

Pureprofile 

Australia's Under-16s Social Media Ban Report 2026

Wave 2



Research methodology

○ Fieldwork:

Wave 1: October 2025

Wave 2: April 2026

○ Market:

Australia

○ Target audience

Parents of children aged 8 – 15

Teachers of children aged 8 – 18 (Primary & Secondary)

Children aged 8 – 15 (assisted by parents)

Adolescents aged 16 – 24

○ Significance arrows

Arrows and callouts in the report indicate **statistically significant differences** from the total or previous wave at 95% confidence level.

Non-significant differences are not shown.

Sample size:

○ **Total Australians** n= 1025

○ **Parents** n= 738

○ **Non-Teacher** n= 757

○ **Teacher** n= 268

○ **High School Teacher** n= 94

○ **Primary School Teacher** n= 112

○ **Adolescent (16-24-year-olds)** n= 231

○ **Male** n= 439

○ **Female** n= 586

○ **8-12-year-old children** n= 304

○ **13-15-year-old children** n= 255

Total questions:

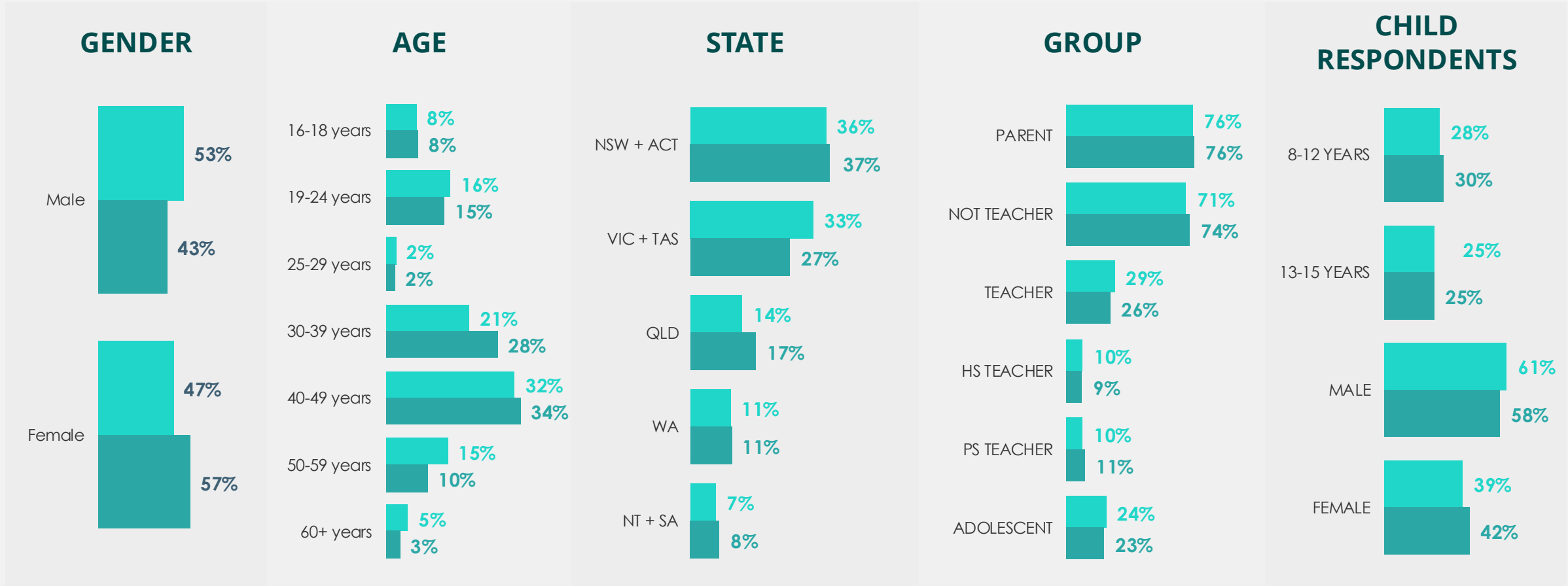
○ **Adolescents & Teachers** = 21

○ **Parents** = 41

○ **8-15-year-olds** = 18

Wave 1 in October 2025 spoke to n= 820 Australians and their children

Wave 2 in April 2026 spoke to n= 1025 Australians and their children



■ WAVE 1 ■ WAVE 2

NET: 16-24
 Wave 1: 24%
 Wave 2: 24%

A note on reading the report

Statistical significance

Typically, we use statistical significance to determine whether two data points from a survey are actually different to one another.

When we calculate two numbers to be statistically different, it simply means that we can feel confident that the differences are real and meaningful, and not just a result of chance.

It's important to remember that **a higher number doesn't always mean it's significantly higher**; some differences might look large but aren't meaningful once we take normal variation into account.

In this report, we can be 95% confident that the differences we've found are genuine and not just random variation.

▲ ▼ Sig. difference at 95% confidence

An up arrow ▲ means a result is **significantly higher** than the other group

A down arrow ▼ means it's **significantly lower** than the other group

T2B & B2B

T2B refers to the sum of the top 2 response options; for example: "completely agree" and "somewhat agree".

B2B refers to the sum of the bottom 2 response options; for example: "completely disagree" and "somewhat disagree".

6 months ago, Australia did something no country has done before...

We banned social media for under-16s

**Before the ban came in,
Australians were united on 2 things...**

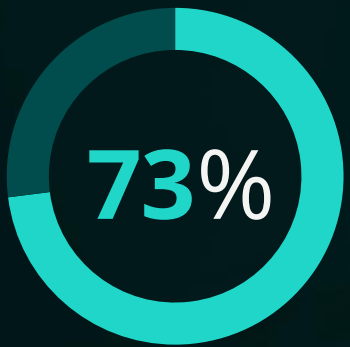
**We overwhelmingly
supported it...**

**But we were
overwhelmingly sceptical...**

Here is what happened next....

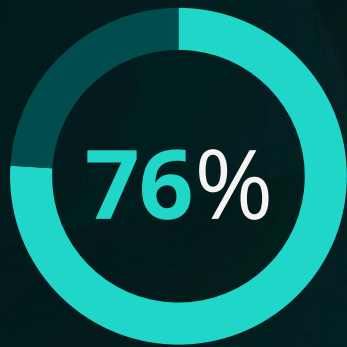
In October 2025, support was broad with nearly 3 in 4 Australians getting behind it...

...In 2026 support remains high



2025

Somewhat / Completely support the ban



2026

Somewhat / Completely support the ban

But support for the ban tells us little about how successful the ban has been, **and questions remain...**

Has the **ban worked**?

Have kids overwhelmingly **walked away from social media** altogether?










And if they have, **what are they doing instead**?











Are **platforms actually enforcing age verification**?
Or are parents carrying the load of the enforcement?

Are **all Australian parents the same**, or are there factors that influence not only how likely they are to enforce the ban, but also the enforcement tools they use, and how successful they are when doing it?

