

Australian Children's and Parents' Perceptions of the Recent Social Media Ban



FAMILY ONLINE SAFETY INSTITUTE RESEARCH BRIEF

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This brief reflects the combined efforts of the Family Online Safety Institute and several external partners. A full list of contributors can be found below.

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Late in 2025, Australia's Social Media Minimum Age Act took effect, banning¹ social media accounts for children under the age of 16. This ban has meant that popular tech platforms like Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube², and others are no longer legally accessible to Australian children 15 and under. If tech companies do not comply, they are subject to fines. The Australian eSafety Commissioner has already threatened to take action against several tech companies "in cases of systemic noncompliance³." Great attention worldwide has been paid to the Australian ban, and several countries such as Spain, South Korea, Brazil, France, Thailand, and the UK⁴ are adopting, or considering adopting, similar legislation. In the United States, states including California, Virginia, and Nebraska have pursued legislation enacting varying restrictions on social media for minors⁵.

Australia's social media ban seems like the earthquake that started a tidal wave. As policymakers, educators, caregivers, and industry try to find their footing in this new normal, the Family Online Safety Institute (FOSI) conducted pre- (October 2025) and post-ban (March/April 2026) surveys in Australia focused on parents' and children's opinions about this new law. These surveys covered the unique timeframe right before and soon after the ban went into effect. Some Australian attitudes and behaviors related to the ban have shifted significantly. This research briefing maps these patterns in order to better understand how caregivers and children are navigating the first in a potentially long line of ban laws.



¹ While the Australian government refers to the Social Media Minimum Age Act as a social media "delay," for the purposes of this brief we will refer to it as an under 16 "ban." We have chosen to use the word "ban" to reflect the common terminology used by children and parents in Australia, as well as by other publications and news outlets.

² Australian children under the age of 16 are no longer able to have accounts on YouTube's main platform. However, YouTube Kids is still available.

³ [Australia readies social media court action citing teen ban breaches](#), Byron Kaye, Reuters. March 30, 2026

⁴ [Global Social Media Age Restriction Tracker](#), Tech Policy Press

⁵ [Eight States Enact Minor Social Media Bans Despite Court Fights](#), Sandy Dornsife, MultiState. October 8, 2025

The below report is one part of FOSI's larger Online Safety Survey, which runs bi-annually in the United States and, for the past two waves, Australia. This brief focuses solely on Australia. For a fuller look at U.S. children's and parents' views on social media bans and school smartphone restrictions, read *A Ban Briefing: Children & Parents' Perceptions of Social Media and Classroom Smartphone Bans in the U.S. and Australia*⁶, published by FOSI in December 2025. For reporting on the other information covered in the Online Safety Survey, including parental control use, educational attitudes, and top concerns, an additional whitepaper will be published in summer 2026.

This survey was fielded to children ages 10-17 and parents of children in that age range in both countries. Some questions were fielded to all children and parents in the sample, while some questions were only fielded to those officially affected by the ban (children ages 15 and under and parents of children ages 15 and under). Other questions were fielded to children 16 and under, and parents of children in this age range, because while 16-year-olds are not affected by the ban technically, many of their younger peers are. It felt important to include this group in the analysis due to their proximity to those affected. For complete counts of those surveyed, please refer to the footnotes accompanying each graph.

There are slight differences in the wording of several questions in the pre- and post-ban surveys, to reflect that the social media ban had been implemented and to ensure clarity for respondents. For example, the pre-ban survey question, "How confident are you that a national ban on social media for anyone under the age of 16 would be implemented successfully by the government?" became the post-ban survey question, "Do you agree that the national ban on social media accounts for anyone under the age of 16 has been implemented successfully by the government?" These changes are noted in the footnotes accompanying each graph when relevant. Due to the shift in response options for these specific questions, significance is not denoted.

