

#FIXAPPRATINGS

No one is holding technology companies accountable for the impacts they are having on our young people. **The apps below have ratings and descriptions that are inaccurate and misleading.**

The UK Parliament has proposed certain measures collectively referred to as a "**Social Media Duty of Care.**" It includes the creation of an independent app rating agency. We agree. Without accountability, large tech companies will continue to prioritize profits over protecting children.

1 SNAPCHAT (12+)

App Store: infrequent/mild sexual content and nudity, alcohol, drug use, profanity, and suggestive themes.

Concerns: porn stars, premium accounts, Discover recommends porn and masturbation, sexting risk, sextortion, minimal parental controls, optional age-gating, minimal age verification, addiction.
Recommended: 17+



2 NETFLIX (4+)

App Store: because it's 4+, no content warnings included.

Concerns: NC-17 content, mature content easily accessed even with parental controls in place. **Recommended:** 17+



3 INSTAGRAM (12+)

App Store: infrequent/mild sexual content and nudity, alcohol, drug use, profanity, and suggestive themes.

Concerns: sex trafficking, self-harm, cyberbullying, pornography, nudity, animal abuse, lack of reporting, lack of parental controls, unrestricted web access, no age verification, self-esteem, addiction, child pornography, child abuse, hashtags.
Recommended: 17+



4 FACEBOOK (12+)

App Store: infrequent/mild sexual content and nudity, alcohol, drug use, profanity, and suggestive themes.

Concerns: fake news, sextortion, nudity, bullying, addiction, hashtags, privacy, minimal parental controls, unrestricted web access.
Recommended: 17+



5 TIKTOK (12+)

App Store: infrequent/mild sexual content and nudity, alcohol, drug use, profanity, and suggestive themes.

Concerns: predators, sextortion, nudity, bullying, lack of reporting, minimal age verification, unrestricted web access.
Recommended: 17+



6 EPISODE (12+)

App Store: infrequent/mild sexual content and nudity, alcohol, drug use, profanity, suggestive, and horror/fear themes.

Concerns: alcohol, hooking up, sex, pregnancy, frequent adult themes, target marketing to kids. **Recommended:** 17+



7 VPN'S (4+)

App Store: because it's 4+, no content warnings included.

Concerns: circumvention for parental and content controls, particularly on school networks, lack of parent understanding.
Recommended: 17+



8 GROUP ME (4+)

App Store: because it's 4+, no content warnings included.

Concerns: categorized as social networking but has a 4+ age rating, unrestricted web access, gifs, memes, video sharing, group chat risk.
Recommended: 17+



9 TWITTER (17+)*

App Store: infrequent/mild sexual content and nudity.

Concerns: rated 4+ by Apple for years, hardcore pornography is rampant, lack of parental controls, unrestricted web access, no age verification. **Recommended:** Adult only



***Apple has a no porn policy in their app stores but plays favorites letting Twitter openly allow porn while cracking down on other apps.**

"And I've often heard people say, 'But it's the parent's responsibility to keep their children safe online', and yes it absolutely is, parents need to do as much as they can, but my message today is parents cannot do that on their own because the internet is too ubiquitous and it's too difficult to control, it's become a giant."

- Ruth Moss, NCSPP

STATEMENT: Child Advocates Call for Accurate App Ratings Due to Online Grooming, Trafficking, and Sexploitation. #fixappratings



Washington, DC – The National Center on Sexual Exploitation, along with child advocates **Chris McKenna from Protect Young Eyes** and **Melissa McKay**, are calling out the current system for app ratings because it is misleading, inconsistent across platforms, and does not appropriately warn parents of the potential dangers found in apps.

“Parents are empowered with rating information to keep kids out of R rated films, but when it comes to apps, parents are left in the dark about the kind of content their children are accessing,” said Dawn Hawkins, Executive Director at the National Center on Sexual Exploitation. “Apps in Apple and Google app stores are not held to any kind of third-party accountability to adhere to a consistent rating system.”

“As a result, social media apps like Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, and Facebook, all rated 12+ by Apple, are hot spots for bullying, the grooming and selling of children into sex-trafficking, glamorized self-harm content, pornography, the buying and selling of illegal drugs, and sextortion. Hashtags make harmful content easy for anyone to discover, regardless of privacy settings. In fact just today a man was sentenced to prison for using Facebook to facilitate sex trafficking of a 15-year-old.”

“Further, Netflix (rated 4+) has numerous shows with graphic depictions of sexual acts and assault with minimal parental controls.”

“It’s our societal duty to protect kids online, and that starts with properly warning parents about the risks associated with certain apps and giving parents more parental controls options,” said Chris McKenna, Founder of Protect Young Eyes. “Parents must do as much as they can to protect kids. But large technology organizations also have a social responsibility to do more to decrease online risks to children and should be held accountable when they fail to uphold this responsibility.”



Advocates call for the following actions:

- **The creation of an independent app ratings board.** This board would have powers similar to the Entertainment Software Ratings Board, which uses a rating system that is clearly understood, enforced, trustworthy, and exists to protect the innocence of minors.
- **The release of intuitive parental controls on iOS, Android, and Chrome operating systems.** These controls should at a minimum include default settings based on a child’s age, easy set-up, and one-touch screen time controls (e.g., school and bedtime selective app shut-off).
- **Adherence to a social media “duty of care” toward children.** Following the proposed UK regulations, minimum expectations include tougher app age verification, safe mode options for parents, and an annual compliance review.

According to Dawn, **“We are hopeful that a few major technology companies understand the immense control they exert over our young people. And, that they decide to start proving to the world that they care about their health and well-being.”**

