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YouTube to Use AI for Age Checks in US After Global Push

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YouTube will deploy artificial intelligence (AI) to estimate the ages of United States (US) users starting August 13, 2025, to ensure age-appropriate content, following stricter age verification rules in the United Kingdom (UK) and Australia.

YouTube, owned by Google, announced on July 29, 2025, that it will introduce AI-powered age estimation technology in the US to identify users under 18, regardless of the birthdate provided in their accounts. The move, set to begin August 13, 2025, with a small group of users, aims to protect teens by limiting access to age-restricted content and applying

safeguards like non-personalized ads and screen-time reminders. James Beser, YouTube's Director of Product Management for Youth, stated in a company blog post that the technology would ensure "teens are treated as teens and adults as adults," with close monitoring before a wider rollout.

The initiative follows Australia's announcement on July 28, 2025, of a social media ban for children under 16, which includes YouTube, effective December 2025. The UK also implemented age checks on social platforms under its 2023 Online Safety Act, effective July 24, 2025. YouTube's AI system, already tested in unspecified markets, analyzes user behavior, such as video viewing history and account longevity, to infer age. If misidentified as underage, users can verify their age using a government-issued identification (ID), credit card, or selfie.

The platform's decision aligns with growing global pressure for online child safety. A 2024 Pew Research Center survey found 90% of US teens aged 13–17 use YouTube, far surpassing TikTok's 63%. Critics, including privacy advocates, raise concerns about data misuse, while content creators worry about reduced ad revenue due to non-personalized ads for teens. Shadow Communications Minister David Coleman criticized Australia's Labor government's ban as "heavy-handed," arguing it risks stifling free expression without clear enforcement plans.

YouTube's AI tool builds on existing protections, like the 2015 YouTube Kids app and 2024 supervised accounts. The company emphasized that only verified adults will access restricted content, addressing past issues with users bypassing age gates. As global regulations tighten, YouTube's proactive step aims to balance safety and user experience, though its accuracy and privacy implications remain under scrutiny.