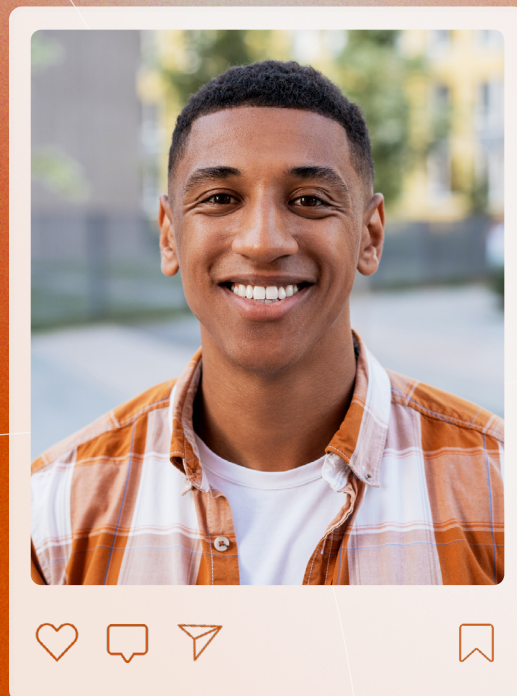
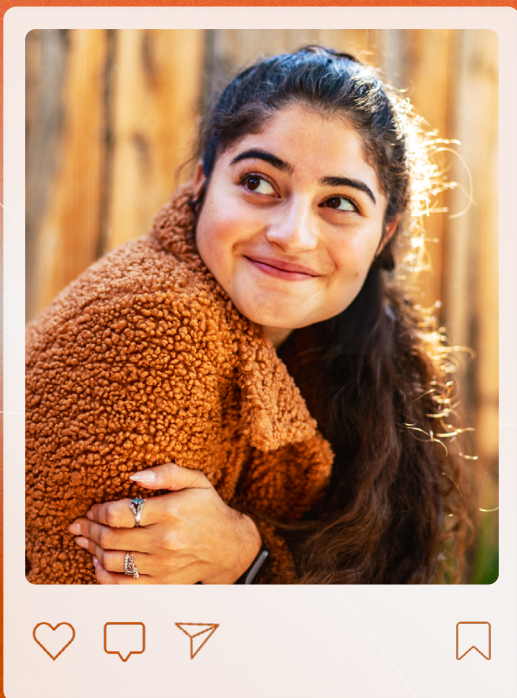


# Social Media, Social Gaming, & Youth Mental Health



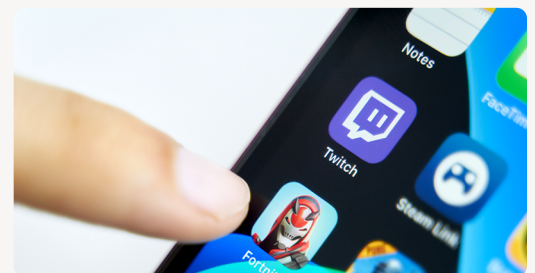
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## Background

In the past two decades, mental illness has grown as a percentage of all child hospitalizations, with mental health issues as the number one reason California's kids are hospitalized.<sup>1</sup> Experts identify a wide range of factors contributing to this decline in youth mental health, including social media, community and school violence, natural disasters, anxiety about climate change, and political polarization.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, there has been a rise in system and structure failures impacting young people, such as poverty, housing insecurity, food insecurity, inadequate access to health care, and limited educational opportunities.<sup>3</sup> Adolescents are also exposed to a range of risk factors, with the Teen National Health Interview Survey showing high reported rates of bullying (34 percent), emotional abuse by a parent (17 percent), and neighborhood violence (15 percent) as additional factors impacting youth mental health.<sup>4</sup>

