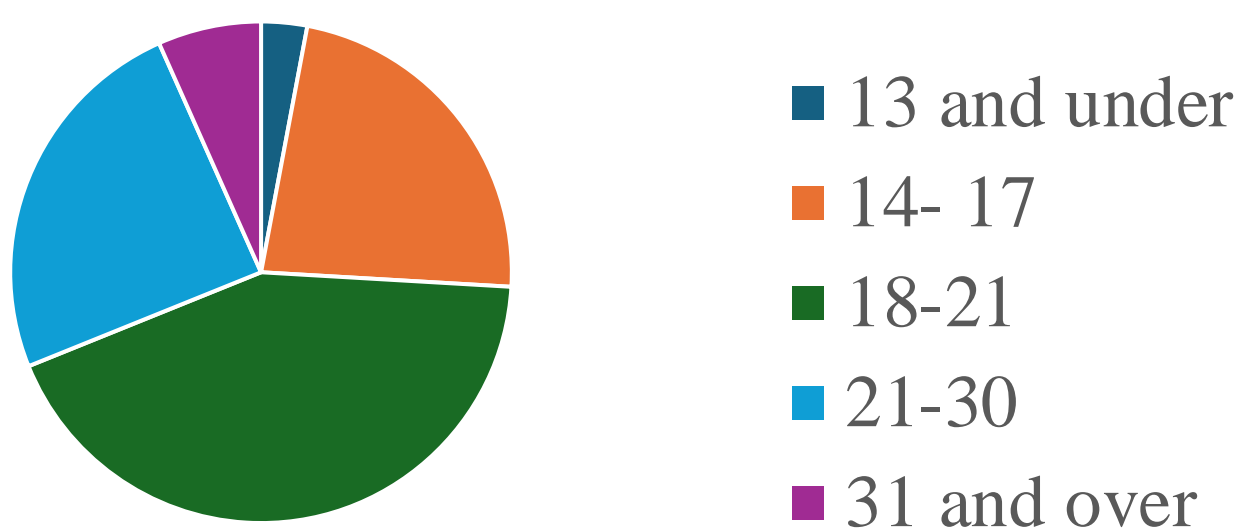# Understanding and Countering Youth Radicalization and Engagement with Online Extremism

A Policy Evaluation of the Proposed United States Kids Online Safety Act

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Motivation

- As youth gain access to technology, the risk of radicalization and engagement with extremism increases, raising the risk of violent extremist behavior.
- One-fourth of users on Iron March, a neo-fascist online platform, are radicalized youth.

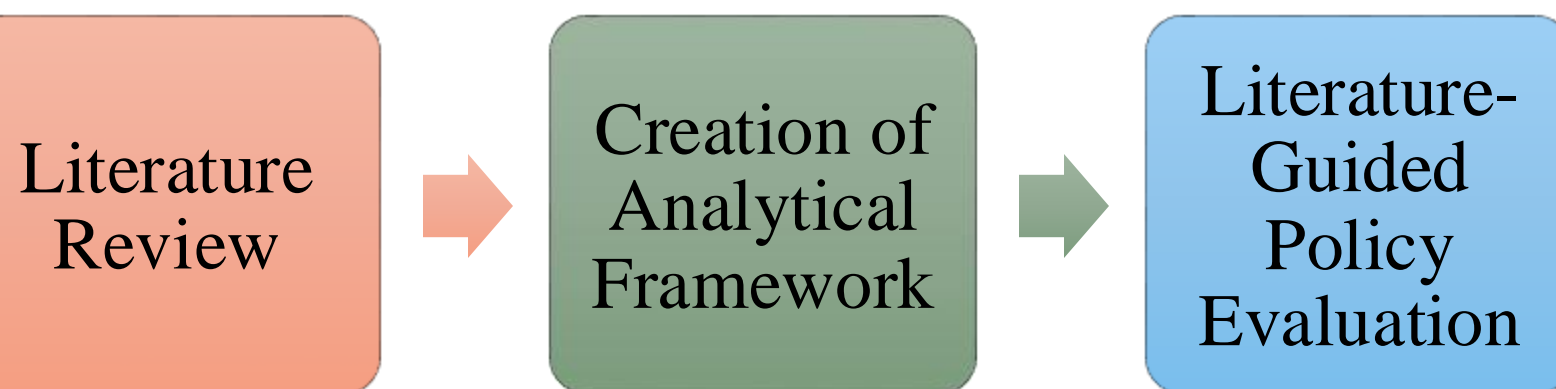**Age Profile of Sampled Iron March Users**

