

Meta responds to regulatory pressure with enhanced teen privacy settings

Article

The news: Meta is proactively enhancing measures to safeguard teens on **Facebook** and **Instagram** by implementing protections against sensitive content such as posts on self-harm

and eating disorders.

- This initiative involves automatically **applying the most restrictive content control settings** to teen accounts, **hiding search results** on sensitive topics, and **redirecting teens to helplines** and other resources. Meta is also encouraging teens to update their privacy settings for added security.

The big picture: The company is currently embroiled in a legal battle with the **Federal Trade Commission** and has asked a federal court to halt an FTC proceeding that could potentially ban it from monetizing teen data.

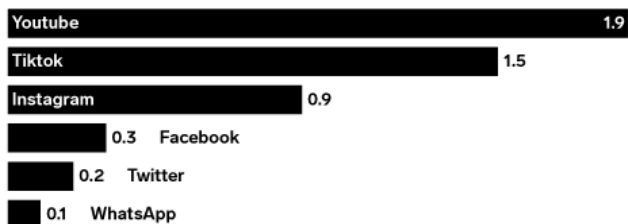
- The dispute arises from an attempt by the FTC to alter a 2020 settlement that originally imposed a \$5 billion fine on Meta following privacy violations, including the **Cambridge Analytica** scandal.
- The proposed modification aims to prevent Meta from targeting ads to minors, a move Meta argues should be decided by a federal judge and not unilaterally imposed by the FTC. In pushing to postpone further FTC action, Meta is citing "irreparable harm" and a lack of federal court procedural protections.
- Scrutiny on Meta has intensified amid allegations that it harms young users by promoting addictive features and enabling child predators. The criticism has led to lawsuits from several states and an upcoming Senate hearing, where Meta CEO **Mark Zuckerberg** and other tech executives will testify about online child safety.
- Meta is facing increasing global regulatory pressures from the **EU's Digital Services Act** and the UK's **Online Safety Act**, which demand greater accountability from tech companies for their platforms' content. In balancing the need for protection and access to information, Meta aims to ensure that teens are shielded from harmful content while still having access to educational and support resources.

Why it matters: Teens and Gen Z users are important to Meta's ability to maintain its grip on the digital ad market.

- Instagram is the third most-used social media platform among US teens, with an **average daily usage of 0.9 hours**, trailing behind **YouTube** and **TikTok**, per Gallup. Facebook's daily engagement among teens is significantly lower at 0.3 hours, indicating that the platform is less popular with the younger demographic compared with other social platforms.

- Among key digital platforms, **Snapchat** is weighted most heavily toward Gen Z users (51.1%), while Instagram and Facebook attract 33.7% and 17.4% of Gen Z users, respectively, per our forecast.
- Instagram Reels has seen a significant increase in weekly usage among US teens, jumping from 19% in 2022 to 30% in 2023, showing the rising popularity of this feature, per Forrester.

Daily Time of US Teens Spent Using Social Media, by Platform, July 2023
mean hours per day



Note: n=1,567 ages 13-19
 Source: Gallup and Institute for Family Studies (IFS), "How Parenting and Self-control Mediate the Link Between Social Media Use and Youth Mental Health," Oct 11, 2023

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