Banned for Under-16s

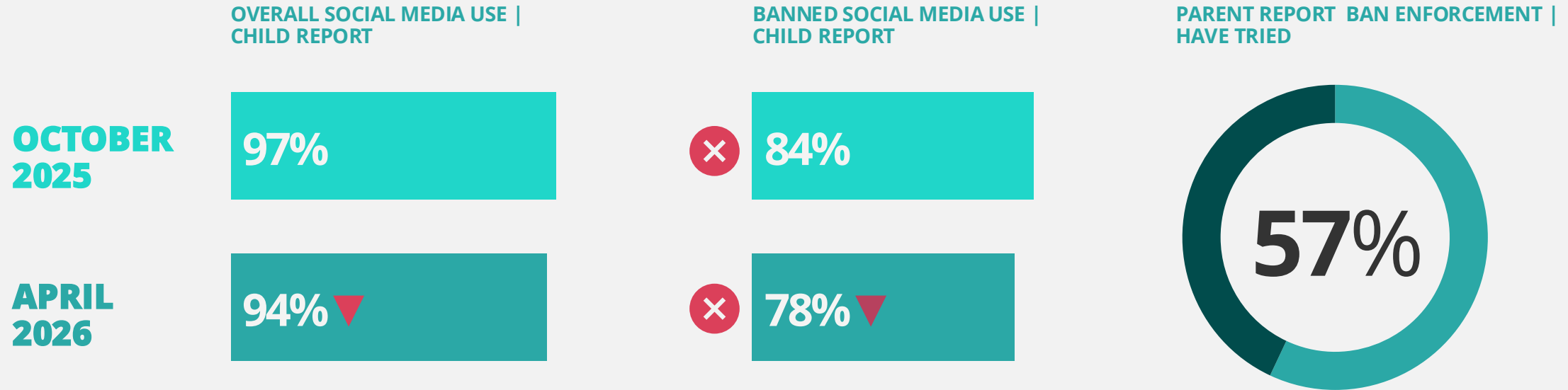
Allowed for Under-16s

 Facebook	 Instagram	 YouTube
 X (Formerly Twitter)	 TikTok	 Reddit
 Kick	 Snapchat	 Twitch

 Facebook Messenger	 YouTube Kids	 GitHub	 Discord
 Pinterest	 WhatsApp	 Lego Play	 Steam
 HubApp	 Roblox		

On face value, the ban has reduced how many under-16s are using social media... just not by much

And while there has been a significant drop in **overall social media use** since October '25, 94% of under-16s still use **some** form of social media, despite nearly **2 in 3 parents** trying to enforce the ban.

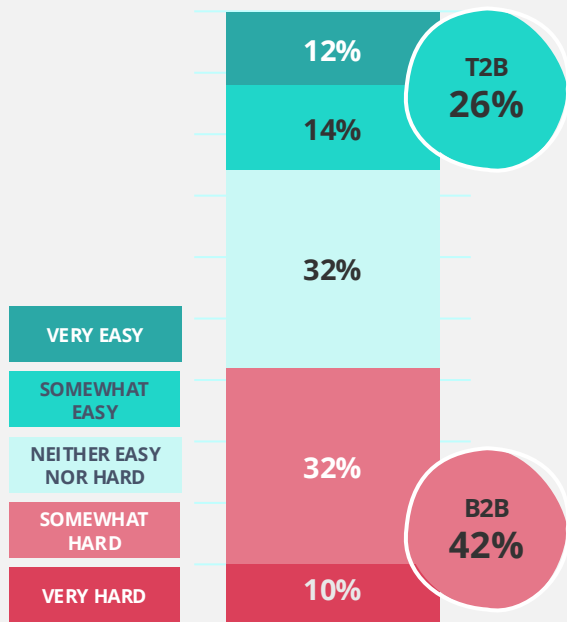


And despite lower usage on the banned platforms, nearly 80% of under-16s are still on them.

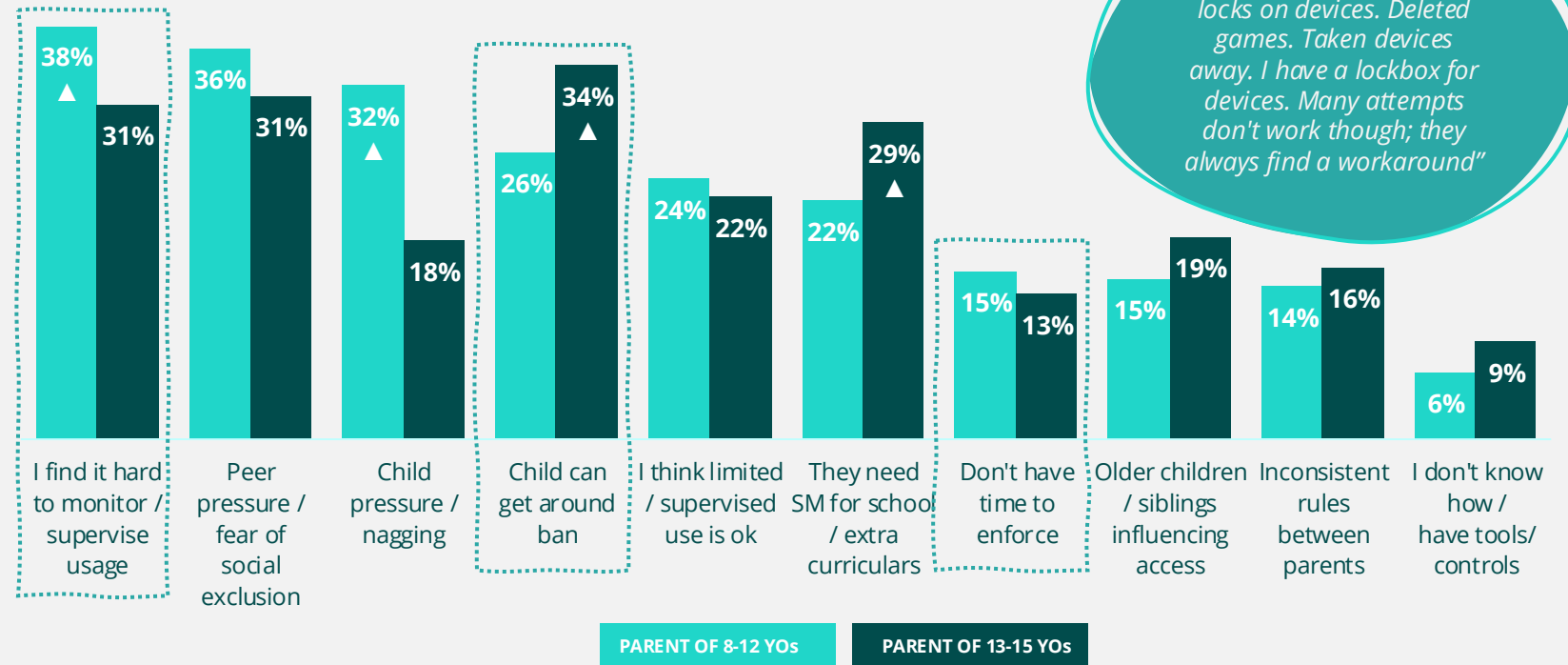
4 in 10 Australian parents have found it hard to enforce the ban – which often comes down to their own capacity for supervision

But parents are also facing push back from their children; as well as fighting against a **highly tech-savvy generation** who, by their own admission, can get around the ban and many parental controls or limits.

BAN ENFORCEMENT DIFFICULTY | PARENT REPORT



BAN ENFORCEMENT DIFFICULTY REASON | PARENT REPORT

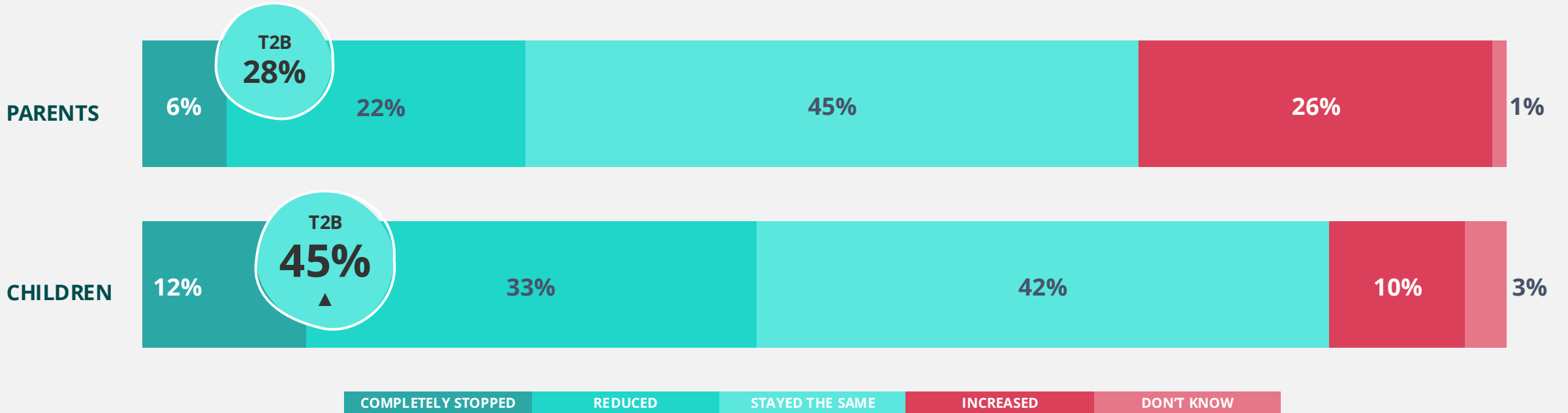


"I have put more parental locks on devices. Deleted games. Taken devices away. I have a lockbox for devices. Many attempts don't work though; they always find a workaround"

