Co-designing with teens and parents for online supervision

Global insights from young people, guardians and experts

This report presents the key findings from a global series of co-design workshops with teens and guardians, and paired consultation sessions with experts, facilitated by Meta's Trust, Transparency and Control Labs and Smart Design

∞ Meta | Smart Design

Executive summary

This report is intended for government, academia, civil society and industry. It presents the key findings from a global series of virtual co-design workshops with teens and guardians paired with consultation sessions with experts facilitated by the Trust, Transparency & Control Labs (TTC Labs), a co-design initiative founded and supported by Meta.

This initiative, which took place between December 2021 and October 2022 across 10 countries, was focused on helping us explore key questions relevant to the design of family-oriented digital experiences, including how to:

- Design for a diverse range of teen needs, both within and across age groups and family types.
- Protect a teen's ability to be online, while helping to ensure they have a safe experience and while considering the rights and duties of guardians
- Account for certain groups of teens who might have distinct privacy and safety needs.
- Help teens find support from social media apps, peers, guardians, or other trusted adults.

In partnership with Smart Design, a design and innovation agency, TTC Labs brought together teens, guardians, academics, policymakers, and civil society to uncover relevant insights and considerations. These insights were used in the development of family-oriented tools and resources, including Meta's Family Center and the education hub.

This report shares learnings from this initiative, including ways in which we applied these learnings in the development of teen- and guardian-focussed tools and features at Meta, as well as future-facing design considerations for industry app designers.

We are publishing these insights in this report to share openly with the broader community of expertise around age-appropriate design. This report reflects a phase of expert feedback on a draft version which we circulated in November 2022, and is intended to be a living document. We invite you to provide continued feedback by email to info@ttclabs.net.

What you'll find in this report

Overview

Digital experiences provide teens with ways to connect and explore their emerging interests and identities (Pew 2022). Around the world, parents/guardians (hereafter "guardians" for simplicity) see the value these experiences bring to their teens by enabling them to build community and develop social skills. However, guardians say that it can be challenging to keep pace with new technologies and digital experiences. For example, two-thirds of sampled guardians in the United States considered parenting more difficult today than it was 20 years ago because of the rise of new social technologies (Pew 2020).

As digital app developers and designers, it's critical to provide age-appropriate safeguards and create experiences that support teens as they learn and develop responsible habits and encounter various situations online. It's also important that we provide guardians with resources and tools when they want to help support their teens and play an active role in their lives.

With the application of the UN's Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) to the digital realm, regulators and advocates have called on technology companies to factor in parental supervision to support the "Best Interests of the Child" standard, which encourages organizations to help preserve teens' ability to access online experiences, while considering the rights and duties of guardians. Guidance coming from regulators, like the UK Information Commissioner Office's Age-Appropriate Design Code and the Ireland Data Protection Commission's Fundamentals for a Child-Oriented Approach to Data Processing, are also foundational in guiding how companies can build youth privacy and safety by design. Together with guidance from global youth advocates, these frameworks recognize the role of parents and guardians in protecting and promoting the best interests of the child – with proper transparency, education, global family dynamics and age band considerations in mind.

Regulators, policy makers and youth advocates also underscore that understanding users' ages underpins these age-appropriate experiences, calling on companies to take meaningful steps to do so. Understanding someone's age online is a complex, industry-wide challenge. In the absence of industry standards or regulation on how to effectively verify age online, it is important that companies work together as well as with governments to set clear standards for age verification online.

Over the past few years, we've reflected on these and other external guidance from governmental bodies and children's rights groups around how to design age-appropriate digital experiences for young people. We have also consulted with experts, young people, and guardians to refine our understanding of how to apply this guidance to social media experiences. We've distilled six considerations to developing digital experiences for people under 18 into our "Best Interests of the Child" Framework to guide our team throughout the design process. This framework helps us to apply the UNCRC to our practice.

Within Meta's Best Interests of the Child Framework, one of the key considerations is to "recognize and engage global youth and families" who use our services. At Meta, in addition to our work with experts in this space, one of the ways that we aim to meet the unique needs of teens and their guardians is to listen to them and incorporate global perspectives into the process of designing digital experiences, with a particular focus on supporting privacy, safety and wellbeing.

As an example of this consideration in action, among others, we developed a virtual co-design methodology to enable the meaningful participation of teens and guardians in the development of Family Center and our education hub, which provides optional tools and resources for guardians to help support their teens' and family's online experience. In partnership with Smart Design, a design and innovation agency, Meta brought together teens, guardians, academics, policymakers, and civil society to uncover relevant insights and considerations.

Between December 2021 and October 2022, Meta and TTC Labs conducted co-design sessions with a diverse sample of teens and guardians in the United States, United Kingdom, Ireland, Australia, Brazil, Japan, India, Mexico, Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire. These sessions were paired with consultations with external experts from government, civil society, and academia, who were invited to observe the co-design sessions as well as participate in a dedicated expert session to provide feedback and explore co-design insights.

We've conducted research with young people and guardians for a long time, and this global co-design initiative was one of a number of research and consultation methods that Meta used to get feedback from teens, guardians and expert stakeholders to inform the development of Family Center and our education hub, which provides optional tools and resources for guardians to help support their teens' and family's online experience. The co-design initiative offered an additional collaborative space to engage with young people, caregivers and families, hearing their voices and taking their needs into account by co-creating with them.

We've learned that designing digital experiences that serve young people's best interests - such as providing opportunities for teens to explore and discover in age-appropriate ways - requires accounting for a number of different perspectives, including those of experts as well as the lived experiences of guardians and young people themselves. At times, these differing points of view require us to navigate complex tradeoffs. These issues are complex and change alongside the evolving abilities of teens and guardians to use, understand and have agency over ever-changing technology. We are committed to continuing our research and wish to share our progress to date in this report, which brings together key insights from our global co-design and consultation initiative alongside additional relevant research, including user experience (UX) research at Meta, to provide a wider perspective on these questions.

About TTC Labs

Initiated and supported by Meta, TTC Labs is a co-design lab bringing together policy makers, privacy experts and digital creators - using design thinking to improve trust, transparency and control in Meta technologies and industry-wide.

TTC Labs has brought together hundreds of industry and design companies in addition to policy, academic, and civil society organizations globally to tackle shared challenges around data transparency and control. These challenges include notification and consent, explaining data concepts to different audiences, algorithmic transparency and explainability, privacy and digital literacy, as well as co-designing with and for young people and co-designing the metaverse.

This current report builds upon a multi-year effort by TTC Labs. Between February 2018 and May 2021, the Labs conducted design jams with experts globally, published the report How to Design with Trust, Transparency and Control for Young People, and ran a virtual summit to explore how to operationalize the "Best Interests of the Child" Framework into digital app design.

We are fostering collaboration and innovation towards deeper understanding and practical solutions. Our vision is to inspire meaningful experiences between people and data to realize a sustainable and equitable internet for everyone.

About Smart Design

Smart Design is a strategic design company that helps people live better and work smarter. We help ambitious organizations reframe what's possible, creating and launching meaningful new products and services.

Founded in 1980, we are independently-owned and headquartered in NYC. We are 60 people strong and thrive at the intersection of research, design, engineering and technology. We are relationship builders and pride ourselves in being collaborative and transparent with our clients.

We work across a broad range of categories, from consumer packaged goods to financial services to technology, and have developed a deep expertise in designing for people and how they live in the real and digital world.

1
Our methodology

What is co-design?

In this context, co-design is a qualitative, participatory, and small-sample research method for industry to work alongside the people who use digital services - including guardians, teens, and experts from government, academia and civil society. It offers a creative and inclusive way to listen to and elevate diverse perspectives as part of the research and design process to inform digital product development. It focuses on hands-on prototyping and activities at interactive workshops, either virtually or in-person.

Why we use co-design in the development of digital experiences

By actively inviting and gaining empathy for different perspectives, co-design can be useful when generating new ideas or propositions, evaluating or iterating on existing ones, or planning and prioritizing digital apps and features for launch.

Tap into a range of expertise

Co-design engages multiple stakeholder groups to take into account a wide range of priorities and needs. Stakeholders can include subject matter experts from academia, civil society and government, and also the people who access Meta's services on a regular basis, including young people.

Engaging different perspectives

All families are different, so we proactively include many different perspectives - including those from marginalized groups - to inform our research. By engaging and actively partnering with young people from a range of backgrounds and family compositions (and guardians where appropriate), we elevate their voices to inform the development of digital experiences that impact their lives.

Create products that meet differing needs

By bringing different perspectives into co-design, we can surface the expectations and interests of multiple parties to create solutions that come closer to meeting the needs of all.

Uncover both foundational and tactical insights

Co-design provides us with the opportunity to get feedback at the app or feature level while also uncovering deeper underlying insights.

Validate early hunches or hypotheses

Co-design can help take out the guesswork when it comes to understanding what young people and their guardians need and want by letting them tell you what they want or how to make existing ideas better.

Generate out-of-the-box ideas

People don't have to be digital designers to provide insights around potential experiences. Unconstrained by status quo and implementation realities and with proper stimulus and prompts, people from all backgrounds can come up with unique and insightful design ideas so as to more fulsomely co-create digital experiences.

Co-designing with teens and guardians

Learning objectives

Our co-design approach was iterative to allow us to customize co-design sessions for different participant groups and regions, while holding constant overarching learning objectives to understand:

- How might Meta foster positive supervised experiences so that guardians feel secure and teens can explore our apps in a safe and supportive environment?
- How might Meta offer resources and guidance to guardians and teens at the right time to promote positive action and healthy communication?
- How might Meta support teens to be mindful about their social media experience to create their own boundaries, build positive habits, and actively participate as digital citizens?

How we involved teens and guardians

In each country, we ran between 4 and 6 remote co-design sessions in total, with each session bringing together a group (cohort) of between 3 and 4 teens or guardians. We recruited teens (with parental consent) and guardians as participants through both a local market research agency and nominations from civil society organizations that regularly work with young people.

For the 90-minute sessions, we used a combination of Zoom to video chat and Miro, an online collaboration tool, to show stimuli and run interactive activities. All activities were designed to be mobile-friendly to be inclusive of people with limited access to technology. The activities were designed to uncover needs relating to online privacy, safety, education and supervision for guardians and teens as well as generate new ideas to inform the development of relevant experiences across Meta technologies, like Family Center and the education hub.

In total, we included more than 166 teens and 156 guardians as part of this global co-design process.

About our participants

Ensuring representation

We acknowledge that social, economic and political factors can impact how each person experiences social technology. In each market, we recruited a sample of participants balanced by gender, race, geography and socio-economic status. Participants were also recruited using criteria that ensured a range of experiences and attitudes toward social media, diversity and inclusion of underrepresented or marginalized groups, like teens and guardians from single parent households and non-parent guardians. We attempted to group participants with shared experiences together in cohorts to create a more comfortable environment. A list of cohorts we included in each country is available in the appendix.

Limitations in our recruiting approach

- Due to privacy concerns, we did not specifically recruit teens that represented a range of sexual orientations or gender identities, although we know that certain groups are more vulnerable online.

- Because our co-design sessions took place online, our sample included those who have some degree of digital literacy, adequate access to the internet, and a willingness to participate in online research through interactive activities.

- Accordingly, our sample may not have represented populations with heightened privacy considerations who might be more vulnerable.

See the appendix for more details on our recruitment approach by country.

Engaging external experts

How we involved experts

The experts we engaged in this initiative represented a wide range of expertise from around the world, including government agencies like data protection regulators and education departments, as well as leading multidisciplinary representatives from academia and civil society, all with a focus on young people, technology and/or digital well-being. In total, we consulted with 125 experts as part of this initiative.

Some experts were invited to observe the virtual teen and guardian co-design sessions and submit questions from the virtual backroom. Some experts from civil society organizations optionally were invited to nominate teens and guardians from their networks to take part in the co-design sessions.

Following these sessions, a wider group of multidisciplinary experts from government, academia and civil society attended a 2-hour remote consultation session. First, we shared insights from the teen and guardian co-design sessions, followed by facilitated group discussions on the learnings and their implications for technology and policy developments.

See the appendix to read more about how we ran our expert consultation.

Older teen

NGO partner

Academic

Guardian of younger teen

Teen with strict guardian

Guardian with strict rules

Regulator

What do experts think about our process?

In November, we circulated a draft version of this report with over 150 global expert stakeholders, building on the global expert consultation approach that informed the core project insights between January and October 2022. We received feedback from 10 organizations from government, academia and civil society, including a group of older teens. We incorporated some of this feedback into our final report, including:

- Learnings from their relative fields that could add more nuance to our own insights
- Areas where further clarification or examples could help us communicate an idea more accurately
- Considerations for how frameworks and insights might apply to different types of people, including use cases with heightened privacy and safety considerations
- Additional research studies on related topics to reference

Broader challenges were noted by experts, including a tension around commercial services acting in the best interests of the child. In particular, many experts stressed that some self-regulatory and guardian supervision tools like screen-time restrictions might be considered overly simplistic since a lot of people's mindsets towards online use have evolved.

"
The co-design process has clearly shown that teens like to be able to call on their parents for support and guidance, but often don't know where or how to begin. By proposing parental supervision tools across technologies, Meta will help overcome this hurdle. Especially since the tools are unobtrusive, respectful of privacy, and offer the ideal training wheels for younger teens building their competence and confidence in the online social environment."

- Janice Richardson, INSIGHT

"
It is really encouraging to know that Meta has been listening to young people and their parents and creating tools that encourage timely conversations. At Parent Zone, we know how difficult it can be for parents when they feel locked out of their children's digital worlds. With these new tools, we are seeing a shift to greater partnership between families and platforms and that is an incredibly positive step."

- Vicki Shotbolt, Parent Zone

Co-design by the numbers

	166 teens	156 guardians	125 experts
🇺🇸 US	30	28	19
🇬🇧🇮🇪 UK/IE	22	20	22
🇦🇺 AU	11	12	17
🇧🇷 BR	16	16	15
🇯🇵 JP	24	16	14
🇮🇳 IN	15	16	10
🇲🇽 MEX	16	16	17
🇸🇳🇨🇮 SN/CIV	32	32	11
TOTAL	**166**	**156**	**125**
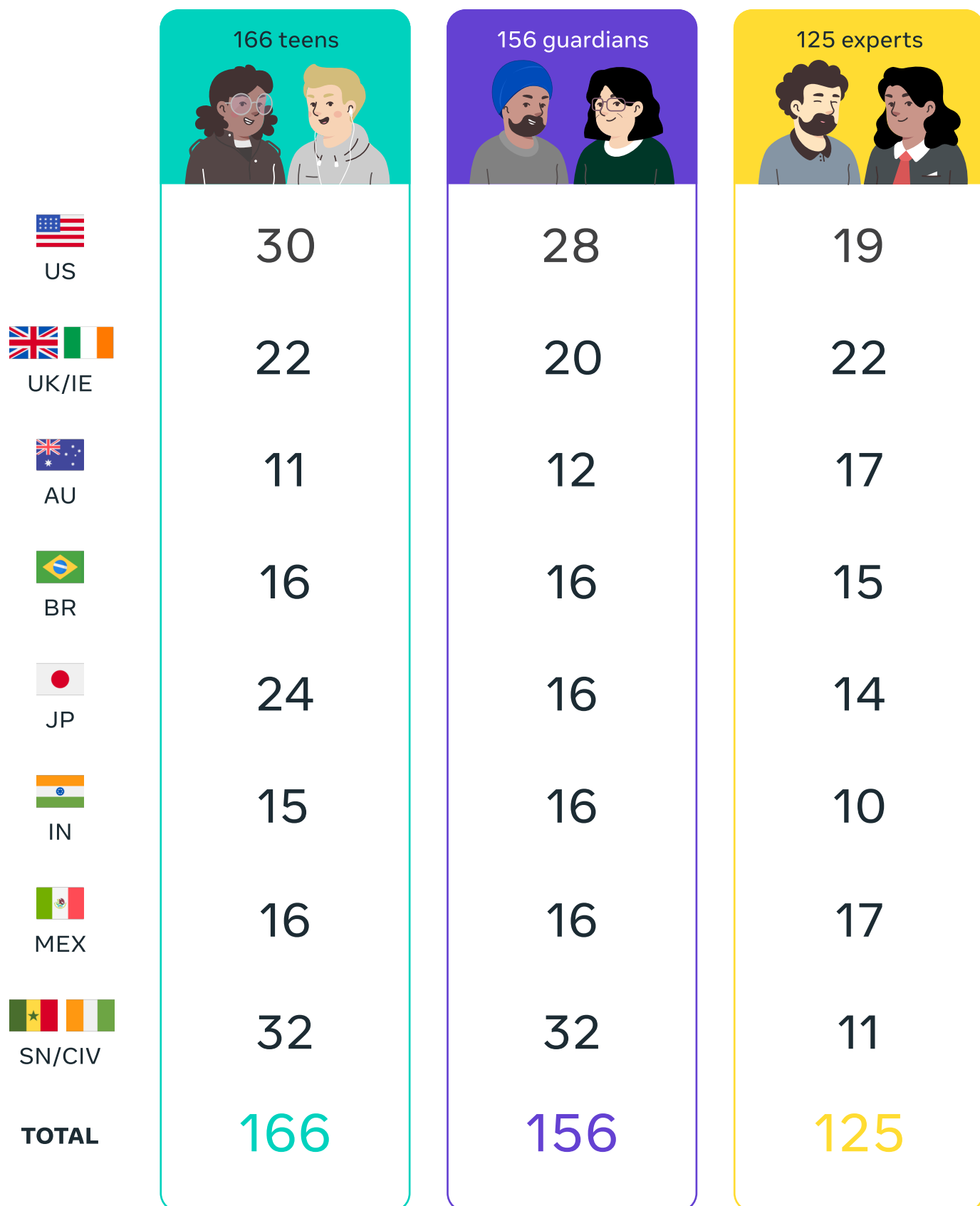
Additional research and ongoing consultation

At Meta, we are proud to collaborate with leading experts, trusted organizations, parents and young people in our shared mission to build positive online experiences for families. We have advisory boards, conduct research, host co-design workshops with parents and teens as well as experts, and hold regular 1:1 discussions with organizations to get regular feedback and guidance that helps us build better products, policies and resources.