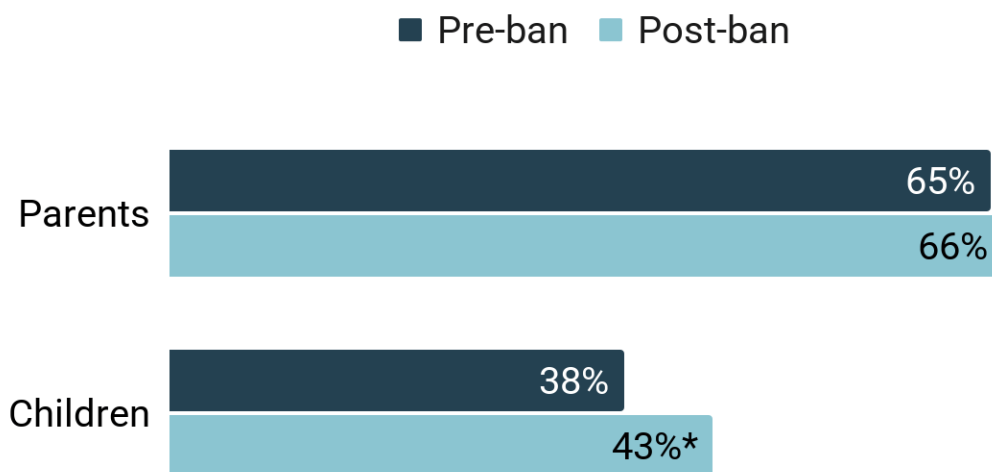


⁶ [A Ban Briefing: Children and Parents' Perceptions of Social Media and Classroom Smartphone Bans in the U.S. and Australia](#), Alanna Powers-O'Brien, Family Online Safety Institute, December 9, 2025

Social Media Ban: Support vs. Implementation

Before the social media ban went into effect, 65% of Australian parents were in support of the new restrictions. In the months following the law’s enactment, Australian parental sentiment has not changed, with two-thirds (66%) of parents supporting the ban. More notably, the number of Australian children who support the ban has increased since enforcement began, from 38% in support pre-ban, to 43% post-ban. This jump in support, while not dramatic, could signal a shift in attitudes about the ban, or at least movement towards acceptance from children. However, with less than half of Australian children supporting the ban, the new law is still not entirely popular among those most affected by the change.

Support for social media ban: Pre- and post-ban of social media for under 16s



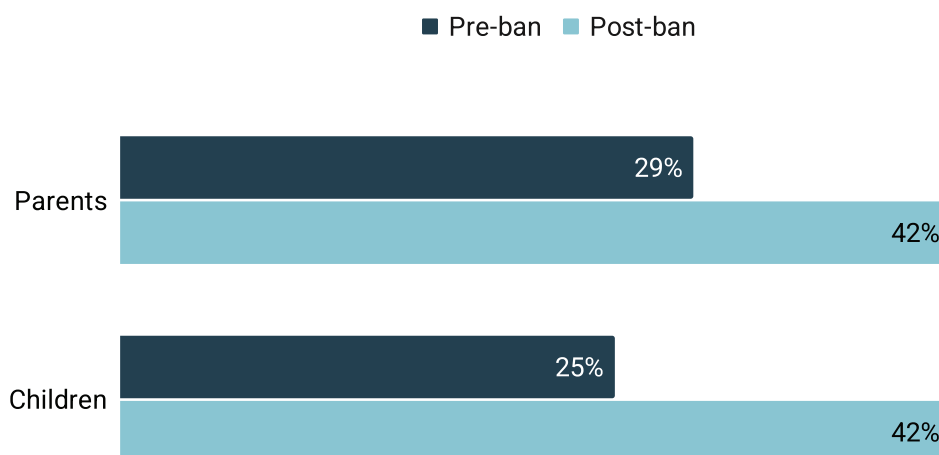
Graph represents answers to the agreement statement: I support a social media ban for children under the age of 16. Bar with an asterisk (*) differs significantly from other bar in children subgroup ($p < .05$). Respondents are pre-ban parents ($n = 1,000$), post-ban parents ($n = 1,003$), pre-ban children ($n = 1,000$) and post-ban children ($n = 1,003$).