Despite these challenges, broadly speaking, children and their parents tell similar stories, but not the same one

Nearly half of parents (45%) and their children (42%) say social media use has stayed the same since the ban began. However, while 1 in 4 parents believe their child’s usage has increased, nearly half of children say their own usage has **actually decreased**.

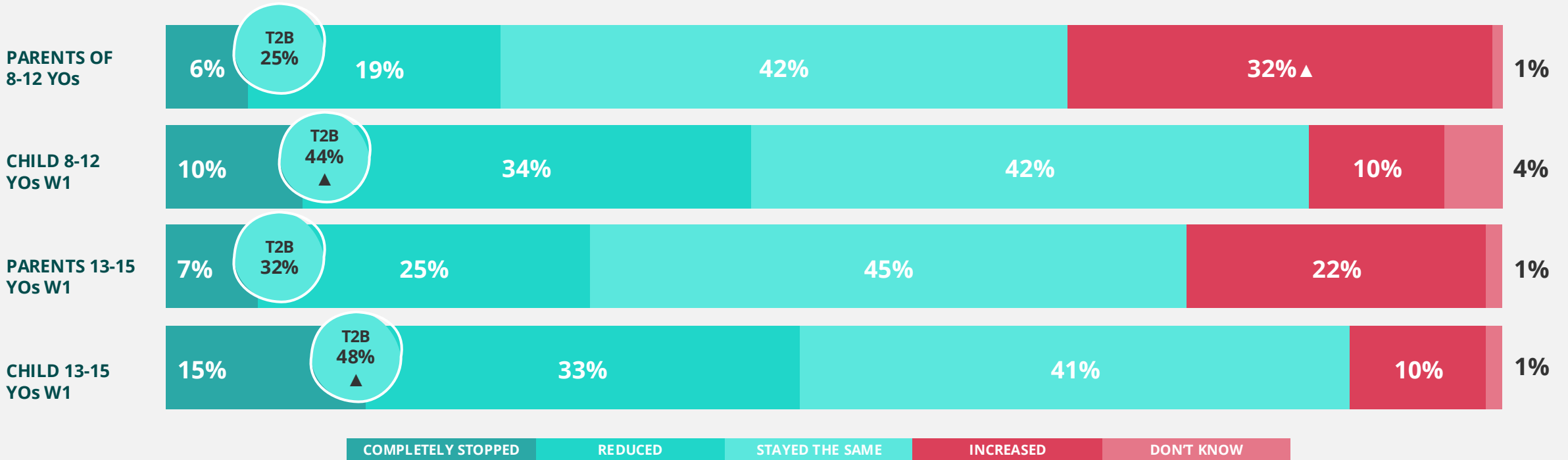
SOCIAL MEDIA USE CHANGE SINCE BAN STARTED | PARENT vs CHILDREN



Unsurprisingly though, child age (older teens: 13-15 vs tweens: 8-12) is a key driver of the discrepancy

Perhaps alarmingly though, 1 in 3 **parents of 8 to 12 year olds** say their child has **increased social media use** since the ban came into place – the largest reported increase of all groups – begging the question: **what is underlying the discrepancy?**

SOCIAL MEDIA USE CHANGE SINCE BAN STARTED | PARENT vs CHILDREN

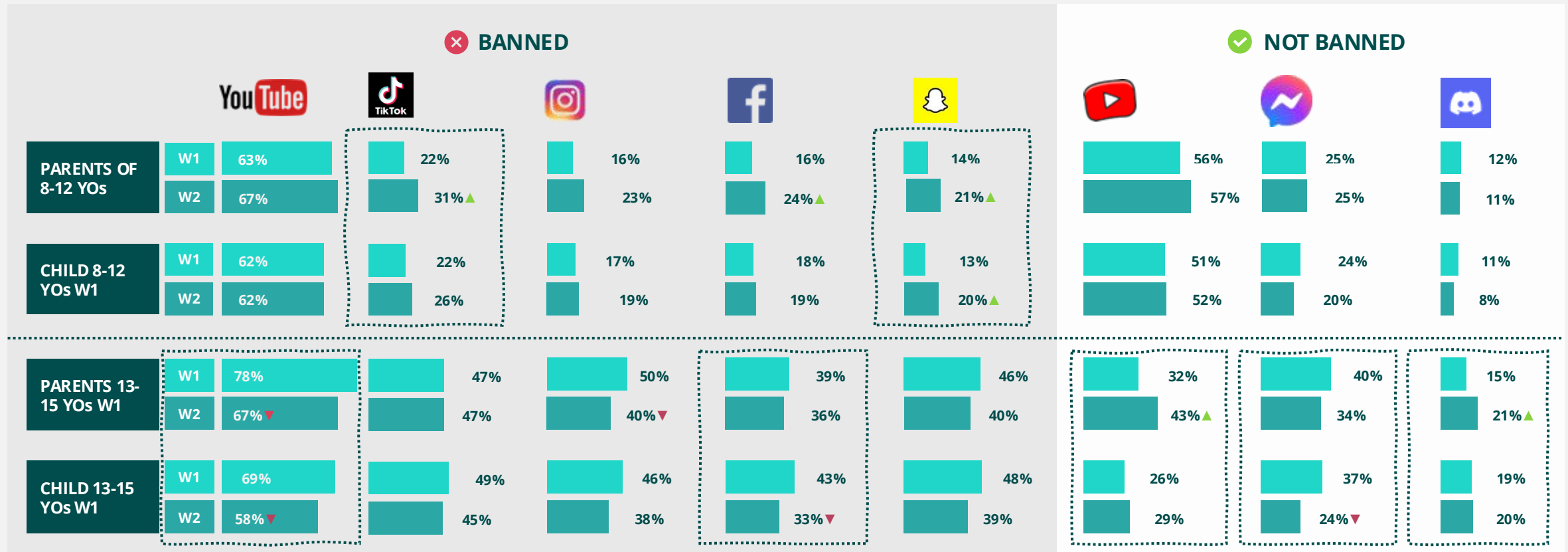


Under-16s are switching platforms, which aren't necessarily safer, just less visible to the policy conversation. But even banned platforms saw increases in use for some

While parents of 8 to 12s also saw increases to both TikTok & Snapchat, their children **only report** increases in **Snapchat** usage.

