



Attitudes of children and parents to social media age restrictions ahead of implementation

March 2026



Acknowledgement of Country

eSafety acknowledges all First Nations people for their continuing care of everything Country encompasses – land, waters and community. We pay our respects to First Nations people and to Elders past and present.



Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the participants in this research who gave their time to contribute to a greater understanding of the social media experiences of children and parents in Australia, and of their attitudes towards the Social Media Minimum Age law.

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eSafety research program

The eSafety Commissioner (eSafety) helps Australians to have safer and more positive experiences online.

The eSafety research program supports, encourages, conducts and evaluates research about online safety for Australians. We do this so that:

- our programs, policies and regulatory functions are evidence-informed
- robust, person-centred evidence on the prevalence and impact of online harms is available to stakeholders
- the evidence base on what works to prevent and remediate online harms continues to grow.

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About this report

Context

The *Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Act 2024* introduced a mandatory minimum age of 16 for accounts on many social media platforms, effective from 10 December 2025. Under this law, Facebook, Instagram, Kick, Reddit, Snapchat, Threads, TikTok, Twitch, X and YouTube are required to take reasonable steps to prevent Australians under 16 from having accounts on their platforms.¹

This change is part of ongoing efforts to create safer and more positive digital spaces for all Australians. The restrictions aim to protect young Australians from risks that users can be exposed to while logged into social media accounts. These risks include design features that encourage users to spend more time on screens, and that expose them to content that can harm their health and wellbeing.

eSafety is conducting an implementation and impact evaluation of the social media age restrictions, which commenced in November 2025 and is expected to run for at least two years. The evaluation is in collaboration with eSafety's Lead Academic Partner, the Stanford Social Media Lab, and is supported by an Academic Advisory Group comprising 11 domestic and international experts, as well as youth peer researchers from eSafety's Youth Advisory Council.

Using a combination of research methods, the evaluation is looking closely at the impacts of the age restrictions, both intended and unintended. We are committed to listening to and reflecting the lived experiences of those affected by the law throughout the evaluation, so our approach has been designed to centre the experiences of children under 16 as well as parents and carers.

This summary report highlights the key findings of the initial qualitative research that was completed in the month before the age restrictions came into effect.

Objectives

The intention of the initial research was to identify the attitudes and perceptions of children and parents and to give a voice to those affected by the new law. It was also intended to deepen our understanding of the spectrum of anticipated impacts of the law ahead of its implementation.

The findings from this research have been used to help inform our support materials for children and parents. The findings will also inform future, more in-depth research by eSafety that aims to evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of the social media age restrictions.

¹ This list reflects the platforms assessed as age-restricted at the time of the research. Since November 2025, additional services have notified eSafety of their view that they are age-restricted. For more information, visit: [Which social media platforms are age-restricted?](#)

Methodology

A total of 72 participants took part in the qualitative research, including 43 children under 16 and 29 parents and caregivers. The study involved:

- online focus groups using a text-based format to preserve anonymity and facilitate open discussion
- one-on-one interviews
- short online tasks that were completed before and after the focus groups and interviews.

Focus groups were limited to children aged 12 to 15 and parents. Children aged 10 to 11 were engaged via one-on-one interviews, which was considered more developmentally appropriate for this age group. The fieldwork took place during the period 3 to 26 November 2025.

In interpreting the findings, it should be noted that as an open-ended approach, qualitative research does not produce statistical findings; rather, it identifies key themes and patterns. Additionally, to ensure a diversity of perspectives, parents with varying attitudes towards the age restrictions (supportive, neutral and unsupportive) were intentionally included. This qualitative research therefore does not provide a measurement of the strength or prevalence of specific attitudes or perceptions. Instead, the findings are designed to deepen understanding of the range of attitudes that existed in relation to social media and to the age restrictions before they took effect.

Reading this report

eSafety acknowledges that families and carers are diverse and come in many different forms. For simplicity and consistency throughout this report, we use the term ‘parents’ to refer collectively to parents, guardians and primary carers of children aged 10 to 15.

Similarly, we use the term ‘children’ to refer collectively to Australians aged 10 to 15.

Key findings

Children have complex relationships with social media, recognising both positive and negative influences.

