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Online child safety:

an opportunity to get it right

Milltown Partners and Baker McKenzie, whose team included former UK ICO, Elizabeth Denham CBE, conducted opinion research among over 1,000 technology policy professionals and technology policy experts from Australia, Germany, India, South Korea, the UK, and the USA. The goal? To understand how policy influencers perceive the future of child safety policy. The research was conducted online from 1-20 June 2022.

Below is a summary of our findings. To access the full report please email Flo Forster or Alex Williams.

Key findings

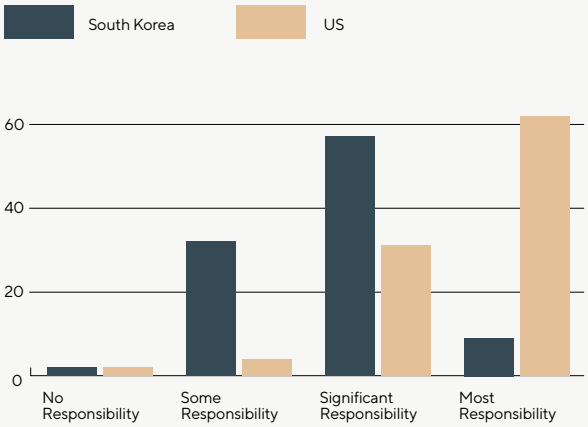
The online safety of young people is a priority for policy influencers around the world.
Policy influencers are keenly aware of the dangers young people face using online platforms and services - and

37%

see it as a priority for new regulation.

Yet there is no clear consensus amongst policy influencers on who should take responsibility for young people's safety online.
While young people's safety is seen as a priority for new regulation, there are sharp differences between markets as to who should take responsibility - for example when it comes to the role of parents and the responsibility of young people themselves.

South Korea v US- How much responsibility should parents have for keeping their children safe online?



Policy influencers don't believe the necessary regulation, guidelines and codes of conduct are in place, nor do they have confidence that governments will get regulation right.

Dissatisfied with the status quo, only

30%

of policy influencers say they are content with current regulation.

However, only

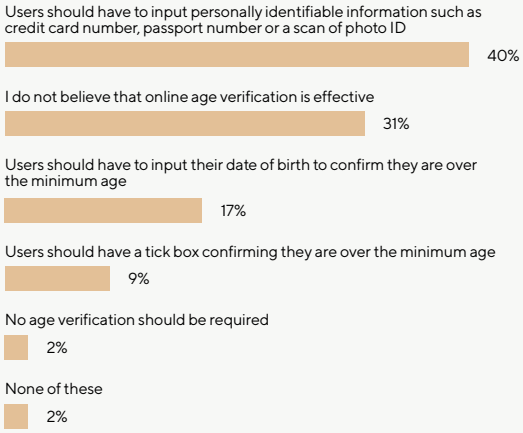
35%

believe policymakers have the necessary expertise to keep young people safe online.

This suggests there is still room for tech companies to position themselves as partners committed to making regulation that is fit for purpose.

There are geographic divides among policy influencers on the future direction of regulation - the result is likely to be policy fragmentation.
There are divisions between markets on many issues, including privacy and safety, and on specific technologies such as age assurance.

Which of the following statements best describes your views on platforms requiring age verification for accessing specific content or services (e.g. violent media or games, pornography, or gambling)?



So what? There are global expectations that tech companies should act to protect children, but no consensus on the details of how they should do that. This means policy fragmentation is likely to continue, with different child safety policies needed in different territories. Even a "maximalist" compliance approach is unlikely to be viable as an operational alternative given the likely variation. To prepare, tech companies need to understand where local and global policy development is headed and then make sure they have the right product and policy strategy in place to maximise opportunities and mitigate risks.

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Our global technology team has a particular focus on supporting technology businesses with online platform business models scale.