Social Media Minimum Age Evaluation

Technical Report | Baseline

July 2026

Social Research Centre

Life in Australia™

Acknowledgements

We acknowledge the Wurundjeri People who are the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which our company is located, and the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia, where we conduct our business. We pay our respects to Elders, past, present and emerging. The Social Research Centre is committed to honouring First Nations peoples' unique cultural and spiritual relationships to the land, waters and seas and their rich contribution to society.

Project sponsor:

The project is funded by the eSafety Commissioner (eSafety)

Contact:

For more information on the conduct and results of the study, the team can be contacted:

The Social Research Centre
Level 5, 350 Queen Street
Melbourne, Victoria 3000
Telephone: (613) 9236 8500
info@srcentre.com.au
srcentre.com.au

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1. Introduction

1.1. Project overview

The *Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Act 2024* represents a pioneering regulatory innovation in global digital governance, establishing Australia as the first jurisdiction to implement comprehensive age-based restrictions on social media platform access. The legislation, which received Royal Assent on 10 December 2024 and commenced on 10 December 2025, created a mandatory minimum age of 16 years for account creation on designated social media platforms (Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts, 2024).

The eSafety Commissioner (eSafety) is both implementing and formally evaluating the Social Media Minimum Age. The evaluation serves as an evidence source – alongside wider data, research and community input – for the legislative review of the age restrictions scheduled to begin in 2027, to be led by the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Spots and the Arts.

The evaluation is being led by eSafety's Research and Evaluation team, with independent scientific oversight from a Lead Academic Partner, Stanford University's Social Media Lab, and an Academic Advisory Group of 11 leading Australian and international experts in youth wellbeing, psychology, public health, education, and technology.

The evaluation adopted a rigorous, mixed methods design to assess the implementation and outcomes of the age restrictions. Central to the approach was a large-scale longitudinal survey of over 4,100 children aged 10-16 and their parents or caregivers, conducted over five waves to capture changes from pre- to post-regulation (baseline, 3, 6, 12, and 24 months). This is complimented by optional passive smartphone data collection (with informed consent), qualitative follow-up studies, and optional linkage to existing administrative data sets (MBS, PBS, and NAPLAN, with informed consent). Together, these methods will provide a comprehensive and evidence-based understanding of the legislation's impact on young people's online behaviours, wellbeing, and safety, while ensuring that ethical standards, privacy protections, and participant welfare remain central to the research design. For more information refer to the Social Media Minimum Age Evaluation Methodology report and the Study Protocol.

An additional opt-in survey module was also incorporated to examine participants' experiences of online sexual harms. This module was developed by the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) and funded by the Office for Child Safety, reflecting a specific policy interest in understanding the potential impacts of the legislation in this domain. The module was included to maximise efficiency in the use of government resources and to minimise respondent burden, including potential confusion or measurement effects arising from exposure to multiple surveys among the same participants.

Data collected through this module does not form part of the project led my eSafety. Rather, it is provided directly to the AIC and is not accessible to eSafety.

eSafety engaged the Social Research Centre to deliver programming and fieldwork services for the longitudinal study. The Social Research Centre provided expert advice on the design of the online survey and passive data collection methodologies, facilitated data linkage processes in line with ethical and privacy standards, and expert consultants were brought in to further inform the approach to survey design and data collection.

This report covers the data collection and methodological aspects of the baseline survey of the Social Media Minimum Age Evaluation, further reports will be produced for future waves of the study.

1.2. Ethics and quality assurance

This study has been reviewed and approved by the AIFS Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) (approval number: 2025/06). eSafety led the HREC submission process.

All aspects of this research were undertaken in accordance with ISO 20252:2019 Market, Opinion and Social Research Standard, The Research Society (formerly AMSRS) Code of Professional Behaviour, the Australian Privacy Principles and the *Privacy (Market and Social Research) Code 2021*.

The Social Research Centre is an accredited Company Partner of The Research Society with all senior staff as full members and several senior staff QPR (Qualified Practicing Researcher) accredited. The Social Research Centre is also a member of the Australian Data and Insights Association (ADIA, formerly known as AMSRO) and bound by the *Privacy (Market and Social Research) Code 2021*.

2. Methodology

2.1. Baseline survey

The primary target population for the baseline survey was Australians aged 10–16 years and their parents / caregivers, with the aim of collecting data that is nationally representative of the Australian community (aged 10-16).

A total of n=4,500 completed parent–child dyads (n=9,000 individual participants) was targeted. In order to achieve the full number of completes, the survey was run on Life in Australia™, as well as three non-probability research panels: Octopus, Pure Profile, and the Online Research Unit (ORU).