This program of co-design research and consultation produced one set of learnings, in addition to internal research and external consultation activities that Meta took into account as part of building parental supervision tools, exploring age-appropriate features and developing family education resources. The co-design research provides helpful and durable reference points for the development of family-oriented experiences that resonate with teens and guardians.
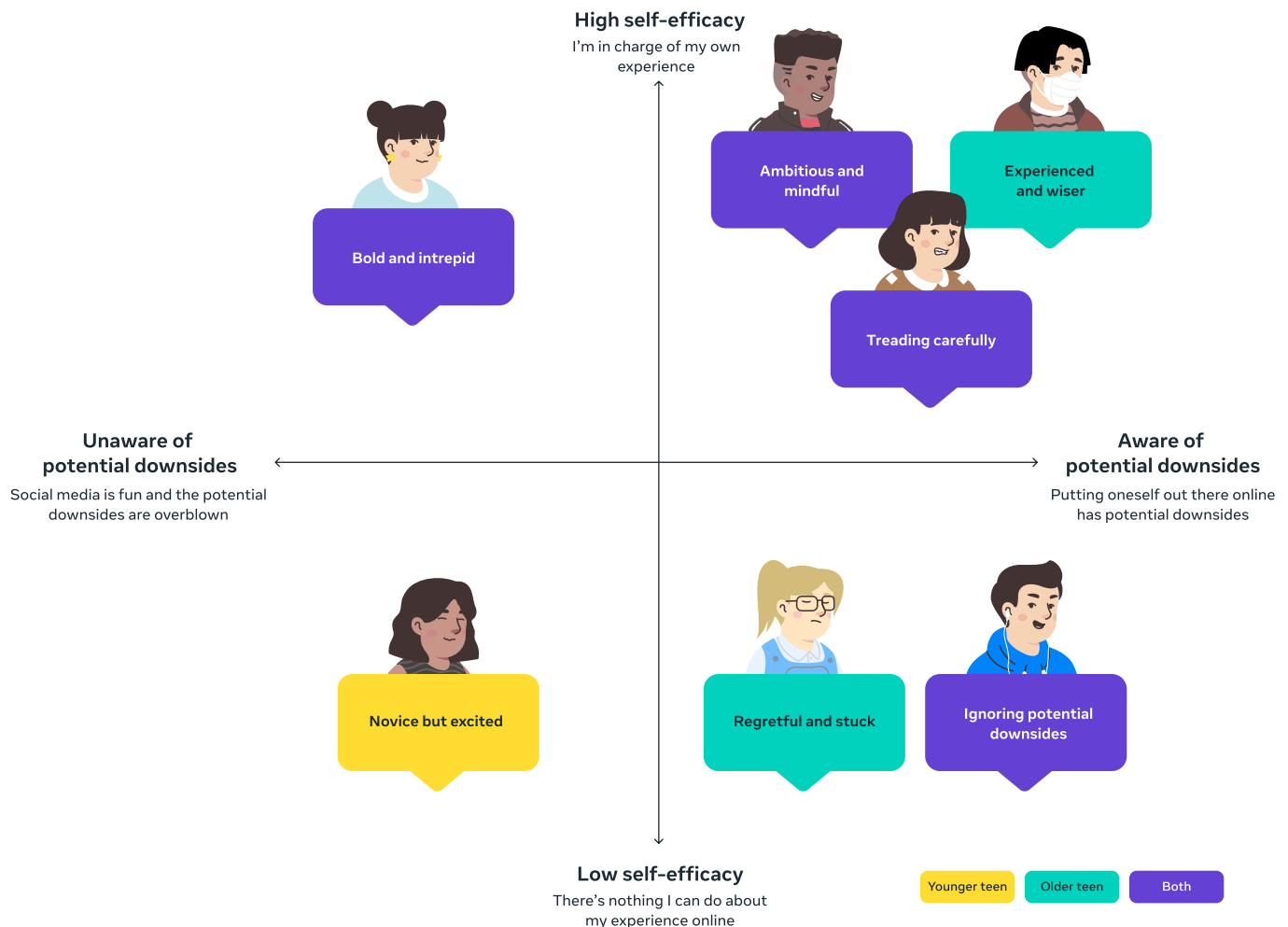
We used several additional resources in order to accompany our learnings from co-design with teens and guardians, and the paired expert consultation sessions. These included:

1   **Related Meta research initiatives, including a quantitative study referenced throughout this report.** This unbranded study was conducted by Meta with more than 13,000 guardians and teens in 7 countries: France, United Kingdom, United States, Brazil, India, Indonesia, and Japan (Kremer 2022).

2   **Peer-reviewed academic articles, industry publications, and regulatory guidance.**

2
Foundational insights

Teen attitudes to supervision and privacy

High self-efficacy
I'm in charge of my own experience

Ambitious and mindful

Experienced and wiser

Bold and intrepid

Treading carefully

Unaware of potential downsides
Social media is fun and the potential downsides are overblown

Aware of potential downsides
Putting oneself out there online has potential downsides

Novice but excited

Regretful and stuck

Ignoring potential downsides

Low self-efficacy
There's nothing I can do about my experience online

| Younger teen | Older teen | Both |

In talking to teens aged 13 to 17 around the world, we heard that their attitudes toward guardian supervision over digital apps depended on a number of factors, from their age or maturity level to their relationships with their guardians and support network, as well as their level of experience with digital apps.

To help identify underlying needs, we mapped prevalent teen attitudes based on self-efficacy (or how in charge they were of their online experience) and their awareness of the potential downsides of social technology. A teen may exhibit more than one of these attitudes and the magnitude of them may change over time across different stages of teens' lives, or as they gain experience. It's likely (though not always the case) that teens are less aware of potential downsides of online services when they are younger. As they get older, develop their own identities, and become more mature, teens tend to become more self-sufficient, and their challenges over social media and messaging app use tend to decline, and this process of maturation over time tends to correlate with a lower level of parental supervision.

These attitudes were grouped based on our research findings and are not intended to be attributed to any particular individual. While only representing a snapshot in time and experience, the attitudes we uncovered are intended to be useful prompts for future product development. Keeping these attitudes top of mind in the design process will help build empathy with teens and ensure that we continue to consider the diverse range of needs that we need to account for.

Teen attitudes, continued

Bold and intrepid

Feels confident enough to handle any negative consequence without their guardians, even though they may not always fully understand them. They feel that the benefits of putting themselves out there (publicly sharing photos, making a new connection, winning a giveaway) outweigh the potential drawbacks. They need help understanding and evaluating potentially problematic situations and behaviors, such as excessive tech use or in-game purchases, and support in course-correcting when misjudgments are made.

Prominent attitude in: 🇧🇷 🇮🇪 🇬🇧

"There might be downsides but I'm doing it anyway"

Novice but excited

Newer to social media and lacks awareness or confidence given their limited experience in online spaces. They may still rely on their guardian to show them what is safe and appropriate and may need more oversight and self-directed guidance as they learn to navigate the new world online.

Prominent attitude in: 🇯🇵

" Social media is an exciting but unfamiliar new world"

Ignoring potential downsides

Aware of the downsides of putting themselves out there online but disregard them in order to seem more mature or in control. When not ignoring them completely, may try to take some action in private on the app but are less likely to reach out to family or peers for support in order to seem like they've got it together or avoid making it a big deal. Need judgment-free support and encouragement to seek help when they need it.

"It's all good (even if it's not)"

Regretful and stuck

Older teen who regrets not forming better habits when they first started off on social media (i.e. spending more time than they intended online, getting absorbed in unproductive content). They feel it will be more difficult to make lasting habit changes or take a break from social media when they need one. They seek a helping hand in building new habits online and reassurance in knowing they're not alone.

"I regret not forming better habits and now there's nothing I can do"

Treading carefully

Highly aware of the potential downsides to putting themselves out there. They proceed with extreme caution when sharing information online, posting, or interacting with others. They won't do anything to try to bring attention to themselves.

Prominent attitude in: 🇯🇵

"I intentionally avoid drawing attention to myself or making myself a target"

Experienced and wiser

Prompted to be more mindful on social media after a negative experience (e.g. unwanted interactions with other people online) that encouraged them to rethink their approach. They want to be able to share practical advice to younger teens who are less experienced navigating social media.

"I learned a valuable lesson"
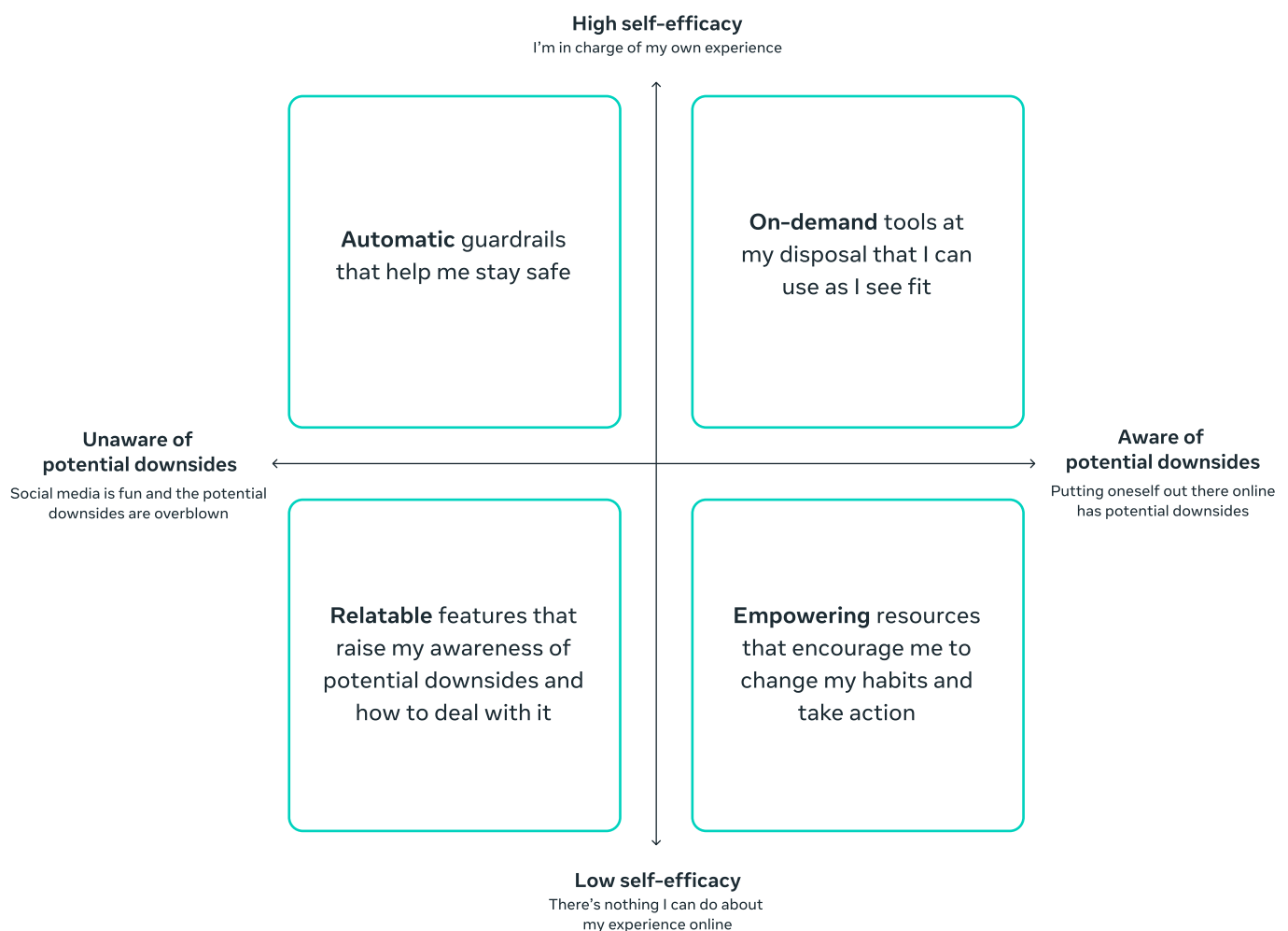
Ambitious and mindful

Determined to take control of their experiences online in order to achieve a goal (i.e. get into a technical program, get good grades, feel more confident). They know when to go to others for support, whether it's their peers, guardians, or built-in tools on the app. They need tools to help them stay on top of their goals and help them use social media productively.

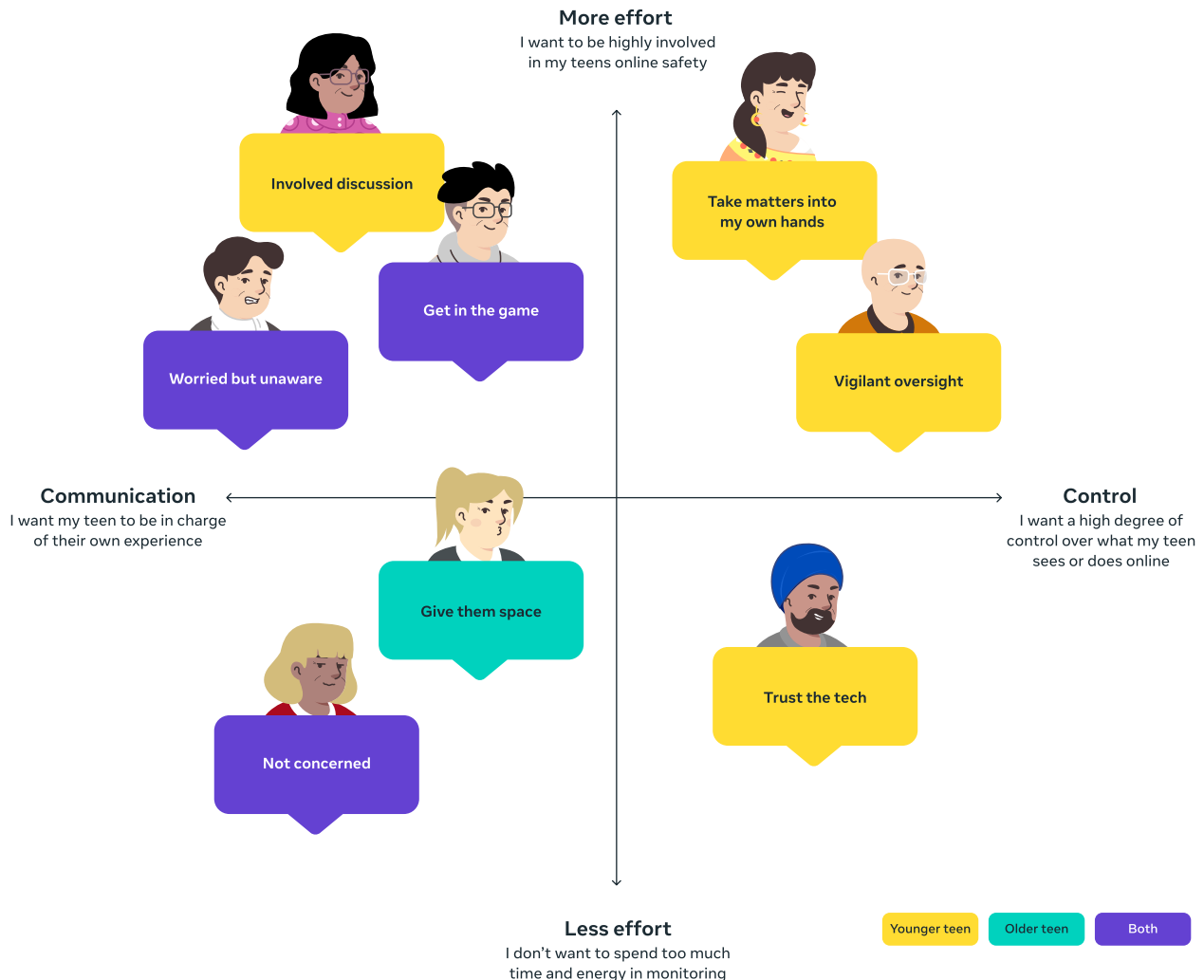"I won't let social media get in the way of my goals"

Teen needs

When it comes to how digital designers might account for these different teen attitudes, it's important to note that needs are more or less significant depending on where a teen falls within this matrix. While the framework below shows the most critical need by attitude, in reality, all teens would benefit from each of these tactics to varying degrees. The combination of these tactics combined create a safer experience for all. For teens who are not yet aware of the potential downsides of online services, social technology companies might provide support through intervention, while also providing educational opportunities to learn about potential downsides and build skills in the background. For those with low self-efficacy, ongoing consistent support is important to help build skills and become more empowered; the level of support might reduce thoughtfully as self-efficacy and autonomy increase over time.

The top right quadrant might represent the more autonomous teen, but it doesn't mean they don't need support. For example, their needs might be more centered on on-demand support and education when a specific occasion arises. A sense of autonomy may also lead to complacency before they have sufficient life experience. As teens who might be more familiar with digital experiences or be more mature, it's important to also give them the opportunity as role models to share their knowledge with younger teens - since we've learned that younger teens appreciate learning from their older peers or siblings as well.

High self-efficacy
I'm in charge of my own experience

Automatic guardrails that help me stay safe

On-demand tools at my disposal that I can use as I see fit

Unaware of potential downsides
Social media is fun and the potential downsides are overblown

Aware of potential downsides
Putting oneself out there online has potential downsides

Relatable features that raise my awareness of potential downsides and how to deal with it

Empowering resources that encourage me to change my habits and take action

Low self-efficacy
There's nothing I can do about my experience online

Guardian attitudes to supervision and privacy

More effort
I want to be highly involved
in my teens online safety

Involved discussion

Get in the game

Take matters into
my own hands

Worried but unaware

Vigilant oversight

Communication
I want my teen to be in charge
of their own experience

Control
I want a high degree of
control over what my teen
sees or does online

Give them space

Not concerned

Trust the tech

Less effort
I don't want to spend too much
time and energy in monitoring

| Younger teen | Older teen | Both |

While every guardian we met had a different attitude toward supervision, we noticed that two main variables determined their unique approaches: how much time and attention they could spend (whether it was time communicating with their teens or time monitoring their actions) and how much control they wanted to have. We distilled some guardian attitudes that represent the range of guardians we spoke with, from strict but time constrained, to trusting and hands-off.