To understand children's relationships with social media, the researchers asked children participating in the study to imagine that social media was a person and to describe that 'person's' personality, behaviours and beliefs, as well as their own relationship with them. Some children characterised social media as a supportive, trusted friend who supports their emotional regulation by helping to boost their mood and having a calming influence. Children also acknowledged social media's demanding and controlling nature, describing it as opinionated and difficult to escape, and therefore as influencing their views and behaviours. Social comparison was a significant concern, with some children noting that social media fosters insecurity and feelings of inadequacy. These responses highlight children's varied experiences with social media and their nuanced perceptions of its role in their lives.

Children



[I see social media as] a friend and I see her every day. I feel safe and calm when I'm with her. She cares for me and makes sure I'm ok. I trust [her] because she is someone I can rely on. (14 to 15 years)



They encourage me to think about many different things. They set me on the right path of life. (12 to 13 years)



They are an outgoing person showing me the world and many different challenges that I may encounter in life. They speak to me like a best friend [in] a calming tone and helpful. They behave responsibly and are always there when needed. (12 to 13 years)



When you first see Charlie [the name the child gave to social media as a person], you see him as having crazy, strong, hyped energy but the longer you're with him, the dimmer he gets ... Charlie is very opinionated. His opinions vary a lot, depending on who surrounds him ... Charlie doesn't go away ... Sometimes I ask him to go away and he's just there. He listens but as soon as he's done listening, he shows his much stronger, opinionated side. (14 to 15 years)



I feel like it would be a second-choice friend. Like someone who acts friendly but deep down you know they aren't who they seem. I would be happy to see them at first, but after a while it would get tiring, boring, and depressing. They never stop talking, they demand attention, compare me to others, and make it hard to focus on real life. I wouldn't trust them because sometimes they lie. They would be too controlling – like, what I wear, how they make me feel towards certain people. (14 to 15 years)



She has a passive aggressive vibe and makes most people self-conscious when she walks in a room ... She encourages me to think about my friends and how blessed they are to look so pretty. She influences my decisions and self-perception badly because she makes me feel insecure and unworthy of love sometimes. (12 to 13 years)



There was broad awareness of the social media age restrictions, but some confusion about how these would be implemented, which influenced participants' attitudes to and preparations for the change.

There was broad awareness among both children and parents that social media age restrictions were about to come into effect, and an understanding that the restrictions were intended to protect children from harm. There was recognition among some parents that the overarching intention of the law was to improve the mental health and wellbeing of children. Some of the older children also recognised this, although most of the children tended to conceptualise the law's intention as 'to protect children' more broadly.

There was mixed understanding among children and parents around the specifics of how the restrictions would be implemented.² Some participants assumed that age assurance technologies would be relatively unsophisticated, and that they could simply lie about their age. There was also limited understanding that the list of restricted platforms was dynamic, making migration to alternative platforms challenging as a longer-term workaround. These assumptions led some children to think the restrictions would have a minimal impact on them, and so they were not actively preparing for the change. Some children and parents were unsure about whether the restrictions applied to messaging apps and gaming platforms and assumed that YouTube would become completely inaccessible. These uncertainties created a sense of anxiety for some about losing access to all online communication and key learning resources.

² At the time this research was conducted, eSafety had begun rolling out resources with detailed guidance on implementation and preparation. However, communication was constrained by platforms not being required to share details of age assurance processes before the law took effect and by the differing age assurance processes they could adopt. Additionally, confirmation of the restricted platforms occurred at the start of the research period, so this was new information at that time.



Children

The government are doing what they think is best to stop bad people hurting kids. (12 to 13 years)

Some social medias you either need a face ID, or you just put in a birthday. With the birthday you can easily just lie about it, but with the face ID, you can just use your parent's face. (10 to 11 years)

Can we still use Facetime to video chat with our mates? (14 to 15 years)

I don't know if Messenger will be banned but if it does then I will be sad because most of my friends live in a different country. (12 to 13 years)

Parents

It will be great. I am hoping his friends won't be gaming as much or spending so much time online. (Parent of 12- to 13-year-old)

Schools also put references on the homework with links to YouTube for research purposes. This will certainly impact the schools as well to look into different platforms and redo their work. (Parent of 12- to 13-year-old)

Trying to restrict access to those platforms to account holders above 16. This, in turn, will prevent [access by] children, often very young and not physiologically capable of processing what they would otherwise get exposed to. (Parent of 12- to 13-year-old)

Parents and young people alike agreed that more needs to be done to protect children on social media, but perceptions were mixed as to whether the age restrictions would be the best solution.

