

Australian Government
Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional
Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts

A summary report on developmental research
to inform a Social Media Minimum Age
campaign

15 September 2025

Research background and methodology

This summary report outlines key findings from research conducted for the Australian Government Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts (the Department) to inform the development of a communications strategy to raise awareness and readiness for Social Media Minimum Age (SMMA).



The developmental research was conducted in **February and March, 2025**. The research was conducted with the target audiences of young people aged 8-15 years, parents/ carers and influencers of young people aged 8-15 years, as well as with the general public (those without an 8-15 year old) via:

- **Qualitative research** – with n=218 participants across 23 focus groups and 17 in-depth interviews; and
- **Quantitative research** – via an online survey with n=2,457 respondents.

References to “participants” relate to findings from the qualitative research, whereas references to “respondents” relate to findings from the quantitative research.

The project was conducted in accordance with the international quality standard ISO 20252, the international information security standard ISO 27001, as well as the Australian Privacy Principles contained in the Privacy Act 1988 (Cth). ORIMA Research also adheres to the Privacy (Market and Social Research) Code 2021 administered by the Australian Data and Insights Association (ADIA).

Key research findings

1. Smooth implementation of SMMA requires support from parents/carers.

The research found that support for the changes among parents/ carers was strongly influenced by the *perceived positive impact of SMMA* and how **prepared** they felt (e.g. how confident they felt in supporting children through the change).

2. Among 8-15 year old respondents there were three distinct cohorts identified, each likely to experience a different impact from SMMA.

These included: non-users (45%), light users (19%) and entrenched users (36%). Within these three cohorts, there were also respondents under 16 years old who viewed social media usage as a ‘rite of passage’, as well as ‘undisclosed users’ whose parents/ carers were unaware of their social media activity. The research findings suggest that SMMA is likely to be most challenging for ‘entrenched’ users, ‘light’ users, ‘rite of passage’ users and ‘undisclosed users’, as well as their parents/ carers.

3. While there was basic awareness of SMMA, knowledge of the details of SMMA was limited.

While a majority of parent/ carer respondents (81%) had heard of changes to who can have a social media account, knowledge was superficial, with around half (52%) indicating that they were not fully aware of any of the more detailed information about the changes shown in the survey. Furthermore, a range of misconceptions were held by participants. These knowledge gaps risk creating a vacuum that could be filled by misinformation and/or disinformation, potentially undermining support for SMMA and compromising its effective implementation.

“I’ve heard about the change that you have to be over 16 to be on social media, but I don’t know about the dates or any other details” — Child aged 13-15 years

4. Support for SMMA was moderate – however, support did not always translate to compliance. A significant minority indicated they might circumvent the restrictions.

41% of parent/ carer respondents and 37% of the general public were highly supportive of SMMA, rating their support as nine or ten out of ten. However, a substantial minority of parents/ carers and 8-15 year old respondents themselves indicated that they were likely to attempt to circumvent the law, regardless of their level of support for SMMA. Overall, 34% of parents/ carers and 30% of 8-15 year olds reported they were likely to find a way to/ help their child find a way to still use social media. Many parent/ carer participants in the research believed their children were already using social media safely with supervision, while others considered enforcement too difficult given children's entrenched usage patterns and social pressures. Additionally, with under 16-year-olds likely to share workaround strategies, there was a risk identified of non-compliance snowballing and becoming normalised. This could potentially undermine SMMA’s effectiveness, as well as related communications activities.

5. Preparedness to adjust to SMMA was moderate.

Only around half of parent/ carer respondents felt that they knew how to support their child through the change (56%). Similarly, around half of 8-15 year old respondents (52%) felt they could follow the new rules either pretty well or definitely. Given preparedness/ readiness had a substantial role in driving support for SMMA, there was a clear need identified for a campaign to increase readiness and provide the target audience with the tools and information needed to adapt.

“They need to tell us what changes are coming. We need to know about this so we can prepare our kids and have a conversation with them” — Parent/ carer of a child aged 8-10 years

6. Perceived positive impact was moderate and focused on “children in general” but can be strengthened by highlighting social media harms.

Parents/ carers were more likely to see benefits for children in general (68%) than for their own child (57%). Emphasising the broader community benefit could therefore help build support for SMMA among those uncertain about its value for their own child(ren).

Parents/ carers anticipated a greater positive impact of SMMA if they were concerned about the harms from social media (66% of those highly concerned about social media anticipated a positive impact from SMMA compared with 36% of those moderately or not concerned). As such, highlighting the “why” through the campaign — explaining how the law reduces social media harms for under 16 year olds — could help to strengthen positive perceptions.

7. SMMA’s credibility hinges on effective implementation, with age assurance being the critical factor.

Current scepticism about SMMA’s effectiveness is largely driven by uncertainty around its implementation. In particular, perceptions of age assurance varied across methods, so the final chosen method(s) will significantly influence perceived effectiveness.

Communications should address this proactively, as information about age assurance methods emerged as the primary concern for parents/ carers (57% of those interested in further information) and a key concern for the general public (42% of those interested).

8. There was a clear need identified for a campaign primarily targeting parents/ carers and under 16s.

For parents/ carers, targeted communications can address superficial knowledge, moderate readiness levels and specific information gaps. This will help build positive perceptions and strengthen support for SMMA.

For under 16 year olds, direct communication was also found to be required. Relying solely on parents/ carers to pass on information was potentially problematic given: many were unaware their child was using the impacted platforms; some intend to be non-compliant; and young people were less likely to accept information filtered exclusively through parents/ carers.

The Australian Government, as the source of the SMMA law, was considered a credible and authoritative information source on the topic. Parents/ carers believed this authority would assist in providing reinforcement and “backing them up” when discussing SMMA with their child(ren).

“If [the government] are taking responsibility for enacting a law, it should be their responsibility to advertise it” — Member of the general public