

Electronic privacy rights are important and should be protected by government as much as possible using whatever legal and regulatory authority is available. This is true for everyone especially children. In crafting the FTC's electronic privacy rules to protect children please consider the following: Social networking giant Facebook thinks of itself as a social utility like a 21st century phone company but refuses to accept any responsibility for its services eroding user privacy or for constantly changing its privacy policy in ways that enable it to diminish privacy. That being said privacy for all individuals should be seriously protected but children above all else are very important. When consumers complain about privacy Facebook's CEO Mark Zuckerberg shrugs it off saying no one has to use Facebook if they don't want to. However, no phone company would ever be able to get away with saying "We're going to publish your conversations and if you don't like it don't use the phone." To its credit Facebook prevents children from signing up for Facebook accounts. They say you have to be 13 years of age or older to have a Facebook account -- same goes for a Google account needed not just for Google+ but Gmail and the now defunct Google Buzz.

However, that doesn't stop some kids who want to use such services from lying about their age when they attempt to register and choose a birth year that indicates they are old enough to use such services. Can we blame children fascinated with technology that want to use it? Not every kid can be kicked off Facebook or will be. When or if a company gets to know a child too young to use said company's website (according to the company's terms and conditions) -- that is it is somehow reported just as they suspend profiles used abusively they may delete and/or suspend user's access to said accounts.

Nevertheless, websites like Facebook and Google are a big part of the Web and kids with Internet access should not be deprived from using popular websites. There are a few radical solutions 1) parents shouldn't allow their children to use the internet at all -- 2) just as educational institutions can block certain websites from being accessed on their computers a parent can use software to block their child from visiting specific websites while allowing them to go to other ones. If a parent chooses to do so it is up to them but it would be wrong for government to censor children's access to the internet or anyone's access for that matter. Even if it were possible for government to do so they shouldn't.

I urge the FTC to protect children's online privacy and protect everyone's online privacy to the best of their ability. The Electronic Privacy Information Center filed a complaint with the FTC in 2009 against Facebook that reportedly the FTC is nearing a settlement with Facebook on soon. However, there are fresh complaints of privacy violations also at Facebook worth investigating.