Not only has children’s support for the ban increased, but both children and parents have also become more positive about its implementation. The pre-ban survey indicated little confidence that the Australian government would successfully implement this ban, with just under 1 in 3 parents (29%) and a quarter of children (25%) feeling confident about the implementation process. Post-ban, 42% of both groups agree that the ban has been implemented successfully by the government. These numbers reflect confidence in less than half of parents and children, but this is still a notable surge that could continue to grow as the ban rollout progresses.

“I think its [sic] bad. We want to talk to our friends. We can’t go to play with our friends after school because our parents don’t let us go out on our own. That means it’s supposed to be boring for us. I don’t like it. We don’t want to be lonely.” - 13 year old girl, New South Wales

“It’s good because I play sports and see my mates more.”
-13 year old boy, Queensland

Attitudes towards successful government implementation: Pre- and post-ban of social media for under 16s



Dark blue bars represent answers to the question: How confident are you that a national ban on social media for anyone under the age of 16 would be implemented successfully by the government? Light blue bars represent answers to the agreement statement: Do you agree that the national ban of social media accounts for anyone under the age of 16 has been implemented successfully by the government? Respondents are pre-ban parents (n = 1,000), post-ban parents (n = 1,003), pre-ban children (n = 1,000) and post-ban children (n = 1,003).

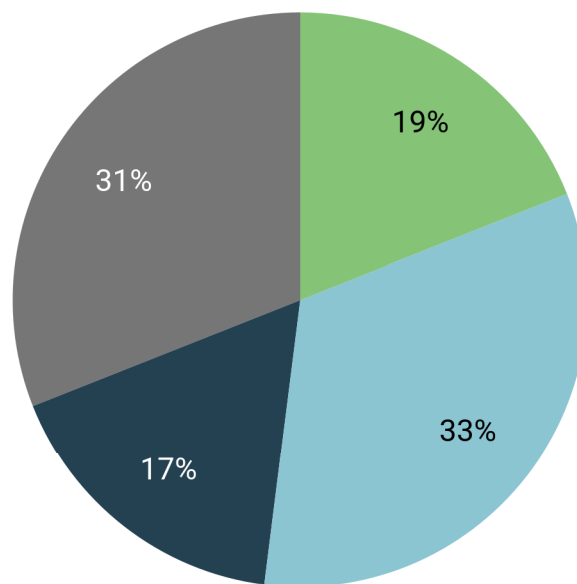
Due to the shift in response options, significance is not denoted.

Loss of Social Media Accounts Post-Ban

It is interesting to consider parents' and children's confidence in the ban implementation alongside data about children's loss of social media accounts. When asked, "Have you lost your accounts on social media platforms included in the ban?" less than two in ten (19%) of children 10-16 reported having lost all of their accounts, one-third (33%) reported having lost some of their accounts, and 17% reported having lost none of their accounts. The additional 31% did not have social media accounts to begin with.

Social media account loss following the social media ban for under 16s

● Lost all accounts ● Lost some accounts ● Lost no accounts ● Did not have accounts pre-ban



Graph represents answers to the question: Have you lost your accounts on social media platforms included in the ban? Respondents are post-ban children ages 10-15 (n = 762).

Therefore, half of surveyed children ages 10-15 (50%) have maintained some access to banned social media accounts. The other half (50%) either lost all of their accounts, or did not have them to begin with. This calls into question what children may view as a "successful" implementation. Perhaps support for implementation has increased among children because many still have access to some of their accounts. To note, the Australian eSafety Commissioner is aware of the large number of under 16s who maintain access to accounts, and has promised that more accounts will be suspended in the coming months through tech company compliance enforcement⁷.

