

2026

Age Assurance Attitudes Among Adults

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Introduction

Amid unprecedented demand to better protect children and teens online, in the United States and globally, one key focus is shifting toward how users' ages will be assessed, and for what purposes. The goals for protecting kids online vary, and lawmakers, industry, and advocates alike have proposed everything from bans or delays on children using social media (see Australian eSafety Commissioner, 2025) to requirements that social media sites and AI systems are built with youths' best interests in mind, as well as mandatory privacy protections (California Age-Appropriate Design Code Act, 2022; California S.B. 976, 2024; SAFE for Kids Act, 2024). Underlying these efforts to better protect kids online is the requirement that a user's age be determined in some manner.

The following research, based on a survey conducted in October 2025, reveals that adults overwhelmingly believe that children need online protections, including age-based protections, and want parental control over children's digital experiences. However, respondents also have significant concerns about privacy, data security, and whether age verification systems can be effective. They want technology companies to enable and facilitate protections, but they don't necessarily trust these companies with their children's data. The findings point to a clear need for age assurance systems that have strong privacy protections by default.

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Key Findings

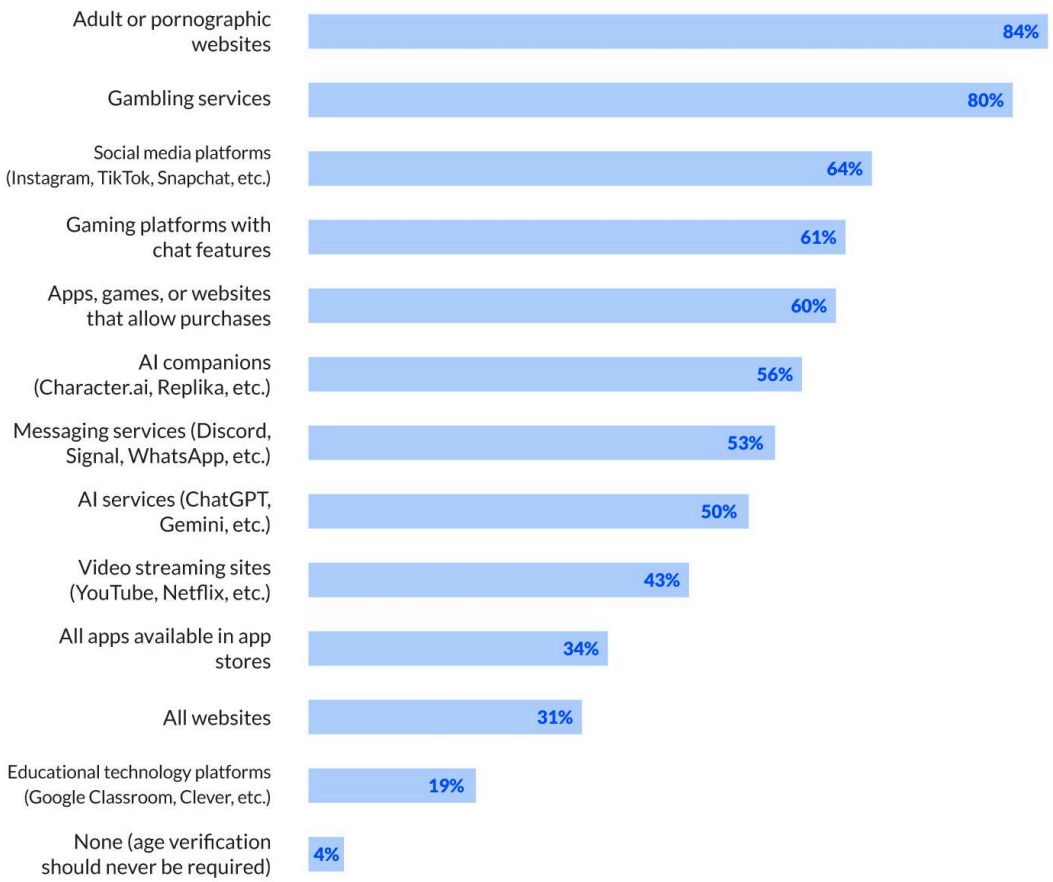
1. More than 6 in 10 respondents want age verification for social media and gaming platforms. More than half want age verification for AI services and AI companions.

When it comes to platforms that young people frequently use, most adults believe that these spaces should require age verification. More than 6 in 10 believe that social media platforms should require age verification (64%), and 61% say the same for gaming platforms with chat features. Eight in 10 respondents believe the same for gambling services.

