



Did You Know?

Insights for Parents on XR Technologies and Privacy

Navigating the world of XR (Extended Reality) technologies with your children can be a bit like stepping into a sci-fi movie. These incredible tools bring digital worlds to life, but they also come with some real-world concerns, especially for our kids. Here's a parent-friendly guide to what you should know.



Sensitive Data Collection: XR devices, like VR headsets and AR glasses, can collect small but highly sensitive pieces of data. This isn't just about where your child goes online or what games they play; it extends to personal information that can identify them just by the way they move in a virtual space.



The Biometric Identifier: These technologies don't just see; they learn. Through a process called pupillometry, XR devices analyze how pupils change in response to different stimuli. This means a device can guess your child's likes or dislikes, and even infer emotions or thoughts, based on their biological reactions while using XR technologies.



Privacy Beyond the User: It's not only the person using the XR device whose privacy is at stake. The 'bystander effect' refers to how these devices can also collect data about people nearby who aren't directly interacting with the technology. For instance, certain products have been designed with indicator lights to show when recording is happening, but the sheer scale of data collection involved is something new and not fully covered by existing privacy laws.



Unprecedented Data Collection: The depth of intimate data collection offered by XR technologies is unlike anything we've seen before. This is especially concerning in contexts where children are involved, such as healthcare, education, and child development, where the implications of such data harvesting are not fully understood or regulated.



Children's Unique Vulnerability: Given their developmental phase, children may not fully comprehend the privacy risks posed by XR technologies. The exposure of their personal data could lead to potential discrimination or threaten their independence, presenting unique risks compared to adults.



Potential Developmental Effects: There are growing concerns about how XR technologies might impact children's development, including their perception, thinking, and social skills, potentially disrupting natural developmental progressions.



Biometric Data Risks: XR technologies can gather biometric information like eye movement and facial expressions, revealing personal preferences. This information could be used for targeted advertising, posing privacy and ethical issues, particularly in digital environments like Meta's metaverse.



Lasting Consequences: The data collected on children can create enduring digital profiles that follow them into adulthood, influencing future opportunities and perceptions based on their childhood interests or behaviors.

Recommendations for Parents

Educate and Monitor: Familiarize yourself with the privacy settings of XR devices and actively monitor your child's use. Educate your child about the importance of privacy and the potential risks associated with sharing personal information online.

Set Boundaries: Establish clear guidelines for when and how XR technologies can be used at home. Encourage offline activities and set limits on XR usage to ensure a healthy balance between virtual and real-world experiences.

Advocate for Privacy: Stay informed about the latest developments in digital privacy and advocate for stronger protections for children. Support initiatives and legislation that aim to safeguard children's privacy and promote transparency and consent in data collection practices.