Beyond these systemic conditions, experts identify the internet and heightened screen time as risk factors. Children between the ages of 8 and 12 in the United States spend an average of 4 to 6 hours a day in front of a screen, while this figure is as high as 9 hours for teenagers.<sup>5</sup> The internet age also exacerbates stress caused by societal problems. Near universal access to the internet exposes youth regularly to a litany of national and global problems, such as "climate change and related disasters, racial injustice, international strife, or gun violence."<sup>6</sup> To date, there has been a plethora of research dedicated to the impact of social media on youth mental health, however, most research does not include the role of social gaming on youth mental health. Emerging research suggests that social gaming needs additional exploration as it may cause significant negative harms to youth mental health and require additional research.<sup>7</sup> This report focuses on how screen time related to traditional social media platforms and social gaming platforms impact the mental wellness of youth, and what policymakers can do to reduce the harms associated with these platforms.



**Social media** has been defined as platforms that enable users to interact with and self-present to various audiences.<sup>8</sup> Popular social media platforms include Facebook and Instagram.

**Social gaming** is the activity or practice of playing an online game on a social media platform.<sup>9</sup> Popular social gaming platforms include Fortnite.

## Social media platform use among youth

In recent years, social media use has become nearly ubiquitous among American youth. Nearly 95 percent of youth aged 13-17 use social media platforms, with over one-third being on them “almost constantly.”<sup>10</sup> About 40 percent of children aged 8-12 also engage with social media despite age restrictions.<sup>11</sup> For information regarding which platforms are most used and demographic differences in youth social media habits, see *Table 1*.

Table 1: Demographic differences in social media platform use <sup>12</sup>

	YouTube	TikTok	Snapchat	Instagram	Facebook	Twitter/X
U.S. Teens	90	63	55	61	32	17
Boys	93	59	53	56	31	18
Girls	87	66	57	66	32	15
White	88	54	55	55	33	13
Black	93	79	57	75	38	24
Hispanic	92	74	55	66	29	20
Ages 13–14	87	55	44	43	23	9
Ages 15–17	92	68	63	72	37	22

**Note:** Some of the subgroups were measured using a relatively small sample. For example, only 247 of the total 1,391 respondents were Black, meaning that findings for this group have a margin of error of plus or minus 8.0 percentage points.

## Social gaming platform use among youth

Social gaming includes multiplayer and interactive online video games and has become one of the most popular digital activities among youth. Social gaming has not had the level of robust research to better understand youth usage as social media. However, generally, researchers agree that on average, boys play video games twice as much as girls<sup>13</sup> and nationally, over 85% of middle and high school students reported playing video games in the past year.<sup>14</sup> One survey found that 73% of respondents started gaming between 5 to 10 years old, raising questions about the age verification abilities on these platforms. While traditional gaming consoles generally do not allow for stranger interactions, online gaming platforms often allow for messages, emojis, and in-game character actions for brief exchanges. Teenagers were varied and flexible in how they connected while gaming. Secondary, supportive platforms like Discord were also commonly used for communication during play, introducing a more traditional social media aspect of communicating into gaming.<sup>15</sup>

## Effects on Youth Mental Health

Social media plays a complex role in the lives of youth, offering both benefits and risks. While there is broad agreement that it has significant effects, experts continue to debate whether the net effect is more positive or negative.

### Benefits of social media

Research shows that social media can offer significant benefits to youth by fostering positive communities and connections with others who share similar identities, abilities, and interests. It provides access to important information and a platform for self-expression<sup>16</sup> and can help youth form and maintain online friendships and social connections<sup>17</sup>. Most adolescents surveyed about their social media use report feeling more accepted (58 percent), supported during difficult times (67 percent), creative (71 percent), and connected to their peers' lives (80 percent) because of social media.<sup>18</sup> Additionally, research indicates that social media and digital mental health interventions can help some youth by promoting help-seeking behaviors and serving as gateways to mental health care<sup>19</sup>. The relationships formed through social media can help youth engage with diverse peer groups and provide valuable social support<sup>20</sup> as online peer support can buffer stress, particularly for marginalized youth, including those who are racial, ethnic, or sexual and gender minorities<sup>21</sup>. Studies show that social media can enhance the mental health and well-being of LGBTQ+ youth by facilitating peer connections, identity exploration, and social support<sup>22</sup>. Other research found that 70 percent of adolescent girls of color report positive, identity-affirming content related to race across social media platforms.<sup>23</sup>

However, many feel the benefits of social media do not outweigh the risks.