Like teens, these guardian attitudes were grouped based on our research findings and are not intended to be attributed to any particular individual, and they don't remain static over time. In reality they may change or fluctuate as trust is built or broken. A guardian might have a different attitude for different children depending on age or gender (Nichols 2022: 7). It is also important to note that a guardian's overall level of concern for social media use also can be influenced by factors such as socio-economic status, family composition, level of digital literacy and cultural factors (Modecki et al. 2022: 5).

Guardian attitudes, continued

Involved discussion
Trusts that their teen will have good judgment and come to them if they have a negative experience. Willing to take the time to learn more about social media as a way to get closer to their teen. While guardians with this attitude still engage in some rule-setting initially, they revisit rules through ongoing conversation and open dialogue.

"Any problem can be solved with a conversation"

Predominant archetype in: 🇺🇸

Give them space
Have a high degree of trust in their teens and respect for their privacy. They feel that monitoring their teen closely is not worth the effort it takes and that it is best for teens to make judgment calls for themselves. They believe their main role is to help their teens understand how to handle a range of situations responsibly on their own but will intervene when necessary.

"It's best to let them figure it out on their own"

Predominant archetype in: 🇯🇵

Worried but unaware
Lack knowledge of digital apps and technology which makes it difficult for them to know what rules to make and potential downsides that they should be aware of.

"Lack the knowledge to keep my teen safe"

Predominant archetype in: 🇯🇵

Get in the game
Keep an eye on their teen by actively engaging with them through gaming or connecting on social media.

"Join the platform so I can participate alongside my teen"

Predominant archetype in: 🇯🇵

Not concerned
Don't give much thought or consideration toward parental supervision, either because they are too busy or simply don't think about it. They may not be aware of the potential downsides to their teens putting themselves out there. Less likely to have a strong relationship with their teen and openly discuss topics around social media.

"Everything seems ok"

Trust the tech
Rely on apps and technology to support their teens. Want control of their teens' online behavior, either because their teens aren't forthcoming about potential challenges they have on social media or because they don't trust what happens on the app. They want another way to keep tabs on their teens, but don't want to put in a lot of effort.

"Digital tools that keep tabs on my teen better than I can"

Take matters into my own hands
Opt for more hands-on methods of supervision (i.e. sharing accounts, occasional phone checks) to monitor their teens, educate them, or track down potential downsides to their teens putting themselves out there, either because they find technological solutions ineffective or slow or because they are not sure they can rely on it.

"Protect my teen by going straight to the source myself"

Predominant archetype in: 🇺🇸

Vigilant oversight
Monitor closely both through tools and tech as well as conversations and dialogue. They see over-monitoring as a short-term stop gap, necessary step in disciplining their teen and teaching them better habits.

"My teens don't have a right to privacy"
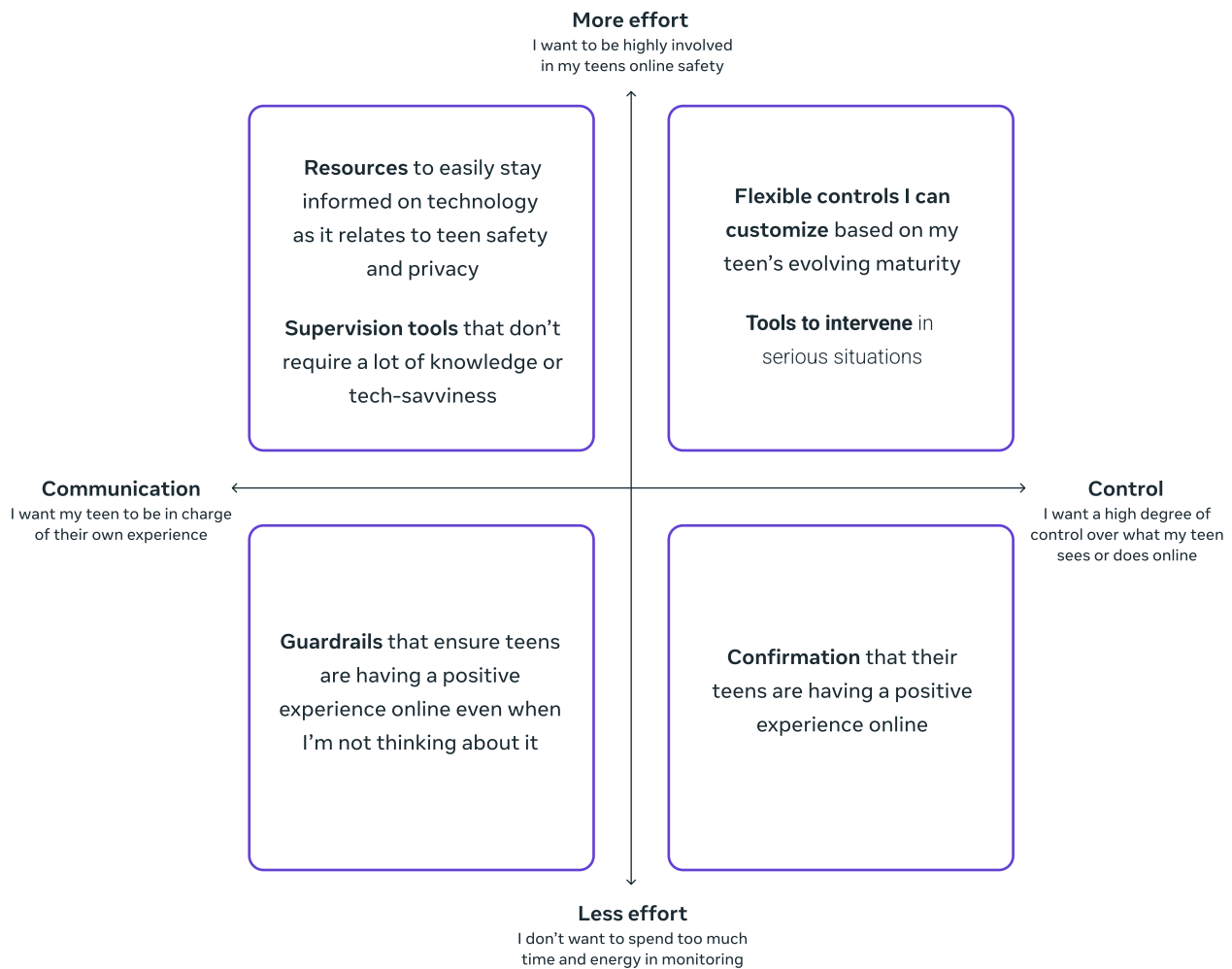
Predominant archetype in: 🇺🇸

Guardian needs

Guardians also have a range of distinct needs that social media services can address. Since Meta launched Family Center, we have focused on serving guardians who might feel the need to support their teen on our apps and would like the tools to do so. 80% of the guardians in Meta's quantitative study indicated that at least one aspect of online teen supervision (not specific to Meta's apps) is very or moderately challenging for them in general (Kremer 2022). The types of tasks they found most challenging included monitoring who their teen was in contact with, balancing their teen's needs for privacy and safety, and monitoring all accounts that the teen has. However, other key challenges experienced by at least one-third of guardians included identifying existing supervision tools that meet their needs and educational resources, knowing how to use these tools and finding time to do so, and coordinating across other guardians and the children they supervise (Kremer 2022).

However, we acknowledge that there is a need to also think about those teens whose guardians may fall in the bottom left category, either because they are unaware of how they should be overseeing their teen, they are simply not concerned, or they are unable to do so for other reasons, such as low digital literacy or lack of available time. The baseline experience on the app must continue to be designed for instances like these, where guardians are not involved in teens' social media use, to support teens with age-appropriate experiences and help teens to make better decisions themselves.

In Meta's survey, 66% of guardians with 13-15 year-olds and 70% of guardians with 16-17 year-olds indicated that they are at least somewhat likely to give their teen(s) some freedom to learn for themselves when using apps (Kremer 2022). In co-design, guardians also said they need tools to enhance open, productive dialogue and build trust with their teens. Another area with a lot of opportunity is for guardians who fall into the top left quadrant – who don't want to impose strict controls or monitor heavily and would prefer to develop a relationship built on trust through communication.
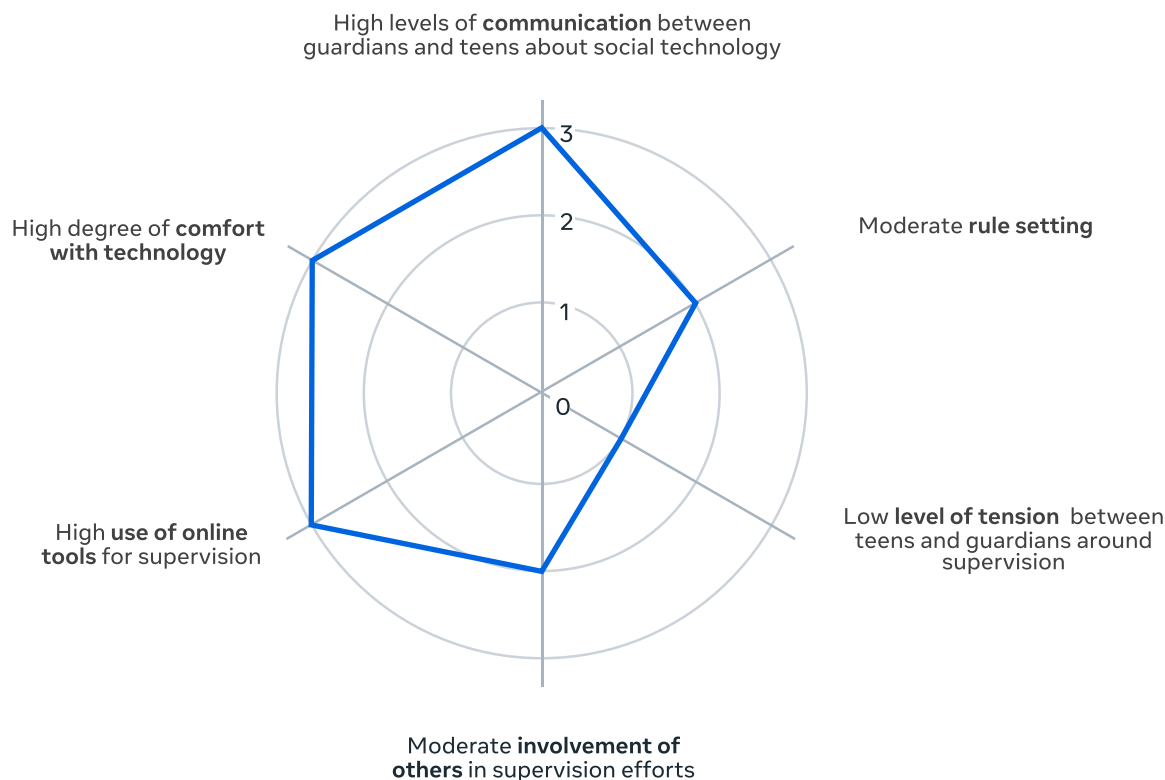
Guardian needs, continued

More effort
I want to be highly involved
in my teens online safety

Resources to easily stay
informed on technology
as it relates to teen safety
and privacy

Supervision tools that don't
require a lot of knowledge or
tech-savviness

**Flexible controls I can
customize** based on my
teen's evolving maturity

Tools to intervene in
serious situations

Communication
I want my teen to be in charge
of their own experience

Control
I want a high degree of
control over what my teen
sees or does online

Guardrails that ensure teens
are having a positive
experience online even when
I'm not thinking about it

Confirmation that their
teens are having a positive
experience online

Less effort
I don't want to spend too much
time and energy in monitoring

Research snapshots
by country

This section contains a brief overview of each country where we conducted co-design. The learnings highlighted for each are not necessarily unique to that country, but illustrate some of the more predominant values or attitudes we noticed in the more localized co-design sessions.

In the section that follows, "Considerations for digital designers", we have pulled out the most salient insights that cut across each country. Country-specific nuances are highlighted throughout as "cultural call-outs."

Alongside our learnings are radar charts that show a profile of how guardians and teens in each country approach supervision, comparing levels of guardian-teen communication and relevant tensions, rule setting and monitoring, support networks, and tech-savviness. These charts are indicative only for some countries based on Meta's research and consultation to date.

Disclaimer: Names have been redacted from this report to protect the privacy of our research and co-design participants.

United States 🇺🇸

High levels of **communication** between guardians and teens about social technology

Moderate **rule setting**

Low **level of tension** between teens and guardians around supervision

Moderate **involvement of others** in supervision efforts

High **use of online tools** for supervision

High degree of **comfort with technology**

Guardians value conversation and rule-making

Guardians in the US said that ongoing conversation around social media was a more effective way to support and supervise their teens rather than setting and enforcing strict rules. When rules were set, it was often in response to their teen making a mistake or misstep that the guardians felt they needed to prevent from recurring, by restricting social media use or imposing strict limits. In co-design, many US guardians said that they supervise their teens mainly through dialogue; it's important that they set the rules but also that teens feel empowered to share their thoughts.

Families bond through social media

It was common for guardians in the US to be on the same social media services their teens were using. They cherished the moments when their teens would engage with them by sending something they could connect over. It gave them a way to relate to their teens and also learn about their world.

"
Sometimes Lexi will send me a video about something we do together, like watch Grey's Anatomy. I love those moments where she can take something that's happening on Instagram and continue the conversation with me."
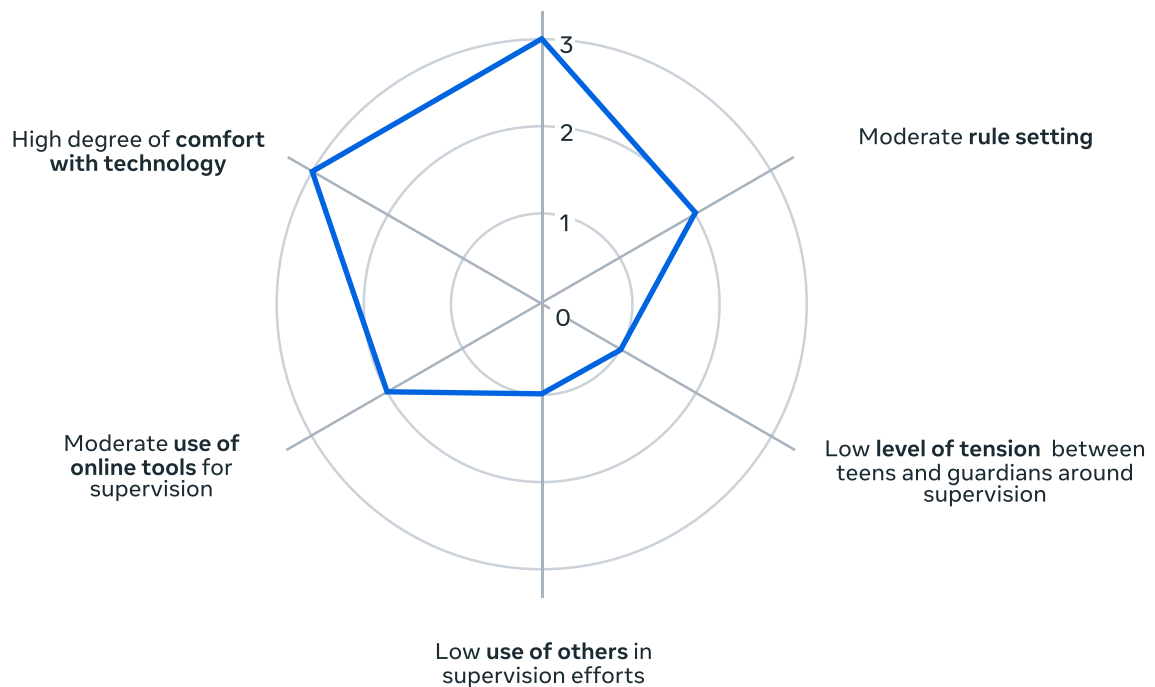
–L., guardian, USA

"
"The approach to guardian surfaces and settings should be framed from the lens of education, not control, in order to establish a path towards self-supervision and teen-guardian trust-building. Teens may be more likely to accept the rules if they've had a part in setting them — where teens can hold parents accountable to shared/family/household goals. There's an opportunity to encourage reciprocity through co-learning, co-creation and facilitation of conversations."

-Expert, USA

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United Kingdom & Ireland 🇬🇧 🇮🇪

High levels of **communication** between guardians and teens about social technology

Moderate **rule setting**

Low **level of tension** between teens and guardians around supervision

Low **use of others** in supervision efforts

Moderate **use of online tools** for supervision

High degree of **comfort with technology**

Guardians open up about teens

Guardians in the UK tended to be very candid about experiences when their teen crossed a line or broke a rule, like downloading a new app without talking to their parent or guardian. In discussing how they dealt with these issues, many recounted instances of discussing norms with their teens before taking more extreme action, like imposing strict rules or taking away the phone.

Teens are curious about the inner workings of social media

There was a high level of awareness among teens in the UK and Ireland around digital privacy and safety. They are fascinated by the mechanisms underlying the surface-level app experience and frequently brought up challenges around where their data ends up and how to protect it. This generation of young people in the UK and Ireland reported having participated in various forms of online citizenship education.

❝
I really want to know how much of my data is already out there and what these companies are doing with it.”

– N., age 13, UK

❝
Providing parents/guardians with access to “smart” insights instead of granular information may be preferable as it can be more actionable for them and help to protect youth privacy.”