The Social Research Centre's Life in Australia™ panel as described below, formed the probability 'spine' around which other data sources were calibrated. This statistical blending process helps moderate or reduce the bias inherent in using non-probability samples[1].

The non-probability panel data collection was undertaken in parallel with Life in Australia™ fieldwork.

The survey was designed to run for a total of 40 minutes, with 20 minutes allocated to completion of each of the parent and child components. This estimate excludes any time required to obtain supplementary consents (e.g. passive metering and data linkage forms). Subsequent survey waves will draw on the baseline instrument to ensure comparability over time.

All survey materials are available on Open Science Framework, and other study materials (e.g., consent forms) can be made available upon request to eSafety.

Inclusions in the data required the completion of both parent and child surveys, so no standalone parent surveys were included in the final dataset.

Incentives

Members of Life in Australia™ received an incentive of $20 for parent and child for participation in the baseline survey. Incentives are accumulated as points ($1 = 1 point) redeemable as a wide variety of gift cards via our e-gift card provider (options are curated to omit those that might be problematic, such as alcohol retailers). Panellists also have the option to donate the incentive to 1 of 5 pre-selected charities that are changed annually (2025 charities: Rural Aid, StreetSmart Australia, The Man Cave, Djirra, and Love your Sister).

2.2. Questionnaire design and programming

The questionnaires were developed by eSafety, with input from the Lead Academic Partner and Academic Advisory Group and then refined in response to feedback from the Social Research Centre.

The Social Research Centre project team then programmed the finalised and approved questionnaire ready for data collection. The Social Research Centre used Forsta to program the surveys, which is hosted at Amazon Web Services (AWS) Sydney.

Standard operational procedures were used to ensure the data collection scripts reflected the agreed questionnaire. These include:

- programming the skips and sequence instructions as per the word-processed questionnaire
    - subjecting the programming to a rigorous checking procedure undertaken by our project management team, eSafety staff and operational staff, including:

[1] Elliott, M.R. and R. Valliant (2017) Inference for nonprobability samples. Statistical Science 32(2), 249-264. DOI: 10.1214/16-STS598.

Valliant, R. (2020). Comparing alternatives to estimation from nonprobability samples. Journal of Survey Statistics and Methodology 8(2), 231–263. DOI: 10.1093/jssam/smz003

- checking the questionnaire in 'practice mode' to fully test the skip pattern and the appearance of the questionnaire without testing the questionnaire on 'live' respondents
- reviewing 'dummy data' to further check the structural integrity of the script

Several rounds of questionnaire adjustments were made post survey launch, largely to reduce the length of the surveys and associated participant burden, leading to differences in data for some survey respondents. The management of these changes and data cleaning are outlined in section 3.4.

2.3. Data Collection via research panels

2.3.1 Life in Australia™

In 2016, the Social Research Centre established Australia's first national probability-based online panel: Life in Australia™ (Kaczmirek et al., 2019). The panel is the most methodologically rigorous online panel in Australia and is one of only a small number worldwide. Members of the panel are recruited via random selection methods, including random digit dialling (RDD), address-based sampling (A-BS), or knock-to-nudge and agreed to provide their contact details to take part in surveys on a regular basis. What separates Life in Australia™ from other online panels is the use of sampling frames for which units have known probability of selection and the fact that people cannot enrol unless invited to participate. For further details on Life in Australia™ methodology, see https://srcentre.com.au/methodology/.

While Life in Australia™ provides excellent data quality (Lavrakas et al., 2022; Pennay et al., 2024), and high respondent participation and retention (key for longitudinal research), the numbers required for the project necessitated the use of non-probability research panels to augment the sample.

2.3.2 Non-probability panels

The non-probability panels included were Octopus, Pure Profile, and Online Research Unit (ORU), and were selected based on accessible sample size, data quality, and adherence to industry standards and guidelines as below:

- Accredited to ISO 20252.
- Adheres to the ESOMAR guidelines on conducting market and opinion research using the internet.
- Australian Data and Insights Association (ADIA) member.
- Adheres to ADIA privacy principles and fully conforms to the Australian Privacy Principles as detailed in the *Privacy Amendment Act (2000)*.
- Adheres to the Research Society Code of Professional Behaviour and guidelines on the confidential handling and delivery of respondent information.
- ADIA Quality Standards for Online Research (Access panels).
- Adheres to the Australian anti-spam laws.

Octopus respondents formed the bulk of the sample required for the survey, and all elements of the project (i.e., baseline survey, data linkage, and passive monitoring) were included for this cohort.