“Relationships formed through social media can help youth engage with diverse peer groups and provide valuable social support as online peer support can buffer stress, particularly for marginalized youth, including those who are racial, ethnic, or sexual and gender minorities.”

## Harmful effects of social media

The negative effects of social media depend on three key harm mechanisms: time spent on social media, the type of content consumed, and the nature of interactions on these platforms.<sup>24</sup> These harm mechanisms contribute to concerns such as negative self-esteem, reduced real-life socialization, addiction, cognitive development issues, exposure to harassment and harmful content, and safety risks.

### Time spent on social media



Excessive time spent on social media is strongly linked to poor mental health outcomes. Studies indicate that youth who spend more than three hours per day on social media are twice as likely to report symptoms of depression and anxiety.<sup>25</sup> The habit-forming nature of social media, facilitated by addictive algorithms and infinite scrolling features, can lead to compulsive use, disrupting essential activities like sleep, academic performance, and in-person social interactions.

#### Addiction and impaired cognitive development

Longitudinal research has shown that frequent social media use can alter brain development, particularly affecting impulse control and reward-processing centers.<sup>26</sup> Being less able to self-regulate behavior can increase risk-taking behaviors, impair schooling, and make other tasks requiring attention and determination more difficult.

#### Lack of real-life socialization

Heavy social media users often report decreased in-person interactions, reducing opportunities to develop real-world communication skills and increasing social isolation.<sup>27</sup> This is particularly concerning for adolescents, whose psychosocial development relies on meaningful offline relationships.

### Type of content consumed



The nature of content on social media significantly impacts youth mental health, with algorithm-driven exposure to harmful material playing a major role.

#### Negative self-esteem

Social media fosters unrealistic beauty standards and constant social comparison, particularly for adolescent girls. Research shows that passive exposure to curated, idealized images of other people increases dissatisfaction with oneself, lowering self-esteem.<sup>28</sup> Platforms like Instagram have been directly linked to worsening body image concerns, with Meta's own internal research finding that one in three teen girls reported that Instagram made them feel worse about their bodies.<sup>29</sup>

#### Exposure to harassment, inappropriate content, and predatory behavior

Social media exposes youth to cyberbullying, hate speech, and predatory behaviors at unprecedented rates. A Finnish study found that adolescents with Problematic Social Media Use (PSMU), as indicated by addiction-like symptoms<sup>30</sup> were significantly more likely to encounter social media threats daily across a range of indicators from cyberbullying and sexual harassment to drug use and appearance pressures. Some studies highlight that misogynistic content is amplified for teen boys through social media algorithms.<sup>31</sup>

## Nature of interaction



The way youth engage with social media—whether through active participation or passive consumption—determines the extent of its effects.

### Negative self-esteem & risk to safety

Studies distinguish between active (engaging in conversations, posting original content) and passive (scrolling, lurking) social media use. In some cases, passive users were more prone to social comparison, envy, and feelings of inadequacy.<sup>32</sup> Similarly, a study that leveraged Facebook's initial staggered rollout across campuses as a natural quasi-experiment found increased rates of anxiety and depression, attributed to envy, among young adults after the platform was introduced.<sup>33</sup> Additionally, private messaging features, disappearing content, and anonymous interactions create opportunities for exploitation, online grooming, and exposure to harmful interactions.

### Addiction & lack of self-regulation

Features like infinite scroll, autoplay, and personalized recommendations are designed to keep users engaged longer, exacerbating compulsive use. Research on youth screen time highlights the dopamine-driven feedback loops that make social media difficult to put down, reinforcing a cycle of dependence and impaired self-regulation.<sup>34</sup>

## Benefits of social gaming

A 12-country study of 13,000 players found that 71% of respondents use gaming as a stress reliever, while 55% turn to video games to combat isolation.<sup>35</sup> Gaming has also been linked to increased creativity and problem-solving skills.