Parents and children generally supported the intention behind the age restrictions, recognising that social media could cause harms and that more protection is needed to keep children safe online. Many parents viewed the age restrictions as a useful support, bringing a sense of relief. For other parents and children, while they agreed that there is a need to do more to protect children online, they did not see the age restrictions as an optimal solution. Some participants suggested that the focus on introducing age restrictions was misplaced and that efforts should concentrate instead on making the platforms safer environments for children.

Children



I just think that there should be strict rules on the apps, instead of taking it away from under-16s. (12 to 13 years)



I think the government is trying to help but they're just doing it wrong. They should only ban certain stuff but [they're] too lazy. (12 to 13 years)



I believe that they should work harder on making teen accounts and restrictions generally effective, and that if you have had a problem on social media that should be our responsibility to manage or your school's responsibility. (14 to 15 years)

Parents



I strongly believe [that] the government has taken a great initiative to roll this project out ... Children will be quite unhappy with this decision, but with what is going around with younger children, using these platforms can get [more] dangerous by the day.

(Parent of 14- to 15-year-old)



I think it's a good idea, for lots of kids. Keeping them off it for a longer period would be better for them. **(Parent of 10- to 11-year-old)**



It will be challenging at first. The kids will complain, but we will have fewer worries about online safety and it will give us as a parent a boundary to protect them. **(Parent of 10- to 11-year-old)**



Allow parental oversight, but don't ban it all outright ... Don't throw out the baby with the bathwater. **(Parent of 14- to 15-year-old)**

Some children felt excited, relieved or ambivalent, while others felt frustrated and unfairly punished. For many, the perceived benefits of social media were felt to outweigh the potential harms.

Children's attitudes towards the age restrictions were influenced by their personal relationship with social media. Some children felt somewhat ambivalent about the restrictions, generally linked to lower usage levels or less reliance on social media for connection or support. Others felt positively about the change and expressed a sense of excitement about how it could improve their lives by offering the opportunity for new experiences. However, many children felt frustrated, upset and unfairly punished. Older children (14 to 15 years) tended to think more critically about the restrictions and expressed deeper frustration and feelings of injustice. They saw the age limit as arbitrary, given their other responsibilities at this age, such as being able to work and being close to the driving age.

Many children felt that the benefits of social media, such as social connection, self-expression, belonging, learning, inspiration and mood regulation, outweighed its harms. They struggled to imagine social media alternatives that could realise these benefits and recognised that there can be barriers to replacing social media with offline spaces. Examples included: parents being unavailable to take children to visit friends in person or to participate in offline activities; financial barriers; and limited access to facilities, particularly in regional areas.

Children



For me personally, I think I will thrive with it – getting me outside more and having to learn to be more outgoing, so I'm thinking it will be a new and exciting experience for me.
(14 to 15 years)



It will help kids to get outside, actually get their assessments right and actually think ... I feel relieved ... **(10 to 11 years)**



I understand why it is being done. But I feel like we – as in kids – are being punished.
(12 to 13 years)



The good stuff [about social media] is more meaningful than the bad stuff. (14 to 15 years)



We don't get a say in any of it either, like the adults are voting on our behalf ... Shouldn't we have voted or something? (12 to 13 years)



I got it at 14. It is very important to me. I [had] to prove to my parents I would be sensible and safe before I could have it. I am only 6 months away from the age of 16. And [I'm] going to be so angry and sad if this goes ahead ... (14 to 15 years)



Life is going to be less fun. Not everybody's parents can drive them places to meet up with people, so social media is a great way to stay connected. (14 to 15 years)



I don't think it's fair because I think we should at least be able to use YouTube. I know YouTube is a very big part of a lot of kids' lives. (10 to 11 years)




The new law makes me feel like the government doesn't trust us. While I get that under-16s might not be as knowledgeable as adults, it is unfair that we are treated like less than, and in a country that stands against ageism, why are we promoting it? (14 to 15 years)




The perceived risks of social media influenced attitudes, impacted by differing levels of knowledge about social media and its potential harms, as well as by personal experiences.