ORU, and Pure Profile collected baseline survey data only. Elements included for each panel are outlined in Table 1.

Table 1 Outline of project elements and expected sample by panel

Panel Name	Pairs targeted	Baseline only	Data linkage	Passive monitoring
Online Research Unit (ORU)	300	X		
Pure Profile	450	X		
Octopus	3,000	X	X	X

Panel Name	Pairs targeted	Baseline only	Data linkage	Passive monitoring
Life in Australia™	500	X	X	X

Final achieved sample for the baseline survey can be found in Section 3, Response outcomes. Please note, final sample is not reported separately by panel.

2.4. Sample design and size

Sampling

A sample structure was developed for the project, taking into account the following elements:

- A sample structure that is representative of the Australian population of children aged 10–16 years.
- A sample including those with disability, those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, First Nations Australians, and those who identify as LGBTQIA+.
- Where parents had multiple children aged 10-to-16 years, a selection priority was used to select the child who should take part in the survey. This selection priority was based on child age, gender, and Aboriginal and / or Torress Strait Islander identity as follows:
    1. Aboriginal and / or Torress Strait Islander + 14 to 16 + boys & others
    2. Aboriginal and / or Torress Strait Islander + 14 to 16 + girls
    3. Aboriginal and / or Torress Strait Islander + 10 to 13 + boys & others
    4. Aboriginal and / or Torress Strait Islander + 10 to 13 + girls
    5. Not Aboriginal and / or Torress Strait Islander + 14 to 16 boys & others
    6. Not Aboriginal and / or Torress Strait Islander + 14 to 16 girls
    7. Not Aboriginal and / or Torress Strait Islander + 10 to 13 boys & others
    8. Not Aboriginal and / or Torress Strait Islander + 10 to 13 girls

Key survey dates

Fieldwork for the baseline survey on Life in Australia™ was undertaken over two weeks, outlined in Table 2.

Table 2 Life in Australia™ key survey dates

Event	Date
Survey soft launch	17th November 2025
Day 1 data checks	18th Nov 2025
Survey full launch (email and SMS)	18th Nov 2025
Email reminder #1	21st Nov 2025
Email reminder #2	25th Nov 2025
SMS reminder #1	25th Nov 2025
Email reminder #3	28th Nov 2025
Reminder calls	25th – 28th Nov 2025
Close survey	1st Dec 2025

Non-probability online panels

Participants were recruited from opt-in ‘research only’ online panels as follows:

- Direct invitations to adults who are parents of children aged 10 to 16 years old.
- Indirect invitations to children aged 10 to 16 years old through their parents. This recruitment method was needed because the opt-in panels do not permit direct invitations to those under 18 years. This recruitment method also provided a greater degree of certainly about correctly obtaining parental consent for this age group.

The contact methodology for the non-probability panel survey involved sending an initial survey invitation via email, followed by multiple email reminders. Incentives for non-probability panel members varied, with a nominal incentive for participation consistent with each panel's guidelines. This includes earning reward points which can later be redeemed for gift vouchers from a range of brands or entering a monthly prize giveaway.

Fieldwork dates for the different panels are outlined in Table 3.

Table 3 Key survey dates by panel

Event	Date
ORU soft launch	10th Nov 2025
ORU full launch	14th Nov 2025
ORU close	19th Dec 2025
Octopus soft launch	18th Nov 2025
Octopus full launch	19th Nov 2025
Octopus close	19th Dec 2025
Pure Profile soft launch	19th Nov 2025
Pure Profile full launch	20th Nov 2025
Pure Profile close	19th Dec 2025

2.5. Other response maximisation procedures

Other procedures to maximise response for the survey included:

- Operation of an 1800 number throughout the survey period, to help establish survey bona fides, address sample members' queries, and encourage response.
- Provision of the Social Research Centre / Life in Australia™ website, as well as the eSafety webpage set up for the project.
- Focus on interviewer training and respondent liaison techniques during interviewer briefing and throughout fieldwork for the CATI reminder element of Life in Australia™ fieldwork.

Retention rates

Annual adult re-interview rates on Life in Australia™ average 90%, compared to 30% for non-probability online panels (estimated based on previous performance for recontact studies). Estimated retention rates are shown in Table 4.