While social gaming can provide positive benefits, such as stress relief and problem-solving skills, similar concerns with traditional social media platforms have emerged about social gaming's impact on mental health and online safety.

## Harmful effects of social gaming

In addition to the gameplay itself, gaming platforms can function as digital social spaces, where players interact in real-time through voice, text, and video. However, these unregulated social spaces can expose youth to toxic behavior, hate speech, and extremism.<sup>36</sup> Similar to traditional social media platforms, excessive time spent gaming is associated with increased anxiety, social withdrawal, sleep disturbances, and aggression.<sup>37</sup> Studies show that gaming addiction can impair social skills, decrease academic performance, and contribute to physical health issues like obesity and carpal tunnel syndrome.<sup>38</sup> Online gaming platforms have increasingly become sites for harassment, extremism, and digital abuse, often without meaningful moderation.<sup>39</sup> Numerous reports have identified alarming patterns of harm 1) 74% of young gamers (ages 10-17) reported experiencing harassment while gaming, including threats of violence, stalking, and hate speech<sup>40</sup> and 2) extremist groups actively use gaming platforms to radicalize young users, exploiting unmoderated spaces to spread harmful ideologies.<sup>41</sup>

One analysis found a correlation with gaming and perceived loneliness, with participants who reported playing video games more frequently as more likely to report higher levels of loneliness. These associations between

all types of gaming and perceived loneliness suggest that while gaming is a social activity, it might not fully compensate for the need for other in-person interactions and/or could reflect feelings of isolation among certain adolescents. This has been particularly true for boys, who showed signs of loneliness when playing against others in the same room, while girls' perceived loneliness was evident only when playing solo.<sup>42</sup>

### Three key differences between social gaming and traditional social media

1

The technology behind social gaming makes research and regulation more difficult (e.g. the FortNite server deletes data after the completion of a gaming round).

2

Gaming platforms were not created with a data-first mindset, meaning that their data policies are drastically different from social media companies.

3

Much of the harmful impacts of social gaming occur on third-party platforms, notably 4Chan and Discord, rather than on the game platforms themselves.

## Legislative & regulatory landscape for social media companies

The landscape of legislative and regulatory affairs concerning social media and social gaming has evolved in response to growing concerns about youth mental health. Nationally, individual states and the federal government have weighed questions about the need to protect children and youth from harmful content while protecting the rights of business.

### Federal response to social media

Some progress has been made at the federal level, where policy is more likely to survive legal challenges. The Revising Existing Procedures On Reporting via Technology (REPORT) Act established enhanced reporting mechanisms for online sexual exploitation of children and created requirements for the reporting of violations that occur on social media platforms<sup>43</sup> Meanwhile, broader policy efforts have failed to get bipartisan and bicameral support. The Kids Online Safety (KOSA) Act passed in the Senate, but failed to pass in the House. KOSA aimed to create a “duty of care” and would have included specific enforcement mechanisms, like market research on implementing age verification systems.<sup>44</sup>

Section 230 and the Children’s Online Protection Act (COPPA) are the main policies governing social media company operations in the United States. Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act of 1996 established that social media sites are platforms rather than publishers, meaning that social media companies are not liable for content created by third party users<sup>45</sup> This disincentivizes social media platforms from moderating content and preventing user harm, as it is challenging for the government to penalize platforms when harm occurs based on content. Meanwhile, COPPA, which was enacted in 1998, prevents social media companies from collecting data on children under 13, unless the companies have explicit consent from parents, and requires enhanced measures to protect the data of minors<sup>46</sup>). This is an important policy, but enforcement has been lacking in the absence of viable age verification.