When it comes to AI, half believe that AI services (like ChatGPT or Gemini) should require age verification (50%), and 56% say the same for AI companions (like those provided by Character.ai or Replika). About one-third of respondents believe that all app store apps (34%) and websites (31%) should require age verification, which suggests that respondents may be nearly equally concerned about websites and apps. And an overwhelming percentage of respondents want age verification for adult or pornographic websites (84%).

Figure 1: Which online services should require age verification?

Base: All respondents (N = 1,096). Multiple responses allowed.



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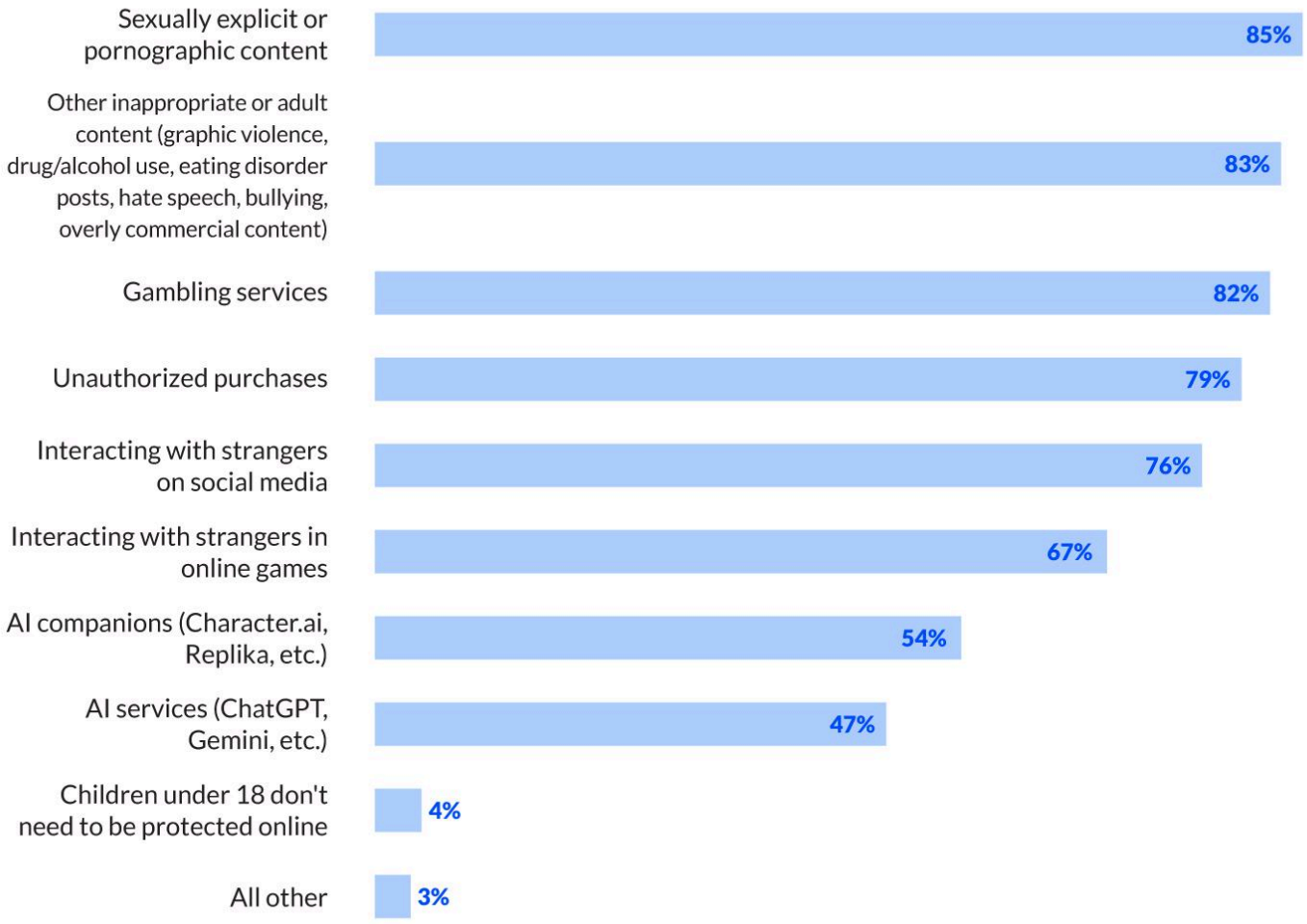
2. 95% of respondents say children need to be protected from certain content, activities, and features online, with pornography, gambling, and online purchases as top concerns.