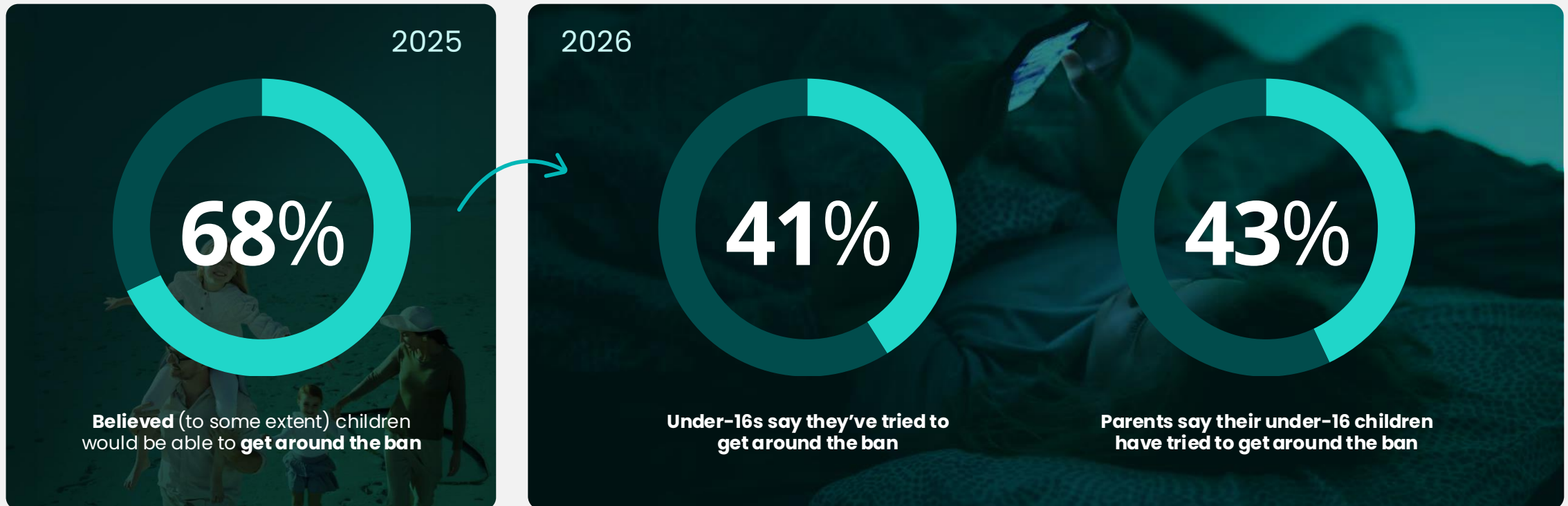
And whereas parents report their **older teens** have moved to **YouTube Kids** and **Discord**, their kids report significant **reductions in banned apps** (YouTube / Facebook), which require profile and login details.

PARENT vs CHILD REPORT BANNED SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM USE | WAVE 1 vs WAVE 2



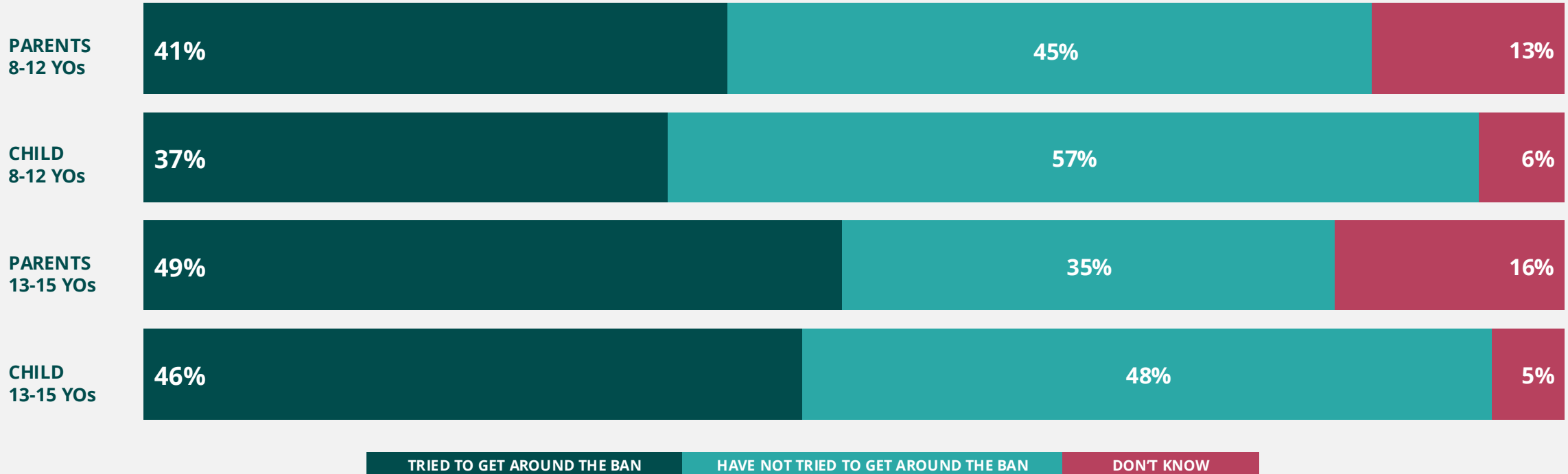
And while parent enforcement of the ban isn't universal, access to banned platforms is as much about the under-16s who are actively trying to dodge the ban

April 2026 tells us that the **pre-ban sceptics were mostly right**. 41% of kids 8-15 told us they've tried to get around the ban, which is backed up by their parents.



What's surprising though isn't that kids are trying to get around the ban; it's just how remarkably consistent under-16s and their parents are in their reports...

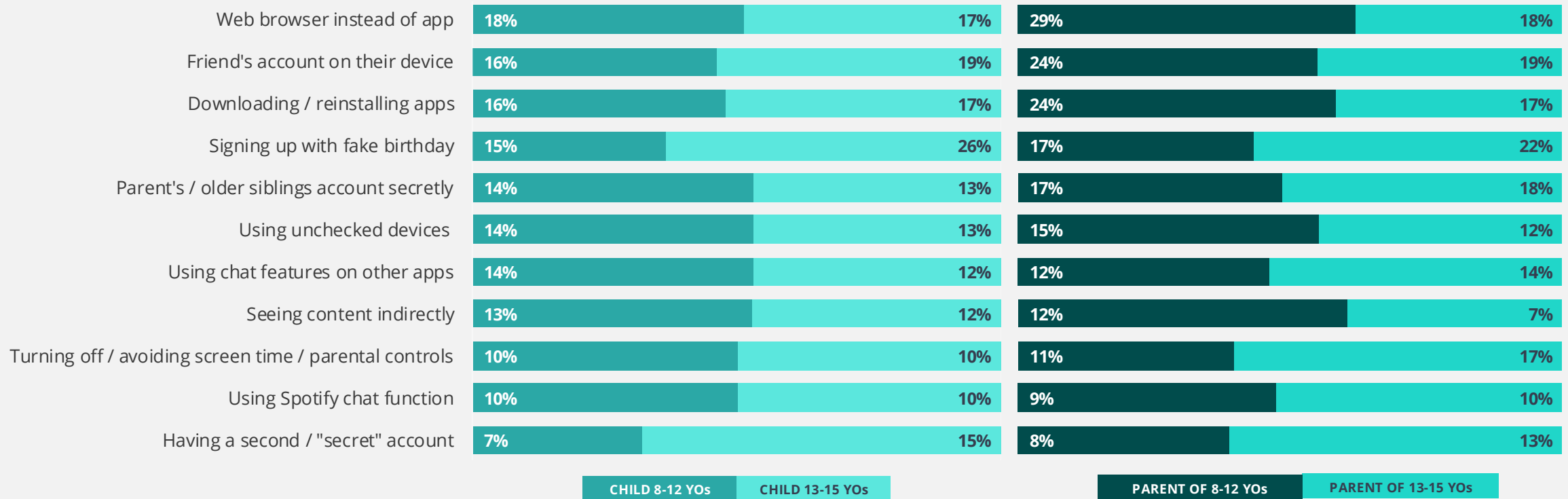
UNDER 16 ATTEMPTED TO GET AROUND THE BAN | PARENT vs CHILD REPORT



Perhaps the biggest indictment though is not on the ban itself, but on the platforms & their lack of governance; especially given how low-tech the workarounds really are

They don't need to be sophisticated; because the enforcement infrastructure isn't either. Age verification exists in theory. In practice, children are navigating around it using the **same social resources they have always had**.

