

'Belly of the beast': From 13, kids treated as adults online

September 30 2021, by Joshua Melvin



Thirteen effectively serves as the age of majority online under a two-decade old US law, and is the minimum set by Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat—all of which are massively popular among children.

Facebook drew outrage for its now paused plans for an Instagram app

for kids aged 12 and under. But 13-year-olds are already welcome on social media with few protections and sometimes tragic effects, experts and parents said.

That's because 13 effectively serves as the age of majority online under a two-decade-old law, and is the minimum set by Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat—all of which are massively popular among children.

Josh Golin at advocacy Fairplay said the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) intended to protect the privacy of kids aged 12 or under, but was crafted well before social media and is now dangerously outdated.

"At age 13, essentially the internet treats you as an adult," Golin told AFP. "I doubt very many people now would say... 'That seems like a good time to throw them into the belly of the beast.'"

US senators have called a hearing Thursday about the "toxic effects of Facebook and Instagram" on [young people](#), which will include the questioning of Facebook executive Antigone Davis.

Worries over the platforms' potential to harm youth have spiked after a scathing Wall Street Journal series revealing the social media giant's own research showed it knew of the damage Instagram can do to teenage girls' well-being.

In the wake of those reports, Facebook announced Monday it was suspending development of the kids' version of the photo-sharing app to consult with the parents and [advocacy groups](#) who fought against the plan.

Yet, Tristan Harris, president and co-founder of the Center for Humane

Technology, noted: "That doesn't stop all the kids who are on there already, whose suicidal ideation, body dysmorphia, anxiety and depression are still there."

He was referring to some of the long list of harms attributed to steady social media use among young people.

Citation: 'Belly of the beast': From 13, kids treated as adults online (2021, September 30)
retrieved 23 April 2024 from
<https://techxplore.com/news/2021-09-belly-beast-kids-adults-online.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.