Ninety-five percent of adults report that children should be protected from certain types of content, activities, and features online. Respondents are most focused on protecting their children from specific content, like pornography (85%), but also express a need to protect children from gambling services (82%), unauthorized purchases (79%), and interactions with strangers. About half of respondents believe children should be protected from AI companions (54%) and AI services (47%).

Figure 2: What should children under 18 be protected from online?

Base: All respondents (N = 1,096). Multiple responses allowed.



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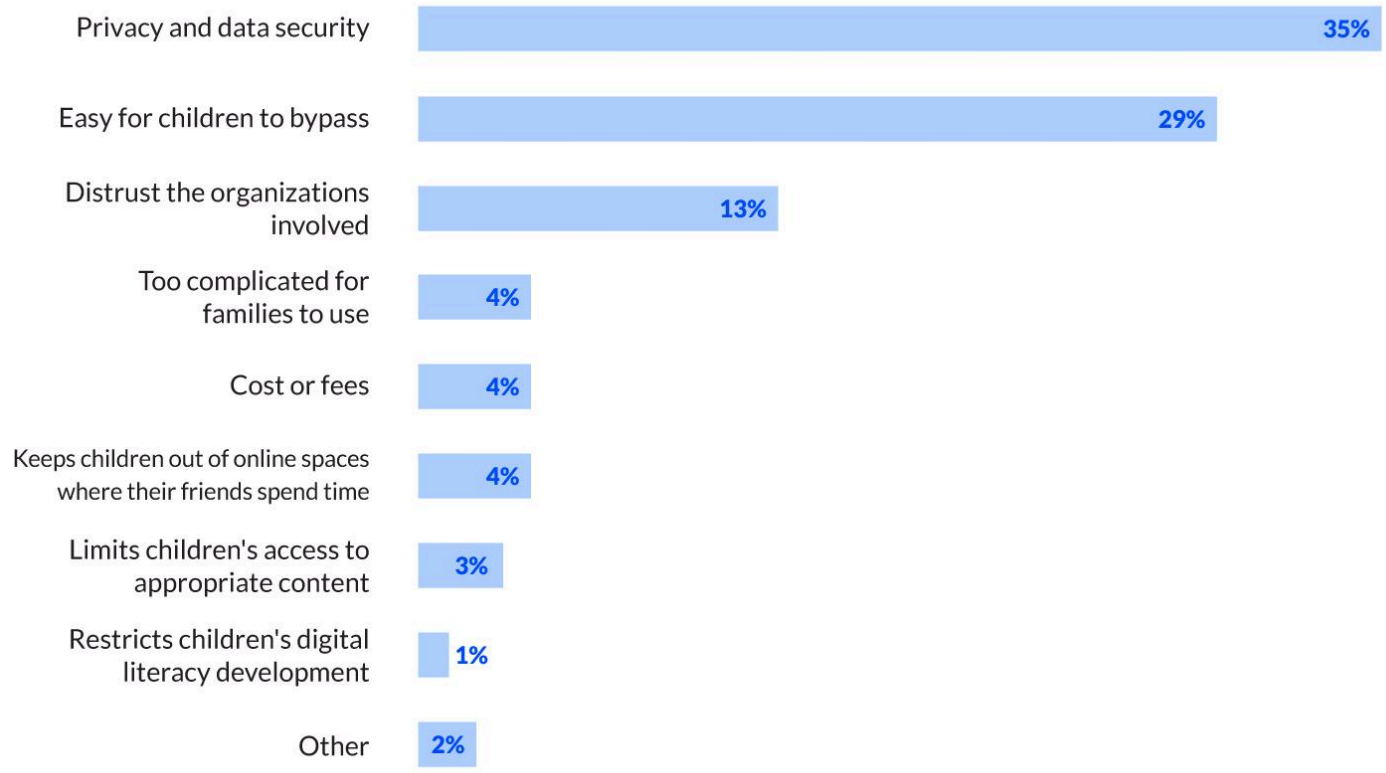
3. Respondents are most concerned that age verification systems may be easy for children to bypass and might pose privacy and data security issues.

Thirty-five percent of respondents are most concerned about privacy and data security when it comes to age verification systems. Nearly one in three (29%) are most concerned that age verification systems are easy for children to bypass.

Figure 3: What is your biggest concern about age verification systems?
Base: All respondents (N = 1,096).