"Children are so much more advanced with technology than any parents will be, and its [sic] the age old issue that if a teenager especially, is desperate enough to get what they want, they will find a way." - 41 year old woman, Victoria

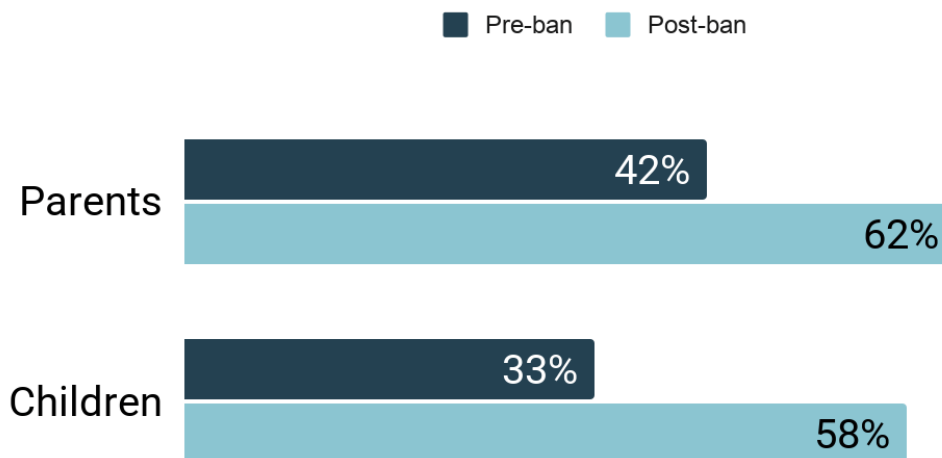
⁷[Social Media Minimum Age: Compliance update](#), Australian eSafety Commissioner, March 2026

Social Media Ban and Mental Health/Well-being

It is difficult to separate the social media ban conversation from broader concerns about children’s mental health and well-being. Supporters of social media bans and restrictions often link their advocacy to concerns about the mental health crisis, though evidence of the link between social media use and youth mental health is inconclusive and children’s mental health depends on a broad swath of factors⁸. Pre-ban survey data showed a rather skeptical Australian public, with less than half (42%) of parents and one-third (33%) of children stating they felt confident about the ban’s ability to help protect the mental health and well-being of children under 16.

Post-ban, confidence has shifted upwards, with 58% of children and 62% of parents agreeing that the ban is helping to protect the mental health and well-being of children under 16. Now that the ban is in effect, both groups are experiencing potentially unexpected improvements in child mental health.

Attitudes towards protection of mental health/well-being of children: Pre- and post-ban of social media for under 16s



Dark blue bars represent answers to the question: How confident are you that a ban on social media will help protect the mental health of children under the age of 16? Light blue bars represent answers to the agreement statement: Do you agree that the ban on social media is helping protect the mental health and well-being of children under 16? Respondents are pre-ban parents (n = 1,000), post-ban parents (n = 1,003), pre-ban children (n = 1,000) and post-ban children (n = 1,003). Due to the shift in response options, significance is not denoted.

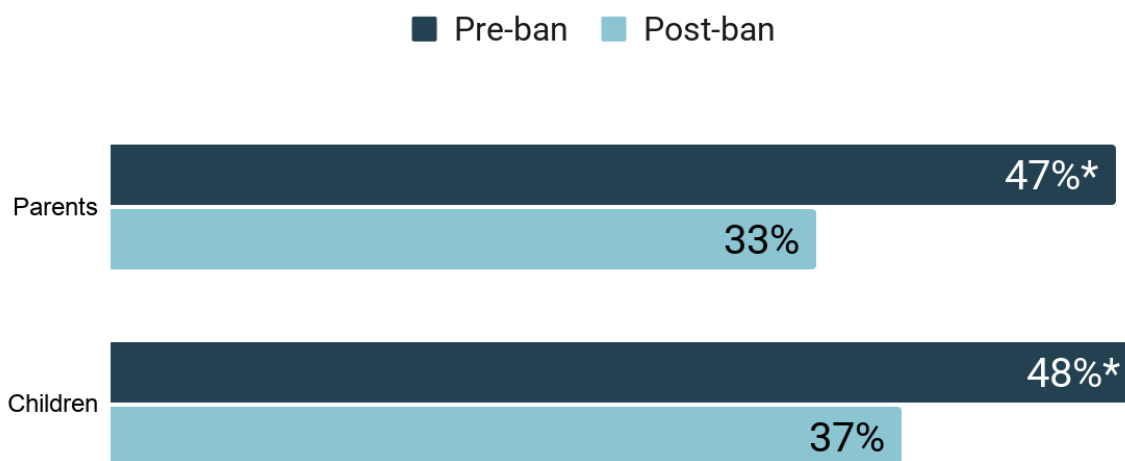
“They are doing a great job to save our children.”
-43 year old man, South Australia