Parents and children generally recognised that social media brings potential harms. Those who displayed greater awareness and understanding of its online harms generally appeared to express more positive attitudes towards the age restrictions. However, the risks of social media were distant for some children and parents, who viewed online harms as uncommon and exaggerated. These participants discounted the role of platforms in online safety, viewing this as primarily the responsibility of individual children and parents and describing online harms as avoidable through the right education and supervision. In line with this, a few parents and children felt that the government, by mandating the age restrictions, was intruding into the parental domain.



Children



[Harms are] not that common if you are in the right places. However, it is overexaggerated how much [harm] is encountered.
(14 to 15 years)



I think people just need to be responsible and sensible when using social media, otherwise it isn't that dangerous.
(14 to 15 years)



Personally, on social media I know from friends' reposts that they are exposed to a lot of dark and depressing content. So, it will help many with mental health as well as social health and will connect your friends more on a deeper level. (14 to 15 years)

Parents



Children are becoming addicted to spending time glued to a screen, preventing them from taking part in other activities (in person, sports, etc ...) and there is the ever-growing risk of them being harmed by others and/or [by] the content produced and shown to them by others. **(Parent of 12- to 13-year-old)**



It's horrific, the risks these days. Very dangerous. **(Parent of 10- to 11-year-old)**



I'm not 100% sure as I don't see everything [my child] does, but [harm on social media] seems to be pretty rare. **(Parent of 14- to 15-year-old)**



I think that it should be up to the parent, to be honest. They know their kids the best and should be charged with making key decisions such as this one. **(Parent of 12- to 13-year-old)**



It can be harmful. As can [be] walking down the street. Horrible things can happen anywhere. **(Parent of 14- to 15-year-old)**

While the intention of the law was broadly supported, many questioned how it would be enforced and anticipated possible workarounds.

While parents and children broadly supported the intention of the age restrictions, many questioned how the law would be enforced. Some children who participated in the research intended to comply with the restrictions, accepting the need to wait until they turned 16 to resume using social media, particularly if their parents were supportive of the law and intended to enforce it. However, there was a broad perception that children would be able to find ways around the restrictions or would migrate to similar platforms. This attitude was linked to uncertainty prior to the law's implementation about how age restrictions would be enforced. A few participants suggested that limiting access alone may not address the underlying concerns, highlighting the need for complementary measures.

Parents



I feel like it won't really change anything coz kids can just lie about their age. How do you validate?
(Parent of 14- to 15-year-old)



I think children will learn to circumvent the law within seconds of it being enacted. I know I will be actively helping my child to circumvent the new laws. (Parent of 14- to 15-year-old)



How will the government restrict age without making us all prove our age? Is everyone happy with handing over all your details to prove your age so you can use the internet? (Parent of 10- to 11-year-old)



Children



I think it'll make me want to bypass the law and go behind my parents' back to find a way to watch it. (12 to 13 years)



I know it is going to happen. I can't change the laws. All I can do is wait till I am of age. (12 to 13 years)



I think that the government is trying to prevent social media from affecting youth mental health. There has obviously been a lot of unfortunate incidents of young people taking their lives, but I also don't think it's entirely due to social media. I think there should be mandatory talks in school where they encourage students to speak out about their mental health, instead of taking away the apps, which won't help anything. (14 to 15 years)



Some people may hack the system, try to change their date on their accounts so that they seem 16, or some may try to receive parent[al] consent. They may also just use different social media apps that provide the same things. (14 to 15 years)



The age restrictions were expected to impact children’s social connectedness, with some anticipating stronger relationships and others fearing increased isolation.

Some parents and children felt the age restrictions would strengthen social connectedness by encouraging deeper in-person connections. Participants spoke about spending more time with friends in person and doing more shared activities, as well as encouraging young people to meet new people in person rather than online. However, others worried that losing social media would lead to social isolation, especially for those who struggle to communicate easily in person, those who find a sense of belonging in online communities, children in remote areas, and children without their own phones. Beyond direct communication, children reflected on how social media provides indirect connections and a sense of intimacy that wasn’t replicated by messaging apps. This was described as seeing people’s lives ‘through their eyes’.

In addition, children were concerned about loss of connection to the broader community and zeitgeist (the cultural mood, attitudes or spirit of a particular time), with social media being a key source of news, trends and collective experiences. Children feared missing out, because older peers and adults would stay on social media and they could not see a clear alternative for themselves to connect easily with the wider community.