– Expert, UK & Ireland

Brazil 🇧🇷

Radar chart with the following axes:

- High levels of **communication** between guardians and teens about social technology — 3
- High **rule setting** — 3
- Moderate **level of tension** between teens and guardians around supervision — 1
- High **involvement of others** in supervision efforts — 3
- High **use of online tools** for supervision — 3
- High degree of **comfort with technology** — 3

Scale rings: 0, 1, 2, 3

Parents/guardians lean on community for support

We heard from single mothers and multi-generational households in Brazil that they seek additional support from other members of their family or community in both supervising and providing guidance on how to support a positive experience for their teens online.

Guardians confront issues head on

Guardians were highly concerned about strangers entering their teens' circles, especially through group chats. Often guardians took it upon themselves to intervene when they saw strangers contacting their teens via social media, as they perceived that there was a lack of trustworthy or reliable support from either apps or authorities. More authoritarian parenting styles in Brazil also tend to be coupled with higher levels of parent-teen dialogue compared to other countries in which we conducted research.

> " I would like to share the responsibilities [of monitoring], I think everyone in the family, like grandparents, aunts, and older cousins should help."
>
> **– C., guardian, Brazil**

Japan 🇯🇵

Low levels of **communication** between guardians and teens about social technology

Low **rule setting**

Moderate **degree of comfort** with technology

Moderate **level of tension** between teens and guardians around supervision

Low **use of online tools** for supervision

Moderate **involvement of others** in supervision efforts

3
2
1
0
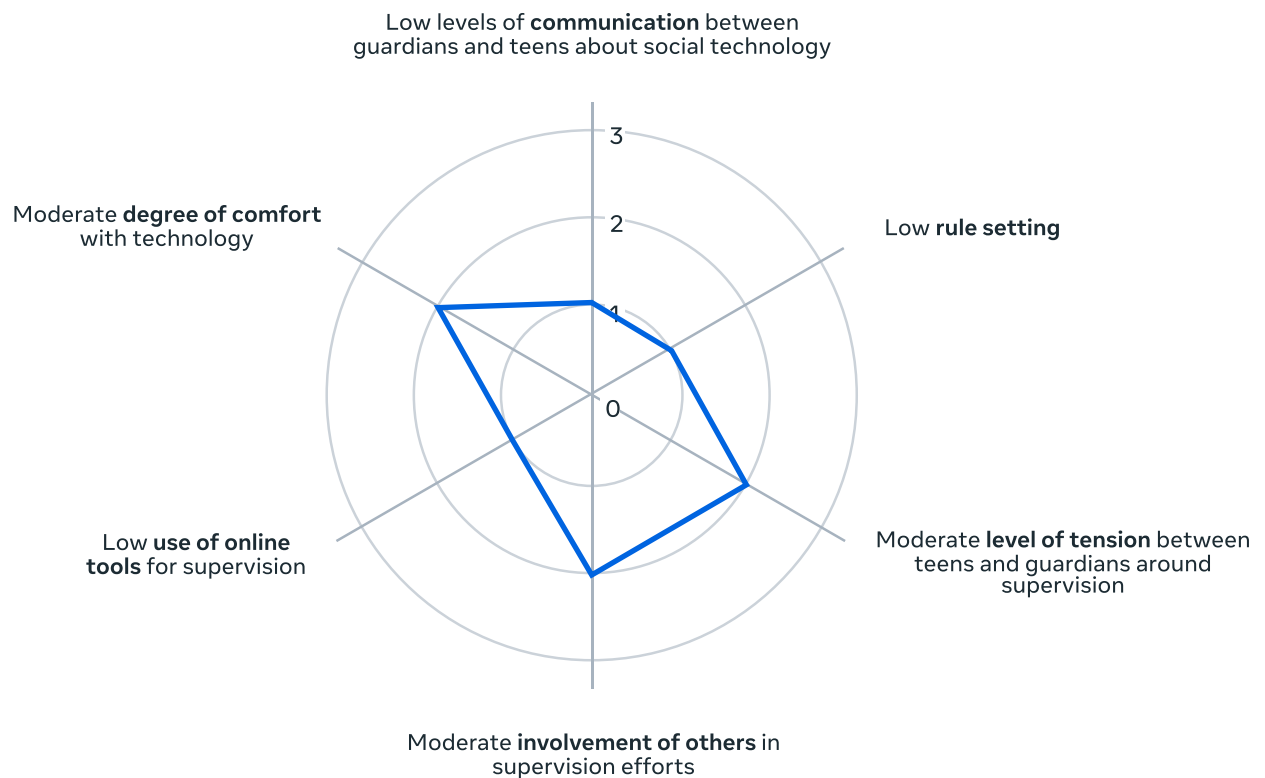
Guardians attitudes towards teen privacy

Guardians in Japan felt that it was very important to respect the privacy of their teens which led to lower levels of rule-setting and communication around social media, unless a teen was facing a serious issue. Japanese teens were also in the habit of keeping their online habits and behaviors to themselves.

Teens tackle issues independently

Support networks are smaller in Japan than in other countries in which we conducted research, where guardians tend to look towards family members, communities or experts for support. Because privacy and independence is highly valued by teens and guardians, it's not as common to directly rely on others for hands-on support in supervision or dealing with challenges online, although they still heavily rely on peer networks within this independent framing.

"
I can't always monitor what she views and what she posts, so it would be nice if [the app could] warn her and catch mistakes before she gets in trouble."

– S., guardian, Japan

India 🇮🇳

Low levels of **communication** between guardians and teens about social technology

Low **rule setting**

High **level of tension** between teens and guardians around supervision

High **involvement of others** in supervision efforts

High **use of online tools** for supervision

High degree of **comfort with technology**

3
2
1
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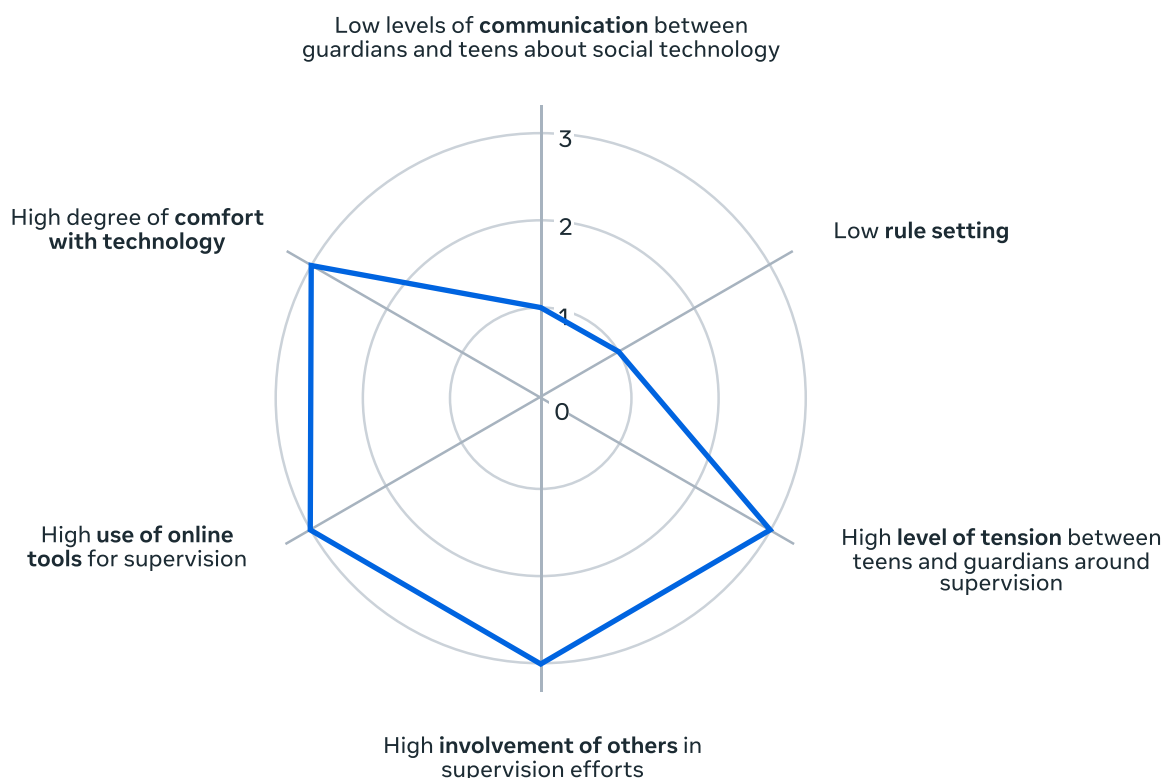
Teens want to avoid confrontation

Tension between guardians and teens was reported to be high in India. When speaking with participants, we learned that the high prevalence of device sharing opens the doors up to more confrontation about teens' actions. In co-design, many teens tended to speak of their dissatisfaction with their guardian's role in supervision compared to other countries; there appeared to be relatively low parent-child dialogue and relatively higher invasive methods of parental supervision.

Device sharing is used as a control mechanism

While results of Meta's global survey indicated that comfort with technology was relatively high in India, in co-design we spoke with many guardians who reported to be less tech savvy. These guardians tended to share devices with their teens and used that as a monitoring and control mechanism. The possible reasons for device sharing were not always tied to economic issues and affordability of devices; sometimes they were based on socio-cultural and familial factors, for instance pertaining to relatively more traditional and authoritarian parenting styles.

> " My mom asked me who this person was and what we were talking about... and told me not to talk to them anymore. She got angry at me. My mom is my elder, so she yelled at me but it didn't feel good."
>
> **— S., age 14, India**

Australia 🇦🇺

Time management tools can be a foundation for positive use of social media

While teens want to have more control over their time online, they also want to learn how to better control what they see, and consider this important for a positive experience. They see social media as an opportunity to explore and deepen their interests (based for instance on their mood) but find it difficult not to be pulled into the noise of their feeds, which sometimes includes unappealing content. Teens often self-supervise because they are concerned with issues beyond their guardians' immediate control, like the content and people they may come to interact with or they worry that their guardian's will not understand a situation and intervene unfavorably. Many teens learn how to do this through peers, and found it difficult to locate helpful resources when they were younger.

Guardians prefer options that help them connect with and understand their teens

Guardians see supervision tools as valuable to understand and connect with their teens. They indicated that understanding their online world helps them to approach and navigate more difficult conversations around social media.

" Show them that they can trust you and that you're responsible enough to do your own thing without them checking on you."

— J., age 14, Australia
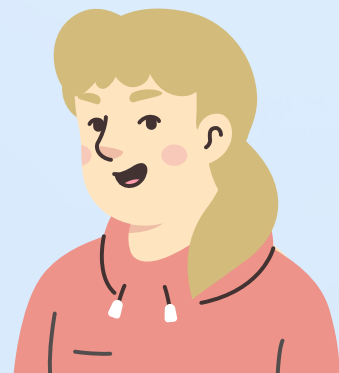
" I find especially when it comes to things like terminology and what's trending, you can stay relevant with them and get a bit of an understanding of what they're talking about."

— S., guardian, Australia

Senegal & Côte d'Ivoire 🇸🇳 🇨🇮

Guardians sometimes trivialize their teens' challenges around social media use

We heard that some of the key challenges faced by teens in Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire on social media include privacy and identity theft. When responding to these kinds of challenges, teens said that they first try to self-supervise and problem solve on their own before looking to others for help. Guardians tend not to be in the know about their teens' activities, and those with lower digital literacy desire to upskill but tend to think that their methods of offline supervision are effective. Both teens and guardians worry about exposure to certain content and generally seek support from older siblings and educators as mediators.

Mexico 🇲🇽

Teens want more trust and less judgment from conversations with their guardians

Many teen participants expressed that they would like to have more honest conversations with their guardians, where there is more trust and less judgment. These conversations are often initiated by their guardians, but teens believe their guardians might be less fearful and judgmental about social media if they knew more about it and how it works. Tools that can help teens demonstrate that they are mature enough to self-manage their accounts on social networks would encourage more constructive and trusting conversations with their guardians.

Guardians want to know existing tools better

Guardian participants in Mexico were interested in tools that help them have more specific conversations, because it would allow them to get closer to their teens by starting these conversations with topics that interest them. They expressed that being able to access more specific content that helps them learn how social media works and the tools they have could improve the conversations they already have and even facilitate a relationship of greater trust with teens.

> "
> We usually talk about who he's talking to and how to talk with others on social media. Sometimes it helps to do it after we watch a video or comment on a piece of news. I'd like to know more about what's trending on social media as a way to help me have better conversations."
>
> **— P., guardian, Mexico**

Potential privacy and safety challenges for guardians and teens

While guardians and teens report sharing many of the same potential challenges, often the magnitude and the rationale are different.

For instance, guardians frequently told us that they feel concerned about their teens falling for a scam. Teens feel confident they can identify them, but view scammers and bots as annoyances and unwelcome interruptions to their online experience. Regarding time spent online, teens are not as concerned as guardians about total screen time. Rather, they are more interested in how it affects their productivity or how it might get in the way of achieving some of their goals. Guardians, on the other hand, are more mindful of how spending too much time online might be inhibiting the development of important social skills for their teens.

There are also nuances that affect the degree to which guardians and teens feel these potential challenges. For example, misinformation, scamming and hackers were more salient challenges for teens and guardians in India and Brazil than other countries in which we conducted research. Time spent online was more of an issue for teens in Japan than it was in other regions of the world.

3

Considerations for digital designers

Introduction

As a result of our global co-design program, we identified five areas where digital designers can improve the supervision experience for both guardians and teens. The following pages illustrate what we learned, highlight the unmet needs we uncovered, provide examples of how Meta is currently acting on these learnings, and list some future-facing design opportunities.

These consideration areas include:

1	Evolving tools as teens grow
2	Helping teens to set their own limits
3	Ensuring positive exploration
4	Enhancing communication between teens and guardians
5	Demystifying social media for guardians

Consideration 1:
Evolving tools as
teens grow

Early and late teens have different developmental needs

Teens' digital privacy education is a journey. It can't be accomplished through a one-time lecture or tutorial, especially since technology is constantly developing. The knowledge, skills, and dispositions that teens develop come from a mix of instruction, direct experience, repetition, and reflection that happen over time and across a range of contexts (Busso & Sauerteig 2022). Developmental stages describe a general progression of teens over time. It's important to recognize teen-specific needs, abilities, social and cultural circumstances, and the level of guardian support as some of the factors that impact teens' trajectories as they develop their identities and interact in digital environments.

Through the co-design sessions, early teens (13-15) consistently told us they are looking for ways to show their guardians that they can handle greater responsibility, either through proof points or well-articulated plans. Coupled with developmental factors, we also heard that a lack of experience and heightened curiosity may make this group less aware of potential downsides to putting themselves out there online. We heard from some guardians that they use firmer rule-setting and controls to create safer spaces, particularly for their early teens.

Expert takeaway:

> Experts generally were supportive of the distinction between early and late teens and the value in providing guardians with more options to receive insights or notifications for earlier teens.

All teens saw supervision tools as useful when they can be used to prove to their guardians that they should be granted new freedoms or responsibilities, rather than being static or inflexible. Some teens in their older years benefit from being able to reflect on past experiences on social tech and learn from them. They start to become more future-oriented and mindful of their own relationship with digital experiences and are more likely than early teens to self-monitor their experience. They transition from going to their guardians for support to going to a friend or a sibling who can personally relate to their experiences online. Similarly, guardians of late teens act more as advisors, providing counsel when their teens initiate it (Nichols 2022: 7).

The path to digital independence is not linear

One of the key insights from previous co-design research is around the need to develop frameworks for different levels of teen maturity and evolving identity (TTC Labs 2020). From our conversations and co-design with teens and guardians in 2022, we explored the various paths to teens taking ownership of their digital experience, and how it is often not a straight line. Generally speaking, as teens grow and mature they become more trusted to handle situations on their own. This applies not only to the digital world, but any situation where teens need to learn to navigate responsibility, like driving or hanging out late with their friends. Guardians do less rule-setting and monitoring and move into phases where their teens are acting more autonomously online (Throuvala 2021). This transition to acting responsibly and independently online for a teen is a critical part of becoming an adult (Modecki et al. 2022: 2). Rule-setting and invasive supervision techniques are generally likely to decrease during this transition, although based on Meta's research and consultation this is dependent on a number of criteria and varies by country.

The ideal trajectory

Guardians set rules and monitor their teens online (Guardian as coach)

Guardians

Teens have skills and knowledge to responsibly monitor their own social media experiences

Control

Teens start learning how to decipher and behave on social media by testing limits, making mistakes, interacting with others

Teens

Guardians aim for a communications-based approach to supervision (Guardian as advisor)

Teen maturity

Expert takeaway:

> Tensions between teens and guardians is not a problem to be solved, but rather an acknowledged reality of relationships within family, household and support networks. Parenthood is context-sensitive and parenting practices fluctuate across a spectrum. Multiple guardianship types, networks of care and non-traditional "nuclear" families should also be accounted for. Equally important is to understand why parents resort to different mediation strategies: understanding their motivations and practices through specific examples, including if they are oriented towards promoting teens' autonomy or not.

The path to digital independence is not linear, continued

However, teens are in a state of flux – constantly learning new things and making mistakes – and may need more or less support at different times. Teen autonomy is the ultimate goal, but rules change depending on whether the guardian senses their teen is capable of acting responsibly. Supervision tools must account for this ebb and flow, providing solutions for guardians and teens in any stage of development.
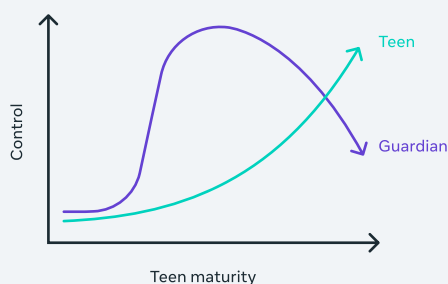
Controls as a stop-gap solution

R. was part of an incident with a group of teens that involved sharing sexual content online. The police and parents had to get involved. After having little to no oversight, R.'s father put him on full tech lockdown. His father gradually lifted restrictions on social media in years following because it wasn't realistic to keep R. off it.