Table 4 Estimated retention rates

Wave	Life in Australia™ re-interview rates	Non-probability panel re-interview rates
1: Baseline 1-month pre-regulation	100%	100%
2: 3-months post-regulation	96%	67%
3: 6-months post-regulation	93%	50%
4: 12-months post-regulation	88%	27%
5: 24-months post-regulation	78%	8%

2.6. Passive data metering

Passive data metering is a key component of the Social Media Minimum Age Evaluation, designed to complement self-reported survey data with objective information on children's smartphone app usage over time.

During the baseline survey, parents were asked whether they consented to their child's participation in passive data metering. Children were then asked to provide their own assent, in line with ethics requirements and conditional on parental consent. Participation in passive metering was voluntary, children could participate in the baseline survey without taking part in this component, and they could opt out at any time, with instructions provided to discontinue participation.

Passive metering was implemented using the Wakoopa app, which could be downloaded to iPhone and Android devices and runs in the background on the child's smartphone, automatically collecting high-level information about app usage. The data collected is limited to what is required for the study. This includes: the applications used, the operating system of the device, the date and time that an application is used, and the duration of each application usage instance. Data related to sensitive apps (such as banking) are not captured, nor is any personal information or other content (such as photos, texts, emails, contacts, social media messaged, URLs, or phone calls or search history.

There are also some important platform-specific limitations. On Android devices, passive metering captures foreground usage for most apps, including both internet-connected and non-internet apps. On iOS devices, app usage can only be identified by routing device traffic through a VPN and decrypting network requests. Measurement therefore depends on whether the app's traffic can be successfully recognised and whitelisted. Apps with anti-VPN protections, user experience constraints or sensitive functions (such as banking, native Apple apps, browser apps, other VPNs, or some subscription-based apps) may not be tracked reliably or at all. As a result, app coverage on iOS is more limited than on Android and differences should be considered when interpreting results and comparing usage patterns across devices.

Passive tracking is conducted continuously across the study period, rather than in short collection windows. This approach supports longitudinal analysis of naturalistic behaviour and enables more consistent measurement of change over time.

Participation in passive metering was supported through a combination of incentives and reminder communications. A $10 incentive was provided following successful app installation, and a $15 monthly incentive was paid for each month in which the child's device remained active. Incentives were administered via parents. Reminder messages were issued during fieldwork to support installation and continued participation, with the aim of maximising uptake and sustained engagement over time.

Ongoing reminders are also sent to participants who become inactive (no activity for 1 day), or dormant (no activity for 7 days). Additional reminders were sent to participants around Christmas 2025, aiming to encourage the download of the app onto any new phones that were gifted.

The breakdown of parental consent, child assent, app installation, and active participation in passive metering is presented in Table 5.

Table 5 Consent, Uptake, and Observed Participation in Passive Metering

Element	Unit	Passive metering
Parental consent for passive metering	n	1452
	% of parents of 10-16's on Life in Australia™ and Octopus	47.8%
Child assent for passive metering	n	940
	% of children 10-16 with parental consent for passive metering on Life in Australia™ and Octopus	64.7%

Element	Unit	Passive metering
App downloads	n – initial downloads	318
	n – active participants at end Jan 2026	169
	% of passive metering downloads among consenting participants	33.8%
	% of passive metering downloads among total eligible participants	10.5%
	% of active passive metering among total downloads	53.1%

2.7. Data linkage

During the baseline survey, Life in Australia™ and Octopus participants were asked if they consented to linking their child's education and / or health records to the information gathered in the survey. If both parents and children agreed, participants were asked to fill out forms with the information required to link to the survey data.

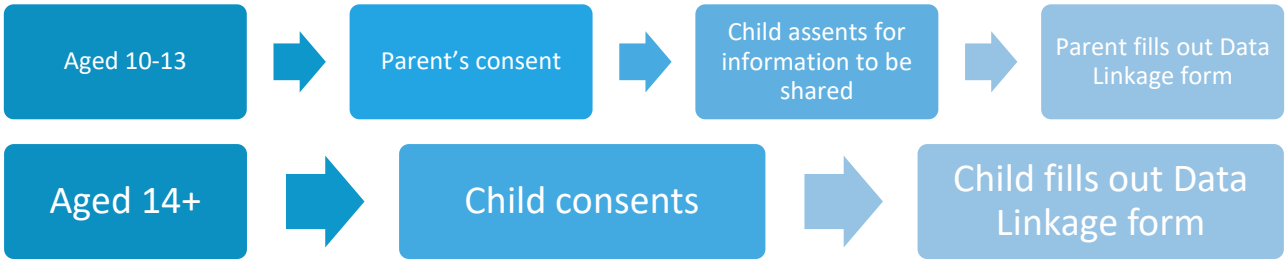
These forms will be delivered directly to Services Australia and the respective State Education Departments, with the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) serving as the Accredited Data Service Provider (ADSP) for this project. AIFS will manage all data linkage processes, ensuring secure transfer and integration of these valuable datasets. All personal identifiers will be removed in accordance with privacy requirements while maintaining the analytical utility of the data.

