2020 Technical Report: A Review of Age Verification Mechanism for 10 Social Media Apps

Engl. transl.: 2020 Technical Report: a Review of Age Verification Mechanism for 10 Social Media Apps

# Keywords

* social media apps
* age verification
* children

# Details

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English

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## Type

Short report

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Cybersafe Ireland

## Sample

"Data was collected by testing the user sign up processes for users aged 12, 13 and 16. Each of
the 10 apps was installed on a new Nokia 2.3 smartphone. Testing involved signing up to each
app, providing a date of birth when requested that suggested each of the three ages specified
above. In a few cases, it was necessary to clear the cache or reinstall the app to begin the process
again for the next user age"

## Implications For Stakeholders About

# Abstract

"This study presents an analysis of the age verification mechanisms in place for 10 popular social media apps used by children: Snapchat, Instagram, TikTok, Viber, Skype, Facebook, HouseParty, Discord, Messenger, WhatsApp. According to CyberSafeIreland, these are the apps most used by younger children, including underage children, i.e. below the age of 13 which is defined as the minimum age for use of such services (16 years in the case of WhatsApp). All of the online services in this group have a minimum age restriction of 13, with the exception of WhatsApp, which has an age restriction of 16, as laid out in their terms and conditions. The purpose of this study was to test of the robustness of the age verification mechanisms deployed by these services"

# Outcome

"There are now some restrictions in place that might act as a deterrent (rather than a
barrier) to underage users.
Messenger is now asking for an age during signup. On Skype, the minimum age has been removed from the Terms of Use and a 12 year old can now sign up.There are some changes to some Terms of Use being EU-wide and there are minor changes in how these were reported last year. TikTok, Messenger and Instagram Terms of Use are now EU wide. This was the case also last year for Messenger and Instagram (see points 2 in testing for each app). It is unclear, however, whether the age 14 for Facebook services in Spain applies to the entire suite of
products."