

# What to Know About Planned Social Media Bans Around the World

Britain said it would ban social media access for children under 16 starting in 2027, joining several other countries introducing similar measures.



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Britain will introduce measures to ban social media for children under 16 and to restrict access to other sorts of online interactions, Prime Minister Keir Starmer said in an announcement on Monday.

Several other countries have announced plans for similar social media bans as parents, educators and experts try to protect children from the potential harms associated with its use.

In December, Australia became the first country to bar anyone under 16 from using many social media apps. It was a closely watched test case for many countries, including Britain, which said it would adopt its own version of the Australian model. Six months in, most indications are that young teenagers in Australia who were already using social media are still doing so, although experts expect the benefits will be felt by the next generation.

The planned bans, in Britain and other countries, follow growing calls from parents and educators for governments and tech companies to do more to protect children online. In December, for instance, a YouGov poll found that 74 percent of Britons supported such a ban. On Monday, Britain said that nine out of 10 parents who responded to a government survey were in favor.

**Here's how some places are approaching it:**

- [Britain](#)
- [Australia](#)
- [Malaysia](#)
- [The European Union](#)
- [Indonesia](#)
- [China](#)
- [Brazil](#)

## Britain

Britain plans to introduce a ban on social media for children under 16. The government said in a statement on Monday that this would include Snapchat, TikTok, YouTube, Instagram, Facebook and X.

But Britain plans to go further than Australia, introducing blocks on livestreaming and on communication with strangers for children under 16. This would apply to gaming sites and other online services in addition to social media.

The government also floated plans to examine “overnight curfews and breaks in infinite scrolling” for anyone under 18, which it said would be detailed more in July. It said that A.I. chatbots that simulated romantic connection or sexual role-play with users would have to enforce a minimum age limit of 18, but it did not lay out a timeline.

Taken together, Britain said, the planned restrictions would “go further than any other country.” The government said it would introduce legislation by the end of this year, with a ban in place by early 2027.

Mr. Starmer acknowledged that the new legislation would not prevent all children from using social media, but he said that the government still had to act.

“They get around other laws, too, but we don’t say, ‘Oh, look, a teenager managed to get a drink somehow, so let’s not bother banning alcohol sales to children,’” he said. “We don’t do that, that would be utterly ridiculous, and so I just don’t accept that argument.”

Public pressure has grown in recent years as parents and educators worry about the harmful effects of social media on young people. A group of British parents of children who took their own lives after consuming negative content on social media have

campaigned for years for the government to act.

In 2023, Britain instituted a broad law, the Online Safety Act, aimed at regulating harmful content.

A year later, when Britain's Labour government was voted into office, officials said they had no plans to restrict social media for children or to ban phones in schools.

Then, last month, the country's media and internet regulator, known as Ofcom, said that social media companies were still not enforcing minimum-age rules.

And this month, Mr. Starmer said that if tech companies operating in Britain did not introduce controls to prevent children from sending and receiving sexually explicit images, the law would be changed.

## Australia

The ban in Australia, which took effect in December, requires social media users to be at least 16 to have access to accounts on Snapchat, TikTok, Facebook and other platforms and services.

In January, an Australian regulator announced that companies had "removed access" to about 4.7 million accounts belonging to children under 16.

But six months in, many young teenagers are still on the platform: In March, the Australian regulator reported that seven in 10 parents whose children already had a social media account said the teenagers still had access to one of the age-restricted services. Other surveys have reported similar findings.

Teenagers say there are easy workarounds. Some have drawn mustaches to beat an age-estimation scan, while others have created new accounts by using a fake birth date. Some have access to a parent's or older sibling's account, or have kept using their own accounts without a hitch.

Some parents say the real effect of the rule may be on younger children who were not yet on social media and may stay off because of the ban.

## Malaysia

This month, Malaysia began enforcing rules barring children younger than 16 from having social media accounts. The government had announced those plans in November.

The authorities said age verification for existing users would be rolled out over the next six months, The Associated Press reported. Companies could face fines, but not

parents.

## The European Union

**Spain:** Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez announced plans in February for a similar ban that would require platforms to institute effective age-verification systems. It would need parliamentary approval to become law.

**France:** A ban on social media for children under 15 could be in place for the start of the school year in September. The plan is popular across the political spectrum, and President Emmanuel Macron has been a vocal supporter.

**Austria:** In March, the country announced plans to ban social media for children under 14.

**Greece:** Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis said in April that legislation to ban social media for children under 15 would go into effect on Jan. 1, 2027. The proposal has little opposition, and the legislation is expected to pass this summer.

Mr. Mitsotakis has said Greece does not want to distance children from technology, which can be a source of inspiration, knowledge and creativity. But he issued a warning: “The addictive design of certain applications, the profit model that is based on your attention, on how long you spend in front of your phone screens, and which deprives your own innocence and freedom, has to be stopped.”

**Denmark:** The country announced a plan in November to bar anyone under 15 from using certain social media platforms. Parents would be allowed to give children ages 13 and older permission to use social media.

Denmark’s ministry for digital affairs said the goal was that children would stay off social media until age 15. The ministry has said it wants to give children more time for “peace, play and development” before they start using social media.

## Indonesia

In March, Indonesia began imposing a new regulation barring children younger than 16 from using what it called “high-risk platforms,” which included TikTok, YouTube, Facebook, Instagram and Roblox, the country’s national police force said in a statement.

## China

China has some of the world’s tightest restrictions on internet usage: It blocks many Western platforms, and the authorities have imposed limits on how much time children

can spend on its wide array of homegrown social media sites.

In 2021, Beijing restricted the amount of time children can spend playing video games to three hours a week, and they can do so only from 8 p.m. to 9 p.m. on Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

## **Brazil**

A law seeking to protect children from addictive, violent and pornographic online content took effect in March.

The measure is not a ban. Instead, children under 16 would have to link their accounts to a legal guardian, who could supervise their social media usage. The law also prohibits platforms from having what Brazil called “manipulative design practices.”

## **The United States**

The Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act prevents companies from collecting the personal data of users under 13.

A blanket social media ban for children would be difficult to enact, partly because states have their own laws. Some states have moved to restrict usage, but those efforts have been challenged in court on free-speech grounds.

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