

# Digital doorkeepers and boundaries

## Perspectives on Australia's proposed social media age restrictions prior to becoming law

In December last year, Federal Parliament passed a law which introduced an obligation on age-restricted social media platforms to take 'reasonable steps' to prevent under-16s from having an account on their platform. In late June, the Australian Government released the *Age Assurance Consumer Research* alongside the *Key Findings from the Age Assurance Technology Trial*, providing a national snapshot of attitudes toward age assurance technologies.

The Social Research Centre conducted a separate study in October last year exploring the views of adults and parents on the, at the time proposed, social media age restrictions. This research, conducted immediately before the social media minimum age Bill was introduced to Parliament, offers additional insights into attitudes, expectations, and experiences relating to children's use of social media – including levels of awareness and support for the minimum age requirement to create a social media account.

The findings add perspective to Australia's evolving approach to online safety and age assurance, and context in which the Age Assurance Consumer Research was undertaken and environment where the Bill received Royal Assent to become an Act.

More than 2,000 Australians, including almost 500 parents were surveyed via the Social Research Centre's probability-based Life in Australia™ online panel – the most methodologically and statistically rigorous online panel in Australia. Data were weighted to reflect the demographic profile of the general Australian population (2021 ABS Census data).

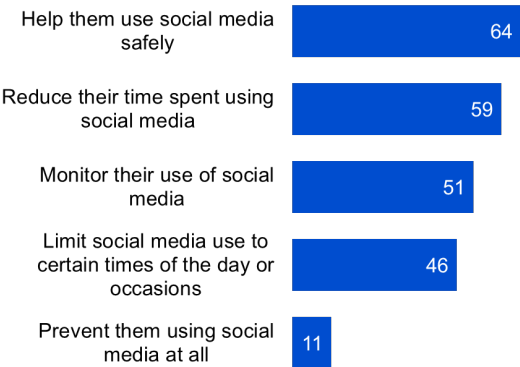
### Majority say 'yes' to minimum age

In October last year, nearly 9 in 10 adult Australians said there should be a minimum age for registering for a social media account. Parents were only slightly more likely than non-parents to report this – a striking consensus that highlights how this issue resonated across people in the community.



### Age restrictions may help address reasons parents use device and platform controls

'Helping children navigate social media safely' and 'managing their exposure time' were cited as typical outcomes parents were seeking from their use of parental controls and other measures.



The eSafety Commissioner says, "The [age restrictions] change aims to strengthen existing measures for protecting young users, especially where there are particular risks associated with accessing potentially harmful social media

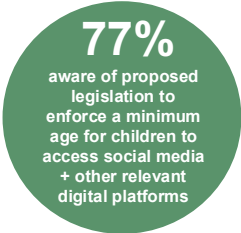
content and features such as persistent notifications and alerts that have been found to have a negative impact on sleep, stress levels and attention."

<https://www.esafety.gov.au/about-us/industry-regulation/social-media-age-restrictions>

### High awareness and endorsement of legislation

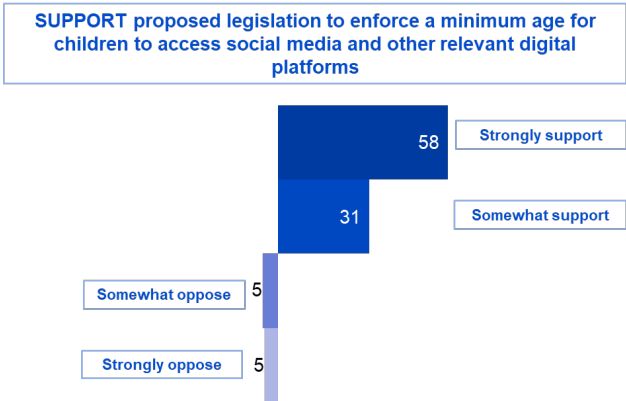
Even before the legislation was formally introduced, there was already high public awareness of the proposal and strong support for its aims.

This finding shows a well-informed population that was aware of government action in this space and actively in favour of firmer digital safeguards for young people.



