

# SMMA Baseline Qualitative Research

## High-level insights

December 2025

# Approach

- **Online focus groups and interviews with children aged 10 - 15 and parents/ caregivers**
  - 10 x interviews with children aged 10 – 11 (40 mins) + pre-task
  - 7 x text-based focus groups with children aged 12 – 15 (60 mins) + pre-task and post-task
  - 6 x text-based focus groups with parents of children aged 10 – 15 (60 mins)
- **Fieldwork dates:** 3 - 10 November and 18 - 26 November 2025
- **Key discussion points:** role of social media in the lives of children, perceived harms and benefits of social media, knowledge and understanding of the SMMA, attitudes, expected impacts
- Sample of **n=72** (n=43 children, n=29 parents/ caregivers)
- Sample recruited via **online panel**

# Key takeouts

- Broad awareness amongst both parents and children of the social media age restriction. However, **confusion around specifics (e.g. age assurance tech, platforms) influences current attitudes and preparation.**
- Children and parents **believe it's important to do more to protect children on social media**, but there are mixed perceptions on whether the social media minimum age is the answer.
- Some children feel frustrated and unfairly punished. For many, the **perceived benefits of social media are felt to outweigh potential harms.**
- Differing knowledge, experience and **perceived threat** of online harms influences attitudes. There's a sentiment that staying safe online is an **individual responsibility.**
- There are **doubts about effectiveness** of the age restriction, driven by uncertainty about how it will be enforced.
- Children and parents are concerned about how the age restriction will impact children's **social connectedness.**
- Losing access to social media is expected to bring **mental health and wellbeing benefits as well as potential new hurdles.**