Children



I think friendships will last longer ... just because people get a break from each other that you just can’t really get if [you’re] always on social media.
(14 to 15 years)



Actually spending time like playing soccer or a sport together or in the pool and not using your phone.
(10 to 11 years)



It could be helpful to encourage people to build stronger connections outside of a screen.
(14 to 15 years)



It will distance my friends who I am already close with. Not being able to chat to them frequently will make us drift apart. (12 to 13 years)



People will become more ignorant and unaware of what's going on in the world. (10 to 11 years)



I find it sometimes hard to talk to different people at school, but I feel like social media gives us another network and has generally made me closer with people I wasn't otherwise friends with. (14 to 15 years)



[Describing how social media is used for connection]
Seeing things through their eyes, instead of through them just talking to you about it. (14 to 15 years)



Some of my friends are only comfortable expressing their emotions through things on social media such as reposts. (14 to 15 years)



If it's the school holidays, how are you supposed to make plans with your friends and say do you want to hang out if your parents don't have each other's number? You can't. There's no way to text each other anything. (10 to 11 years)



Parents



Living regionally, a lot of [my child's] mates live rurally. They're not exactly [within] walking distance. It's going to be extremely isolating.
(Parent of 14- to 15-year-old)



I hope it forces them to make face-to-face plans more often and they might rediscover real world activities and meeting friends at [the] park which builds stronger and deeper friendships, do bit of physical activities and play a game and feel happier and healthy.
(Parent of 14- to 15-year-old)



Making and maintaining friendships probably isn't too much of a concern, but being in a small community it will limit the number and diversity of friendships.
(Parent of 14- to 15-year-old)



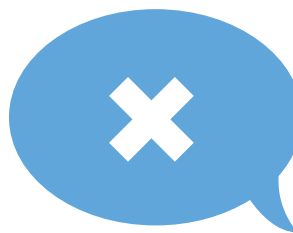
Because of the housing issues, many families have had to move 1000s of kms to stay housed. Friends are a long way away, family [are] far, far away. Many kids I deal with [are on the] ADHD spectrum [and have] extreme trauma-based issues [and] take ages to build friend[ships].

(Parent of 10- to 11-year-old)



Isolation might be a factor for kids who connect via their phones a lot, but it will [hopefully] encourage them to find other more meaningful ways to connect.

(Parent of 12- to 13-year-old)



Losing access to social media was expected to bring both mental health and wellbeing benefits as well as potential new challenges.

Parents generally anticipated long-term mental health and wellbeing benefits through restricting social media access until age 16 and were hopeful of positive generational change. Many parents expected the age restrictions to reduce social comparison, reduce feelings of addiction, deliver more of a balance between time spent offline and online, and encourage more engagement in behaviours that foster positive health and development – such as better sleep from reduced screentime, in-person socialising, and diversion to more offline activities. Children also anticipated some of these impacts.

However, some children and parents felt it could create new mental health and wellbeing challenges, ranging from increased stress and anxiety to the loss of critical support networks and pathways to help. This was linked to losing a source of social connection, emotional support, mood regulation and self-expression. For some families, the anticipated impact was already evident, with children expressing panic about losing key connections, such as long-distance friendships.

Children



I think it will make kids feel better, actually ... because I don't have to worry all the time about what's happening on YouTube or social medias and stuff like that ... because they can like actually socialise with other people ... they might feel good about their life now ...
(10 to 11 years)

Sleeping will definitely be much easier. It's too tempting to scroll at night after a long day. Screen time would go down drastically. **(14 to 15 years)**

It will help decrease comparison anxiety and depression, but it might cause new mental health issues – like feeling lonely and stuff. **(14 to 15 years)**



I think some people might feel more isolated, because they don't have that form of connection. So this might make them depressed or anxious and lead to more serious issues. (14 to 15 years)



People will start going out more into the environment, which is better for your health, rather than just sitting at home scrolling or texting all the time. (14 to 15 years)



Because for many it is a way that they can vent to other people, especially since personal information can't be shared and most people don't know your identity. By removing this, people can't reach out for help as easily and it will affect young people negatively. (14 to 15 years)



A little bit sad but I am grateful they are doing it ... I think that it will make them feel way better because they don't have people cyberbullying them or [posting] hate comments. They might also have no more peer pressure if they were experiencing peer pressure online. (12 to 13 years)

Parents



Oh my gosh, my son is so distant, and disappears for hours, but then becomes so angry when the phone is taken away. His phone was severely locked so now [he] only has access to family messages and calls, and he is like a different kid. He laughs, goes outside and plays, is [a] social butterfly.

