United Kingdom

The United Kingdom recently passed the Online Safety Act 2023 (UK Act), which imposes a responsibility on social media and search engines to ensure user safety on their platforms. The Office of Communications (Ofcom) is leading the implementation of the Act's provisions and is drafting codes of practice and guidance for consultation on illegal content, content harmful to children, and categorised services.[[1]](#footnote-1)

The Act shares similarities with the Australian Online Safety Act 2021 (Cth) but introduces new criminal offences, including:

* Section 188 - intimate image abuses;
* Section 183 - epilepsy trolling;
* Section 179 - sending false information intended to cause non-trivial harm;
* Section 181 - threatening communications;
* Section 184 - encouraging or assisting serious self-harm; and
* Section 187 - cyberflashing.

Canada

Canada’s Online Harms Bill 2024 outlines a vision for safer and more inclusive online participation. [[2]](#footnote-2) Under the Bill, social media services would be subjected to three key duties:

1. A duty to act responsibly;
2. A duty to protect children;
3. A duty to make certain content inaccessible, specifically:
   1. content that sexually victimises a child or revictimises a survivor, and
   2. intimate images posted without consent.

For more information, see [here](https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/online-harms.html)[[3]](#footnote-3)

1. United Kingdom, Department for Science, Innovation & Technology ‘Guidance – Online Safety Act:

   explainer’ *Online Safety Act: explainer* (Web Page, 8 May 2024) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/online-safety-act-explainer/online-safety-actexplainer#

   what-the-online-safety-act-does >. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Government of Canada, ‘Government of Canada introduces legislation to combat harmful content online, including the sexual exploitation of children’ *Canadian Heritage* (Web Page, 26 February 2024)

   <https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/news/2024/02/government-of-canada-introduceslegislation-to-combat-harmful-content-online-including-the-sexual-exploitation-of-children.html>. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Government of Canada, ‘Proposed Bill to address Online Harms’ *Arts and media* (Web Page, 4 April 2024) <https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/online-harms.html>. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)