

## **Safety for children online**

February 11, 2024 • vajiramandravi.com



### **What's in today's article?**

- Why in news?
- What are the issues with children's safety online?
- Reach of generative AI
- What can be done to keep children safe online?

### **Why in news?**

- In early February, Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg provided a public apology to parents whose children were victims of online predators during a Congressional hearing.
- The Big Tech and the Online Child Sexual Exploitation Crisis hearing was reportedly called to examine and investigate the plague of online child sexual exploitation.
- All their executives were pinned on their abdication of responsibility to protect children on social media platforms.

### **News Summary: Safety for children online**

# What are the issues with children's safety online?

- Challenges
  - Exposure to Inappropriate Content
    - Children may come across inappropriate content such as violence, pornography, hate speech, etc. while browsing the internet.
  - Online Predators and Grooming
  - There is a risk of children encountering online predators who use social media and gaming platforms to establish relationships with children.
    - They can use this relationship to groom them for exploitation or abuse.
  - Cyberbullying
    - Children can become victims of cyberbullying, which involves the use of digital technology to harass, intimidate, or humiliate others.
      - This can have serious psychological and emotional consequences for children.
  - Privacy Concerns
    - Children may not fully understand the importance of privacy settings and may unknowingly share personal information online.
  - Addictive Behaviour
    - Excessive screen time and use of digital devices can lead to addictive behaviour among children.
      - This will affect their mental and physical health, as well as their academic performance and social interactions.
- Responsibility of tech companies
  - Vast amounts of data, including about non-verbal behaviour are collected by the tech companies.
    - This allows them to facilitate hyper-personalised profiling, advertising, and increased surveillance, impacting children's privacy, security, other rights and freedom.
    - Across the world, parents and activists are aggressively advancing the agenda of having the tech companies take responsibility, or provide platforms that are safe by design for children and young users.

## Reach of generative AI

- Generative AI brings potential opportunities, such as homework assistance, easy-to-understand explanations of difficult concepts, and personalised learning experiences.
  - Generative AI is a type of artificial intelligence technology that can produce various types of content, including text, imagery, audio and synthetic data.
- For children with disabilities, a world opens up as they can interface and co-create with digital systems in new ways through text, speech or images.
- But generative AI could also be used by bad actors or inadvertently cause harm or society-wide disruptions at the cost of children's prospects and well-being.
  - Generative AI can quickly make text-based lies that look just like those written by people. These lies can be more convincing than what humans write.

- AI-generated images are sometimes indistinguishable from reality.
- Children are vulnerable to the risks of mis/disinformation as their cognitive capacities are still developing.
- There is also a debate about how interacting with chatbots that have a human-like tone will impact young minds.

## What can be done to keep children safe online?

- Increased responsibility of tech companies
    - The primary responsibility is that of the tech companies who will have to incorporate safety by design.
    - The proceedings of the Congressional hearings have made it obvious that these companies are fully cognisant of the extent to which their apps and systems impact children negatively.
  - UNICEF's Guidance for Child-Friendly AI
    - Children's Development and Well-being – UNICEF suggests that AI should support children's growth and happiness.
    - Protecting Children's Data and Privacy – According to UNICEF, AI should safeguard children's information and privacy.
    - Highest Data Protection Standards – UNICEF recommends applying the strictest data protection rules to children's data in virtual worlds and metaverse environments.
  - Government Responsibilities for Children's Online Safety
    - Regulatory Frameworks Oversight – Governments must regularly check and change rules to make sure new technologies don't harm children's rights.
    - Addressing Harmful Content and Behaviour – Governments should take action against harmful content and behaviours that are bad for children online.
  - Responsibilities of parents
    - Use an internet security suite
    - Use parental controls
    - Teach kids about privacy
    - Monitor what your kids post online
    - Create rules such as which websites they can visit and how long they can spend online.
    - Report online abuse
- 

### Q1) What is UNICEF?

UNICEF stands for United Nations Children's Fund. It is a United Nations agency that provides humanitarian and developmental aid to children worldwide. UNICEF was created by the United Nations General Assembly on December 11, 1946, to provide emergency food and healthcare to children and mothers in countries devastated by World War II.

### Q2) What is generative AI?

Generative AI (genAI) is a type of artificial intelligence (AI) that can create new content, such as text, images, audio, music, or videos. Generative AI uses deep learning, neural networks, and machine learning techniques to learn from patterns, trends, and relationships in training data. It can then generate new, unique outputs with the same statistical properties.

---

**Source:** [How can child safety be ensured online?](#) | UNICEF

---

Source: <https://vajiramandravi.com/current-affairs/safety-for-children-online/>

© Vajiram & Ravi. For personal use only.