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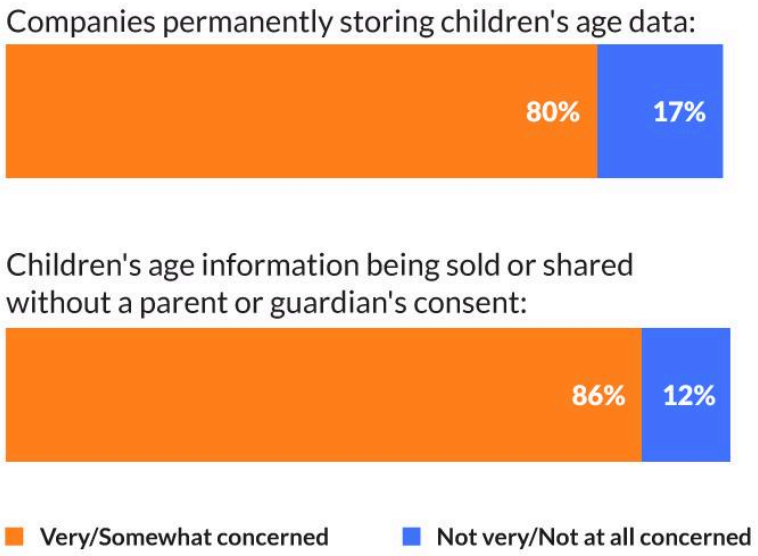
4. **86% of adults are concerned about companies selling or sharing children's age data without consent, and 80% are concerned about companies permanently storing children's age information.**

Eighty percent of respondents are at least "somewhat concerned" about companies permanently storing children's age data, with almost half (48%) indicating they are "very concerned" about this happening. Most respondents are at least somewhat concerned about children's age information being sold or shared (86%), with more than half (59%) indicating that they are "very concerned" about this happening.

Figure 4: How concerned are you about each of the following?

Base: All respondents (N = 1,096).
Note: Totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding or nonresponse.



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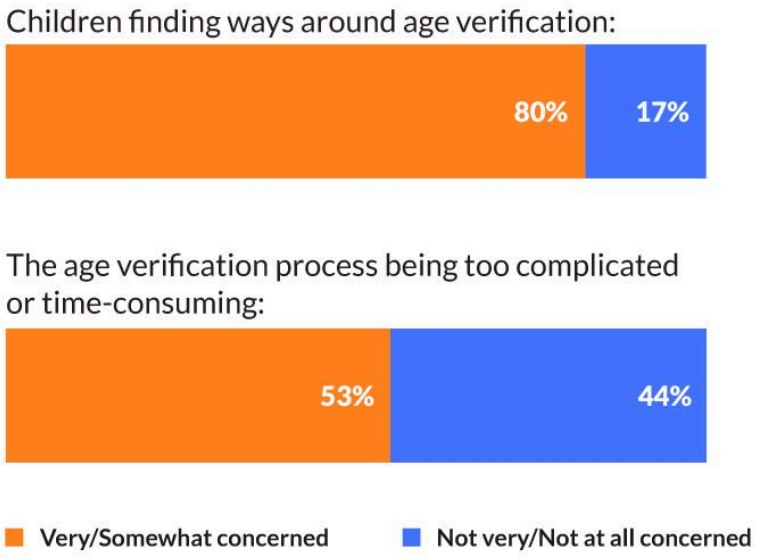
5. 80% of respondents are concerned that children will find ways around age verification, and about half are concerned the process will be too complicated.

Forty-five percent of respondents are "very concerned" that children will find ways around age verification, while 35% indicate that they are "somewhat concerned." Additionally, about one-fifth of respondents (21%) are "very concerned" about the age verification process being too complicated, while another one-third (32%) are somewhat concerned about the same.

Figure 5: How concerned are you about each of the following?

Base: All respondents (N = 1,096).

Note: Totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding or nonresponse.



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Discussion

This research reveals that adults overwhelmingly support age verification for many online services and platforms, especially for adult content, gambling, social media, and gaming platforms with chat features. Respondents also express concerns about privacy, data security, and the effectiveness of age assurance systems.

The overwhelming agreement (95%) among respondents that children need protection from certain types of online platforms and experiences demonstrates a clear need for action. However, respondents also express a great deal of privacy concerns (with 86% worried about companies sharing data and 80% concerned about permanent storage of children's information), highlighting the need for age-appropriate protections that also protect privacy. This presents both a challenge and an opportunity: Age assurance systems must be designed with privacy protections included from the start.

Concerns that children will find ways around age verification underscore this need for robust, industry-built infrastructure that is resilient enough to withstand attempts to circumvent while remaining accessible for regular users. Parents and caregivers cannot single-handedly enforce protections against sophisticated platforms. They need technology companies to create, or be required to create, these guardrails.