⁸ [Time spent on gaming and social media not to blame for teen mental health issues](#), Joe Stafford, University of Manchester. January 14, 2026

Social Media Ban and Screen Time

While confidence in the ban’s ability to help protect mental health and well-being has improved between pre- and post-surveys, Australians’ outlook about the ban’s impact on children’s screen time reduction has diminished post-ban. Pre-ban, just under half of children 10-16⁹ (48%) and parents of children 10-16 (47%) said a social media ban would decrease their/their child’s screen time. Post-ban, these numbers have dropped, with 37% of children and 33% of parents in these groups stating that the social media ban actually has decreased their/their child’s screen time.

Screen time reduction: Pre- and post-ban of social media for under 16s



Dark blue bars represent answers to the agreement statement: A social media ban for children under 16s will decrease my child’s/my screen time. Light blue bars represent answers to the agreement statement: A social media ban for children under 16 has decreased my child’s/my screen time. Dark blue bars with asterisks differ significantly from light blue bars in the same subgroup, “parents” and “children” respectively ($p < .05$). Respondents are pre-ban parents (n = 879), post-ban parents of children ages 10-16 (n = 895), pre-ban children ages 10-16 (n = 878) and post-ban children ages 10-16 (n = 874).

⁹ Researchers asked this question to 16-year-olds because while they are not affected by the ban technically, many of their younger peers are. It felt important to include this group in the analysis because of their proximity to those affected, given the social nature of the impacted platforms.

If screen time has not decreased for most children, what does this time online look like in the post-ban era? This picture is not as clear. Post-ban, 46% of children 10-16 say the ban has caused them to spend more time on other digital platforms, such as video games and text messaging. In contrast, just 36% of parents of children 10-16 say their children are now spending more time on other digital platforms. This 10% difference between parents and children may mean that children are not fully disclosing their digital activities to their parents. One concern with the social media ban is that it could push children to more unsavory corners of the internet, or cause children to be less transparent with their parents about their media use¹⁰. Therefore, this disparity in parent and child reporting should be closely monitored and further studied.

Children's increased time on other platforms: Post-ban of social media for under 16s



Graph represents answers to the agreement statement: A social media ban has caused my child/me to spend more time on other digital platforms. Bar with asterisk differs significantly from other bar in graph ($p < .05$). Respondents are post-ban parents of children ages 10-16 ($n = 895$) and post-ban children ages 10-16 ($n = 874$).

To add more nuance to this discussion, pre-ban, 59% of children and 50% of parents agreed that the social media ban would cause them/their children to spend more time on other digital platforms. These numbers are higher than what has actually come to fruition post-ban, meaning migration to other platforms has not been as widely adopted as pre-ban attitudes indicated. The fact that half of children under 16 have maintained access to at least one social media platform could also play a role in this lower-than-predicted migration.