The survey incorporates linkage to multiple administrative datasets:

- Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) data
- Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) records from Services Australia
- National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) results from state and territory custodians.

Workflow for consent of data linkage is outlined in Figure 1, with different processes for children aged 10–13, and 14+.

Figure 1 Consent flow for data linkage forms



Participants were initially asked if they agreed to data linkage during the survey. If they agreed during the survey, a follow up email with links to the consent forms were sent to the parent, either for the parent of children aged 10-13, or for the child aged 14+ to complete.

A $5 incentive was provided to respondents upon the return of a completed, signed consent form.

A series of reminders were sent to participants during fieldwork, and additional reminders were sent for the completion of data linkage forms in January (post fieldwork) as a response maximisation strategy.

The breakdown on consents vs completed forms is shown in Table 6.

Table 6 Consent and completion of data linkage forms

Element	Unit	NAPLAN	MBS / PBS
Parental consent for child data linkage (10-13)	n	782	622
	% of parents of 10-13's on Life in Australia™ and Octopus	46.1%	36.7%
Child assent for data linkage (10-13)	n	606	513
	% of children 10-13 with parental consent for data linkage on Life in Australia™ and Octopus	77.5%	82.5%
Child consent for data linkage (14+)	n	535	420
	% of children 14+ on Life in Australia™ and Octopus	39.9%	31.3%
Completed forms	n	443	283
	% of completed forms among consenting participants	38.8%	30.3%
	% of completed forms among all eligible participants	14.6%	9.3%

2.8. Human Research Ethics Committee review and approval

This study has been reviewed and approved by the AIFS Human Research Ethics Committee (approval number: 2025/06). eSafety was responsible for obtaining human research ethics review and approval. The Social Research Centre made recommendations around standard approaches for speaking with parents and seeking consent to survey their children in a manner that is ethically compliant, which were implemented in the study. For more information refer to the Social Media Minimum Age Evaluation Methodology report and the Study Protocol.

3. Response outcomes

The total sample size achieved for the baseline survey was *n* = 4,121 parent / child dyads (*n* = 8,242 individual respondents). Completes were defined as a parent / child dyad who completed both the parent and child versions of the baseline survey, answering at least to the end of question bc_9.5. Completes per panel are outlined in Table 7.

Response rates for the survey cannot be calculated as the number of respondents approached from the non-probability panels is unknown.

Table 7 Completes by panel

Panel Name	Completed dyad surveys
Online Research Unit (ORU)	451
Pure Profile	634
Octopus	2,462
Life in Australia™	574
Total	**4,121**

The median survey completion time for parents and children is outlined in Table 8.

Table 8 Parent and child median survey completion time

Survey completion median	Minutes
Parents	33.5
Children	31.9

3.1. Respondent profile

The demographic profile of the final baseline respondents has been outlined in Table 9. Demographics were primarily reported by parents, but the child demographics collected (as reported by the participating child) are also included below.

Table 9 Unweighted respondent demographics – parent and child

Demographics	*n*	% of final sample
State (parent report)		
NSW	1,272	30.9%
VIC	1,118	27.1%
QLD	794	19.3%
SA	298	7.2%
WA	421	10.2%
TAS	121	2.9%
NT	28	0.7%
ACT	68	1.7%

Demographics	*n*	% of final sample
Remoteness (parent report)		
Major cities	3186	77.3%
Inner regional	669	16.2%
Outer regional	240	5.8%
Remote	19	0.5%
Very remote	6	0.1%
SEIFA (parent report)		
Quintile 1 – Most disadvantage	635	15.4%
Quintile 2	747	18.1%
Quintile 3	1,008	24.5%
Quintile 4	940	22.8%
Quintile 5 – Least disadvantage	788	19.1%
Age (parent)		
18-24 years	17	0.4%
25-34 years	506	12.3%
35-44 years	2,027	49.2%
45-54 years	1,351	32.8%
55-64 years	203	4.9%
65-74 years	14	0.3%
75+ years	3	0.1%
Gender (parent)		
Man or male	1,356	32.9%
Woman or female	2,759	66.9%
Non-binary	5	0.1%
Language diversity		
Parent uses languages other than English at home	855	20.7%
Parent does not use languages other than English at home	3,263	79.2%
Other parents use languages other than English at home	798	19.4%
Other parents do not use languages other than English	3,336	81.0%
Education (parent)		
Year 9 and below	91	2.2%
Certificate I/II	7	0.2%
Years 10 and 11	193	4.7%
Year 12	338	8.2%