(Parent of 14- to 15-year-old)



I think, [for] the ones who already have access now, it may cause distress, but it is a positive move forward as it will limit future children's access.

(Parent of 12- to 13-year-old)



There is no way it's not a positive long term for our kids.

(Parent of 10- to 11-year-old)



I think it will impact them and their peers in negative ways. A lot of kids use these platforms for emotional support from friends.

(Parent of 14- to 15-year-old)

Conclusion

This research highlights diverse perspectives on the Social Media Minimum Age law and its anticipated impacts, prior to it coming into effect.

The law's intention to protect children online was broadly supported, with many parents welcoming age restrictions as a tool for managing their children's safety. However, some parents and children questioned whether this approach was the best solution, suggesting that efforts should focus instead on making platforms safer. There were concerns about enforcement, with expectations that children would find workarounds, and that limiting access alone may not address the underlying issues. While some children felt relieved or excited by the change, many expressed frustration and a sense of unfairness, viewing the benefits of social media as outweighing its potential harms.

Parents generally anticipated positive long-term impacts on mental health and wellbeing, and some children agreed, expecting reduced social comparison and increased offline activities and in-person socialising. However, some children and parents felt the restrictions could also create new mental health and wellbeing challenges, linked to losing a source of social connection, emotional support, mood regulation and self-expression. Impacts on children's social connectedness was a key concern, particularly for those who struggle to communicate easily in person, those who find a sense of belonging in online communities, and children living in remote areas.

These findings reinforce the importance of putting in place strategies to support children and parents during the transition, including promoting and creating alternative online and offline spaces for social connection, ensuring access to trusted support services, and continuing to build digital literacy among families. eSafety developed comprehensive educational and communication materials to support children, parents and educators in preparation for the age restrictions. The research findings reflect the value of these resources and the importance of ongoing education and communication about the age restrictions as implementation evolves. The age restrictions are only part of a wider online safety approach; ongoing education, monitoring, promotion of Safety by Design, and industry enforcement remain critical.

These findings also underscore the importance of the evaluation of the age restrictions. This is a world-first piece of legislation, and perspectives vary on what implementation will mean in practice and what impacts are anticipated. It is therefore critical to carefully examine and understand the impacts of the age restrictions, both intended and unintended, and to be attuned to differences across communities and contexts. This vigilance will enable a robust assessment of the true effect of the Social Media Minimum Age law. To this end, eSafety, in collaboration with domestic and international academic experts, is undertaking a comprehensive implementation and outcome evaluation. The evaluation will monitor how the age restrictions are rolled out and assess what happens as a result in children's lives.

Appendix: Detailed methodology

This report summarises the findings of qualitative research which sought to provide insight into knowledge of and attitudes towards the Social Media Minimum Age law among children aged 10 to 15 and parents of 10- to 15-year-olds, ahead of the law taking effect on 10 December 2025. It will inform future, more in-depth research by eSafety aimed at evaluating the implementation and effectiveness of the law.

The study received ethics approval on 28 October 2025 from the Bellberry Human Research Ethics Committee, ID 26CeSC019.

Participants and recruitment

A total of $n = 72$ participants took part in the research, including $n = 43$ children aged 10 to 15 and $n = 29$ parents of 10- to 15-year-olds.

All participants provided informed consent to participate in the study. Children also received permission from their parents/guardians to participate in the study.

All children and parents who participated in the research used pseudonyms to maintain their anonymity.

A mix of participants were recruited based on age, gender, location and socio-economic status, and included Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people with disability, and those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Parents were also recruited to ensure that a variety of perspectives were represented, with a mix of those who were supportive, neutral or opposed to the age restrictions.

Further demographic details of the sample are provided in Table 1.