## California's response to social media

As shown in the Appendix, the state has passed two major pieces of social media legislation aimed at youth in the past two legislative sessions: SB 976 (Skinner) and AB 2273 (Wicks), which ban addictive algorithms for youth and require default youth privacy settings, respectively. However, both laws have been enjoined in federal courts on First Amendment grounds, demonstrating the significant legal hurdle that free speech protections pose to interventions meant to protect youth online.

Legal challenges faced by AB 587 (2021-2022), which requires platform transparency around privacy and content moderation policies, make this point ever clearer. Despite not directly impacting users' speech or content moderation policies, AB 587 has been enjoined on compelled speech grounds with companies arguing that they cannot be forced to detail their internal policies. This judicial barrier makes clear that any legislation requiring social media companies to provide information to the public will almost certainly be taken as a First Amendment violation.

AB 2657, introduced in the last legislative session, sought to establish a social media commission during the last legislative session. However, this bill stalled at the Appropriations Committee for cost concerns, highlighting the need to be mindful of spending when designing research efforts.

## Dependence on self-regulation by industry

In the absence of strong legal liability for harms facilitated by social media, tech companies have largely self-regulated, leading to few protections for users, including minors. However, there has been an increase in self-regulation in recent years, especially in periods of intense public scrutiny on social media<sup>47</sup> In September 2024, Meta created special teen accounts for all users under the age of 18 with the requirement that teens under 16 get parental permission to change their accounts from the built-in settings. The new settings include default private accounts (i.e., accounts only accessible by approved followers) and a notification after spending 60 minutes in a day on the app<sup>48</sup> TikTok then implemented similar policy updates, launching a voluntary parent-teen social media use contract and implementing a special "age-appropriate experience for teens"<sup>49</sup>The intent of these policies are uncertain. Notably, a TikTok employee said that the company's goal in implementing a one hour per day time notification is "improving public trust in the TikTok platform via media coverage [...] not to reduce the time spent."<sup>50</sup>

## Regulatory & industry landscape for social gaming companies

Traditional gaming has had a longer existence in homes than social media. The video game industry has benefited from an outdated understanding of how it operates in the lives of young people. As a result, gaming platforms operate with minimal regulatory oversight. The industry's reliance on voluntary compliance and parental oversight leaves significant gaps in protection, making gaming one of the least regulated digital social spaces for youth.

## Federal response to gaming.<sup>51</sup>

In 1994, Congress introduced the Video Game Rating Act of 1994, which called for establishing an agency called the Interactive Entertainment Rating Commission. The commission was intended to "coordinate with the video game industry in the development of a voluntary system for providing information concerning the contents of video games to purchasers and users," and create regulations related to video game ratings. However, the bill did not move forward.

In 2007, The Children Protection from Video Game Violence and Sexual Content Act of 2007 called for the Federal Trade Commission to research the Entertainment Software Ratings Board's (ESRB) system and report to Congress on whether it exposed children to excessive sexual and violent content. It also required the Comptroller General to research the impact that video games may have on children's mental stability and growth.

In 2013, the Video Games Rating Enforcement Act was introduced. Among other stipulations, its text prohibited minors from renting, selling, or buying a video game with an adult rated label, with monetary penalties for people or businesses who violated these provisions. Most the House "to address the effects of new technologies on children's mental health," although that bill did not identify video games directly. The bill did not move forward.

## California's response to gaming

The California Legislature has passed or considered several bills focused on increasing the safety of youth on social media and in gaming. In 2005, California passed a law restricting the sale of violent video games to minors, but the U.S. Supreme Court overturned it in *Brown v. Entertainment Merchants Association* (2011), ruling that video games are protected under the First Amendment. As a result, no legally enforceable age restrictions exist for game sales in California or the U.S.<sup>52</sup>

## Dependence on self-regulation by industry

The video game industry primarily relies on self-regulation through the Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB), which assigns voluntary age and content ratings to games. There are no legal mandates enforcing these age restrictions, making compliance dependent on industry participation.<sup>53</sup> Additionally, while gaming platforms offer parental control settings, their effectiveness varies, as they require active setup and enforcement by parents<sup>54</sup>: Finally, 'in-game reporting systems are ineffective—the majority of harassment complaints go unanswered, and many players hesitate to report incidents due to poor enforcement, fear of retaliation, and a sense that harassment is part of gaming.<sup>55</sup>

Social media companies also rely on self-regulation. States like Florida, Utah and Texas, have passed social media laws with protections for minors. Both Florida and Utah's laws add requirements for parental consent for either creating accounts or enabling certain functions.