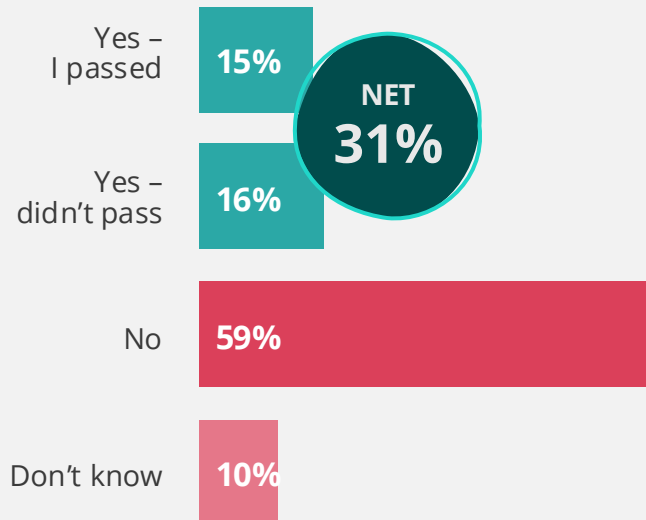
PARENT REPORT OF CHILD BAN AVOIDANCE TOOLS | 8-12s vs 13-15s



The age verification layer was the mechanism many pointed to as the one thing that would make this ban different from those that had failed elsewhere

Since October 2025, only **1 in 3 children** have had their face scanned for age verification – with **1 in 2** under-16s able to pass as over 16.

FACE SCAN | CHILD REPORT



The implication is significant...

The technical backstop - promised by government to do the heavy lifting of the enforcement burden - **has not yet been delivered.**

Until it does, parents will remain the primary line of defence; whether they signed up for that role or not.

So.... after 6 months of the **under-16s social media ban** being in place, the scorecard is:



Nearly **8 in 10 (78%)** children under 16 are still **regularly accessing** banned social media platforms



57% of parents to children under 16 have **tried to enforce** the ban, but **42%** have found it **hard to do**



Only **1 in 3** under-16s have had their faces **scanned for age verification**, and half of those were able to pass as over 16

Importantly though, **there is more to the story...**

Before the ban, Australians (and the children themselves) predicted under-16s would spend more time outside and encourage more in-person socialising...

And for the most part, that's what both under-16s and their parents say has replaced social media use since Oct '25, but **screens and online gaming is still a big part of their day-to-day activities.**

PARENTS

*"My child now prioritises offline activities like **reading, sports, and creative hobbies** over screen time."*

*"Mostly just **normal kid stuff, honestly**. They **watch more TV**, spend more time on homework and play games that do not really involve chatting with people. Also, they have been spending **more time outside**, like riding bikes and playing around with friends nearby."*

*"**VR gaming**, arts and crafts, chores, homework, hobbies and **exercise**."*

*"They only watch **YouTube under supervision** and **play Roblox** with chat disabled."*

UNDER-16s

*"I go out to **ride bike with Ryan**, sometimes play **badminton**"*

*"I do a lot more **art projects** now and make things for my friends and my boyfriend and my Mum"*

*"The ban hasn't affected me at all, **I am still able to use all my social media accounts**, but every now and then I go out and **play basketball**"*

*"Yes. I am **playing football more often now**. I play games with my Dad and my younger brother and my younger Sister. I **watch cartoons** with my sister and brother."*

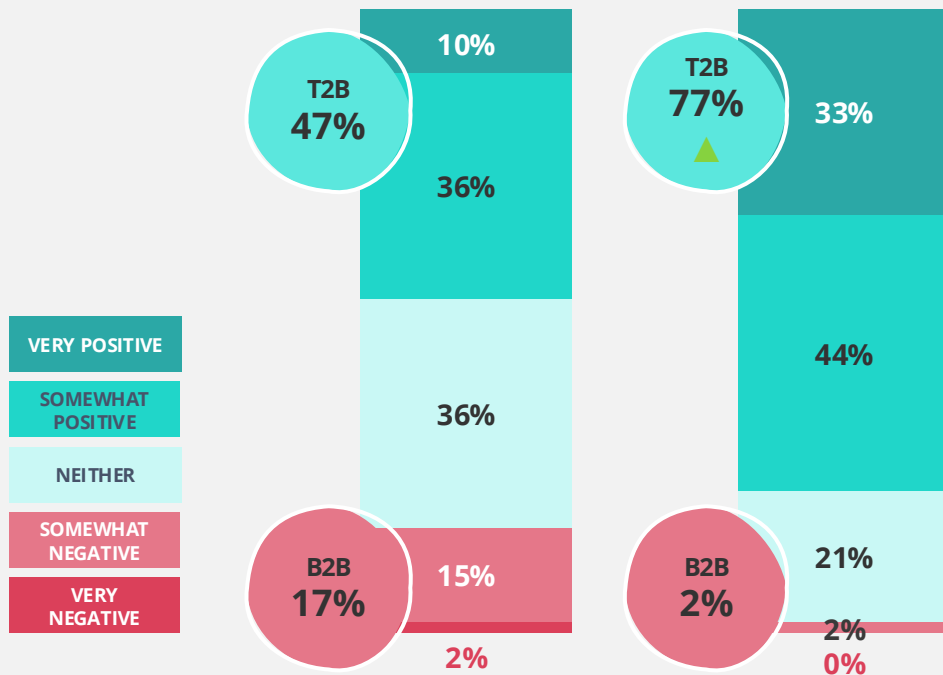
*"Playing games on my **Nintendo switch**"*

*"I go **cycling with my dad** and my parents make me **read more books than before**. They also promised me more camping and sporting at free times."*

Even though parents see the positive benefits of the social media ban for under-16s who have reduced or stopped using social media since the ban, children still miss it...

Parent conversations about social media tend to focus on content: algorithms, harmful material, screen time. But for children, the loss the ban has created is social, not informational. Social media was the ambient infrastructure of their peer relationships; the always-on group chat, **the constant soft signal that they were connected and included.**

PARENT REPORT IMPACT OF REDUCED SOCIAL MEDIA ON CHILDREN | WAVE 1 vs WAVE 2



WHAT UNDER-16s MISS ABOUT SOCIAL MEDIA | CHILD REPORT

"I miss being able to **easily talk to friends whenever I want** and seeing what they are doing in real time. I also miss watching short videos and trends on apps like TikTok and Instagram, and feeling like I'm part of what everyone is talking about"

"I really miss **being able to talk with my friends easily**, especially in group chats and messages after school or on weekends. I also miss watching funny videos and seeing updates from people I know."