Table 1: Demographic makeup of participants

Children	<i>n</i> =
10 to 11 years	10
12 to 13 years	14
14 to 15 years	19
Female	21
Male	21
Non-binary	1
Metro location	24
Regional/remote location	19
Uses social media (could include watching YouTube, seeing TikTok clips, as well as looking at, interacting with or posting on any social media platform, with or without an account)	41
Children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds	10
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children	6
Trans and gender diverse children	1
Children with disability	8

Parents	<i>n</i> =
Female	11
Male	18
Non-binary	0
Child aged 10 to 11 years	8
Child aged 12 to 13 years	7
Child aged 14 to 15 years	14
Metro location	15
Regional/remote location	14
Parents from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds	7
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents	2
Trans and gender diverse parents	0
Sexuality diverse parents	2
Parents with disability	6
Child uses social media (could include watching YouTube, seeing TikTok clips, as well as looking at, interacting with or posting on any social media platform, with or without an account)	29

Parent attitudes towards the age restrictions (Intentionally recruited a mix of attitudes)	<i>n</i> =
Supportive	12
Unsure or neutral	7
Unsupportive	10

Methods

The study involved online focus groups, one-on-one interviews, and short online tasks completed before and after the focus groups and interviews. Focus groups were limited to children aged 12 to 15 and parents. Children aged 10 to 11 were engaged via one-on-one interviews, which was considered more developmentally appropriate for this age group. The fieldwork took place during the period 3 to 26 November 2025.

The key discussion points included the role of social media in the lives of children, perceived harms and benefits of social media, knowledge and understanding of the Social Media Minimum Age law, attitudes towards the restrictions, and expected impacts.

Online focus groups

The study involved online focus groups with children aged 12 to 15 (seven groups) and parents of children aged 10 to 15 (six groups). Each focus group was conducted with four or five participants.

The focus groups were conducted on VisionsLive, using a text-based format to preserve anonymity and facilitate open discussion. Focus groups lasted approximately one hour. Participants were grouped according to children's age.

Focus groups for those aged 12 to 15 were co-facilitated by two youth researchers recruited via eSafety's Youth Council. The youth researchers also contributed to the analysis and interpretation of findings, with their involvement across the research intended to support more meaningful and contextual insights.

Online individual interviews

In addition, the study involved individual interviews with children aged 10 to 11. These were conducted via online video call and typically lasted 40 minutes.

Online tasks before and after participation in focus groups/interviews

All children recruited were invited to complete a short online task prior to their focus group or interview. The task involved imagining that social media was a person and describing that 'person's' personality and behaviours, and how they made them feel.

Children who participated in the focus groups were also invited to complete a short online task after the group. This task allowed them to share feedback on the experience, reflect on their level of honesty in the group, and share reflections on how people their age might try to circumvent the age restrictions.

Limitations

- As a qualitative research report, the findings presented here should not be read as being representative of the Australian population. This recommendation is in keeping with the aims of online qualitative research, which is to draw interpretations and insights, as opposed to generating quantifiable data or descriptions. A mix of parent attitudes towards the age restrictions were intentionally recruited (broadly supportive, neutral and unsupportive) to ensure that the study represented a range of perspectives. Therefore, the findings should be used to better understand different attitudes and perceptions, rather than to quantify these. The quantitative evaluation will support this objective.
- The study was designed to include a range of participants to reflect the diverse identities, backgrounds and experiences of children and parents in Australia. Focus groups and interviews were conducted online to widen the geographical spread of participants. However, this strategy may have made participation inaccessible to some people – for instance, those who are not confident with written or spoken English or who do not have reliable internet access.
- The study includes the voices of children and parents from a range of backgrounds; however, its primary intention was to broadly understand their knowledge of, attitudes towards and expectations regarding the impacts of the age restrictions. The study lacked the scope to consider in detail the ways that the age restrictions were perceived by and expected to impact different cohorts, such as LGBTQIA+ young people, young people with disability and Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander young people. Future eSafety research will consider the attitudes of and impacts on children who are part of these cohorts.
- Participants were not recruited based on their having lived experience of online harms, and they were not directly asked about this. There is an opportunity to better understand the way in which lived experience of online harms influences attitudes towards the age restrictions and its impacts. Future eSafety research will consider more targeted recruitment of this audience.
- Participants were informed that the research was being conducted by eSafety. This knowledge may have influenced their responses, as some participants may have been reluctant to share views they deemed to be socially undesirable. A range of measures were taken to mitigate this; however, it could still have impacted participants' responses. Such measures included using a format that maximised anonymity (no video or audio, use of pseudonyms), confirming confidentiality, encouraging open sharing of diverse perspectives upfront, and use of projective techniques where participants answered questions about a hypothetical person and scenario.