Florida's law prohibits platforms from allowing teenagers under the age of 14 and requires parental consent for 14- and 15-year-olds to create accounts. Florida's law lacks an age verification mechanism, merely requiring age verification to determine if the account holder is a minor, hindering the possibility for enforcement<sup>56</sup>

The Utah law requires platforms to implement highly accurate age assurance systems and implement default protective settings for accounts belonging to minors. Meanwhile, Utah's new SB 194 requires highly accurate age verification, making it possible to reliably enforce the age-based protections. This bill, however, faces two lawsuits, delaying its implementation.<sup>57</sup>

Texas passed the Securing Children Online through Parental Empowerment Act (SCOPE), which included enhanced privacy and control over minors accounts, with a focus on ensuring that parents are able to control the content that their children access.<sup>58</sup>

Additionally, Texas and Utah are among over a dozen states that have implemented age verification requirements for people within those states to access adult content. These laws have largely led companies with adult sexual content to block access in those states rather than implement the requisite age verification, as they await the Supreme Court's decision on the constitutionality of these laws.<sup>59</sup>

## Recommendations

The long history of federal and state legislative and regulatory attempts make policy recommendations for state officials fraught with legal challenges and business lobbying pressures while the mental health of youth continues to deteriorate. Below, we have outlined options we believe are feasible, given the current legal challenges to existing legislative attempts. These recommendations should allow for progress towards healthy childhood development in an increasingly digital world.



### Move forward with a working group reporting to the Legislature

The state of California should create a working group composed of parents, youth, social media companies, educators, and clinicians to research the impacts of social media and gaming on youth mental health in California. This working group should deliver a report to the Governor and Legislature exploring the relationship between social media and youth mental health, as well as the relative magnitude of harm mechanisms and adverse effects. Assembly Bill 2657 would have established a commission, but the bill failed in part because the cost of a formal commission was deemed too expensive. However, a working group in place of a commission would lower anticipated costs, requiring significantly less time and resources from the state, helping to clear this political hurdle while still achieving the goals of the body.



### Create an education campaign for students and parents

Create an education campaign for students and parents. Provide school districts with a social media and social gaming literacy module that focuses on safe and responsible use of platforms. Rather than telling students that they should not use social media or gaming platforms, this module should discuss how to identify fake profiles and content, highlight examples of scams and predatory behavior, and explain the risks of excessive screen time. Schools should also provide students with a take home learning module for their parents and caregivers to engage with, informing them about parental controls and other safety features on social media platforms. As an alternative to mandating this curriculum, reform advocates may consider supporting efforts to create these modules as a resource for schools and parents to voluntarily use.



## Support device-level age verification to access social media platforms

Support device-level age verification to access social media and gaming platforms. Require device manufacturers to verify a device user's age at the time of activation or through operating system updates for devices being used by a secondary user after initial activation. The device's application programming interface (API) will then communicate the user's age to application stores, applications, websites, and any other online services that require age verification for access. Requiring device-level verification would likely face less challenge than other mechanisms, such as third-party or platform level verification, as social media companies would not be responsible for verification in this case. Technology companies are highly organized in their lobbying and have specific protections as content providers under Section 230 that do not extend to hardware companies. Device level verification credibly circumvents the legal complexities of protection under Section 230, by addressing a technical factor other than content providers. However, any age verification requirement should be narrowly tailored to avoid concerns related to data privacy, security, and potentially compelled speech.