Support for legislation enforcing a minimum age to access social media was near-universal, with 89% of Australians in favour – including 58% who strongly supported it. Opposition was minimal, highlighting rare national consensus on a digital safety issue.

This strong public backing created a clear opportunity for policymakers to act. As highlighted in the recent Age Assurance Consumer Research, however, the public expects credible, enforceable protections for children online.

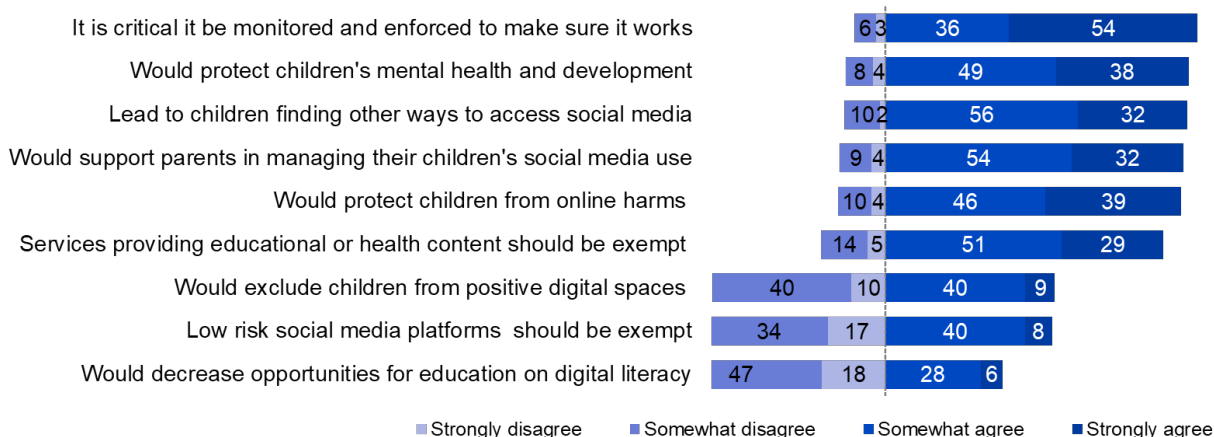


## A public call for protective boundaries

Findings provide a clear message to policymakers and platform providers: Australians want greater guardrails for young people online. The near-universal support for a minimum age threshold suggests the public is ready for robust, enforceable standards – and willing to back legislative efforts that protect children from digital harms.

Importantly, some concerns were raised about potential unintended consequences (such as limiting access to positive online experiences and opportunities to build digital literacy). While many respondents expressed a strong desire for a safer, more structured social media environment, it is critical to recognise that support for age restrictions was not without nuance. Ongoing conversations will need to carefully consider how to balance protection with access to beneficial digital opportunities. This was highlighted recently with our research to understand the community's level of support for YouTube's exemption and need for rules that reflect the diversity of content and grey areas that can exist when trying to enforce blanket platform restrictions.

**If legislation to enforce a minimum age for children to access social media and other relevant digital platforms was put in place, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following...**



## About Life in Australia™

Established in 2016, *Life in Australia*™ is the highest-quality online panel in the country, and one of the few probability-based online panels globally. This means every Australian has a chance of being invited to the panel. Unlike traditional online opt-in panels, *Life in Australia*™ uses rigorous recruitment and maintenance procedures to ensure that results are truly representative and generalisable to the Australian population.

As response rates to traditional telephone surveys decline, probability-based online panels like *Life in Australia*™ strike the perfect balance between cost-effectiveness, speed, and data reliability. This makes the panel a trusted source of high-quality, methodologically rigorous survey data for academia, government, not-for-profits, and business.

## About the Social Research Centre

The Social Research Centre, owned by the Australian National University (ANU), delivers high-quality social research that informs policy and drives positive social impact. We partner with government, academia, not-for-profits, and mission-aligned commercial clients to provide robust, methodologically rigorous insights across key social issues, including education, health, employment, and social cohesion.

Our expertise spans survey design, data management, and advanced qualitative and quantitative methodologies, ensuring that decision-makers have access to insights they can trust.

## Media contact

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