago	Under 12	Under discussion
	36	Argentina[22]	Not indicated or contested	Proposed
	37	Brazil	Under 16	Proposed
	38	Colombia	Under 16	Proposed
	39	Costa Rica	Under 14	Proposed
	40	Ecuador	Under 13	Proposed
	41	Paraguay	Under 16	Proposed
	42	Uruguay	Under 15	Proposed

Region	No.	Jurisdiction / country	Age threshold	Current status
Africa	43	Egypt	Under 13	Under discussion
	44	Nigeria	Not indicated or contested	Under discussion
	45	Rwanda	Under 16	Under discussion
	46	Zimbabwe	Under 18	Under discussion
	47	Morocco	Under 16	Proposed
	48	Gabon	Under 16	Under implementation
Asia-Pacific	49	India	Under 18	Under discussion
	50	Pakistan	Under 16	Under discussion
	51	Papua New Guinea	Under 16	Under discussion
	52	Singapore	Under 13	Under discussion
	53	Thailand	Under 16	Under discussion
	54	New Zealand	Under 16	Proposed
	55	Philippines	Under 16	Proposed
	56	South Korea	Under 14	Proposed
	57	Sri Lanka	Under 16	Proposed
	58	Australia	Under 16	Under implementation
	59	Indonesia	Under 16	Under implementation
	60	Malaysia	Under 16	Under implementation
	61	Viet Nam	Under 16	Under implementation
Middle East	62	Oman	Under 16	Under discussion
	63	Saudi Arabia	Under 16	Under discussion
	64	Bahrain	Under 15	Proposed
	65	United Arab Emirates	Under 15	Under implementation
Central Asia and the Caucasus	66	Armenia	Under 16	Under discussion
	67	Uzbekistan	Under 16	Under discussion
	68	Kazakhstan	Under 16	Proposed
	69	Azerbaijan	Under 16	Passed

Endnotes

1 The increase in the number of jurisdictions between March and August 2026 results from new legislative activity, improved research coverage, and a refinement of scope and classification. This brief has identified jurisdictions that had engaged with the question before March 2026 but were not captured then, so the difference between the two figures should not be read as a rate of change.

2 Age of consent under data protection law determines when a child can validly consent to the processing of their own personal data. Below that age, consent must typically be provided by a parent or guardian instead. This threshold applies to the processing of children's data across the digital economy and is not limited to social media. A social media minimum age determines whether a child may access the service at all, which is why the two are treated separately.

3 French Constitutional Council, Decision No. 2026-911 DC of 14 August 2026.

4 In March 2026, the Government passed an amendment to specify additional features of platforms that classify them as age-restricted social media services. In September 2026, an amendment passed to increase penalties against platforms for failure to comply with the social media minimum age law and expand the eSafety Commissioner's information-gathering powers.

5 In addition to the existing law, Viet Nam is considering an amendment which would bar minors from posting, sharing or commenting on social media.

6 The restriction in the United Arab Emirates has been approved and is being implemented progressively. Social media platforms have a 12-month grace period (running until mid-2027) to ensure compliance.

7 The United Kingdom has adopted only the power to impose a minimum age, not the minimum age itself. The amended Online Safety Act empowers the Secretary of State to require providers to prevent or restrict children's access. On 15 June 2026 the Secretary of State announced that she will use the power to bar under-16s.

8 Several legislative initiatives have been introduced in Parliament aimed at regulating children's access to and use of social networks through the establishment of age thresholds, forms of parental supervision and age-verification systems.

9 Romania has two draft laws currently before Parliament. Firstly, the Draft Law on Online Age of Majority (the focus of this brief) was adopted by the Senate and needs to be adopted by the Chamber of Deputies in order to enter into force. Secondly, the draft law on the protection of minors using online social networking services was submitted in 2026 by a different parliamentary group, and has already received some favourable opinions from specialised committees.

10 The status of laws differs for each jurisdiction. For the status of the law, see Table 1. Jurisdictions by region and status (under discussion, proposed, passed or under implementation).

11 Shares are calculated on the 69 jurisdictions and rounded to one decimal place, so they do not sum exactly to 100 per cent.

12 Argentina, Azerbaijan, Costa Rica, Ecuador, European Union, Indonesia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Mexico, Montenegro, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Portugal, Romania, Viet Nam.

13 Australia, Austria, Bahrain, Brazil, Bulgaria, Chile, Colombia, Denmark, France, Gabon, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Italy, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Morocco, New Zealand, Philippines, Singapore, Slovakia, Sweden, Türkiye, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United States, Uruguay, Zimbabwe.

14 Armenia, Belgium, Canada, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Egypt, Hungary, India, Ireland, Malta, Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Poland, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Slovenia, South Korea, Spain, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, Uzbekistan.

15 Gabon's Ordinance No. 0011/PR/2026 prohibits account creation below the age of 16 years. The Ordinance separately requires platforms to block or suspend the publication, sharing and social interaction functions of any account identified as belonging to a user under 16, unless parental consent has been formally recorded. Parental consent therefore governs what an account may do, not whether it may be created, which is why Gabon is recorded here as a hard floor.

16 European Union, Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Sweden, Türkiye, United Kingdom, Egypt, Australia, New Zealand, Malta, Singapore.

17 Only consultations conducted directly with children and only where the consultation focused on social media age restrictions (not only broader topics such as child online safety, platform regulation or privacy) were included.

18 General Comment No. 25, para. 17.

19 The United Kingdom has adopted only the power to impose a minimum age, not the minimum age itself. The amended Online Safety Act empowers the Secretary of State to require providers to prevent or restrict children's access. On 15 June 2026 the Secretary of State announced that she will use the power to bar under-16s.

20 Two bills have been introduced in Congress: S.278 Kids Off Social Media Act (KOSMA) and H.R.10337 – 16 & Up Social Media Act. This analysis focuses on KOSMA as the more advanced bill.

21 Several bills are currently under discussion in the Senate and in the Chamber of Deputies. There is no clear consensus regarding which specific bill will ultimately be put to a vote, and there are differing views on what the minimum age requirement should be. Therefore, Chile is categorized as 'under discussion' with no clear age threshold.

22 Multiple federal bills addressing children's online safety are pending in Argentina. At least one proposal aims to introduce age-based restrictions on access to regulated digital platforms, but the legislative landscape remains fragmented and no proposal has yet received a favourable committee opinion.

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