## Create time-triggered warning labels for youth on platforms

Create time-triggered warning labels for youth on platforms. Require social media platforms to implement time-triggered warning labels for youth after a certain period of time spent on a given platform each day. These labels would appear on the screen at increasingly small intervals as the user continues to use the platform past the time limit trigger. This will allow the user to continue using the platform but makes the experience increasingly irritating to encourage attrition without a strict time limit. Limiting the amount of time that young people spend online restricts the habit-forming nature of social media and allows youths to maintain in person interests and connections, allowing for the positive elements of social media while mitigating the risks of overuse. Any required speech (such as making companies display time limits) can be considered compelled speech and a violation of companies' first amendment rights. Increased evidence that California has a compelling interest in requiring these warning labels would likely be necessary for courts to uphold a policy that arguably infringes on companies' constitutional rights.

## Appendix A: California policy efforts

The table below summarizes major California policy efforts to date. See the main body of this policy brief for additional discussion of each.

California Legislation	Policy Description	Mechanism Addressed	Current Status
SB 976: Protecting Our Kids from Social Media Addiction Act (2023-24)	SB 976 prohibits social media companies from: Providing an addictive algorithm to youth users without parental consent; Sending notifications to youth users during school hours or between midnight and 6am ( <a href="#">CalMatters</a> ).	Time (1), Types of Content (2)	Passed but enjoined on First Amendment grounds
AB 2273: California Age-Appropriate Design Code Act (2021-22)	AB 2273 would require: Default privacy and safety settings; Prohibiting the use of a child's; personal information, or storing a child's geolocation; Companies provide clear and easily accessible privacy information and standards that permit children to exercise their privacy rights ( <a href="#">Newsom</a> ).	Types of Content (2), Types of Interaction (3)	Passed but enjoined on First Amendment grounds ( <a href="#">Miller</a> )
AB 587: Social Media Companies Terms of Service (2021-22)	AB 587 would require social media companies to: Make privacy policies readily available to users; Post terms of service in a public database; Publish a biannual report detailing terms of service, enforcement policy, and data about violations to be stored in a public repository ( <a href="#">AB 587</a> ).	Types of Content (2), Types of Interaction (3)	Passed but enjoined on First Amendment grounds ( <a href="#">Poritz</a> )
AB 2657: Social Media Commission (2023-24)	AB 2657 would have: Established a Social Media Commission chaired by the Secretary of California Health and Human Service and composed of 7 stakeholder subcommittees; Resulted in a report submitted to the governor investigating social media, mental health, and impacts of existing legislation ( <a href="#">LegiScan</a> ).	Evaluate strength of all three harm mechanisms	Introduced during the 2024-25 Legislative Session but stalled in Appropriations

## Appendix B: Recent federal and non-California state policy efforts

Legislation	Policy Description	Mechanism Addressed	Current Status
S. 474: Revising Existing Procedures On Reporting via Technology (REPORT) Act [Federal] (2023-24)	Changes the federal framework governing the reporting of crimes involving the online sexual exploitation of children, increasing the amount of time that a provider must preserve the contents of a report, requiring providers to report on a violation that may be planned or imminent, and extending the requirement for providers to report apparent violations involving the sexual exploitation of children ( <a href="#">S. 474, 118th Congress</a> ).	Types of content (2), Types of interactions (3)	Passed and signed into law on May 7, 2024
S. 1409: Kids Online Safety (KOSA) Act [Federal] (2023-24)	Requires covered platforms to take reasonable measures in the design and operation of products or services used by minors to prevent and mitigate certain harms that may arise from that use, including providing minors with certain safeguards and parents or guardians with tools to supervise minors' use of a platform, such as control of privacy and account settings ( <a href="#">S. 1409, 118th Congress</a> ).	Types of content (2), Types of interactions (3)	Passed in the Senate in July 2024 and stalled in the House
HB 3: Online Protections for Minors [Florida] (2024)	Requires social media platforms to prohibit minors 13 and younger and requires parental permission for 14- and 15-year olds to create accounts ( <a href="#">HB 3</a> ).	Time (1)	Passed and effective date of January 1, 2025. Enforcement paused until preliminary decision in challenge based on 1st Amendment grounds ( <a href="#">Bridges</a> )
SB 104: Children's Device Protection Act [Utah] (2024)	Requires devices to automatically enable content filters upon device activation by a minor. These filters can be disabled and re-enabled by a non-minor user ( <a href="#">SB 104</a> ).	Types of content (2)	Passed and enacted on January 1, 2025 <sup>60</sup>
SB 194: Social Media Regulation Amendments [Utah] (2024)	Blocks harmful and addictive product features on social media, protects minors' privacy, and gives parents the tools and resources they need to keep their children safe ( <a href="#">SB 194, Utah</a> ).	Types of content (2), Types of interactions (3)	Signed into Law Match 2024, stayed until resolution of legal challenge at the Utah District Court