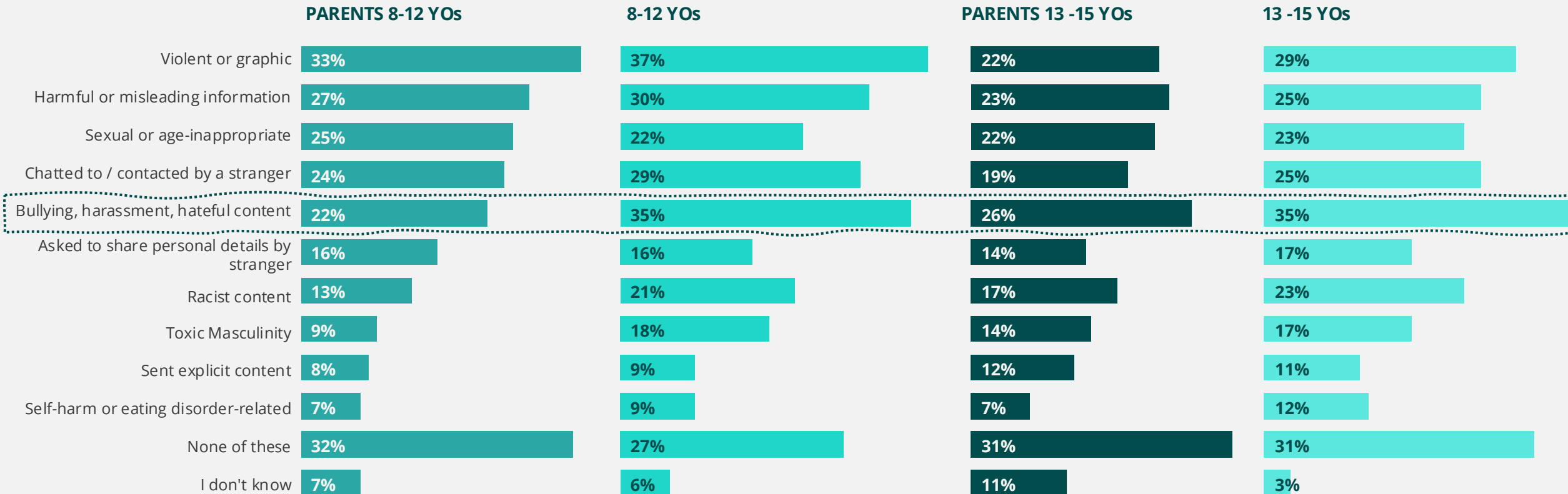
"I miss **interacting with my friends**, I miss having fun with my friends especially online games. Actually, **life currently is quite boring** not being able to access it as before."

"I miss texting my friends for football practice, **now I have to go to their houses to call them**"

Parents consistently underestimate what their children have been exposed to online – even for the most engaged parents

And while nearly **1 in 3 children** (and their parents) report they've **not been exposed** to any problematic content online; the discrepancy speaks to the importance of open conversations between parents and children about online experiences.

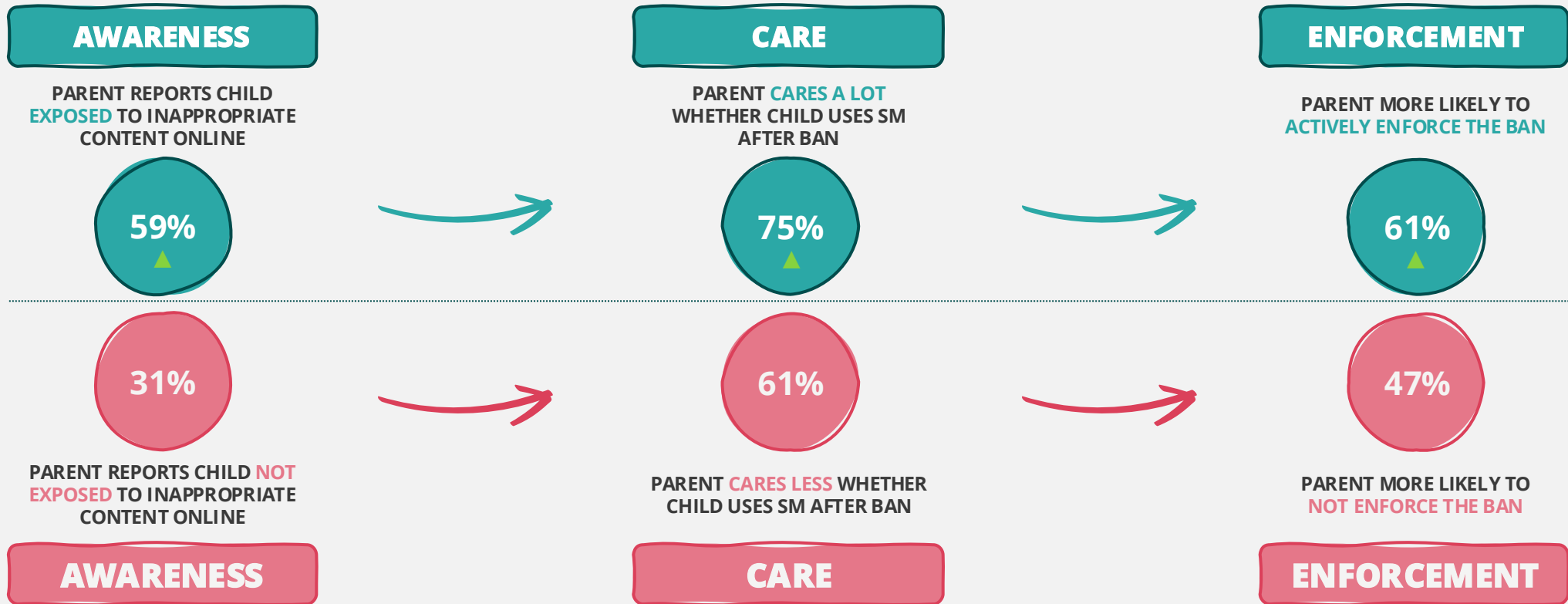
INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT SEEN ONLINE BY CHILDREN | CHILD vs PARENT REPORT



Ultimately, there is a delicate interplay between how much parents care about their kids' social media use, parent awareness of kids' content exposure, and parental enforcement

When parents are **aware** of the content their child has been exposed to online, they feel both **compelled & empowered to act**. But the gap isn't about **values**. It's about **visibility**. Without awareness, parents can be lulled into minimising the risks.

PARENT CARE FACTOR x EXPOSURE TO INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT x BAN ENFORCEMENT | HOW MUCH PARENTS CARE IF CHILD USES SOCIAL MEDIA AFTER BAN



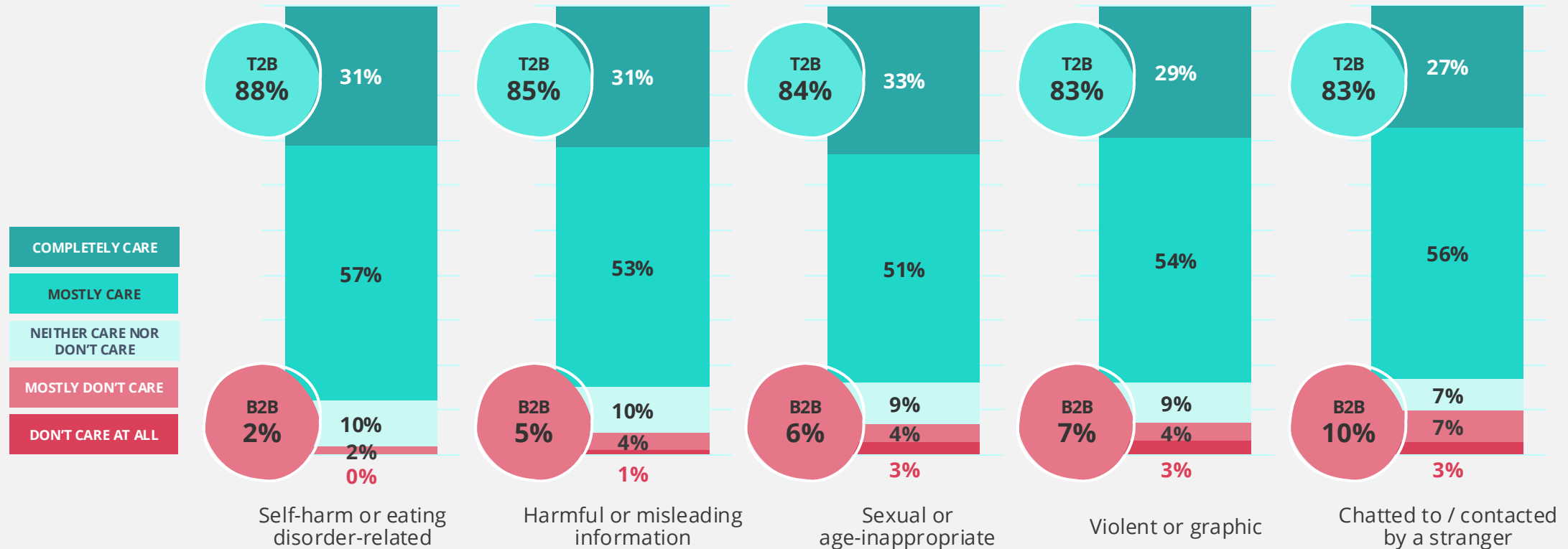
B16. How much do you **care** about whether your child continues to use social media despite the ban? B11. Regardless of the reason for your answer, have you actively tried to enforce the Social Media Ban since it came into force in December 2025? B19. As far as you know, which, if any, of the following types of **online** or **social media content** have **any of your children ever** previously been exposed to? Base: Parents of 8-12 YO's enforcing ban n= 293, Parents reported child exposure n= 358, Parents reported child exposure n= 189,

