



Social Media

Following the introduction of social media platforms in the early 2000's, social media use has quickly become commonplace in the lives of many.¹ Seventy-two percent of all Americans use at least one social media platform.² Usage among teens is higher, with a 2022 survey reporting ninety-five percent of all teens use at least one social media platform.³ One in five teen users report using YouTube or TikTok “almost constantly.”⁴

On the National Level

A bipartisan group of senators introduced a bill in the U.S. Senate in April of 2023 aiming to greatly restrict access to social media for children.⁸ The “Protecting Kids on Social Media Act” aims to require age verification and parental/guardian consent for users under the age of eighteen, prohibit the use of “algorithmic recommendation systems” on minors, and prohibit social media access for those under the age of thirteen altogether.⁹ The most recent action on this bill its referral to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation on March 26, of 2023.¹⁰ According to GovTrack, a legislation tracking website, the bill has a very low chance of passage.¹¹

A group of representatives including Vermont’s own Becca Balint introduced a bill to the U.S. House of Representatives in May of 2023 titled the “Protecting Young Minds Online Act.”¹² The language of the bill aims to “amend Title V of the Public Health Service Act to direct the Center for Mental Health Services to develop and disseminate a strategy to address the effects of new technologies on children’s mental health.”¹³ The most recent action on this bill was its referral to the Subcommittee on Health on May 12, of 2023.¹⁴ GovTrack calculations also estimates this bill will have a low chance of passage.¹⁵

Vermont

According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, updated as recently as August 10, 2023, there is no active legislation in Vermont on the access to social media by children.¹⁶

Arkansas

Arkansas enacted legislation in March of 2023 requiring social media companies to verify the age of account holders and prohibit minors from holding accounts without express consent from a parent or legal guardian.

ATc -0.0081 g7(w)-2281. Tc47(w8831195Tjref0BT60 g -1.15 Td6.48 (ur)36.48)Tj2873288P &MCID9 ur

identifying information after access to the platform has been granted, the company can be punished with a fine of up to \$2,500 per violation.¹⁸

California

California passed legislation that goes into effect July 1, 2024, entitled “The California Age-Appropriate Design Code Act.” This act states that “[b]usinesses that develop and provide online services, products, or features that children are likely to access should consider the best interests of children when designing, developing, and providing that online service, product, or feature,”¹⁹ and that if it comes to a decision between maximizing profits or protecting children, “companies should prioritize the privacy, safety, and well-being of children over commercial interests.”²⁰

California Senators also introduced a new b (m)-2 (e)4 a6 (2 543..2 13.8 refB62(c)6 ie (S)-4 A/CID 35 (a)4)4

relationships can lead to isolation among peers, as children can lose interpersonal skills through heavy online interaction, and experience increased anxiety with in-person interaction.

exposure to social media.⁴³ They were also more likely to sleep less and feel lonely than adolescents who had less exposure to social media. The American Psychological Association (APA) has issued a “Health Advisory on Social Media use in Adolescence,” based on accumulated body of research on social media. The APA’s work shows that children have greater risks of irritability, nervousness, and psychological issues in early adolescence than in later adolescence and early adulthood.⁴⁴ This advisory notes that social media is not found to be inherently beneficial or harmful to adolescent lives; children’s online behavior reflects and impacts their offline lives. This means that in most cases the effects of social media are dependent upon individual’s own psychological and social circumstances.⁴⁵

Academic Performance

Studies published in the _____ and the _____
⁴⁶ concluded that social media usage is associated with poorer academic performance in adolescents.⁴⁷ The researchers cited in _____ found that reducing time on social media improves feelings of school connectedness and promotes positive academic performance.⁴⁸ Students who use social media regularly tend to obtain lower scores in math, reading, and science.⁴⁹ Another study included in _____ says

Conclusion