# What teenagers think about social media ban in Australia

▶ **Recently, Australia passed a law banning children under the age of 16 from using social media, making it the strictest of such laws in the world. The Australian government believes this law will support parents in protecting their children from the potential harms of social media, such as addiction, privacy issues, and exposure to inappropriate content. But what do kids themselves think about this move? We asked teenagers around the world about their opinion. Here are their responses.**

## A ban too harsh or just about right?

Some teens see the ban as a step too far, arguing that social media is an essential part of their lives. *"Social media is a huge part of teen culture,"* says **Sergei, 16, from Estonia**. *"Banning it would isolate us from the global internet culture and limit how we express ourselves."* He believes that although the ban may make socializing online harder, teens will still find ways to get around it. *"They'll just use VPNs, and the ban will fail to achieve its goal."*

Others, like **12-year-old Luna from the Netherlands**, share similar doubts pointing out that age restrictions can be easily bypassed. *"It probably won't work because you can just say you were born in 2002 and download the app anyway,"* she said.



*"It's not a problem of the internet, it's a problem of society,"* said **16-year-old Peter from the UK**. He argued that the ban addresses symptoms, not causes, of social media-related issues. *"Information will always find a way to get out there,"* he explains. *"We're not solving the real problem, which is how society handles things like privacy and addiction."*

## Responsibility of parents or governments

Who should regulate social media use—parents or governments? Many felt strongly that the responsibility lies with families. "*It should be up to the parents to decide, not the government,*" said **16-year-old Peter from the UK**, highlighting the role of parental guidance in setting boundaries.

**A 16-year-old girl from the Netherlands** emphasized that children should learn how to handle social media properly under their parents' supervision. "*It's the parents' responsibility to make sure their child isn't spending too much time on TikTok or similar platforms,*" she said. She also suggests setting limits, such as screen time restrictions, to help control the amount of time spent online.

Another **teen from the Netherlands** suggested that parents could set limits or time restrictions, which families could oversee. "*Policing it will mostly depend on the parents,*" he argued, adding that age-appropriate conversations and clear expectations from parents could have a longer-lasting impact.

## Social media is a part of teen's identity

For many teens, the ban risks alienating them from a crucial part of their identity. Banning it could isolate young people from global conversations. "*There are a lot of teens who use social media to chat about their interests (movies, video games, etc.). They might feel lonely without the ability to communicate with people who share the same hobbies*", says **Vik, 16, from Lithuania.**

Others saw a potential silver lining. **15-year-old Nikita from the Netherlands** believed the ban could promote healthier social development.

While opinions vary widely, most teens see social media as both a tool for self-expression and a potential source of harm. Whether it's fostering creativity, connecting with others, or posing risks like addiction and privacy invasion, social media plays a significant role in their lives. Addressing its challenges requires balancing regulation, education, and personal responsibility rather than outright bans.

## A complex debate

Some teens believed the ban had merit. **20-year-old Sam from the Netherlands** explains that "*kids who engage with social media at a young age can become insecure and develop unrealistic standards*." However, he acknowledged that enforcing the law would be a major challenge.

**Vik, 16, from Lithuania**, thinks the idea of a social media ban for minors could be a good one, but with some reservations. "*Teenagers use social media to connect with friends and share their art*," she says. "*It's important to have those connections. Banning all social media would just make the situation worse.*"

While some teens support the intention behind the ban, they feel the age limit is too high. "*Setting the age limit at 16 is too high,*" says **a teen, 16, from the Netherlands**. "*12 would be more reasonable.*"

"*Managing social media use becomes easier with age,*" shared **16-year-old Lily from the Netherlands**. "*But waiting until 16 feels unnecessary. Starting at 13 makes more sense.*"

## Privacy Concerns

Many teens worried that requiring ID verification could jeopardize privacy. "*If you try to enforce this with an ID, there's a high chance that people will just fake it,*" said a **16-year-old boy from the Netherlands**.

The UK teen noted that age verification systems might make sensitive data accessible to governments and corporations, raising the risk of surveillance and breaches of privacy.

For the most teens, the idea of banning social media feels unrealistic. **Sam, 20, from the Netherlands,** acknowledges the harm social media can cause, especially for younger kids, but worries about implementing this ban: "*Policing this will be extremely difficult. The entire younger generation is now used to it. Getting them "quit" will be very hard.*"

While the goal of protecting young people from the dangers of social media is important, teenagers are wondering about how best to go about it. Many feel that the issue lies more with societal problems, like addiction and privacy, rather than the platforms themselves.
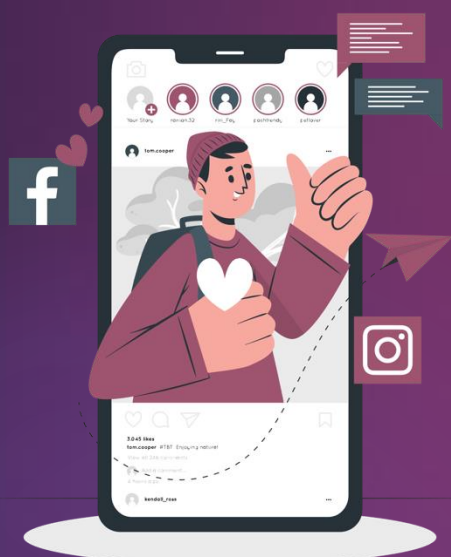
## Alternative solution

Most teens agreed on one thing: education and moderation are better solutions than outright bans. "*Children just need to learn how to handle social media properly,*" said a **16-year-old teen girl from the Netherlands**. She suggested that parents, schools, and platforms work together to educate young users about the risks and responsibilities of social media.

Some teens proposed additional measures, such as mandatory video lessons on social media or built-in time restrictions on apps. These ideas, they argued, together with parental involvement, such as discussions about social media's effects could help reduce harm without isolating teens from their digital world.

While adults debate policy, teens are clear about one thing: their voices must be heard. As one youth advocate put it, "*We need to be involved in developing solutions.*"

▶ *What do you think? Should governments decide how social media is used, or should it be up to parents and teens themselves?*

▶ *Leave your comments:* https://online-safety.org

## How different countries regulate children's social media use

▶ **USA**: Many social media platforms set the minimum age for creating an account at 13. However, many children still bypass this limit by entering a false birthdate.

▶ **EU:** In the EU, parental consent is required for the processing of personal data for children under the age of 16, though member states can lower that limit to 13.

▶ **Sweden** permits children aged 13 and above to use social media platforms without parental consent. There is ongoing discussion about strengthening age verification processes.

▶ **Netherlands** permits children aged 13 and above to use social media platforms without parental consent.

▶ **Norway:** The government have recently proposed raising the age at which children can use social media to 15 from 13, although parents would still be permitted to sign off on behalf their underage kids.

▶ **France:** In 2023, France passed a law requiring social platforms to obtain parental consent for minors under 15 to create accounts. However, it is not yet enforced.

▶ **Germany:** Minors between the ages of 13 and 16 are allowed to use social media only if their parents give consent.

▶ **Belgium:** In 2018, Belgium enacted a law requiring children to be at least 13 to create a social media account without parental permission.

▶ **Italy:** Children under 14 need parental consent to sign up for social media accounts.