— USA Co-design
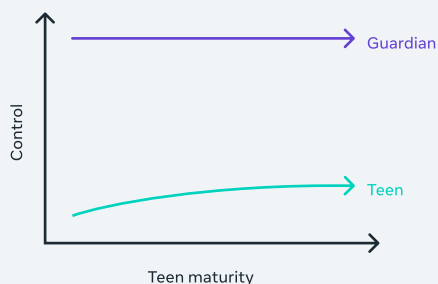
Strict controls that hinder growth

A. is a mature 14 year old. Her guardians are very strict when it comes to social technology, limiting her exposure to the apps to only a few minutes a day. The strict rules encourage A. to push back even more and prevents her from being able to build healthy limits on her own.

— USA Co-design
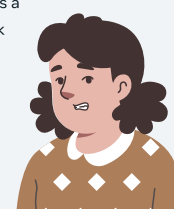
Expert takeaway:

> Many experts said that supervision is not an 'on-off switch' and it's important to meet young people and guardians where they are. Rules and context are key: what age, situation and scenarios influence guardians to set certain rules. Supervision settings should be flexible and allow teens to communicate. As young people gain autonomy, they continue to seek support, but start using self-supervision tools. They're still learning to navigate social media albeit relying less on their parents for guidance.

Supervision has three ingredients

Guardians of teens use a combination of different tactics in their supervision efforts, including **rule-setting, monitoring** (whether their teens are aware of it or not), and **conversation and teaching**. How guardians employ these three tactics with their teens does not remain static over time and can even vary across siblings within the same household. It also may be the case that two guardians of the same teen have fundamentally different philosophies when it comes to monitoring, which may lead to disputes and challenges in supervision.

Rule setting	Monitoring	Conversation & teaching
To protect teens and teach them how to build healthy habits	To reassure guardians that teens are being safe, responsible, and respectful	To support an open and trusting relationship
(e.g., screen time limits, "black out times")	(e.g., random phone checks, "bad word" alerts)	(e.g.,discussions around topics like body image, sexual content, catfishing)

Although we have uncovered some broad attitudes for guardian supervision, every relationship between a teen and their guardian is different. Findings indicate that guardians determine the right balance of these supervision tactics based on a set of factors, including, but not limited to:

- Relationship with their teen. What is the level of trust between the teen and the guardian? Is there open dialogue and communication?
- Desired amount of control. How much involvement do the guardians want to have in their teens' experiences?
- Available time and energy. What is the guardian's personal bandwidth to consistently monitor and check in? Do they have others in their network to support them?
- Social technology literacy. How much do they know about social media and developing technologies, and their options available to monitor? What are their perceptions of the potential downsides?

Teens are looking for ways to demonstrate maturity

Teens want to show their guardians that they can handle greater responsibility and gain more independence. Guardians often find it challenging to know when their teens are ready for greater autonomy. Some indicators of readiness guardians look for include witnessing teens making good decisions, teens proactively seeking out guardian advice and a lack of secrecy around the teen's online activities.

However, these indicators are intangible, imprecise and depend somewhat on the guardians having a trusting relationship with their teen. **Teens and guardians alike are looking for support from digital apps that can provide insights and proof-points to gauge maturity.**

Concept feedback

Teens loved the idea of the "screen time bank" as a way to prove responsibility and get rewards themselves. Guardians and teens agreed that knowing how they spend their time online is more important than screen time alone.

Screen time bank
Get points for every minute you are under your daily screen time limit. You can use those points to:

- Extend your screen time
- Share your score with your guardians to show you're being responsible
- Unlock new features on the app

Screen time limit reached
Your current screen time point total is

0 . 4 2

Extend your screen time now

Redeem points to unlock features

Share screen time balance with your guardians
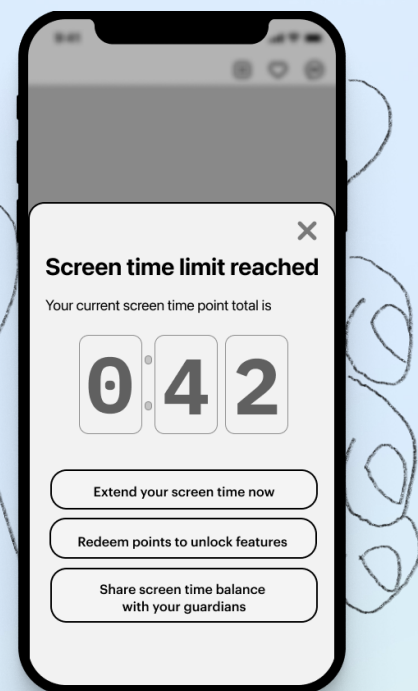
" It would be good to have a competition on your family and show how responsible you are. To win a competition would be fun!"

– A. 13, USA

∞ Meta   Smart Design

Evolving tools as teens grow:

What Meta is doing

In this section, we're detailing some of the ways in which co-design insights helped inform the development of Meta's family-oriented tools and resources. We're also sharing additional information about other age-appropriate features and tools that we have developed.

Helping teens to practice smart decision making

Setting up supervision tools requiring both guardian and teen confirmation

On Instagram, both guardians and teens can invite each other to set up supervision. When supervision is enabled, guardians have the ability to view some of their teen's account settings on Instagram, like whether the teen has changed a privacy setting they were initially defaulted into, and be notified if or when they change those settings. Guardians also have the ability to see insights on how much time teens spend on Instagram, what accounts their teen follows / blocked and accounts that follow their teen.

Giving guardians insight into the decisions teens make around their settings like their account privacy and messaging preferences can give families opportunities to have conversations around their respective expectations and comfort levels around responsible social media use. Teens are also told exactly which information is and isn't shared with their guardians, which is important to foster transparency and trust. Guardians and teens can remove supervision at any time.

What Meta is doing, continued

Providing guardians with flexible supervision options

Meta Family Center

In co-design, asking teens to deliberate between two extreme and opposing scenarios as part of co-design helped reveal moderate solutions that were satisfying to them. For example, choosing between "only being able to access Instagram for 5 minutes every hour" and "having the entire app shut down between 9pm and 6am" helped reveal teen participants' preferences and pain points around having blocking hours or time limits imposed on their social media experience.

An example of a measure that Instagram has taken with these co-design insights in mind is to build flexible parental controls that can account for situational context like weekdays, weekends and school holidays. Guardians have the option to set daily time limits and/or schedule breaks for times when teens have other responsibilities such as school, homework or sleep. In the same way that we have been notifying teens when their parents set time limits, we will also let teens know when their parent has set a scheduled break, as well as 10 minutes before the scheduled break begins. During the break, teens can still access their settings. Over the coming months, we'll explore ways for teens to request more time when they've reached their time limit, ideally opening up conversations around expected daily use.
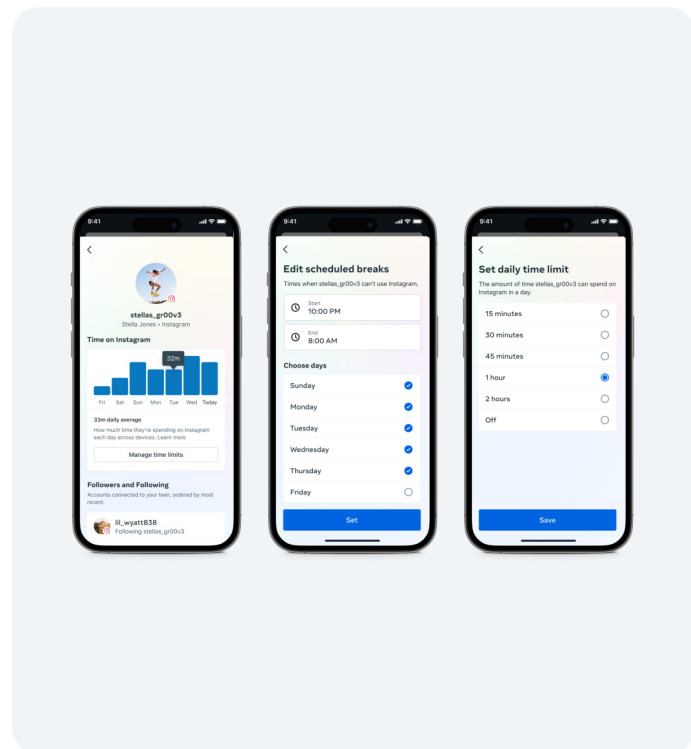
Future-facing design opportunities

To create supervision tools that evolve as teens grow, digital designers should consider how to:

1. Create education and transparency for teens and guardians so that no one is surprised about what is shared, always notifying people when information is shared or changes are made.

2. Create settings and controls that account for a range of maturity levels.

3. Give teens a chance to practice good judgment and prove maturity to their guardians.

4. Help guardians feel confident that their teens are ready for more online responsibility and transition comfortably toward fewer rules.

Consideration 2: Helping teens to set their own limits

Teens will self-monitor when it makes them feel empowered

When some teens notice their use of social media is interfering with their personal goals, they may be motivated to proactively set their own limits or controls, even in the absence of guardian supervision or oversight. They see the benefit of monitoring their experience on social media if it is on their own terms and if it will make them feel empowered, and more productive. Because they respond to meaningful concerns, the limits teens set for themselves might be more effective than those imposed by guardians (Lazarides et al: 2015: 83). **Monitoring tools should be framed as self-empowering, not self-limiting, and help teens identify their own boundaries at an early age.**

Motivations that prompt teens to self-monitor:

- **Presenting themselves well to other**
  Value for teens: "Show yourself in the best light"

- **Focusing or accomplishing tasks**
  Value props for teens: "Get better sleep", "Don't waste time, Improve your focus"

- **Building resilience and self-esteem**
  Value for teens: "Know what's real versus fake"

- **Demonstrating growth and maturity**
  Value for teens: "You make the rules", "Prove to your guardian you are mature"

- **Protect their personal information**
  Value for teens: "Don't get hacked", "Get rid of scammers"

Expert takeaway

> Teens often self-monitor because they are concerned with issues beyond their guardians' immediate control, like the content and people they may come to interact with. Many teens say they learned how to do this through peers and they wished that it would have been easier to find helpful resources when they were younger - although they also realize that they didn't always know better when younger.
>
> Depending on the social norms at play, imperatives for teens to present themselves well to others might have potential downsides. It would be important to co-create educational components with teens that not only support teens in situations where they feel they need to self-monitor, but also help them learn about digital rights and citizenship as well as how to build self-respect and respect for others.

Teens' first instinct is to handle situations on their own

When responding to a challenge on social media, teens may first attempt to resolve the situation without assistance. For example, teens commonly use app features such as blocking, reporting, setting a screen time limit, or making their profile private. Often they learn about these features through onboarding through the app or from friends or siblings. These actions give them agency and control over their experience; however, teens sometimes find it quite difficult to take action because when they do they desire evidence that their responsible actions are leading to positive outcomes.

What would you do if...

Someone bullies you on social media or online gaming

"Some people with bad taste like to pick on people and they generally target girls. There is a function to block them so that you cannot see/ hear them anymore. I would probably do the same if I ran into someone like that."

– O., 16, Japan

See the appendix to read more about how we developed these learning with our 'What would you do?' co-design activity.

Teens are looking for continued support from social media

Teens shared with us areas where they would like social media services to continue to develop solutions. **In particular they were looking for tools that would address situations where they perceive they are wasting time, come across unappealing content or come in contact with people who make them uncomfortable.**

Where teens want more support

Positive encouragement

"When you're about to create an Instagram account, usually one of the first steps is for you to follow a few people. I think that maybe there could be accounts from Instagram itself that promoted self-esteem and could already be in this list of recommendations."

– B., 14, Brazil

Continued proactive detection of policy-violating content

"We have slanderers nowadays and many people take legal action against them. I think it is best if A.I. checks DMs and posts to see if they're harmful before sending them."

– T., 13, Japan

Time management tools that don't rely on hard cut-offs

"I am afraid that [screen time settings] will shut off my screen during the game due to the time limit. If it can be flexible, it's okay."

– O., 14, Japan

See the appendix to read more about how we developed these learning with our 'Time Machine' co-design activity

Teens turn to different sources depending on what type of support is needed

Teens and caregivers often rely on different sources to gain privacy information, which leads each group to focus on a slightly different set of privacy topics (Busso & Sauerteig). Teens seek support from the app when they are self-motivated to set boundaries or monitor their use in order to quickly resolve an issue on their own. Guardians or other trusted adults are typically the second line of defense when teens need more guidance on difficult issues, reassurance that they are behaving appropriately or need intervention in the face of a serious threat.

Peers also play a huge role in supporting teens online, providing empathy and camaraderie in dealing with issues a grown-up might not understand. This is especially true as teens get older (Nichols 2022: 7). Teens look to their friends or older siblings for boosts of encouragement and confidence. Younger teens tend to look at older teens as role models on how to properly use social media and how to conduct themselves online.

Authority figures 🆘

Intervene when there are serious issues that requires disciplinary action or involvement of a third-party figure.

Friends & peers 💗

Offer me empathy and camaraderie in dealing with issues a grown-up might not understand. Give me boosts of confidence and encouragement.

Guardians 💗 📋 🆘

Give me guidance on a difficult issue, reassurance that I am behaving appropriately, or intervention in the face of a threat.

Other trusted adults 💗 📋 🆘

Offer me wisdom and more objective advice than I might get from my parents or peers.

Older siblings & teens 💗 📋

Offer me advice as someone who has gone through a similar experience or teach me how to use the app.

Types of support

📋 Practical guidance on a specific topic

🆘 Intervention in the face of a serious threat

💗 Emotional support related to wellbeing

Cultural call-out

In Brazil, support networks often extend beyond the parent/guardian to extended family or members of the community. In Japan, teens are more likely to go to peers before guardians when issues on social media arise. In India, teens reaching out to older siblings is more prominent than in other countries.

What Meta is doing

## Encouraging teens to be more mindful of their time online

Take a break

The 'Take A Break' feature was designed to empower people who use Instagram to make informed decisions about how they're spending their time. If someone has been scrolling for a certain amount of time, we'll ask them to take a break from Instagram and suggest that they set reminders to take more breaks in the future. We'll also show them expert-backed tips to help them reflect and reset.
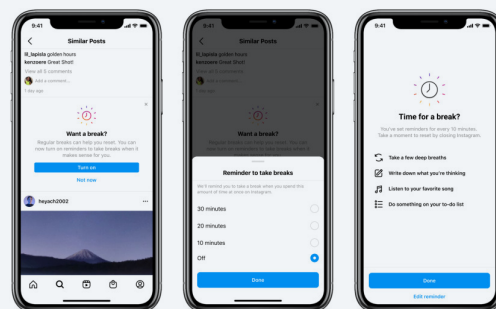
Topic nudges

On Instagram, teens in certain countries will see a notification that encourages them to switch to a different topic if they're repeatedly looking at the same type of content on Explore. This nudge is designed to encourage teens to discover something new and excludes certain topics that may be associated with appearance comparison.

Helping teens identify potential downsides to sharing personal information, putting themselves out there, and finding support.
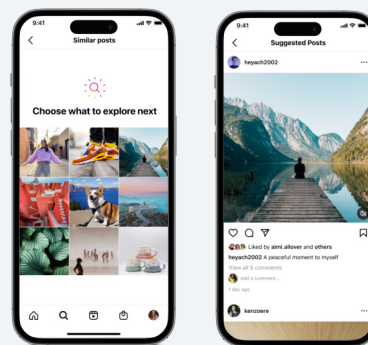
What Meta is doing, continued

Helping teens identify potential downsides to sharing personal information and putting themselves out there, finding support

Safety Notifications

Instagram currently has controls for muting, blocking and restricting accounts, and ways to protect people from seeing offensive DMs and comments. There are also safety notices in messages that notify young people when an adult who has been exhibiting potentially suspicious behavior is messaging them. For example, adults are restricted from sending unsolicited messages to teens that don't follow them. Additionally, if an adult is sending a large amount of friend or message requests to people under 18, we use this tool to alert the recipients within their messages and give them an option to end the conversation, or block, report, or restrict the adult. With these prompts, we provide tips in-app on ways to manage the situation as well as on things to keep in mind when sharing photos, videos or information online. Through supervision on Instagram, teens have the option to share a report they have made with their guardians. Teens can also access offline support via the app.
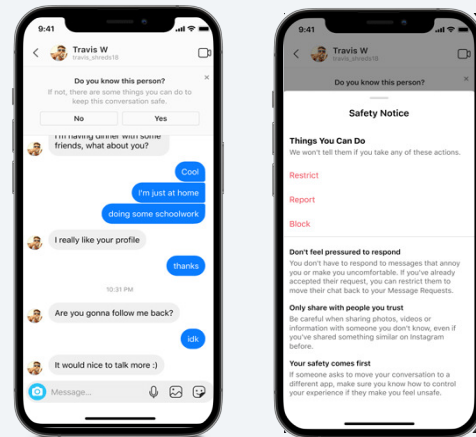
Future-facing design opportunities

To help teens to set their own limits, digital designers should consider how to:

1   Build an experience for teens that makes them feel responsible and in charge from an early age.

2   Facilitate the types of support that teens are already seeking from others, like their peers, extended communities, or mental health resources.

3   Provide teens with guardrails and reassurance that their responsible actions lead to positive outcomes.

Consideration 3: Ensuring positive exploration

Social media creates important avenues for teenagers to explore their evolving identities

Teenagehood is a transitional time when teens explore different identities and explore new sides of themselves, including those they fear may be less accepted in offline contexts. Social media provides teens with opportunities to express themselves. Teens also find ways that don't feel as vulnerable or permanent to express themselves (rightly or wrongly to them), whether it is through setting up multiple accounts on social media, posting content that disappears after 24 hours, or creating an avatar.