- ■ 13 and under
- ■ 14- 17
- ■ 18-21
- ■ 21-30
- ■ 31 and over

Definition

Radicalization: "Involves adopting an extremist worldview, one that is rejected by main-stream society and one that deems legitimate the use of violence as a method to effect societal or political change." - Victoroff
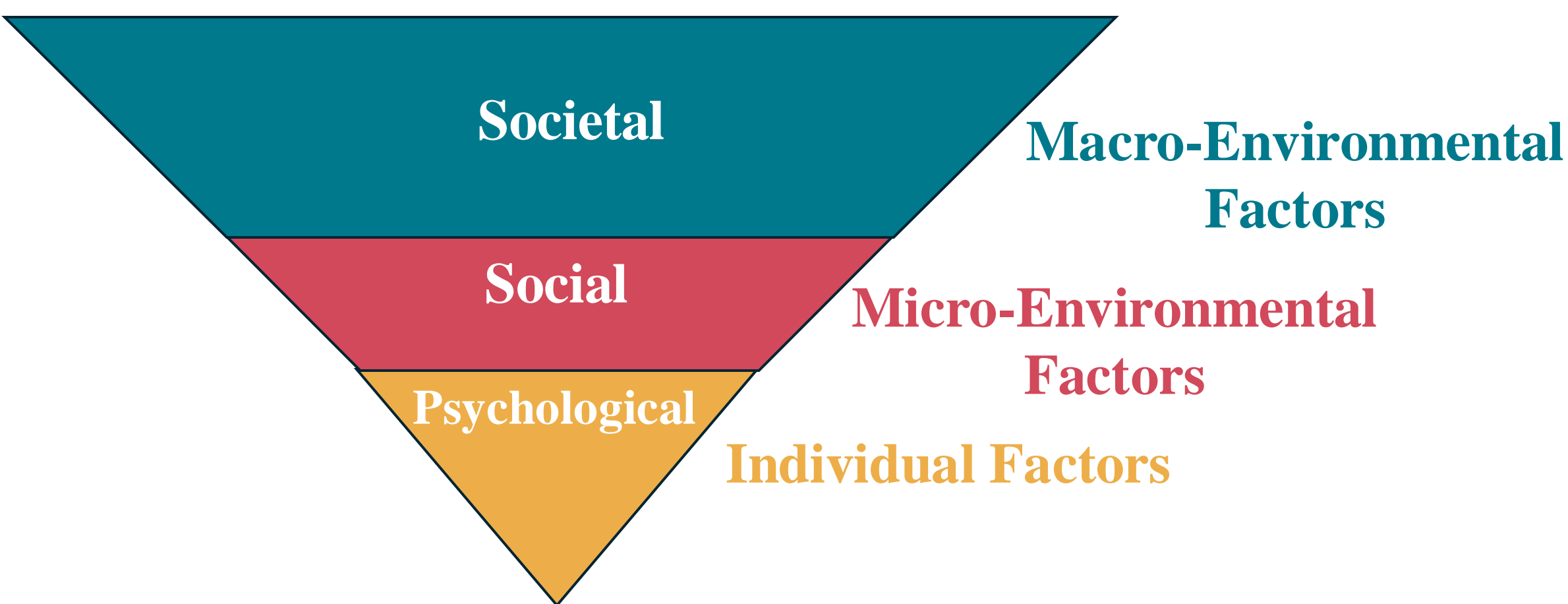
Research Flow

Policy Issue: What are the strengths and weaknesses of the proposed Kids Online Safety Act in preventing youth radicalization and engagement with extremism?

