



RESEARCH EXPLAINER

What that Angus Reid Poll of Public Opinion on Banning Children from Social Media Actually Shows

The widely cited "75% support" figure tells a more complicated story than the headlines suggest. Let's take a closer look at the details about who answered what for this survey.

Source: Angus Reid Institute, "Banning children under 16 from social media platforms widely supported by parents and most Canadians" - March 30, 2026

The survey was conducted March 11-17, 2026 and included responses from 4,005 Canadian adults + 0 respondents under 18 years of age

Cross-tabulations: [Children PR Tables \(PDF\)](#) | [Questionnaire \(PDF\)](#)

At their 2026 National Convention, the Liberal Party voted to pursue a minimum age of 16 for social media accounts in Canada. The news coverage widely cited an Angus Reid Institute poll allegedly showing that **"75% of Canadians support a full ban."** But a critical review of the poll data tells a different story. Here's what the data found in Angus Reid's own cross-tabulations, i.e. tables that provide the detailed breakdowns of responses by age of the oldest child in the home, response intensity (e.g., strongly vs. somewhat), and comparison across policy options, actually shows.

01 A "full ban" was the least popular option tested

Respondents were presented with five possible policy measures. A blanket ban on all social media for under-16s received the lowest support of any option. Design-regulation and transparency measures including banning specific apps only, requiring parental consent, in-app usage reports, and mandatory time limits, *all polled higher.*



Canadians expressed a clear preference for targeted, design-focused interventions over the blunt age ban option. Headlines focused on the option with the lowest public support, not the highest.

Notably, none of the options provided in this poll outlined policies that would place other types of significant restrictions on tech companies, such as restricting the use of persuasive designs and gambling mechanics, or requiring robust and effective content moderation wherever children are present. Instead, age bans and parental monitoring were presented as the only two types of responses available.

-See original chart (Figure SM6) in Angus Reid report

02

Nearly half of "support" is soft and weakens among parents most affected

The data breakdown reveals that the "75% support" figure can only be obtained by combining two very different answer categories, representing different levels of support. Across the general population, only 41% of respondents *strongly* support a full ban while another 34% only *somewhat* support it. Nearly half the headline figure is soft support. These are respondents who may well prefer an alternative if offered one.

Among parents of children who are currently teenagers, the picture shifts further. The more directly a family is affected by the proposed ban, the weaker support becomes:

	Strongly support	Somewhat support	Net support	Net oppose
General population	41%	34%	75%	18%
Parents, oldest child 10-12	44%	29%	73%	22%
Parents, oldest child 13-15	37%	31%	68%	27%
Parents, oldest child 16-17	31%	32%	63%	31%

Source: QPOL1 cross-tabulations by oldest child age. Highlighted row = age group most directly affected by the proposed ban. Subgroup sample sizes are small ($n = 115-164$), so margins of error are wider (approx. $\pm 7-9$ points).

The highlighted row is the most relevant here: parents of 13-15 year olds, i.e. the teenagers that an age-based ban restricting children under 16 years from social media would primarily target and impact. Among *these* parents, strong support drops to 37%. Over a quarter are Opposed to it, and 10% are Strongly Opposed (double the general population rate of 5%).

03

Most 13-15 year olds are already on social media

The poll's own data on current usage reveals a significant gap between what a ban proposes and what families are actually experiencing:

Oldest child age	Currently using social media	Strongly support full ban	No restrictions in place
10-12	49%	44%	1%
13-15	77%	37%	13%
16-17	89%	31%	29%

Source: QPT1, QPOL1, and QPT2 cross-tabulations. "Currently using social media" = children in household currently use social media.

Among 13-15 year olds, **more than three-quarters are already active social media users**. A ban would not merely prevent future uptake — it would attempt to remove access from a population already deeply embedded in these platforms. Meanwhile, 81% of their parents already impose at least some restrictions on their child's social media use, including app limits, activity monitoring, time controls, or rules about phones at night.