Demographics	*n*	% of final sample
Certificate III and/or IV Level	810	19.7%
Advanced Diploma and/or Diploma Level	463	11.2%
Bachelor Degree Level	1,175	28.5%
Graduate Diploma and/or Graduate Certificate Level	342	8.3%
Postgraduate Degree Level	696	16.9%
Age (child)		
10 years	559	13.6%
11 years	608	14.8%
12 years	547	13.3%
13 years	516	12.5%
14 years	616	14.9%
15 years	706	17.1%
16 years	569	13.8%
Gender (child)		
A boy (he/him)	2,194	53.2%
A girl (she/her)	1,833	44.5%
Non-binary	26	0.6%
A trans boy	9	0.2%
A trans girl	7	0.2%
A sistergirl	1	0.0%
A brotherboy	1	0.0%
I use a different term	8	0.2%
I'm still working on it	13	0.3%
I don't want to say	5	0.1%
Aboriginal and / or Torress Strait Islander identity (child)		
No	3764	91.3%
Yes, child is Aboriginal	306	7.4%
Yes, child is Torres Strait Islander	11	.3%
Yes, child is both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	40	1.0%

Data processing and outputs

3.2. Coding and verbatim cleaning

eSafety is responsible for coding, allowing for fully customised and actionable codeframes. The Social Research Coding team therefore focused on basic cleaning, and de-identification of verbatims.

3.3. Data quality checks for online completes

Data quality checks for online completes consisted of checks for:

- speeding (using an approach developed by TrueSample, speeders were defined as those who speeded on 40 percent or more of web survey pages[2])
- straight lining during grid questions (participants can legitimately straight-line many scales, so checks review the total proportion of grid questions where straight lining occurred. Checks occurred for BP_2.2, BP_2.3, BP_2.8, BP_2.13a, BP_6.6, BC_3.4, BC_3.14)
- number of non-substantive response options selected (over 20% of 'Not sure' or over 30% 'Prefer not to say' options selected)
- illogical or unlikely combinations of responses (which is dependent on the content of questions asked)
- responses to open-ended questions, including nonsense responses (e.g. strings of letters 'ajusybf' instead of response)
- duplication of respondents across different panels (checks for identical responses across different panellists)

We consider all these indicators when determining whether a respondent is removed for poor data quality. Data quality indicators other than verbatim responses are used to identify potentially problematic cases. Free-text responses that indicated thoughtful engagement with the survey encouraged retention of the respondent if where another data quality flag was recorded (e.g. respondent flagged for straight lining may be kept if their verbatim responses indicated engagement with the survey).

Data quality is tracked for panel members over time and those with repeated issues are retired from the Life in Australia™. Panels are also advised of poor-quality respondents for their own management purposes.

Following data quality checks, 94 were removed from the final data. These cases were excluded due to poor data quality and are not counted toward the completion rate. Reasons for removal included:

- High % of grid responses indicated straight lining
- High % of responses were selections of either the first or last response option
- High proportion of Prefer not to say or Don't Know responses
- Nonsense verbatim responses
- Identical responses across panels

3.4. Change management and data cleaning

Given the quick turnaround to program the survey ahead of the legislation implementation date of December 10th 2025, the questionnaires were still being reviewed as the survey was being programmed, leading to some changes occurring post start of fieldwork. These changes were also made to reduce the duration of the survey, and respondent burden.

[2] cfpb_nfwbs-puf-user-guide.pdf

These changes did require additional management by the Social Research Centre to ensure version control was maintained, and data cleaning processes took into account post-launch changes, and aligned data for respondents who completed earlier versions of the survey.

Additional data cleaning processes are outlined below:

- bp_4.15 (parental online monitoring) changed from multiple response, to a forced yes/no, and options were reduced later in field. Responses from participants who were shown a multiple response version were recoded to include yes/no response for each option
- bc_6.16 (time spent streaming / gaming) updated from a write in text box to a drop-down version in field, write in responses were back coded to match the drop-down bands
- bc_8.9 (platforms where harmful content was experienced) expanded into multiple questions post launch, bases had to be updated, and respondents who hadn't seen the earlier version of the question included as missing data.
- bc_3.2 and bc_3.3 (bed time and wake up times), similar to above, this was changed from a write-in to a standard list. Write in responses were back-coded to align with the bands displayed later

3.5. Electronic data provision

A final version of the data file (with weights) was provided in SPSS. Supporting documentation, including a data dictionary, was also provided.