Expert consultation takeaway: United States

> Some privacy, safety and wellbeing experts we consulted said that multiple account creation and the ability for teens to explore freely is a crucial part of development, especially for teens exploring their sexual identities. Some experts argued for teen-centric tools and in-app learning experiences designed for and with teens, with stronger consideration given to the need for identity exploration and the challenges this creates. Tools should help teens to amplify safe and positive practices, and promote more positive experiments and challenges.

While these spaces to explore freely are important for teens, teens are not always mature enough to think through the potential downsides. This creates a challenge for guardians who want to minimize potential emotional downsides for their teens but leave them with enough room to grow and learn. This challenge applies not only to social media, but much more broadly as teens encounter rites of passage, like starting high school or dating.

> " When I was in junior high, I was quite shy to express my opinions but [my avatar on VR] helps me express myself because I can be anonymous. It's easier to express my opinions. It's given me confidence to some extent."
>
> – S., 16, Japan

Teens look for ways to get around boundaries

Teens have many tactics for eluding online restrictions when they feel their ability to explore their identity is stifled by guardian oversight or restrictions, whether it's creating second accounts or accessing apps from different devices. When teens find workarounds to restrictions and rules, they may miss out on important teachable moments and opportunities for communication with their guardians.

Types of oversight that drive teens to open second accounts

Features that are so restrictive that social technology is not fun

- Limit or block content

Features that inhibit connection and communication with peers

- Restrict access at certain times of day

Features that share information that could spur unwelcomed questions from guardians

- View follower/following
- View friends profiles
- View DMs

Features that inhibit ability to make decisions for themselves

- Set a screen time limit for Instagram
- Approve follower/ following
- Limit or block content

Features that invade privacy

- View follower/following
- View friends profiles
- View DMs

Features that prevent learning or productivity

- Restrict access at certain times of day
- Limit or block content

Specific to older teens

Guardians want guardrails that respect teen privacy

Invasive methods of oversight can be challenging for guardians and teens alike. Tactics which disregard teen privacy tend to be avoided, like reading messages, although this varies by country and by parenting styles. Some guardians are mindful of over-regulating their teens' experience in such a way that it hinders their development. On the other hand, guardians resort to invasive tactics when they are concerned about their teens' safety or feel that their teens may be keeping something from them. Instead of taking measures that invade their teens' privacy, guardians would like digital apps to be more protective of their teens and alert them of potential dangers in ways that respect their privacy.

In-bounds

What guardians think is ok

Set ground rules on when and where my teens can use social media or play games

Decide what games my teen can/cannot play

Require permission before spending money on games

Occasionally take a 'peep' at my teens social media or listen in on my teen playing a game

Advise my teen on safety considerations (including what they should be keeping private)

Out of bounds

What guardians think is over-stepping or unrealistic		Where technology can help
Decide who my teen can and cannot follow	→	Alert me of concerning new connections
Shield my teen from harmful content, links or adverts	→	Take a stance on what games are appropriate/ inappropriate for teens
Read personal messages and DMs	→	Notify me if there's offensive language being used by/toward my teen
Follow my teen and their friends on social media		

See the appendix to read more about how we developed this learning with our 'You Make the Rules' and "Build your own control center' co-design activities.

Guardians need easy-to-use ways to supervise their teens

Constant monitoring is both a disproportionate encroachment on teen privacy and unrealistic from a time perspective. Many guardians won't use parental controls that require significant time investment, such as manually approving followers or determining what content is appropriate for their teens. They are more willing to spend time customizing controls when they have distinct supervision needs that align with personal values or approaches to parenting.

Guardians are looking for efficient tools that provide reassurance that urgent issues will be brought to their attention. They prefer a one-stop-shop (instead of toggling between different apps, browsers, and operating systems) and they would rather receive alerts instead of reports or analytics on their teen's online activities.

Guardians will take time to customize settings when they align with their personal values, preferences and approaches to parenting.

- **Screen time controls:** Guardians want to be able to set custom limits based on their teens schedule or time of year
- **Keyword alerts:** Guardians may have specific concerns relating to their teens they want to monitor more closely
- **Personalized eduction content:** Guardians only want to receive resources and tips on topics relevant to their situations
- **How and when alerts are received:** Guardians have differing preferences on the frequency and best channel for alerts

Guardians want the app to filter out certain content that is not suitable for teens when it comes to high priority safety matter so they can feel confident they are not missing anything important.

- **Block age-approriate content:** Guardians want the app to take a stance at filtering out violent, sexual, or explicit content that is not suitable for teens
- **Receive alert for suspicious followers or DMs:** Guardians want the app to be able to recognize and flag suspicious adults without the guardian providing the criteria
- **Receive alerts if my teen has reported something:** Guardians want to know right away if a teen has been n contact with a dangerous actor and the reason for the report

Cultural call-out 🇯🇵

This sentiment was especially prevalent among guardians in Japan who felt that the best way for teens to learn judgment is by giving them the freedom to make certain decisions and rules for themselves. Japanese guardians also mentioned the process of monitoring their teens online can be troublesome and take time and effort.

What Meta is doing

Providing guardrails for positive exploration

Age assurance tools

Our age assurance tools help us provide people with age-appropriate experiences. For example, in addition to collecting everyone's age on Instagram and Facebook, we also use AI to help us better understand if someone is an adult or teen. We are also testing new accessible and privacy-preserving ways for users to verify their age, including uploading a video selfie. We have partnered with Yoti to offer this option. These tools help us ensure that teens are provided with age-appropriate experiences, including limiting messages from unknown adults on Instagram and blocking restricted ad content on Instagram and Facebook.
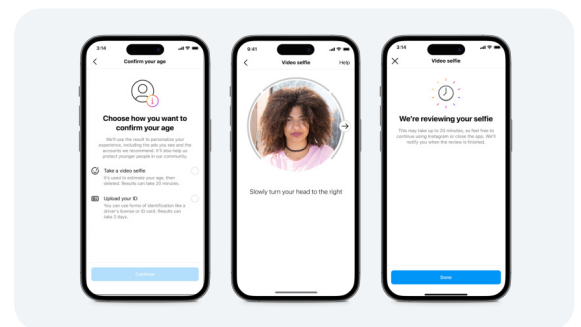
Raising the baseline experience for privacy

Default privacy settings for teens

Facebook has new default settings for teens. Everyone who is under the age of 16 (or under 18 in certain countries) will be defaulted into more private defaults for the following settings, when they join Facebook:

- Who can see your friends list
- Who can see the people, Pages and lists you follow
- Who can see posts you're tagged in on your profile
- Reviewing posts you're tagged in before the post appears on your profile
- Who is allowed to comment on your public posts

We'll be encouraging teens already on Facebook to change these settings to the more private options through a notification.

When signing up for an Instagram account, teens 16 and under (or under 18 in certain countries) are defaulted into private accounts and other appropriately high privacy settings. To keep teens' content private, we switch off the ability for people to tag or mention teens who don't follow them, or to include their content in Reels Remixes or guides by default when they first join Instagram. As part of the Meta account structure, people between the ages of 13 and 17 also have their Meta Horizon profiles set to private by default. A dedicated Teen privacy resource page contains more information for teens about privacy settings, defaults and features across Meta Quest, Instagram, Facebook and Messenger.
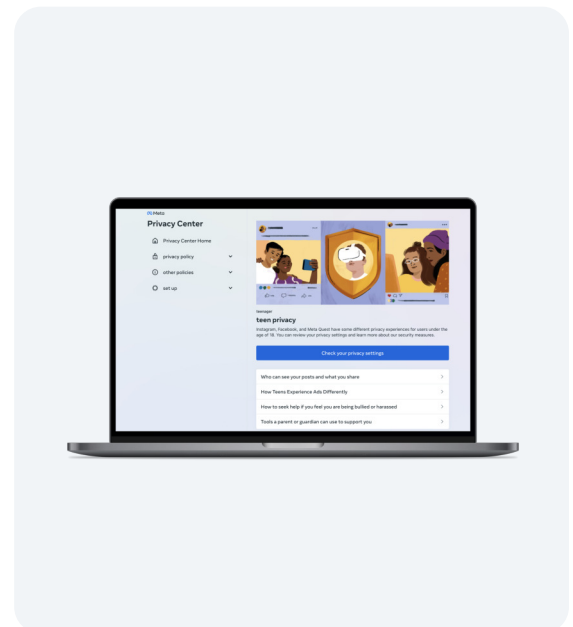
What Meta is doing, continued

Sensitive Content Control

On Instagram, the Sensitive Content Control enables people to choose how much or how little sensitive content to see in Explore from accounts they don't follow. This control has only two options for teens: "Standard" and "Less." New teens on Instagram under 16 years-old will be defaulted into the "Less" state. For teens already on Instagram, we will send a prompt encouraging them to select the "Less" experience. This will make it more difficult for young people to come across potentially sensitive content or accounts in Search, Explore, Hashtag Pages, Reels, Feed Recommendations and Suggested Accounts.

In addition, we are testing a new way to encourage teens to update their safety and privacy settings. We'll show prompts asking teens to review their settings including: controlling who can reshare their content, who can message and contact them, what content they can see and how they can manage their time spent on Instagram.
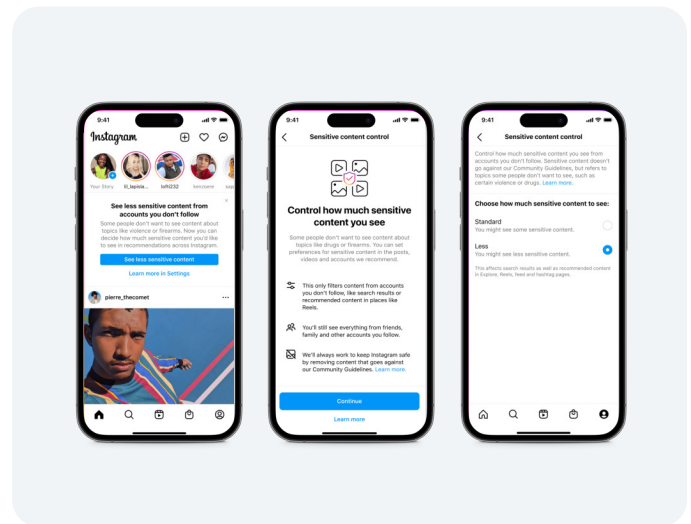
Future-facing design opportunities

To ensure positive exploration, digital designers should consider how to:

1. Help teens identify potential downsides on social media and how to take action.

2. Help teens develop habits to create positive experiences on social media through meaningful exploration.

3. Help guardians feel confident that they can monitor their teens without invading their privacy.

Consideration 4: Enhancing communication between teens and guardians

Guardians and teens strive for a relationship based on trust

Teens, guardians and experts agree that open communication is the goal. Especially as teens get older, both guardians and teens rely on conversation as other forms of support relatively decrease. The ability to communicate around topics like social media use, what the teens see and do online, and issues that may arise is critical to building a trusting relationship. Communication-based approaches to supervision are often considered more effective than rule-setting or monitoring strategies in that they empower teens to feel more confident and in control of their decisions. For guardians, it helps them maintain a boundary for their teens knowing that teens will come to them when issues arise, helping to build trust (Modecki et al. 2022: 3). This demonstrates a "digital mentoring" approach to guardian supervision, instead of simply limiting and permitting tech access (Weinstein & James 2022: 166).

Social media services are currently set up to support guardians in rule-setting and monitoring, but there is also an opportunity to help establish patterns of communication over the long term. Guardians and teens both value possible features that provide in-app education moments, insights to inform conversation topics, or resources to facilitate difficult talks.

Concept feedback

Usage charts can help guardians know when they should have a talk to their teen and what about.

Usage charts
You and your parents can view detailed charts on how you spend your time in the app. You have the ability to see:

- Time spent on different activities (messaging, scrolling, and watching reels)
- Time spent of different content types (ie. celebrities, gaming, math)
- Duration of sessions and when you are most active
- Accounts you interacted with most

9:41
Screen time usage
Time spent each day
41 min
Daily Average
60
40
20
0
M T W T F S S
• Looking at posts • Chat
See content topic breakdown
Duration of sessions
6 min
Average duration
23 min
Longest duration
Most activity happens between
04:00 - 04:12
Accounts interacted with most
username
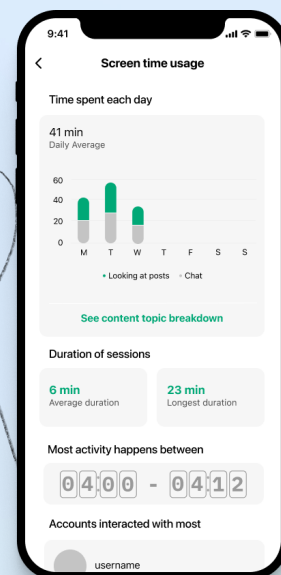
> " I'd want to see how much time they spend DMing. I could ask, 'hey who are you messaging?"
>
> – M., guardian, USA

Learning 2

Conversations around social media can sometimes be contentious

When teens sense that guardian oversight is too strict, they feel this is an indication that they aren't trusted, which can lead to arguments, withholding information, or downplaying the seriousness of potential issues from their guardians.

Many teens that we spoke to said that they would seek out guardians for support. However, teens may sometimes feel uncomfortable going to their guardians with issues relating to digital experiences because they fear their guardians might limit their device use by physically taking it away from them or creating screen time limits (Nominet 2022: 38).

In co-design sessions, some teens said that they may also fear going to guardians would get them into trouble or open up an uncomfortable discussion about topics they don't want to talk about. Sometimes guardians would avoid challenging conversations by leaning on supervision features as a way to set ground rules without disagreement or negotiation. For example, setting a screen time limit that shuts off a teen's access at a certain time was deemed easier for guardians than constantly telling them to put away their phones at night.

Guardians and teens both believe that insights can help to de-escalate conflict when they're provided with objective "third party" information. Information about how time is being spent online can be a helpful conversation starter.

See appendix for more information on our co-design activities.

" I told my family when my account was hacked and my mother told me to delete my Instagram. Now I feel scared to tell them if anything happens so if any problem comes, me and my friends sort it out together and find a solution for it."

– N., 16, India

The right insights can make conversations around social media more productive

Some guardians said they struggle to know when they need to have a conversation with their teen about social media, and exactly what they need to talk about. These guardians felt that insights pulled from their teens' social media use might help them identify topics that warrant a conversation. Guardians in co-design seemed interested both in knowing the granular details about their teens' activity, like screen time stats, as well as knowing deeper insights, like how their teens are using their time on social technology. Insights that provided deeper meaning could act as a basis for conversation, for instance encouraging their teens to spend their time more meaningfully.

Teens also saw value in having more insights at their disposal. In addition to insights highlighting interesting patterns in their behavior, they could be used as evidence to show their guardians that they are ready to handle greater responsibility.

Data points	Insights	Conversation topics
New followers/following	What is their degree of connection to my teen?	How to protect your privacy as a teen
Screen time numbers	How time is being used?	How time can be spent more meaningfully
See who teens are messaging most	Is anyone new popping up?	How to deal with strangers online
See who my teen reports	Why was this reported?	How to grapple with sensitive topics

Family Center does not provide guardians with data on who teens are messaging to protect the privacy of the teens and their connections. This framework uses hypothetical examples used in co-design to represent more extreme methods of supervision. There were intended to be provocations to understand how teens and guardians would react to more or less invasive ideas of supervision, and to prompt discussion with experts.

Not all guardians are positive actors

In some instances, guardians may not act in the best interest of their teens, or may assume they are but may not be understanding their teens' needs or growing identities. In these cases, equipping them with information about their teens' activity online may do more harm than good. Some teens may experience heightened psychological distress which could be mediated but also exacerbated by parental supervision tactics, depending on the context (El Asam et al, 2022). For example, teens may hide alternative religious or political views or their sexual orientation from guardians who may not be accepting of them. Because of this, guardian supervision tools are best thought of as being for guardians who want to provide support and for teens who are open to it.

Expert takeaway: UK and Ireland

> Social media services should provide resources for teens who can't or don't want to seek help from their guardians. Who should be responsible for supervision depends on the type of issue that a teen faces.

What Meta is doing

Leveraging technology to mediate more trusted dialogue

Option to share a report

Reporting content is one way teens can let Instagram know that they believe something they have seen violates Instagram's community guidelines. If a teen has opted into parental supervision, after submitting their report to Instagram, the teen also has the option to let their parent know. Parents can then be notified if their teen chose to share they've reported an account or post, including who was reported and the type of content, with teens allowed to add notes. Reports are optional and never automatically shared with parents. Instead, teens have an in-app opportunity to share moments with their parents in a way that may more closely mirror their expectations and norms of sharing in the non-digital world.
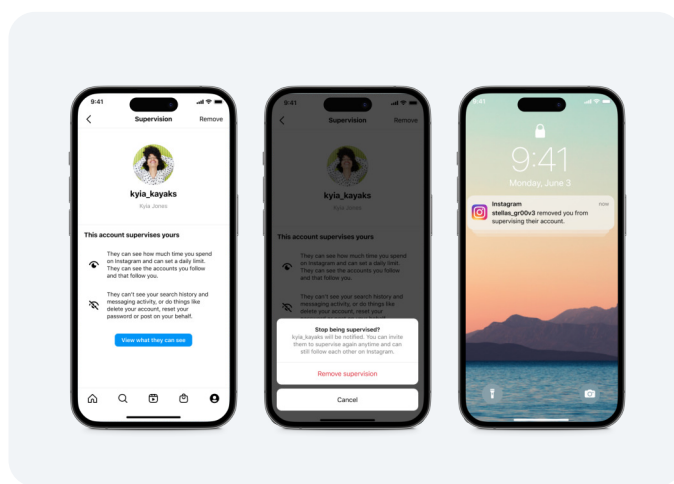
Facilitating more productive conversations

By asking guardians to collaborate on an educational experience they would all value, we learned about their motivations, frustrations and needs. This gave us important direction in creating the education hub. For example, guardians indicated that they often lack access to credible, trustworthy sources of information on social media, so we partnered with leading experts to help author the content. We also learned that guardians want tools to have more targeted conversations that can make discussions around social media less adversarial. This led us to develop discussion guides so that guardians are better equipped to handle difficult conversations around sensitive topics.