Perhaps most strikingly: half of children aged 10-12 are already on social media which is below the existing age-13 minimum that most platforms already (albeit nominally) enforce. This suggests that age-based restrictions, even when they already exist, are not preventing access.

This and the broader research suggest: The more direct a parent's experience with a teenager's actual social media use, the less likely they are to support a blanket ban and the more likely they are to already be managing that use through other means.

04

Parents of teenagers increasingly believe kids can use social media responsibly

Respondents were asked whether "most teens are capable of using social media responsibly." The results vary dramatically by age of the parent's oldest child:

20%

Parents of 10-to-12-year-olds who agree teens can use social media responsibly

39%

Parents of 13-to-15-year-olds who agree — nearly double

Among parents of 16-17 year olds, agreement that their child can use social media responsibly rises to 44%. Parents whose children are actually living with social media are significantly more likely to believe teenagers can handle it. This finding further complicates the case for removing access entirely.

-Source: QR1 cross-tabulations, Children PR Tables

05

Most ban supporters say it's parents' job, not government's

72% of all respondents, and 70% of those who support a "full ban," agree with the statement "parents, not governments, should be primarily responsible for regulating teens' social media use." **Only 20% say government should be primarily responsible.**

70%

of ban supporters say parents — not government — should be primarily responsible

Among parents of 13-15 year olds, this rises to 75%

This tension is largely unmentioned and unexamined in the news coverage. It could even be read as suggesting that, for at least some respondents, "support" for a ban reflects a general desire for something to be done or an opinion about how families should manage children's digital activities — rather than a considered endorsement of the specific policy instrument of prohibition.

-Source: QR1, see also Figure SM11 in main report

06

There is no consensus on age 16 as the right threshold

When asked what age is appropriate for children to access social media, only 32% of the general population selected 16. Among parents of 13-15 year olds — the group most directly affected — just 25% chose 16.

Roughly equal numbers across the population chose ages 10-12 (13%), 14 (16%), and 15 (13%). The "under 16" line in the Liberal resolution does not reflect a clear Canadian consensus that this is the most appropriate threshold. It reflects Australia's precedent.

-Source: QPT1.5, see also Figure SM1 in main report

...and most importantly: no youth were surveyed

4,005 Canadian adults were surveyed. Zero respondents under 18, a demographic that makes up **nearly one-fifth of Canada's population**. A poll about policy that would directly restrict the digital lives of roughly 8 million young Canadians collected *no data from any of them*.

This mirrors the broader pattern of youth exclusion from the policy debate. At the Liberal convention, 17-year-old delegate Carter Scott told reporters he was "frustrated that young people didn't get a chance to chime into the debate on the convention floor" (Canadian Press News, 2026).

Methodological notes: The Angus Reid Forum is a proprietary opt-in online panel, not a probability sample. Results are weighted to census demographics, but the margin of error (± 1.5 points) is offered "for comparison purposes only." Parent subgroups by age of oldest child are small ($n = 115-164$ unweighted), meaning subgroup margins of error are approximately $\pm 7-9$ points. The survey was self-commissioned and paid for by ARI.

-See full methodology statement in main report

What the data points toward

Despite its press release and coverage, the Angus Reid poll does not make a straightforward case for a social media ban. What it does tell us is:

- Canadians prefer targeted interventions over blanket prohibitions.
- Support weakens among parents closest to the issue.
- Most parents are already managing their children's digital lives.
- Ban supporters simultaneously say regulating access is the parents' job, not the government's.
- Children and teenagers were not asked, even though they are the most directly impacted — by both the proposed age ban AND by the underlying issues and concerns it seeks to address.

Assessment

The policy conversation needs to move beyond "ban or no ban" and start tackling the harder but more productive question:

How do we hold platforms accountable for making their products safe and age-appropriate for young users?



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All data cited is drawn from the Angus Reid Institute's published report and cross-tabulation tables, available at angusreid.org. The full [cross-tabulations \(PDF\)](#) and [questionnaire \(PDF\)](#) are linked for verification. Claude.AI was used to assist with trend spotting, comparing datasets, and layout. All results were verified.