Legislation	Policy Description	Mechanism Addressed	Current Status
HB 464: Social Media Regulation Amendments [Utah] (2024)	Holds social media companies that use curation algorithms responsible for mental health problems they cause through the design of their platforms, presuming that the platform caused the harm if minors or their parents sue a social media company for mental health harm ( <a href="#">HB 464, Utah</a> ).	Time (1), Types of interactions (3)	Passed March 2024 and enacted October 2024
HB 18: Securing Children Online through Parental Empowerment Act (SCOPE) [Texas] (2023)	Requires digital service providers to protect minor children (under 18) from harmful content and data collection practices ( <a href="#">HB 18, AG Paxton</a> ).	Types of content (2)	Passed and enacted on September 1, 2024. Several aspects of the act are currently paused under 1st Amendment concerns ( <a href="#">Osibamowo</a> )
Pornography Age Verification Laws [Texas, Florida, and 17 other states] (2022-25)	19 states have passed laws requiring websites that host pornography to age verify users. While not a social media policy, these efforts provide a critical window into the technological and legal viability of age verification as SCOTUS prepares to issue a ruling ( <a href="#">Chapman et al.</a> ).	Types of Content (2)	Pending before SCOTUS, arguments complete

# Endnotes

- 1 <https://go.childrennow.org/2024-california-childrens-report-card>
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- 4 [Panchal](#), 2024
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- 7 <https://srcd.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/cdep.12518>
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- 13 [Video Games and Youth](#). American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry. October 2024.
- 14 [Video Games and Mental Health: The Good and the Bad](#). Charlie Health. July 2023.
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- 21 [Charmaraman et al., 2022](#); [Ybarra et al., 2015](#)
- 22 [Berger et al.](#), 2022
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- 24 [U.S. Surgeon General, 2023](#)
- 25 [Riehm et al.](#), 2019
- 26 [Maza et al.](#), 2023
- 27 [Twenge 2020](#); [Twenge et al. 2018](#)
- 28 [Verduyn et al.](#), 2015; [Beyens et al.](#), 2020
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- 31 <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2024/feb/06/social-media-algorithms-amplifying-misogynistic-content>
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- 33 [Braghieri et al.](#), 2022
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We conduct non-partisan research, policy development, and advocacy reflecting a whole-child approach to improving the lives of kids, especially kids of color and kids living in poverty, from prenatal through age 26.

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**Writers**

Chad Brechbuhler,  
*Stanford University,*  
*Master of Public Policy '25*

Jose Luis Gandara,  
*Stanford University,*  
*Master of Public Policy '25*

Lily Rashes,  
*Stanford University,*  
*Master of Public Policy '25*

**Contributors**

Joe Nation, Ph.D.  
*Professor of the Practice*  
*Stanford Public*  
*Policy Program*

Lishaun Francis,  
*Children Now,*  
*Senior Director,*  
*Behavioral Health*

Kelly Hardy,  
*Children Now,*  
*Senior Managing Director,*  
*Health & Research*

**Designer**

Jose Murillo,  
*Children Now,*  
*Digital Marketing & Service*  
*Design Coordinator*

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