Informed by co-design insights, we supplemented the rollout of family-oriented tools and resources globally with local partnerships to build teen and guardian awareness. Conversations within families to set boundaries that both teens and parents agree upon need to happen early on, and there is a need for educational resources that are local and accessible to both parents and teens.
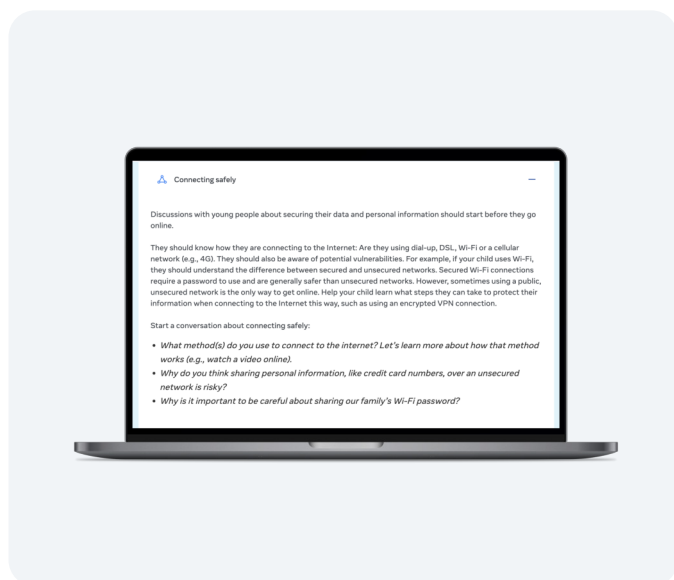
What Meta is doing, continued

Adjusting for maturity overtime

With supervision on Meta Quest, teens can submit an "Ask to Buy" request for an app that is blocked by default based on its IARC-rating, which triggers a notification to their guardian to approve or deny the request. Guardians can always go back to the list of apps available to or blocked for the teen and revisit their decision if or when they feel the teen may have reached an appropriate maturity level for the app. Meanwhile, as teens grow in age and gain more access to mature apps and content, guardians and teens get a notification to have conversations about what this new level of maturity means and how guardians can support their teens' evolving needs and best interests in this new chapter.
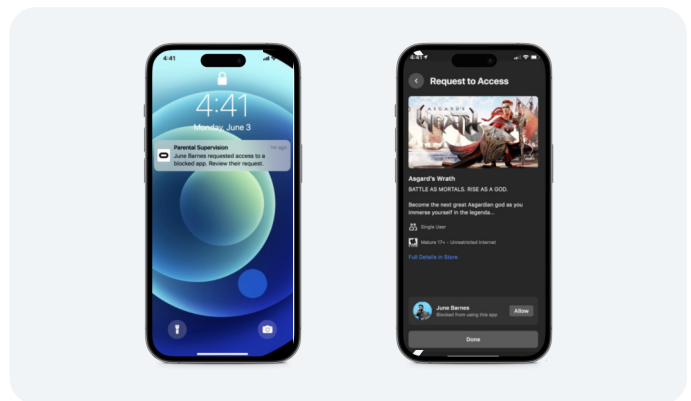
Future-facing design opportunities

To enhance communication between teens and guardians, digital designers should consider how to:

1	Help guardians learn more about the teen experience (e.g. popular topics or trends).
2	Provide comfortable and non-confrontational methods to get conversations going between guardians and teens.
3	Support guardians and teens move into a fewer-rules phase.

Consideration 5: Demystifying social technology for guardians

Lack of knowledge is one of the biggest barriers to online supervision

Teens today have access to more information than guardians ever had, and they interact with each other online in ways that many guardians don't understand. Guardians often struggle to keep up with the new apps, games and workarounds their teens are using. This might discourage some guardians from continuing to monitor their teens' experiences online, especially in certain populations and countries with lower digital literacy among older demographics.

Expert takeaway

> Experts around the world emphasized the digital literacy gap between guardians and teens, with the former experiencing a continued difficulty keeping up with understanding social media and technology.

The guardians we met who had a more limited understanding of the constant development of social technologies wanted easy-to-understand information about:

- Existing safety features and newly released updates

- Why safety features are important

- Important safety issues that aren't on their radar

Guardians reported that they would prefer to learn about these topics in formats that are short and engaging, referencing serialized explainer videos that they could watch over time. When new safety features become available, guardians want to know right away via pop-ups in-app or email notifications. They worry about missing important information about changes or updates.

> " I don't really have any social media and I never have. I don't really know how it works. I want to know what kids can access, what they are doing, and how easy it is."
>
> – P., guardian, Ireland

Guardians feel they lack the context to understand their teens' online experiences

Even guardians who understand the technical side of social media lack insight into how their teens' experience may be different from their own. They want resources that help them understand what their teens are up to on social media and what is trending that they should be aware of. When guardians are looking for practical advice or emotional support, they tend to seek this information from people who have personal, first-hand experience such as other guardians, older teens, siblings, peers or educators (Throuvala 2021). When guardians are looking for important safety issues that aren't on their radar, they want social media companies to raise their awareness.

Teens also wish that their guardians could better understand their main concerns on social media. Sometimes teens are hesitant to talk to their guardians about social tech because they feel that they "just won't understand." It is important to provide guidance to guardians who want to have more empathetic and productive conversations with their teens about their online experiences.

Concept feedback

'What's trending' gave guardians a way to connect with their teens to open up conversations and preempt issues.

What's trending?
Learn what's trending on social media with teens. IG account is not required.

Access tools to help guide conversations with your teen on these topics and see if there are relevant settings that can be adjusted on their account.

Parents with an IG account linked to their teen's can learn what is trending on their teen's account specifically.
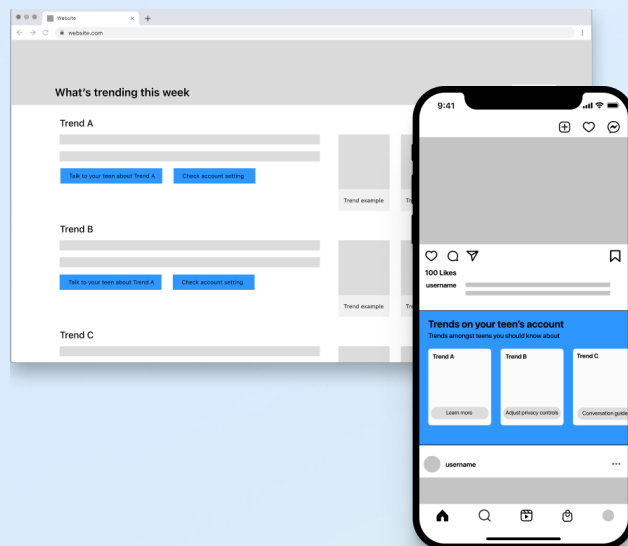
> " There is a big difference between what my kids are seeing and what I know. It's good to know what's popular and engage with my kids on it. I could drop a bit of lingo and feel cool."
>
> – L., guardian, UK

The less guardians know about social media, the more control they want

For guardians who don't know what to look out for, digital experiences can seem like an overwhelming "black box" (Modecki et al. 2022: 4). This heightened fear of what they don't understand can fuel a desire to control even more than they may need to (Nichols 2022: 8). We found this to be especially true of more nascent technologies, like virtual reality. Until they are able to preview the technology for themselves, some guardians said that they may be more likely to be cautious.

Expert takeaway: Australia

> Teens want to have conversations about online autonomy and safety, however guardians often lack the know-how to facilitate this. Many guardians focus solely on potential issues and downsides, or "zero-tolerance" approaches, despite teens' desires to broaden the conversation. How might we normalize this conversation, and encourage having it early and often?

See the Appendix to read more about how we developed these learnings with our 'Education moodboard' activity.

Cultural call-out

Device sharing is very common in India. Several guardian participants from India reported sharing devices with their teens as a means of maintaining control over their online experiences without relying on additional apps or technology. By physically sharing the device, guardians exert more control over screen time and monitor what their teens are viewing and who they are talking to.

Demystifying social technology for guardians:

What Meta is doing

Educational resources as conversation starters

A core focus of building age-appropriate experiences is giving both guardians and teens resources on these experiences. Surfaces like the Meta Teen Privacy Center, the Family Center Education Hub, VR Parent education hub, the Oculus Safety Center and more aim to ground guardians and teens in digital experiences and empower everyone to have better conversations that understand teens' rights.

Meta's education hub includes resources, tips and articles from subject-matter experts and trusted organizations to help support family experience across Meta technologies. The site lets both teens and guardians explore content on a variety of key topics, including digital wellbeing, safety, media literacy and communication.

It's common for families to feel nervous about discussing responsible technology practices, which is why a key part of any meaningful supervision experience is robust education for guardians and teens to help families start those conversations and understand each others' boundaries. The Meta education hub and VR parent education hub are two places where guardians can access resources from experts and review helpful articles, videos and tips on topics like how to talk to teens about social media or safe virtual reality (VR) usage. At the same time, the new teen-directed privacy page shares more information for teens about privacy settings, defaults and features across Meta Quest, Instagram, Facebook and Messenger.
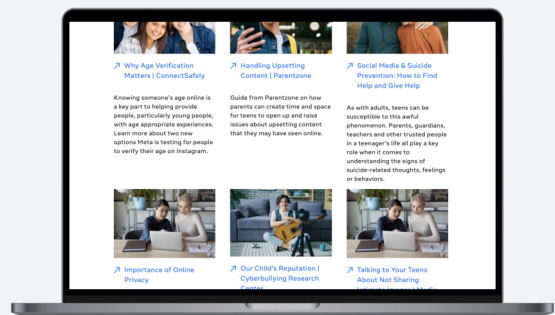
Future-facing design opportunities

To demystify social technology for guardians, digital designers should consider how to:

1	Provide guardians with the resources in the right format at the right time.
2	Enable guardians to preview their teens' experience on new apps, features and experiences.
3	Make guardians feel secure that they are not missing out on important safety updates or issues.

4
What's next

What else can we learn about this subject?

Individuals, including teens, only have so much control over their circumstances. Recognizing the implicit role of adults - from guardians and educators to digital designers and policymakers - as "proxy agents" of support for teens means acknowledging the potential for complicity in creating conditions that might unintentionally undermine teen agency (Weinstein & James 2022: 165-66). Some questions for further potential exploration include:

- How do teens and guardians best access education, both in the context of actively using the app and on demand through settings and additional resources?

- What do teens and guardians expect from tech companies compared to schools and experts? How might tech companies continue to provide pathways to expert information and support?

- How do needs change across specific communities and groups?

- Who do teens trust most to guide them in navigating digital experiences (influencers, community leaders, educators, parents, friends, etc.), and why?

Where else can participatory methods be applied?

Co-design as a consultation-based methodology has the potential to help digital designers understand and take action on youth-related topics that have technology and policy implications.

We've outlined three broad areas for continued exploration by industry and the broader ecosystem.

Contextual education for teens and guardians

As technology continues to evolve, there is an opportunity to explore best practices for age-appropriate notifications and disclosure on digital services, including pathways for transparency, choice, control and education.

Teen privacy, safety and wellbeing in the metaverse

Questions for potential further exploration through co-design include:

- How might digital designers understand the "Best Interests of the Child" standard in the various contexts of the metaverse?
- Do teens feel equipped to take learnings from 2D social media experiences into 3D virtual experiences?
- How might we create a broader community of expertise for this work to drive responsible innovation in virtual reality and the metaverse?

Heightened privacy considerations

Co-design as a methodology has the potential to help digital designers understand and take meaningful action on issues faced by various demographics who, depending on the context, may have heightened privacy considerations, including but not limited to young people. Questions for potential further exploration through co-design include:

- How might digital designers balance the privacy and agency of specific groups on social technology?
- How might digital designers consider intersectional identities, communities and equities through accessible, inclusive practices with a focus on privacy, safety and wellbeing outcomes?
- How might digital designers evolve multi-stakeholder approaches, benchmarks, metrics and decision-making practices to be reflective of intersectional experiences and marginalized groups, including those with capacity and capability variation?

What's next for Meta?

> " This co-design initiative helped our team empathize with teens and guardians globally so as to better understand their needs as we developed Family Center for Instagram in 2022. This research enabled a mindset shift towards facilitating teen and parent communication. Insights from this research will continue to be valuable for future-facing work on the design of family-oriented surfaces at Meta"
>
> **– Ryan Kwok, Meta**

This is the first step in a longer term journey to develop intuitive supervision tools, informed by teens, guardians, youth experts, civil society organizations, and regulatory bodies. These groups have played a crucial role in our work to build age-appropriate experiences that are grounded in the "Best Interests of the Child" standard. While this initiative has primarily focused on traditional social media, we are committed to further collaborating on additional ways to support the unique needs that the metaverse raises for young people and families as well.

As always, there is a lot more work to do and we're eager to hear feedback from groups who work with guardians, teens and families on this issue to continue refining our approach, and ultimately working to raise industry standards. We look forward to additional consultation on the learnings and insights highlighted in this report as well as through our ongoing technology and policy development.

5
Appendix & references

Approach to recruiting and cohorts for co-design

Below is an overview of the teens and guardians we recruited for each phase of co-design, including the total numbers, the cohorts, and our recruiting approach, as well as the local design partner who conducted the activities.

Note that our cohorts typically included 3-4 participants and our approach to cohorts evolved as we learned and developed hypotheses about particular groups of teens and guardians.

US 🇺🇸

- Teens (30): No cohorts due to recruiting limitations through nominees from civil society organizations
- Guardians (28): No cohorts due to recruiting limitations through nominees from civil society organizations
- Recruiting approach: Recruited exclusively through nominees from civil society organizations
- Design partner: Smart Design

UK and Ireland 🇬🇧 🇮🇪

- Teens (22): 2x cohorts of young teens (13-14), 3x cohorts of older teens (15-17), 1x cohort of teens with single or divorced guardians, 1x cohort of nominees from civil society organizations
- Guardians (20): 1x cohort of guardians of younger teens (13-14), 1x cohort of guardians of older teens (15-17), 1x cohort of guardians skeptical of social media, 1x cohort of permissive guardians, 1x cohort of single or divorced guardian
- Recruiting approach: Market research recruiter and nominees from civil society organizations
- Design partner: Smart Design

Brazil 🇧🇷

- Teens (16): 2x cohort of young teens (13-14), 3x cohorts of older teens (15-17), 1x cohort of teens of mixed ages
- Guardians (16): 2x cohorts of guardians of younger teens (13-14), 1x cohort of guardians of older teens (15-17), 1x cohort of guardians of teens of any age
- Recruiting approach: Market research recruiter and nominees from civil society organizations
- Design partner: Smart Design

Japan 🇯🇵

- Teens (24): 1x cohort of teens of mixed ages, 1x cohort of teens who have had negative experiences, 1x cohort of teens with strict parents, 1x cohort of teens with permissive guardians, 2x cohort of teens who use VR headsets
- Guardians (16): 1x cohort of guardians less familiar with technology, 1x cohort of guardians more familiar with technology, 1x cohort of permissive guardians, 1x cohort of strict guardians
- Recruiting approach: Market research recruiter and nominees from a high school (for teens / guardians in households who use VR)
- Design partner: Smart Design

India 🇮🇳

- Teens (15): 2x cohorts of young teens (13-14), 2x cohorts of older teens (15-17) – one cohort in each age group with teens that have their own device and have guardians with high digital literacy, another cohort in each age group with teens that share their device with guardians and have guardians with low digital literacy
- Guardians (16): 2x cohorts of guardians of young teens, 2x cohorts of guardians of older teens - one cohort for each age group with teens that have their own device and guardians with high digital literacy, another cohort for each age group with teens that share their device with guardians and guardians with low digital literacy
- Recruiting approach: Market research recruiter
- Design partner: Parallel Labs

Australia 🇦🇺

- Teens (11): 1x cohort of young teens (14-15), 1 x cohort of older male teens (15-17), 1x cohort of older female teens (15-17)
- Guardians (12): 3x general cohorts of guardians with teens of varying ages
- Recruiting approach: Market research recruiter
- Design partner: Craig Walker

Mexico 🇲🇽

- Teens (16): 1x cohort of young teens (13-14), 1x cohort of older teens (16-17), 2x cohorts of teens of mixed ages
- Guardians (15): 1x cohort of guardians of younger teens, 1x cohort of guardians of older teens, 2 x general cohorts of guardians with teens of varying ages
- Recruiting approach: Market research recruiter
- Design partner: Aerolab

Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire 🇸🇳 🇨🇮

- Teens (32 - 16 in each country): in each country 1x cohort of teens from vulnerable socio-economic groups with willingness to spend more time on social media, 1x cohort of teens from higher socioeconomic groups with a more reserved attitude to social media, 1x cohort of teens who are social media influencers and are active online, 1x cohort of teens with shared devices who have guardians with low digital literacy
- Guardians (32 - 16 in each country): in each country 1 x cohort of guardians from vulnerable/middle socio-economic status who have teens that are active on social media, 1x cohort of guardians with high digital literacy who have more open discussions with their teens about social media, 1x cohort of guardians with low digital literacy who are not aware of the potential downsides of social media, 1x cohort of guardians (older siblings or educators) who act as mediators between teens and parents
- Recruiting approach: Market research recruiter and nominees from civil society organizations. Activities adapted to be conducted in-person.
- Design partner: YUX

About guardian and teen attitudes

We initially developed our framework around guardian and teen attitudes after our first round of co-design in the United States. We found it useful to classify types of participants by identifying a few defining attributes to help us pull together learnings from what we were hearing from families. For guardians, these attributes included their predominant supervision tactic (whether it was more based on communication or control) and how much effort they were willing to spend on rule-setting and monitoring. For teens, these attributes included how aware they were of the potential downsides of social technology and how empowered they felt in dealing with them.

