

CHILDREN, SOCIAL MEDIA AND REGULATION

Under 13? Under 16? Under 18? What age should India choose?

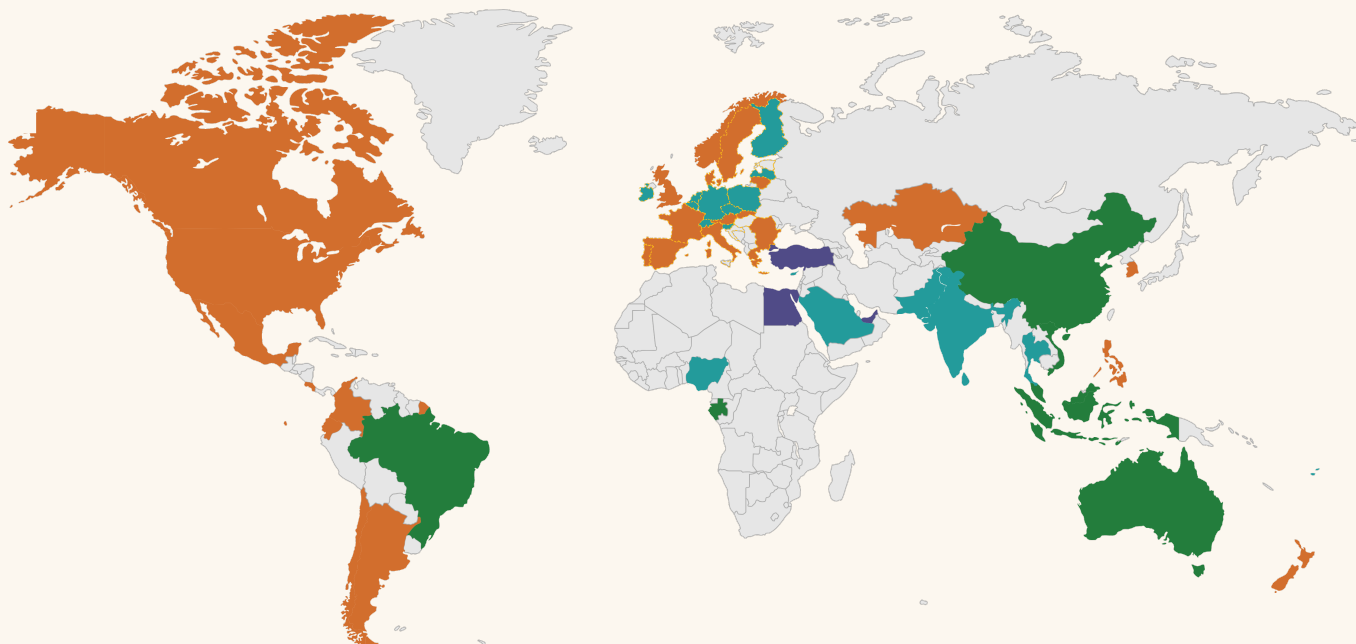
57 jurisdictions are moving. That does not mean 57 bans.

Governments are moving rapidly on children's access to social media. But measures already in force, adopted but not yet operative, formally proposed and under official consideration are often discussed as though they were the same thing.

THEY ARE NOT EQUIVALENT.

THE GLOBAL LANDSCAPE

57 jurisdictions mapped | status as of 30 September 2026



7

IN FORCE

Core obligations in effect

3

ADOPTED

Enacted; not yet in effect

27

FORMAL PROPOSAL

A bill or official draft on the record

20

UNDER OFFICIAL REVIEW

No specific legal text yet

WHAT THE HEADLINES BLUR

Many interventions are still too new to evaluate by outcomes.

REGULATORY MOMENTUM

is not REGULATORY SUCCESS

LAW ON THE BOOKS

is not LAW IN FORCE

AGE ASSURANCE

is not CHILD SAFETY

RESTRICTED ACCESS

is not REDUCED HARM

SCOPE

National measures setting a minimum age or parental linkage requirement for social media accounts. General consent ages, design only or age assurance only rules and subnational measures are excluded. Jurisdictions are classified by their most advanced live measure.

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FROM GLOBAL EXPERIENCE TO THE INDIAN DEBATE

Where the line is drawn

● In force ● Adopted

UNDER 13	UNDER 15	UNDER 16 MOST COMMON	UNDER 18
● Egypt No independent accounts	● Turkey Account ban ● UAE Account ban	● Australia Account ban ● Malaysia Account ban ● Gabon Account ban ● Indonesia High risk platforms ● Brazil Parental linkage ● Vietnam Parental linkage	● China Minor Mode limits

Ten jurisdictions, four different lines, and not all of them are bans.

What are we learning?

01 More regulatory activity does not yet mean more evidence.

Many measures are too new to evaluate properly. A law, proposal or age threshold tells us little on its own about whether children are actually safer.

02 Access is only one part of the risk landscape.

Age based rules may affect access. They do not, by themselves, address what children encounter online or how recommendation, interaction and engagement systems shape their experience.

03 Implementation can determine whether policy works at all.

Age assurance, platform safeguards, reporting systems and oversight depend on technical capability, clear responsibilities and workable implementation.

04 Age assurance is an enabling mechanism, not an end in itself.

The test is whether it meaningfully reduces risk while remaining proportionate, privacy preserving and linked to safer experiences for children.

What does India need to get right?

01 Start with the harm, not the instrument.

Different harms may require different responses. The intervention should follow the risk.

02 Avoid one size fits all regulation.

Age, service type and feature design can produce very different risk profiles.

03 Consider access, design and privacy together.

Access measures should be assessed alongside design, parental tools, safety systems and privacy.

04 Keep age assurance risk based and proportionate.

The level of assurance should reflect the level of risk, with strong data minimisation.

05 Build institutional capability alongside policy ambition.

Effective frameworks require expertise, resources and clear responsibilities.

06 Measure outcomes, not just compliance.

Test whether interventions reduce harm, and retain the ability to adjust course.

India does not need to choose a foreign model before answering the harder questions.

The task is to identify what combination of measures, if any, is supported by the evidence, proportionate to the risks, respectful of children's rights and workable in the Indian context.

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