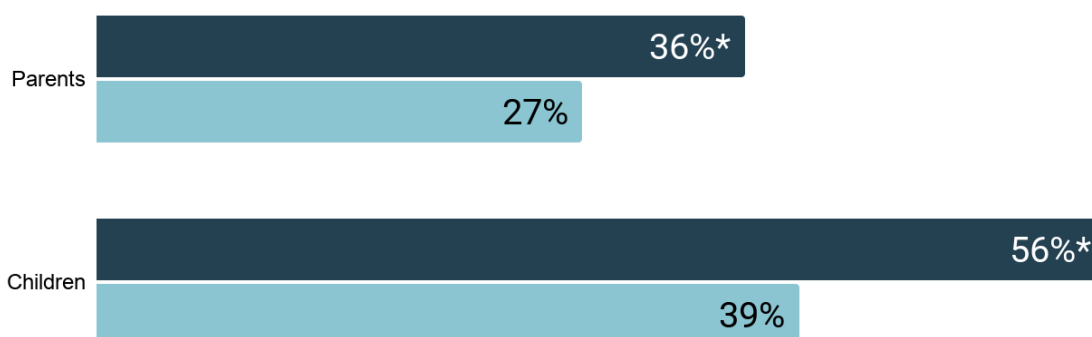
¹⁰ [New research shows teen social media bans might not be the answer](#), Ash Johnson, The Hill. February 7, 2026

Social Media Ban and Children’s Connections

Another concern surrounding the social media ban was the potential loss of connection and support for children, particularly among those who live in rural areas with less in-person access to friends, family, and community. Pre-ban, more than half of children ages 10-16 (56%) were worried about losing important connections and support networks. More than one-third (36%) of parents of children 10-16 also had this concern. Post-ban, about four in ten children 10-16 (39%) stated that they have lost connections and support they cannot get elsewhere, with just over a quarter (27%) of parents with children in this age range stating that their children have lost important connections and support.

Concerns about loss of connections and support: Post-ban of social media for under 16s

■ Pre-ban ■ Post-ban



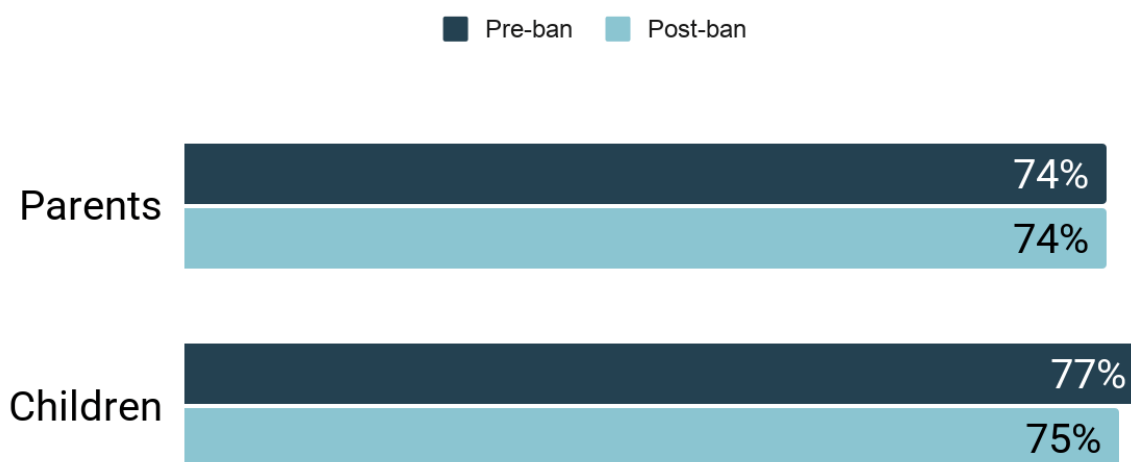
Dark blue bars represent answers to the agreement statement: I am concerned that a social media ban will mean that my child/I will lose important connections and support they can’t get elsewhere. Light blue bars represent answers to the agreement statement: I am concerned that a social media ban has meant that my child/I has/have lost important connections and support they/I can’t get elsewhere. Dark blue bars with asterisks differ significantly from light blue bars in same subgroup, “parents” and “children” respectively ($p < .05$). Respondents are pre-ban parents of children 10-16 ($n = 879$), post-ban parents of children ages 10-16 ($n = 895$), pre-ban children ages 10-16 ($n = 878$), and post-ban children ages 10-16 ($n = 874$).

The significant decline in these concerns between the pre-ban and post-ban surveys is another area that points to better outcomes than the Australian public had predicted in late 2025. This could indicate that Australian children have found other ways to connect, perhaps through texting, gaming, or by putting more effort into in-person hangouts. Or, because many children have maintained access to their social media accounts, some may not feel the impact of the potential loss of connection just yet.