These attitudes, though not entirely representative of all teen or guardian experiences, were ultimately used to help define higher order needs. This is similar to how personas and archetypes are used by digital designers as tools to empathize with people using online services.

As we scaled our co-design to different countries, we continued to refine and add more nuance to these attitudes. While we found examples of each attitude wherever we went, certain attitudes were more apparent in certain countries or among certain socio-cultural groups. For example:

Guardians:

- **Give them space** was highly prominent in Japan where guardians had a high degree of respect for the privacy of their teens.
- **Trusting the tech** was common among single guardians who expressed concern about their teens' experience on social media but didn't always have the time to monitor as closely as they wanted to or a partner to split up the responsibility of supervision.

Teens:

- In India, many teens were **bold and Intrepid**, tending to deal with the downsides of social technology themselves out of fear of confrontation or getting in trouble.
- Teenage girls often exhibited an attitude of **treading carefully** in response to experiences they or their friends may have had with bullying.

Tools for running co-design

As an approach to designing digital experiences, co-design offers a creative and inclusive way to listen to and elevate diverse perspectives as part of the product design process. Explore the range of co-design activities to clarify which method best suits your needs.

Would you rather?

Description

In this game used as an ice breaker activity, teen participants were presented with two unappealing options and asked to pick among them to uncover information about their needs, mental models and values. Teens used gestures, like putting their hand on their noses or heads, to indicate their preference.

Research questions for which we sought responses:

- When weighing two values (like privacy or safety), what do teens find more important?
- What moderate solutions might be satisfying for teens when it comes to parental supervision?
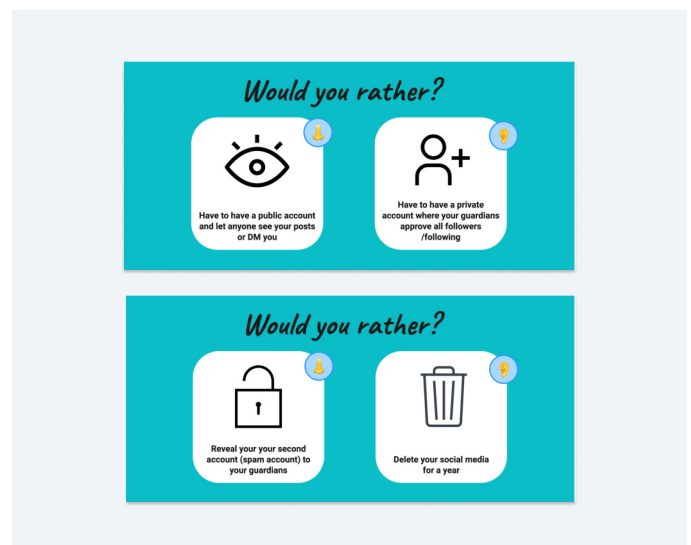
Education moodboard

Description

Guardians of teens identified their most important social media topics and collaboratively designed their own educational experience to learn about them. Using a set of prompts, cards and inspiration, guardians created a mood board to illustrate their ideal experience, highlighting important elements like format, tone of voice, and key differentiators.

Research questions for which we sought responses:

- What specific topics are top of mind for guardians when it comes to social media and gaming?
- How do guardians want to learn about these topics?
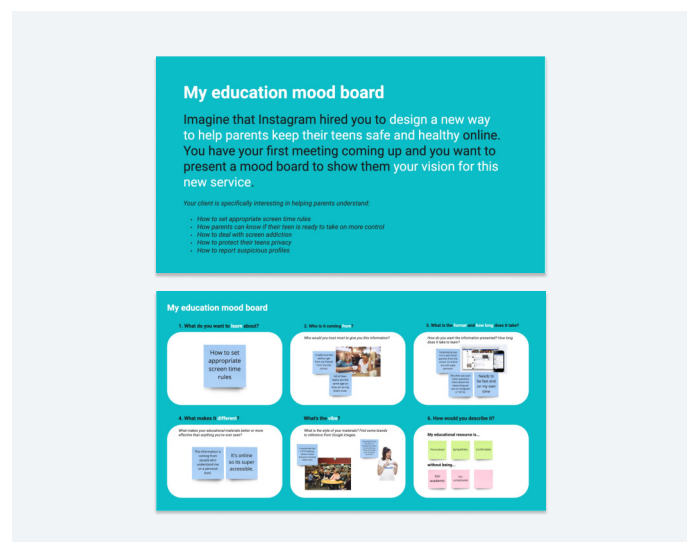
Time Machine

Description

Teen participants were prompted to travel back in time to when they first started using social media or online gaming. On a sheet of paper folded in quarters, they were asked to write down a challenge they used to have with social media or gaming, what advice they would give to their younger self, an idea of a tool that could have helped them, and how they imagine a safe and happy social media five years from now.

Research questions for which we sought responses:

- Where do teens need the most support when it comes to social media and gaming?
- What type of guidance would resonate most with teens?
- What solutions or interventions would provide real value to teens?
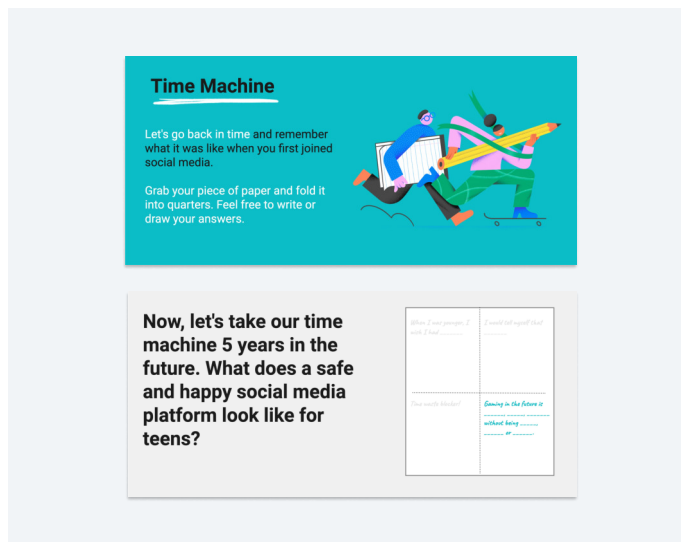
You make the rules & Build your own control center

Description

When used together, these two activities revealed discrepancies in the priorities of teens and guardians when it comes to their online safety.

Research questions for which we sought responses:

- Where do safety priorities align (or not) between guardians and teens?
- What types of solutions would meet guardians and teens in the middle? How should we help establish a healthy compromise?
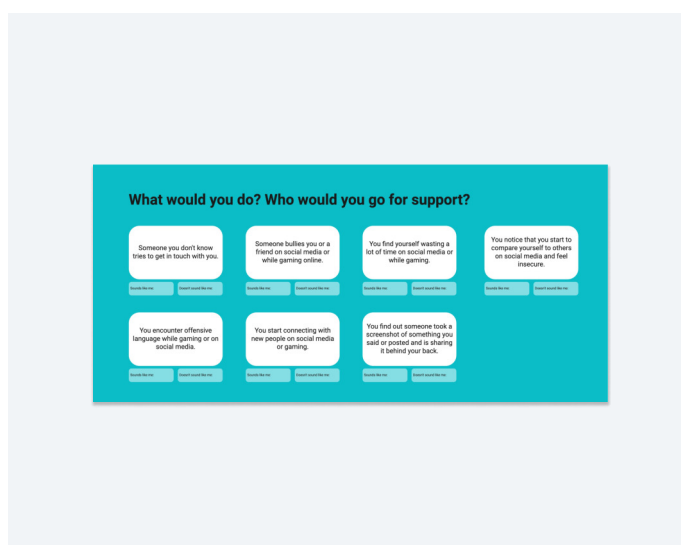
Tricky conversations guide

Description

Guardians and teens separately reflected on a conversation they had (or wanted to have) with the other to create a guide to help others navigate conversations around social media. Through a series of prompts, parents and teens expressed their expectations for a good conversation, useful tips and words of wisdom that they wish they knew when they first had these conversations.

Research questions for which we sought responses:

- How might Meta better promote conversations between guardians and teens?
- What are the biggest areas of disagreement between parents and teens?
- What are the different types of relationships between parents and their teens?
- What insights or information would help guardians and teens have better conversations?

What would you do?

Description

Teens were presented with a set of different scenarios that might prompt a safety action or self-monitoring. Through a series of simple polls, we identified how relevant those scenarios were to them, what they are currently doing when they occur, and where they might want/need additional support.

Research questions for which we sought responses:

- How and why do teens self-supervise?
- What are teens top concerns when it comes to online activity?
- What should we be building that teens would find valuable?
- How do we provide a baseline level of support in areas where teens need it most?
- Who do teens look to provide support in different scenarios?
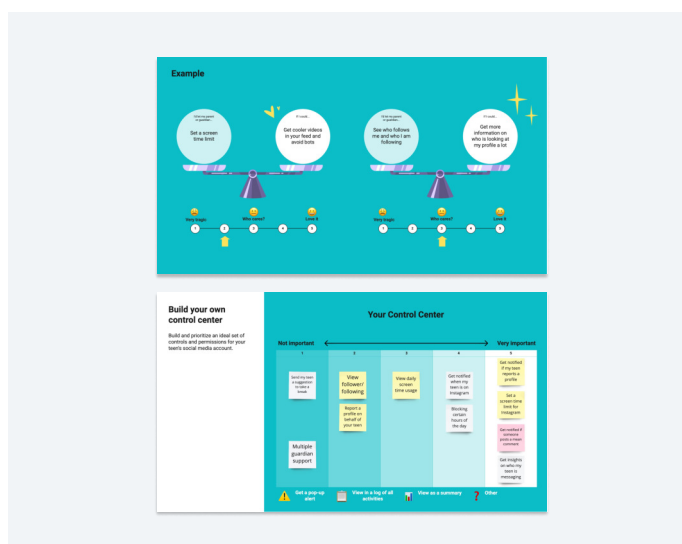
Perceptions and concerns

Description

Guardians were asked to reflect on their perceptions and top concerns regarding their teens using social media, online gaming, and VR headsets. They identified areas where they wished their teens would take more action and areas where they wished they could have more support.

Research questions for which we sought responses:
- What are guardian's top concerns when it comes to their teens' online activities?
- How are their concerns and needs different across different technology platforms?
- What are the main barriers for adoption for newer technology, like VR?
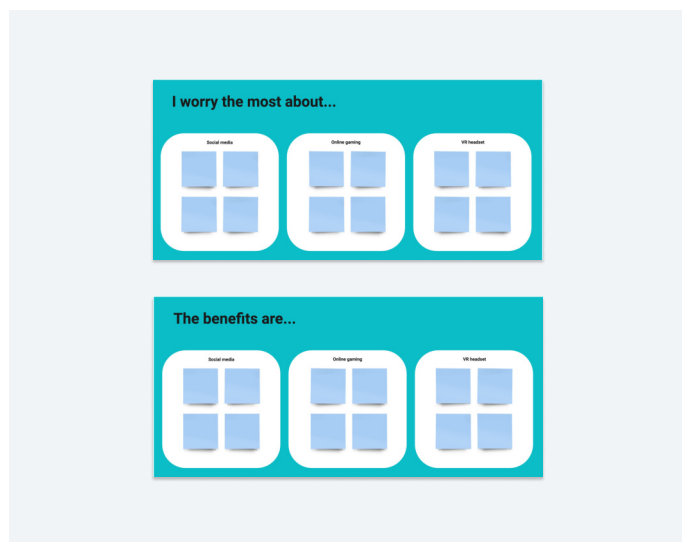
Build your own dashboard

Description

Guardians will design their own control dashboard where they can set up different tools to help them monitor their teen's experience on social media, online gaming, and using VR headsets. In a series of prompts, we uncovered what it is that they would want the control center to help them do, what apps and devices it would cover and who else would be using it in their households.

Research questions for which we sought responses:
- What needs should Family Center address for guardians and teens?
- What are the value propositions for guardians?
- What are the different supervision roles in the household?
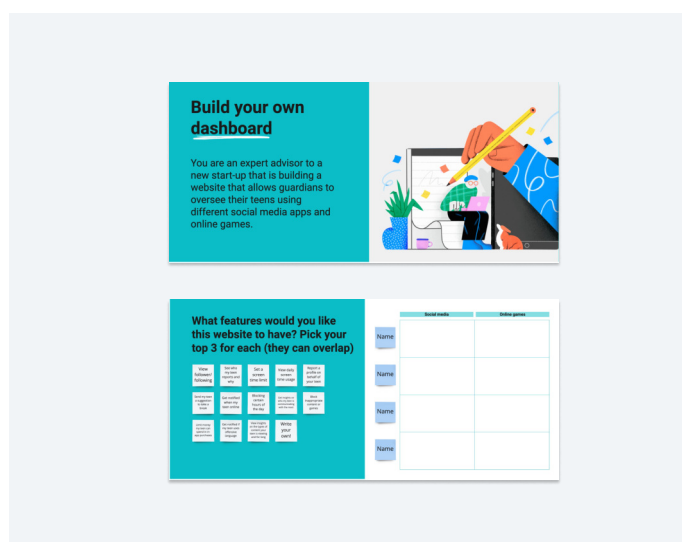
Magic robot

Description

Teens were asked to imagine that they had a Magic Robot assistant that would help them be smarter and more responsible online. The robot was intended to represent a Family Center product for teens. In a series of prompts, we uncovered what it is that they would want the robot to help them do and what apps and devices it would cover. We had teens write a one-sentence review to sell their idea to other teens.

Research questions for which we sought responses:

- What would the value proposition of Family Center be for teens?
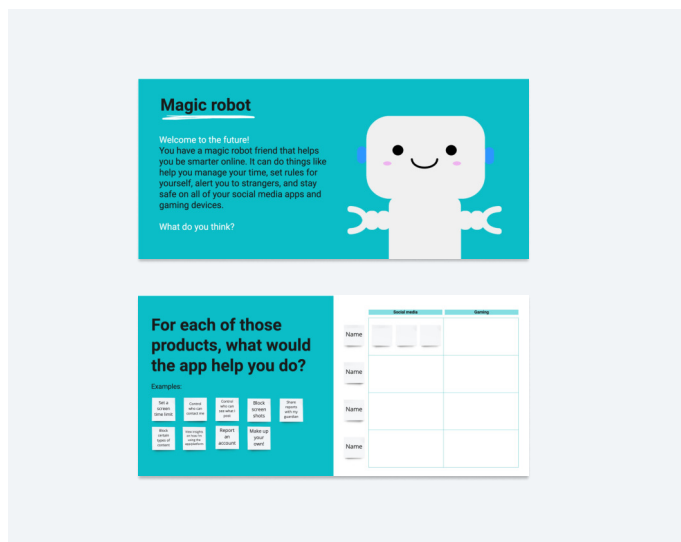

Sacrificial concepts

Description

We presented participants with early stage concepts to gather early feedback and opportunities for improvement. Participants gave a physical thumbs up or down depending on if the concepts would be useful to them. These concepts were intentionally vague and under-developed to leave space for people to suggest improvements and build upon them. We used these concepts to represent early stage concepts the product team were considering and prove or disprove hunches around what we thought people might want.

Research questions for which we sought responses:

- What features would provide the most value to guardians and teens?
- How would participants change concepts to make them work better for them?
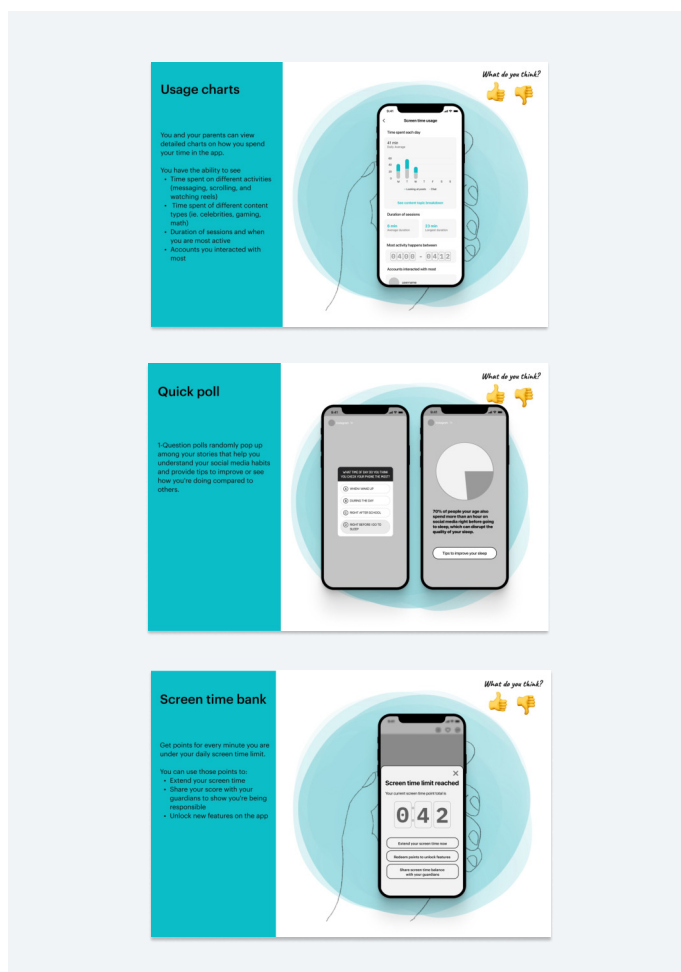
Expert consultation

Description

Following co-design sessions with teens and guardians in each country, we invited a wider group of multidisciplinary experts from government, academia and civil society to attend a 2-hour remote consultation session. We shared insights from the teen and guardian co-design sessions and facilitated a group discussions on the learnings and their implications for technology and policy developments. Sample of questions we prompted for discussion with experts included:

- How might the insights and 'best practices' we uncover change for different types of teen-guardian relationships, including guardians who are less involved or aware?

- What learnings from research might guide the approach to designing tools that teens feel motivated to take up at a younger age? How should online services measure success?

- What types of in-app features and education tools should be considered to encourage teen-guardian conversation and trust-building beyond screen time limits on social media?

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