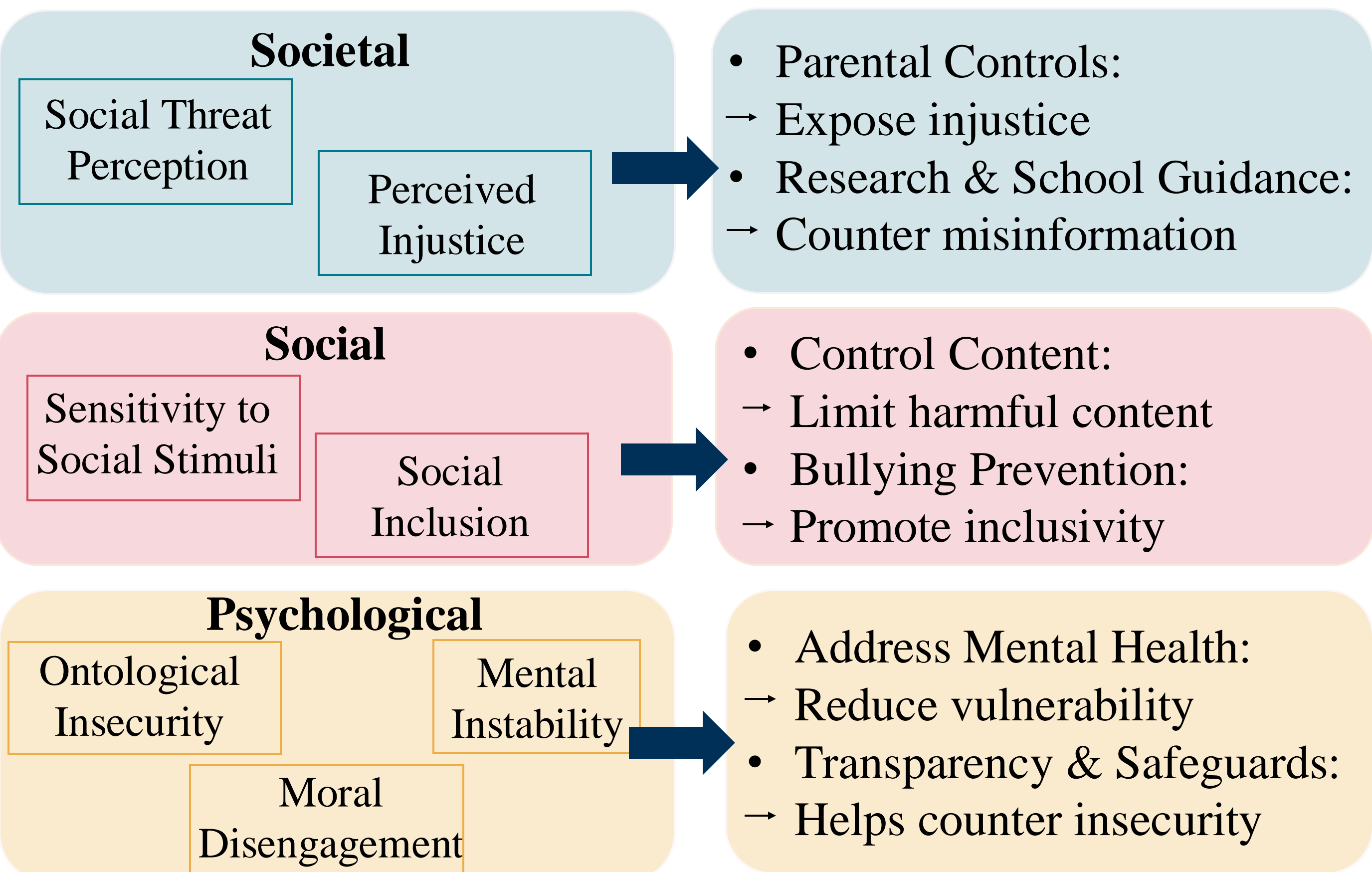Literature Review → Creation of Analytical Framework → Literature-Guided Policy Evaluation

Analytical Framework

Factors Contributing to Youth Radicalization and Engagement with Extremism

- Societal — Macro-Environmental Factors
- Social — Micro-Environmental Factors
- Psychological — Individual Factors

Literature-Guided Policy Evaluation

Factors in Youth Radicalization and Extremism | **Evaluation of the Kids Online Safety Act**

Societal
- Social Threat Perception
- Perceived Injustice

- Parental Controls:
→ Expose injustice
- Research & School Guidance:
→ Counter misinformation

Social
- Sensitivity to Social Stimuli
- Social Inclusion

- Control Content:
→ Limit harmful content
- Bullying Prevention:
→ Promote inclusivity

Psychological
- Ontological Insecurity
- Mental Instability
- Moral Disengagement