As age assurance policies and technologies continue to evolve, these findings provide an important framework for understanding usage and concerns. Adults largely support age verification for many types of services, but they want solutions that are effective while still protecting children's privacy. Meeting these expectations will require collaboration across sectors, including in policymaking arenas, to develop systems that support parents and kids alike.

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Limitations

Several methodological considerations should be noted when interpreting these findings. First, this cross-sectional survey captures attitudes and behaviors at a single point in time within a quickly evolving policy and technology landscape, and attitudes may shift as age assurance systems change.

Second, all data reflects self-reported attitudes and beliefs, which may be subject to social desirability bias. Respondents may overreport support for child protection measures or underreport concerns about inconvenience. They may respond based on what they believe they should want rather than their actual preferences.

Third, while respondents were provided with examples of age assurance concepts, some may have had limited familiarity with how these systems actually work in practice. Their responses may reflect attitudes toward idealized versions of age assurance rather than practical implementation.

Finally, the survey asked about attitudes toward age assurance broadly, without distinguishing between children of different ages. Attitudes on verification practices for younger children may differ from those for older children and adolescents, and these nuances may not be fully captured in this data.

Future research should examine how attitudes evolve as age assurance systems become more prevalent, explore differences and attitudes based on children's ages and developmental stages, and investigate how actual experience with age assurance systems impacts support.

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Methodology

Study Methodology

This survey was conducted by NORC at the University of Chicago with funding from Common Sense Media.

Data was collected using the AmeriSpeak Omnibus®, a bi-monthly multi-client survey using NORC's probability-based panel designed to be representative of the U.S. household population. The survey was part of a larger study that included questions about other topics not included in this report. During the initial recruitment phase of the panel, randomly selected U.S. households were sampled with a known, non-zero probability of selection from the NORC National Sample Frame and then contacted by U.S. mail, email, telephone, and field interviewers (face-to-face). The panel provides sample coverage of approximately 97% of the U.S. household population. Those excluded from the sample include people with P.O. Box-only addresses, some addresses not listed in the USPS Delivery Sequence File, and some newly constructed dwellings.

Interviews for this survey were conducted from October 9 to October 13, 2025, with adults age 18 and over representing the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Panel members were randomly drawn from AmeriSpeak, and 1,096 completed the survey (1,039 via the web and 57 by telephone). Panel members were invited by email or by phone from a NORC telephone interviewer. Interviews were conducted in English only. Respondents were offered a small monetary incentive for completing the survey. The final stage completion rate is 15.1%, the weighted household panel response rate is 26.3%, and the weighted household panel retention rate is 78.0%, for a cumulative response rate of 3.1%.

The overall margin of sampling error is +/- 4.1 percentage points at the 95% confidence level, including the design effect. The margin of sampling error may be higher for subgroups. Sampling error is only one of many potential sources of error, and there may be other unmeasured errors in this or any other survey.

Quality assurance checks were conducted to ensure data quality. In total, 71 interviews were removed for nonresponse to at least 50% of the questions asked of them or for completing the survey in less than one-third the median interview time for the full sample. These interviews were excluded from the data file prior to weighting.

Once the sample has been selected and fielded, and all of the study data has been collected and made final, a poststratification process is used to adjust for any survey nonresponse, as well as any noncoverage or under- and oversampling resulting from the study-specific sample design.

Poststratification variables included age, gender, Census division, race/ethnicity, and education. Weighting variables were obtained from the 2025 Current Population Survey. The weighted data reflects the U.S. population of adults age 18 and over.

Additional information on the AmeriSpeak Panel methodology is available at https://amerispeak.norc.org/about-amerispeak/Pages/Panel-Design.aspx

For more information, email info@norc.org.

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Terminology

Throughout this report, we use the terms *age verification* and *age assurance/assessment* interchangeably to describe systems for determining children's ages online. In our survey, we used the term *age verification* because it is more familiar and easier for most people to understand. However, the questions explored attitudes about various age assurance methods, not just those that require government ID.

Age assurance and age assessment are umbrella terms that encompass all methods of determining or confirming a user's age, including:

- Age estimation (analyzing behavior patterns, account data, or other indicators)
- Age verification (confirming age through official documentation)
- Self-declaration (user-provided information like birth dates)

In technical material, age verification tends to be defined as a specific type of age assurance that typically involves confirming age through government-issued identification or other official documentation.

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Protecting Our Kids from Social Media Addiction Act, S.B. 976, 2023–2024 Leg., Reg. Sess. (C.A. 2024).

Stop Addictive Feeds Exploitation (SAFE) for Kids Act, S. 7694A, 2023–2024 Leg. Sess. (N.Y. 2024).

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