4. Approach to weighting

4.1. Weights for parent respondents

The baseline survey comprised two components that were combined for weighting purposes:

1. A probability-based sample of parents with 10- to 16-year-old children from Life in Australia™.
2. Non-probability samples of parents with 10- to 16-year-old children.

The usual approach to weighting probability-based samples is a two-step process that aims to reduce biases caused by non-coverage and non-response and to align weighted sample estimates with external data about the target population (Kalton & Flores-Cervantes, 2003). First, base weights are calculated to account for each respondent's initial chance of selection and for the survey's response rate. Next, the base weights are adjusted to align respondents with the population on key socio-demographic characteristics. Refer to Särndal et al. (1992) for detailed information about model-assisted survey sampling and estimation, and to Valliant et al. (2018) for a contemporary treatment of weighting and estimation for sample surveys.

The non-probability samples used non-random mechanisms to recruit participants to the survey, which means that the design-based approach just described does not apply. However, there are several methods for weighting such samples and making estimates from them (refer to Valliant, 2020). The methods used for the baseline survey was "quasi-randomisation" which requires a reference sample chosen at random from the target population. The reference sample is used to estimate pseudo-selection probabilities for the convenience samples, to adjust for selection bias. For this survey, the reference sample consisted of the probability cases from Life in Australia™.

A machine learning model (Stekhoven & Bühlmann, 2012) was used to estimate base weights for the non-probability sample, conditional upon the reference weights for Life in Australia™ respondents and the demographic, lifestyle, and outcome variables common between the two samples. Following this process, the combined sample had base weights for the two groups – a probability-based one for Life in Australia™ cases and a modelled one for convenience cases.

The base weights were then adjusted to align the combined sample with the population on key characteristics. The choice of alignment characteristics was guided by three factors:

- Which characteristics are most different between the probability and convenience samples?
- Which characteristics are most associated with the survey's key questionnaire items?
- Which characteristics are most different between the combined sample and the population?

With these factors in mind, the characteristics used to adjust the weights are those shown in Table 10. This table also includes the population counts and percentages, obtained from an ABS data request for the 2021 Census (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2026). All population counts refer to the population of parents aged 18 and over with at least one child aged 10 to 16 years in the household.

The method used to adjust the base weights was regression calibration (Deville et al., 1993), implemented in R (R Core Team, 2023) using the survey package (Lumley, 2020). For more information on weighting of sample surveys, refer to Valliant et al. (2018).

4.2. Weights for child respondents

A second weight was calculated for respondents who completed the child section of the questionnaire. This weight reflects the child in the context of the population of Australian 10–16-year-old children. Like the non-probability sample, the design-based approach to weighting does not apply to child respondents, as there is a non-random mechanism of recruitment. Unlike the parent weighting, however, there is no probability-based reference sample with which the quasi-randomisation approach can be applied. Instead, a super-population

(modelling) approach is taken, in which all respondents are assigned the same base weight and regression calibration is used to adjust these base weights. More information on this approach can be found in Elliott and Valliant (2017).

The set of characteristics used to adjust the child weights are those shown in Table 11. This table also includes the population counts and percentages, obtained from a Census 2021 data request (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2026). All population counts refer to the Australian 10-16-year-old population.

4.3. Weights for parent-child pairs (dyads)

A third weight was also calculated, designed to reflect the parent-child dyad in the context of the population of Australian parents and 10–16-year-old child dyads. As with the child weights, the design-based approach to weighting does not apply to the dyads, since there is a non-random mechanism of selection. A super-population approach is taken, in which all dyads are assigned the same base weight of 1, and regression calibration is used to adjust base weights to match the population of parent-child pairs.

The set of characteristics used to adjust the dyad weights reflects the three attributes of parent-child pairs – child characteristics, parent characteristics and shared characteristics. Characteristics and population counts are shown in Table 12. Counts were estimated from the Census 2021 confidentialised unit record file (5% sample) (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2026). All population counts refer to the population of Australian parent and 10–16-year-old child dyads.

4.4. Weighting variables

Three weighting variables have been added to the dataset: *weight_parent*, *weight_child*, and *weight_dyad*. Each set of weights is calibrated to sum to the total number of dyads in the dataset; however, each is intended for a different analytical purpose:

- *weight_parent* should be used when making estimates and inferences for the population of parents.
- *weight_child* should be used when making estimates and inferences for the population of children aged 10-16 years.
- *weight_dyad* should be used when making estimates and inferences about the joint attitudes and behaviours of parent-child pairs.