- Address Mental Health:
→ Reduce vulnerability
- Transparency & Safeguards:
→ Helps counter insecurity
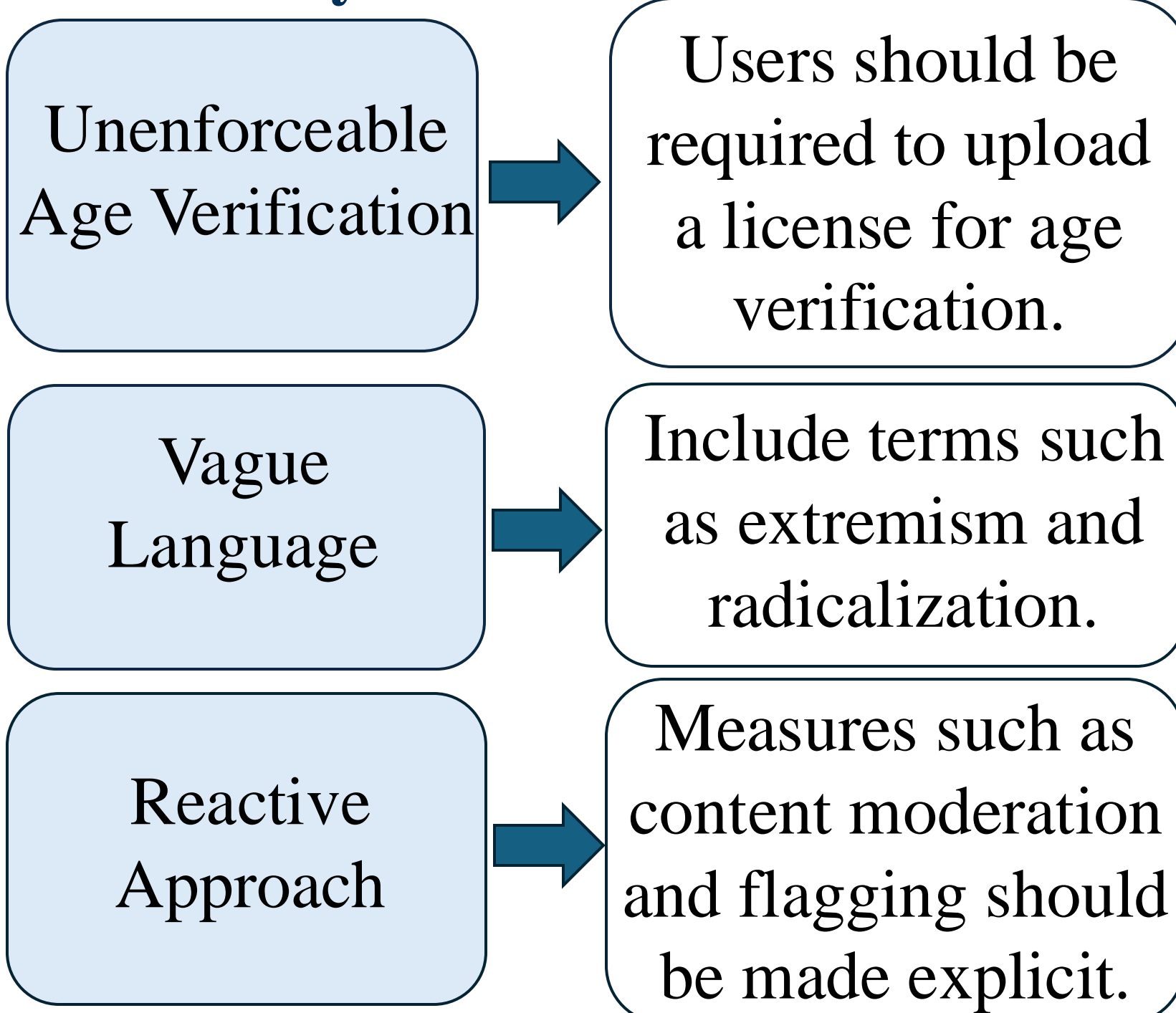
Summary of Strengths

Strengths of the Kids Online Safety Act:
- Guidance for schools
- Disabling addictive feature and opting out of algorithmic recommendations
- Parental Controls and Reporting
- Research: Kids Online Safety Council

Recommendations

Weaknesses of the Policy | **Recommendations for Improvement**

Unenforceable Age Verification	→	Users should be required to upload a license for age verification.
Vague Language	→	Include terms such as extremism and radicalization.
Reactive Approach	→	Measures such as content moderation and flagging should be made explicit.

Conclusions

The Kids Online Safety Act shows strengths in reducing youth radicalization by limiting harmful content and addressing vulnerabilities. However, it relies on a reactive approach and lacks robust implementation.