

Meta Platforms - 2024

Report on Child Safety Impacts and Actual Harm Reduction to Children

The internet was not developed with children in mind. Social media impacts children's brains differently than adult brains.¹ It also poses physical and psychological risks that many children and teens are unprepared for, including sextortion and grooming, hate group recruitment, human trafficking, cyberbullying and harassment, exposure to sexual or violent content, invasion of privacy, self-harm content, and financial scams, among others.

Meta is the world's largest social media company with billions of children and teen users. Meta's platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, Messenger and WhatsApp, have been linked to numerous child safety impacts including:

Mental Health:

Meta's own research shows Instagram's negative impacts on teens' self-image, increased rates of depression and anxiety, and a link to increased suicidal thoughts.² Forty-two states have sued Meta claiming that Facebook and Instagram algorithms are intentionally addictive and harm kids' mental health.³

Sexual Exploitation:

In 2022, nearly 32 million cases of online child sexual abuse material were reported; over 27 million of those (85 percent) stemmed from Meta platforms.⁴ Meta has started encrypting Facebook Messenger despite urgent warnings from law enforcement and child protection organizations that encryption will hide millions of reports, cloak the actions of child predators, and make children more vulnerable.⁵ A *Wall Street Journal* investigation describes how Instagram's algorithms "connect and promote" a vast pedophile network by guiding pedophiles to sellers of child sexual abuse materials.⁶

Cyberbullying:

Time Magazine reported that "By one estimate, nearly 80% of teens are on Instagram and more than half of those users have been bullied on the platform."⁷ A United Kingdom study ranked Instagram first in youth cyberbullying, with 42 percent reporting bullying, followed by Facebook (39 percent), and WhatsApp (17 percent).⁸

Data Privacy:

In 2022, Meta was fined over \$400 million for failing to safeguard children's information on Instagram.⁹

Legislation:

The new European Union's Digital Services Act will make identifying, reporting and removing child sexual abuse material mandatory.¹⁰ The United Kingdom's Online Safety bill aims to keep internet users, particularly children, safe from fraudulent and harmful content. The United States' proposed Kids Online Safety Act enjoys public and bipartisan Congressional support and requires companies to prevent or mitigate child risks including suicide, eating disorders and substance abuse."^{11 12}

Meta is facing significant regulatory, reputational, and legal risks due to these unabated issues.

Meta's website lists some steps taken to improve child safety, but it has no publicly available, company-wide child safety or harm reduction performance targets for investors and stakeholders to judge the effectiveness of Meta's announced tools, policies and actions.

Resolved: Shareholders request that, within one year, the Board of Directors adopts targets and publishes annually a report (prepared at reasonable expense, excluding proprietary information) that includes quantitative metrics appropriate to assessing whether Meta has improved its performance globally regarding child safety impacts and actual harm reduction to children on its platforms.

¹ <https://www.apa.org/news/apa/2022/social-media-children-teens>

² <https://www.wsj.com/articles/facebook-knows-instagram-is-toxic-for-teen-girls-company-documents-show-11631620739>

³ <https://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2023/11/03/meta-lawsuit-attorney-generals-pursue-social-media-accountability/71410913007/>

⁴ <https://www.missingkids.org/content/dam/missingkids/pdfs/2022-reports-by-esp.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/12/06/technology/meta-messenger-encryption.html>

⁶ <https://www.wsj.com/articles/instagram-vast-pedophile-network-4ab7189>

⁷ <https://time.com/5619999/instagram-mosseri-bullying-artificial-intelligence>

⁸ <https://techjury.net/blog/cyberbullying-statistics>

⁹ <https://www.cnet.com/news/privacy/meta-fined-400m-for-failing-to-protect-childrens-privacy-on-instagram>

¹⁰ <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/28/opinion/social-media-facebook-transparency.html?smid=em-share>

¹¹ <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/protecting-kids-online-bipartisan-cause-senators/story?id=97195752>

¹² <https://www.nbcnews.com/tech/social-media/kosa-kids-online-safety-act-speech-censor-rcna128249>