▲ ▼ Sig. difference at 95% confidence between groups

The more harmful the content (is perceived to be), the harder parents push back. Self-harm content drives near-universal parental care

Parents are driven by what their child has seen: parents who report their child has been exposed to **the most viscerally harmful** content are the **most galvanised to act**.

PARENT CARE FACTOR x EXPOSURE TO SPECIFIC INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT | HOW MUCH PARENTS CARE IF CHILD USES SOCIAL MEDIA AFTER BAN

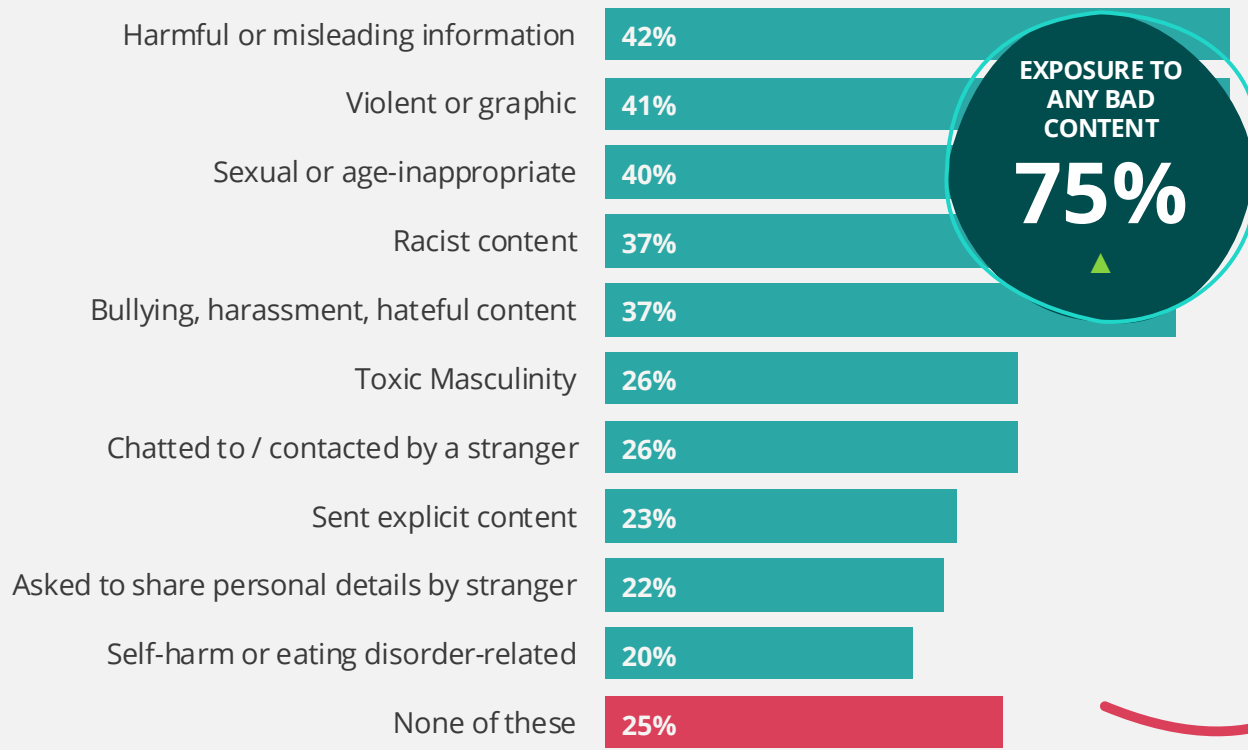


B16. How much do you **care** about whether your child continues to use social media despite the ban? B11. Regardless of the reason for your answer, have you actively tried to enforce the Social Media Ban since it came into force in December 2025? B19. As far as you know, which, if any, of the following types of **online** or **social media content** have **any of your children ever** previously been exposed to? Base: Parents of 8-12 YO's enforcing ban n= 293, Parents reported child exposure n= 358, Parents reported child exposure n= 189,

But it's not just about what children have been exposed to... parents' own past exposure to online content is also an essential part of the enforcement equation

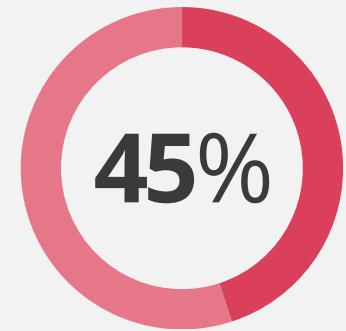
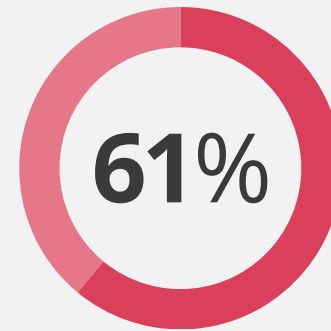
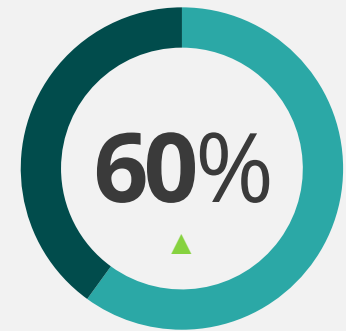
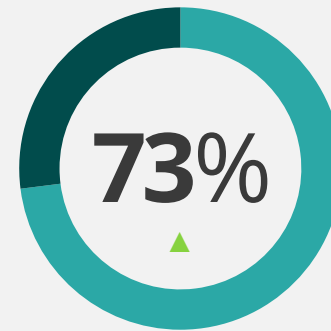
While not surprising, it's important to acknowledge that past experience shapes future behaviour, demonstrating that parents who are **more aware of online risks** are also **more likely to care about and actively enforce the ban**.

INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT SEEN ONLINE BY PARENTS | SELF REPORT



PARENT CARE FACTOR

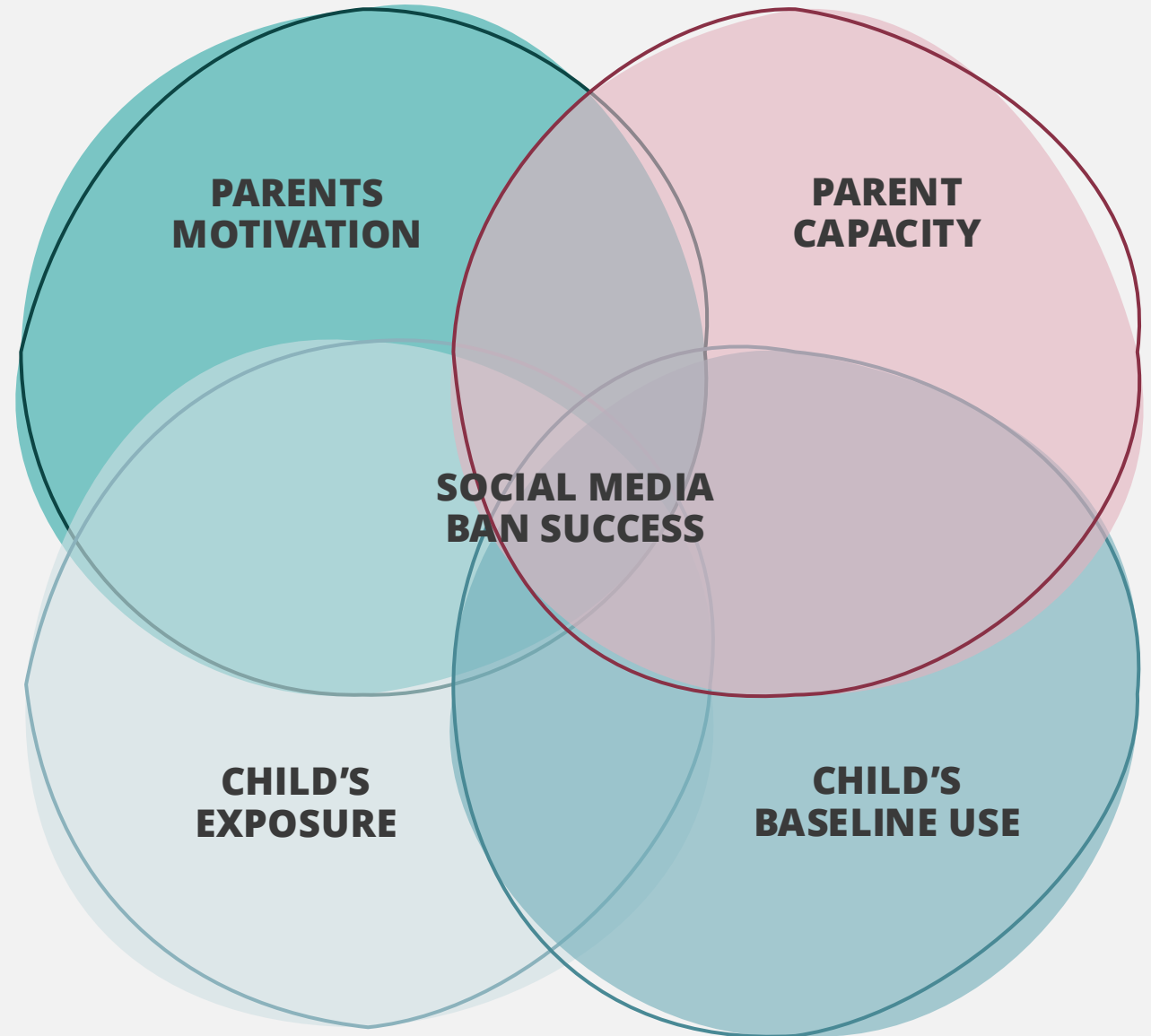
PARENT ENFORCEMENT



The Under-16s Social Media Ban laws set the standard, but until platform enforcement technology catches up... the ban's success rests on what's happening at home.

And what's happening at home comes down to **four connected**, yet **rarely aligned** factors...

Success can't be determined by **policy**. It's the **ecosystem in which it exists**.



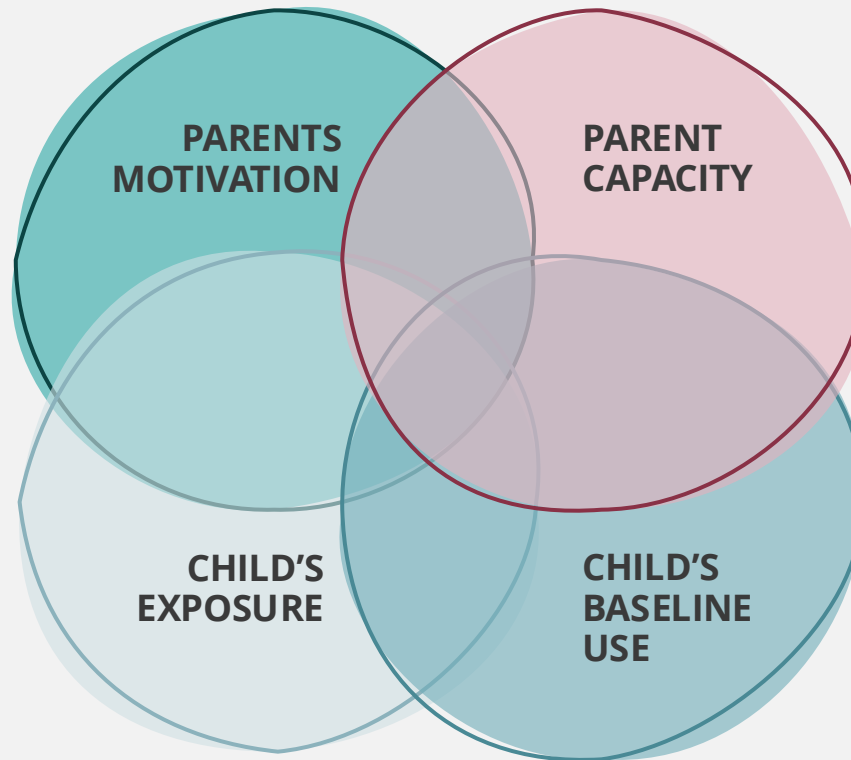
The ban succeeds most, where all four elements align. In most Australian households though, at least one element is harder than the others...

Parents motivation

What they fear, shaped by their own experience of harmful content

Child's exposure

What the child has already encountered online – negative or harmful content



Parents capacity

What they can actually do, shaped by time, tools, and digital fluency

Child's baseline use

How much had to change for the ban to take effect in this household

Platform compliance & account use

The four primary elements are further complicated by the reliability of the verification on social media platforms and assumes the child uses an account (e.g. not required on YouTube)

Ultimately, the families that have the **capacity and digital fluency** to take an approach that balances **relationship, education, sensible oversight, and empowerment** are seemingly the ‘**success stories**’ of the social media ban

These families report lower regular social media usage, lower likelihood of banned platform usage, lower rates of both child obfuscation, and higher parental enforcement rates.

*“We’ve mainly tried to **reduce access rather than completely block everything**. We’ve spoken with the kids about which apps are appropriate for their age and explained the reasons behind the social media ban. We’ve also used **parental controls and screen settings on devices** to limit access to certain apps and restrict usage during school nights.*”

*We **regularly check what apps are installed**, monitor new downloads, and keep devices in shared family areas where possible. We’ve **encouraged more use of age-appropriate platforms** like YouTube kids instead of unrestricted social media. Also, we set rules around no phone during meals, homework time, and before bed.”*

*“Enforcement for us has been about **education and monitoring**. I use a **third-party parental monitoring tool** that alerts me to any attempted installs or browser-based access of social platforms. Beyond the technical blocks, **we have focused heavily on digital literacy, teaching them about the risks that the ban is meant to mitigate**. We have also coordinated with the parents of their close friends to ensure a consistent environment across their entire social circle, making the ban easier to maintain.”*

*“I **explained about the social media ban**, and we **discussed compromising** so that he could still watch TikTok and YouTube but **with my supervision by sitting next to me**. He has settings in Roblox that only allow him to chat to his cousins too.”*

*“I haven’t enforced a strict ban because I trust them for the fact that **we are open to conversations about online safety and using parental controls to limit app access** and set downtime hours.”*

Understanding behaviour is the first step to shaping outcomes.

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