Social Media Companies' Role

As the social media ban continues to roll out, many Australians are also keen for tech companies to increase their commitment to children's online safety. This is evident in survey respondents' widespread support for special accounts with additional protections for teenagers. In fact, three-quarters (75%) of Australian children and 74% of Australian parents agree that these accounts should exist. These numbers have barely shifted from the pre-ban survey, when 77% of children and 74% of parents agreed that companies should create such accounts. These numbers show that even after the ban has gone into effect, Australian children and parents are still looking for increased online protections. This may be an acknowledgement that a social media ban is not the whole solution to keeping children safe online.

Support for teen social media accounts: Post-ban of social media for under 16s



Graph represents answers to the agreement statement: Social media companies should create special accounts with additional protections for teenagers. pre-ban parents (n = 1,000), post-ban parents (n = 1,003), pre-ban children (n = 1,000) and post-ban children (n = 1,003).

In 2025, Australia's social media ban generated strong reactions from both supporters and critics. In 2026, the world has watched the ban's rollout closely, assessing its effectiveness and practicality from near and far. As several countries and U.S. states aim to enact similar legislation, this briefing provides insights into Australians' views of the ban both before and after enactment.

What has unfolded in Australia since December 2025 is complicated, and it is too early to declare the ban a resounding success, a catastrophic failure, or something in between. Children's support for the ban has grown, but still sits below 50%. Half of surveyed children 10-16 still have access to at least one banned social media platform. In the post-ban era, more Australians think that the ban has a positive effect on children's mental health and well-being, even while only a third claim that their/their child's screen time has decreased. Nearly half of children claim the ban has caused them to spend more time on other platforms, but only 36% of parents say this is true of their children. Through it all, support for teen social media accounts with special protections has remained consistently high.

This briefing aims to give a voice to those most affected by legislation: children and parents. How they navigate and view this ban is one of the most important metrics for this policy and any other similar legislation to come. For any state or country planning to enact similar laws, interacting with and learning from children and guardians is essential to creating effective pathways forward. For Australia, the shifts in children's and parents' pre- and post-ban attitudes and behaviors show that change can happen with implementation. Children's and parents' understanding and support of the ban should continue to be carefully researched, and the reasons behind these shifts in attitudes and behavior deserve further exploration.

Social media bans are one part of a larger conversation about children's online safety. This topic is often complicated, and requires care and consideration for the whole child, not just their time spent on social media. FOSI's Online Safety Survey covers a variety of topics related to screen use, education, and safety concerns. For a close look at that research, an additional whitepaper will be published in summer 2026.



The data in this brief is part of a larger research project titled the “Online Safety Survey.” This data was collected by Ipsos, a leading market research firm. The Australian pre-ban survey involved 2,000 total respondents, 1,000 children aged 10-17 and 1,000 parents of children in that age range. The Australian post-ban survey involved 2,006 total respondents, 1,003 children aged 10-17 and 1,003 parents of children in that age range. Data is representative by child age and gender.

Pre-ban data was collected from Thursday, October 2, 2025 to Monday, October 20, 2025. Post-ban data was collected from Tuesday, March 17, 2026 to Monday, April 6, 2026. Participants qualified if they or their children used the internet for at least three hours weekly. Data was analyzed via SPSS. No post-hoc weights were applied to this study, and the findings reflect the opinion of survey respondents only.

ABOUT FOSI: The FAMILY ONLINE SAFETY INSTITUTE is an international, non-profit organization that works to make the online world safer for kids and their families. FOSI convenes leaders in industry, government and the non-profit sectors to collaborate and innovate new solutions and policies in the field of online safety. Through research, resources, events and special projects, fosi promotes a culture of responsibility online and encourages a sense of digital citizenship for all. FOSI’s membership includes many of the leading internet and telecommunications companies around the world.

This research is supported by Disney’s Digital Wellness Grant Program & TikTok