Table 10 Characteristics used for adjusting parent base weights, with population distribution and data sources.

Category	Benchmark Target (#)	Benchmark Target (%)	Source
State or territory of residence			(A)
New South Wales	766,915	31.9	
Victoria	612,718	25.48	
Queensland	497,640	20.7	
South Australia	160,364	6.67	
Western Australia	254,090	10.57	
Tasmania	48,602	2.02	
Northern Territory	20,698	0.86	
Australian Capital Territory	43,390	1.8	

Category	Benchmark Target (#)	Benchmark Target (%)	Source
Part of State			(A)
Capital city	1,653,168	68.76	
Rest of state	751,249	31.24	
Age group by Highest education			(A)
18-34 years x Bachelor or above	15,915	0.66	
18-34 years x Below Bachelor	120,400	5.01	
35-44 years x Bachelor or above	367,867	15.3	
35-44 years x Below Bachelor	630,177	26.21	
45-54 years x Bachelor or above	466,739	19.41	
45-54 years x Below Bachelor	636,729	26.48	
55+ years x Bachelor or above	59,472	2.47	
55+ years x Below Bachelor	107,118	4.46	
Language other than English spoken at home			(A)
Yes	661,689	27.52	
No	1,742,728	72.48	
Gender			(A)
Man or male	1,077,205	44.8	
Woman or female	1,327,212	55.2	
Labour Force Status			(A)
Employed	1,962,489	81.62	
Other	441,928	18.38	

Sources:

(A) ABS Census 2021 (ABS 2026)

Table 11 Characteristics used for adjusting child base weights, with population distribution and data sources.

Category	Benchmark Target (#)	Benchmark Target (%)	Source
State or territory of residence			(A)
New South Wales	631,795	30.87	
Victoria	499,624	27.13	
Queensland	427,458	19.29	
South Australia	133,547	7.23	
Western Australia	213,727	10.22	
Tasmania	41,896	2.94	

Category	Benchmark Target (#)	Benchmark Target (%)	Source
Northern Territory	17,617	0.68	
Australian Capital Territory	34,849	1.65	
Age group			(A)
10-13 years	1,171,461	54.11	
14-16 years	829,053	45.89	
Language other than English spoken at home			(A)
Yes	375,156	15.43	
No	1,625,358	84.57	
Gender			(A)
Boy or male	1,029,811	54.09	
Girl or female	970,703	45.91	

Sources:

(B) ABS Census 2021 (ABS 2026)

Table 12 Characteristics used for adjusting dyad weights, with population distribution and data sources.

Category	Benchmark Target (#)	Benchmark Target (%)	Source
Age group – Child			(B)
10-13 years	95,038	59.17	
14-16 years	65,582	40.83	
Language other than English spoken at home – Child			(B)
Yes	29,277	18.23	
No	131,343	81.77	
Gender – Child			(B)
Boy or male	82,216	51.19	
Girl or female	78,404	48.81	
State or territory of residence – Shared			(B)
New South Wales	51,067	31.79	
Victoria	40,761	25.38	
Queensland	33,766	21.02	
South Australia	10,801	6.72	
Western Australia	16,766	10.44	
Tasmania	3,421	2.13	
Northern Territory	1,320	0.82	
Australian Capital Territory	2,718	1.69	

Category	Benchmark Target (#)	Benchmark Target (%)	Source
Age group by Highest education – Parent			(B)
18-34 years x Bachelor or above	893	0.56	
18-34 years x Below Bachelor	7,093	4.42	
35-44 years x Bachelor or above	24,155	15.04	
35-44 years x Below Bachelor	42,920	26.72	
45-54 years x Bachelor or above	33,033	20.57	
45-54 years x Below Bachelor	42,344	26.36	
55+ years x Bachelor or above	3,637	2.26	
55+ years x Below Bachelor	6,545	4.07	
Language other than English spoken at home – Parent			(B)
Yes	39,304	24.47	
No	121,316	75.53	
Gender – Parent			(B)
Man or male	72,754	45.3	
Woman or female	87,866	54.7	
Labour Force Status – Parent			(B)
Employed	133,220	82.94	
Other	27,400	17.06	

Sources:

(B) Census 2021 CURF (ABS 2026)

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The Social Research Centre Pty Ltd
Level 5, 350 Queen Street, Melbourne VIC 3000
PO Box 13328, Law Courts VIC 8010

03 9236 8500 | info@srcentre.com.au

srcentre.com.au

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