



When the State says it will restrict access of children to the Internet, what does it mean? Mathures Paul reports

No means constant surveillance

It might be better to ban children from the Internet. That line, from an April 2019 piece in *The Atlantic*, no longer looks like a wild idea. Tech platforms rely on two main mechanisms for age verification: biometric facial estimation (using AI to estimate a user's age from a live selfie scan) and government ID. Neither is a seamless fix. Facial estimation can prove unreliable while uploaded ID cards create massive honey pots of sensitive data. Civil liberties and digital rights groups warn that requiring adults and teens alike to "age-gate" the web effectively ends anonymous browsing, opening up unprecedented risks from data breaches and surveillance. That said, country after country is now writing age-gating for social media into law. Here is where the major restrictions stand across geographies:

Australia

Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, Snapchat, Kick, Reddit, Threads, Twitch and X were ordered to block users under 16 from December 10, 2025, or face penalties. Enforcement has been patchy, prompting Prime Minister Anthony Albanese to double the fine to the equivalent of around \$70 million.

Brazil

This country's approach, enforced in March, goes beyond a ban. Minors under 16 must link their social media accounts to a legal guardian, and platforms are barred from using addictive design features such as infinite scroll and autoplay video.

Britain

Former premier Keir Starmer's restriction on social media for under-16s is expected to take effect by the end of this year. Officials are also weighing overnight curfews on social media, breaks in infinite scrolling for under-18s and restrictions on AI chatbots designed as romantic companions.

China

Since 2021, under-18s have been restricted to three hours of video gaming a week, between 8pm and 9pm on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays.

Denmark

Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen announced last year that Denmark would ban social media for under-15s. Parents will retain the discretion to permit access from age 13.

France

France's parliament passed a ban on social media for under-15s on July 21; it takes effect September 1. Platforms are expected to begin age verification for new users, with existing accounts screened gradually.

Greece

It will have a social media

ban for under-15s from January 1 next year. Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis said rising anxiety, sleep problems and the addictive design of online platforms had prompted the move.

India

Chief economic adviser V. Anantha Nageswaran called social media platforms "predatory" in how they hold attention and proposed age-based limits earlier this year. Karnataka has proposed a ban for under-16s, while Andhra Pradesh is looking at restricting access for children under 13.

Indonesia

It announced in March that it would deactivate accounts belonging to under-16s on what officials call "high risk" platforms. "This will start with platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, Facebook, Instagram, Threads, X, Bigo Live and Roblox," said Meutya Hafid, communications and digital affairs minister.

Malaysia

In June, it began enforcing rules barring children younger than 16 from having social media accounts. Platforms with at least eight million users in Malaysia, including Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and YouTube, must implement age-verification systems.

Norway

It is joining a growing number of countries restricting social media access for children under 16. The limit will apply until January 1 of the year a child turns 16, with technology companies responsible for age verification.

Spain

Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez said in February that anyone under 16 will be banned from social media. "We will protect them from the digital Wild West," he told the World Governments Summit in Dubai.

Sweden

A government-appointed commission recommended on June 2 that Sweden restrict social media use to those 15 years and older. Earlier this year, the country's public health agency encouraged parents to declare parts of the home phone-free.

United States

The Kids Online Safety Act — still a proposed bill — would require platforms to "exercise reasonable care" in designing features that could harm minors. The long-standing Children's Online Privacy Protection Act already bars companies from collecting data on under-13s without parental consent.

United Arab Emirates

The UAE became the first Arab country to set a minimum social media age in June, fixing it at 15,

