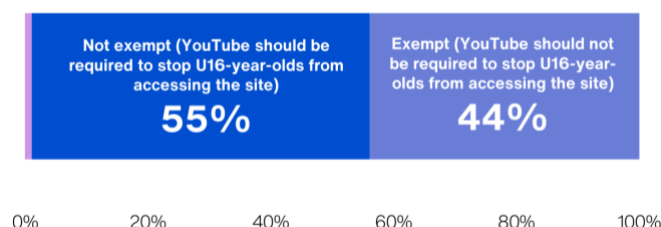


YouTube exemption divides young and old: content vs. regulation

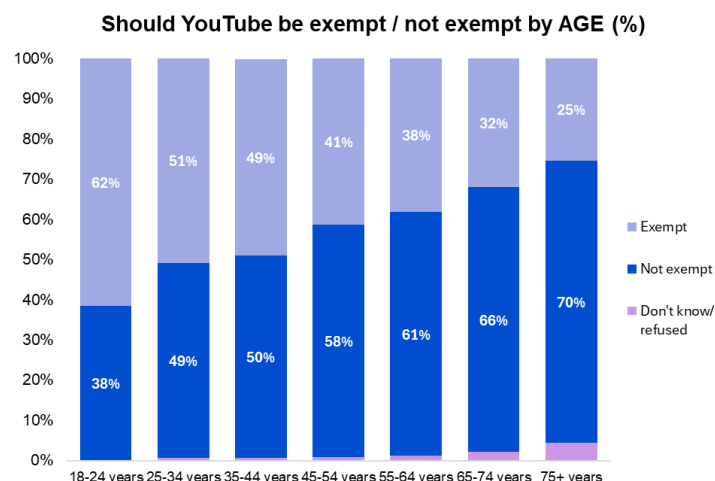
9 July 2025. New analysis reveals Australians' views on whether YouTube should follow the same age restrictions as other platforms under the *Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Act 2024* (the Act) – and shows that information seeking and age may shape support.

Last year, Federal Parliament passed a law which introduces an obligation on age-restricted social media platforms to take 'reasonable steps' to prevent under-16s from having an account on their platform. This obligation will apply to platforms such as Snapchat, TikTok, Facebook, Instagram and X (previously known as Twitter). Legislative rules to exclude certain types of platforms from this obligation will soon be finalised. An early draft of the rules excluded YouTube.

Almost 7,500 Australians were surveyed last week to understand their level of support for YouTube's exemption from this new law. Data reveals divided opinion among Australians on whether YouTube should be held to the same minimum age obligation as other social media platforms under this Act. A slight majority (55%) back tighter rules to keep under-16s out, while a sizeable minority (44%) support a YouTube exemption.



A striking relationship with age groups was found. Younger people (18–24) were more likely to support a YouTube exemption, showing consistent differences compared to all older age groups.



Younger people's support for a YouTube exemption is likely consistent with their higher usage of YouTube to watch video content compared to older age groups¹.

Exemption support was consistently higher among men (48%) than women (39%). Political polarisation was strong, with Greens voters (51%) showing greater support for a YouTube exemption than Labor (41%) and Liberal (38%) supporters. This is, however, likely due to the higher

proportion of younger people who generally think of themselves as Greens voters. Parents showed no differences in responses compared to non-parents, regardless of the age of their children.

We found a range of online behaviours impact people's view on whether YouTube should be exempt or not. For example, those 'viewing posts, images and videos on social media' (49%) or 'looking for information online' (47%) more than once a day, were more likely, than less frequent users (regardless of age), to support a YouTube exemption. In contrast, no differences were found by how often people 'comment or post online.'

The Age Assurance Consumer research released in June found that 69% of parents thought YouTube was appropriate for those aged 15 years and under². However, eSafety Commissioner Julie Inman Grant points out that a YouTube exemption is "not consistent with the purpose of the [social media minimum age] obligation to reduce the risk of harm."³

"While children of all ages can access positive content on YouTube, without thorough screening and moderation they also have access to content that can be extremely harmful," says Dr Kylie Brosnan, Executive Director at the Social Research Centre.

"Moderated platforms like YouTube Kids were created with these considerations in mind and represent a potential solution – provided adequate controls remain in place."

These insights highlight the need for rules that reflect the diversity of content and grey areas that can exist.

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Note on the question asked: "Under this law, social media platforms must take 'reasonable steps' to stop users under 16 from accessing their site. YouTube is currently exempt from this requirement. Based on what you know, do you think YouTube should be exempt or not exempt?"

While the Act is worded as "preventing under-16s from having an account on their platform", 'accessing' was used to be more consistent with the diversity of mainstream media discussions and language used in the lead up to this question.

¹ <https://www.acma.gov.au/communications-and-media-australia>

² <https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/departments/media/publications/age-assurance-consumer-research-findings>

³ <https://www.esafety.gov.au/newsroom/blogs/swimming-between-the-digital-flags-helping-young-australians-navigate-social-medias-dangerous-currents>