

# Should Canada Ban Youth from Social Media?

## Discussion Prompt

Canada should ban youth from having accounts on social media.

## General background

The Australian government recently instituted a social media ban for everyone under the age of 16. They argued that social media can cause harm to youth health and wellbeing through design features that encourage screen addiction, and that social media can expose young people to disturbing content.

So far, the ban in Australia applies to the following platforms: Instagram, Facebook, Threads, Snapchat, X, YouTube, TikTok, Reddit, Kick, and Twitch. Platforms that fail to comply with the ban can face fines of up to 50 million Australian dollars. All users under 16 have lost access to their accounts, and any content they previously posted will no longer be visible to others (although everyone remains able to view content that is accessible to those without an account). The platforms listed above are now required to take reasonable steps to check users' ages, which will include the use of age verification technology.

While some people hope that this is the first of many bills that will ban youth from accessing social media all over the world, not everyone agrees. For instance, some human rights, and technology experts argue that banning youth from accessing social media will encourage youth to use more unregulated platforms that pose an even greater risk to their health and wellbeing. There are also concerns that a ban for youth fails to hold platforms accountable for treating the issues at their roots.

Should Canada follow Australia's lead? While the federal government has not officially proposed any legislation that would ban youth from accessing social media platforms, there were two bills proposed before the dissolution of parliament in January 2025 to address online harms, both of which focused on protecting minors from harms faced online (Bill C-63 and Bill C-412). More recently, Nova Scotia's provincial government introduced a bill that would ban youth under 16 from using social media. And in January 2026, anonymous sources [reported to the Globe and Mail](#) that the Canadian government is planning to introduce a new bill that will ban youth under 14 from having social media accounts.

### **For More Information:**

- [Millions of Australian children just lost access to social media. What's happening and will it work?](#) | CNN
- [Federal officials draft plans to ban social media for children under 14](#) | The Globe and Mail

- [What is Australia's under-16 social media ban? The world-first law explained](#) | The University of Sydney
- [N.S. Liberals to table bill that would ban use of social media by children under 16](#) | CBC

## **Yes**

*Here are some reasons why people might argue that Canada **should** ban youth from having accounts on social media.*

### **Reducing Screen Time**

Social media increases the time many youth spend looking at screens, which some argue can even be addictive. [There is some evidence to suggest](#) that greater time spent on screens results in decreased levels of concentration, unhealthy sleeping patterns, and increased stress levels. Time spent on social media apps also reduces time for important developmental activities, such as in-person socializing and focused learning time.

### **Reducing exposure to harmful content**

Social media allows youth easy access to content that can be deeply harmful to their health and wellbeing. We should be reducing exposure to harmful content, and preventing youth from creating accounts on social media platforms with such content is one way to reduce this risk.

### **Protecting youth from bad conduct**

Having an account on one or more social media apps increases the likelihood of facing cyberbullying, which can be deeply detrimental to youth wellbeing. It also makes youth vulnerable to predators on the internet. Further, some argue that youth, especially those under 16, are not yet ready to use social media responsibly themselves – they cannot be trusted to engage responsibly on a public platform, where there will be a record of their own conduct for years to come.

### **Read More:**

- [What to know about Australia's new social media law: Should Canada do the same?\\*](#) | CTV
- [The Guardian view on Australia's social media ban: dragging tech companies into action](#) | The Guardian
- [Kids under 14 should be banned from social media unless parents consent, Quebec committee says](#) | CTV

*\*Content Warning: includes discussion of self-harm*

## **No**

Here are some reasons why people might argue that Canada **should not** ban youth from having accounts on social media.

### **Youth lose access to their communities**

Many youth find community through social media, particularly when they live in rural areas, and/or when parts of their identity are not represented in nearby communities. For instance, youth who identify as 2SLGBTQ+ often rely on online communities accessed through social media platforms as a safe and affirming space, especially those who face discrimination in their households or communities.

### **Youth will turn to less regulated platforms**

If youth are banned from accessing the most popular platforms, social media use will not go away. Instead, youth will turn to other, less regulated and thus riskier platforms, with greater potential for harm. The social media platforms that are the most popular - and so the ones most likely to be banned - also happen to be the platforms with more advanced safeguards in place. This includes content-moderation and tools that aim to protect users from harmful conduct, such as cyberbullying and predators online.

### **We should be treating the issues at their roots**

Instead of introducing a blanket ban on social media, we should be educating young people on responsible and safe social media use, so that they are able to receive the benefits of these platforms while avoiding the harms. Moreover, the issues youth face on social media are not unique to them. For example, if the problem is that social media apps are addictive, we should be treating the issue at its root and holding these platforms accountable for fueling addiction for all users through their design.

### **Read More:**

- ['I would not have made it out': Why online spaces matter for 2SLGBTQ+ youth\\*](#) | CBC
- [Canada is poised to follow Australia's under-16 social media ban. Is this a good idea?\\*](#) | Toronto Star
- [Australia: Government should strictly regulate social media platforms, not ban children and young people](#) | Amnesty International

*\*Content warning: includes mention of suicide*