

Banning children under 16 from social media platforms widely supported by parents and most Canadians

After Australia became first country to ban social media for kids, Canadians appear ready to follow suit

March 30, 2026 – Scrutiny of the negative effects of social media on young people has intensified further following a landmark ruling in California labelling Instagram and YouTube as deliberately addictive and harmful to children. Prior to the ruling, Canada had already joined the ranks of countries considering a ban on social media use for those under 16.

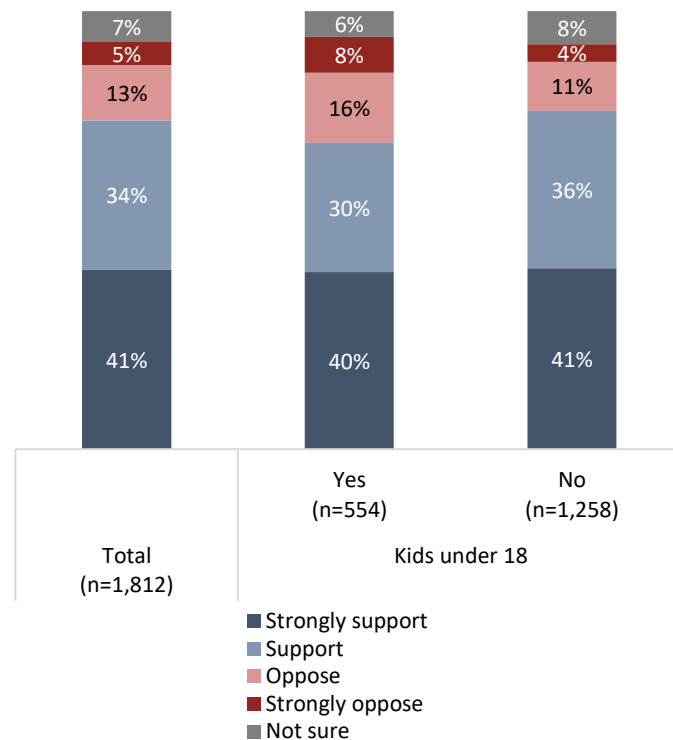
According to new data from a wide-ranging study on current social media use by the non-profit Angus Reid Institute, banning those under 16 from platforms would be well received by the vast majority of Canadians. Three-quarters (75%) say they support a full ban on social media use for anyone under the age of 16. Among parents with kids in the household support is also strong, at 70 per cent.

[See report on these same questions in the United States here.](#)

Endorsement of restrictions on the use of social media comes as three-in-five (61%) Canadians – and half (52%) of those whose oldest child is 16 or 17 – say they believe teens are not capable of using social media responsibly. And there is near unanimous concern from Canadians over children's potential exposure on social media to misinformation (92% concerned), cyberbullying (90%), explicit content (85%), negative mental health impacts (94%) and addiction (94%).

As it stands, parents with kids aged 10 to 15 are more likely than not governing their kids' social media use. A majority say they put restrictions on which apps their kids use, monitor their activity or place time limits.

Support vs. oppose - "A full ban on social media use for anyone under 16"



METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from March 11-17, 2026, among a randomized sample of 4,005 Canadian adults. Respondents are drawn from the [Angus Reid Forum](#), a large-scale online panel developed to include Canadian residents in each of the 343 federal ridings in Canada and representative of the Canadian population by age, gender, family income, ethnic status and education. The sample was weighted to be representative of adults nationwide according to region, gender, age, household income, and education, based on the Canadian census. For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of this size would carry a margin of error of +/- 1.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding. The survey was self-commissioned and paid for by ARI. Detailed tables are found at the end of this release.

For more information on our polling methods, [click here.](#)

CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, President: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl
Dave Korzinski, Research Director: 250.899.0821 dave.korzinski@angusreid.org

Although a ban – which will **reportedly be discussed** by the Liberal Party at its convention in April - would be welcomed by most parents, more say that the responsibility for regulating social media use should fall to the parents (72%) rather than governments (20%).

More Key Findings:

- When those who want under-16's banned only from certain apps are asked which social media should be verboten, TikTok (88%), X/Twitter (86%), and Snapchat (84%) are at the top of the list. Only half (48%) would ban kids under 16 from YouTube.
- There is no consensus among Canadians as to what age is the right one for kids to have access to social media. The age of 16 is chosen at the highest rate, by one-third (32%); near equal numbers say 10-12 (13%), 14 (16%), and 15 (13%).
- One-third (32%) say AI companies like OpenAI should be required to report user activity to Canadian authorities if it's "potentially illegal". More (45%) say they should only be required to do so if it is illegal. This question has gained particular relevance in Canada after the suspect in the Tumbler Ridge shooting was banned by OpenAI seven months prior to the incident but had not caused Open AI to alert authorities because the account did not meet the company's threshold for "credible and imminent planning" of serious violence.

About ARI

The Angus Reid Institute (ARI) was founded in October 2014 by pollster and sociologist, Dr. Angus Reid. ARI is a national, not-for-profit, non-partisan public opinion research foundation established to advance education by commissioning, conducting and disseminating to the public accessible and impartial statistical data, research and policy analysis on economics, political science, philanthropy, public administration, domestic and international affairs and other socio-economic issues of importance to Canada and its world.

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Shachi Kurl, President: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl
Dave Korzinski, Research Director: 250.899.0821 dave.korzinski@angusreid.org

Part One: Social media and children

What’s the right age for social media?

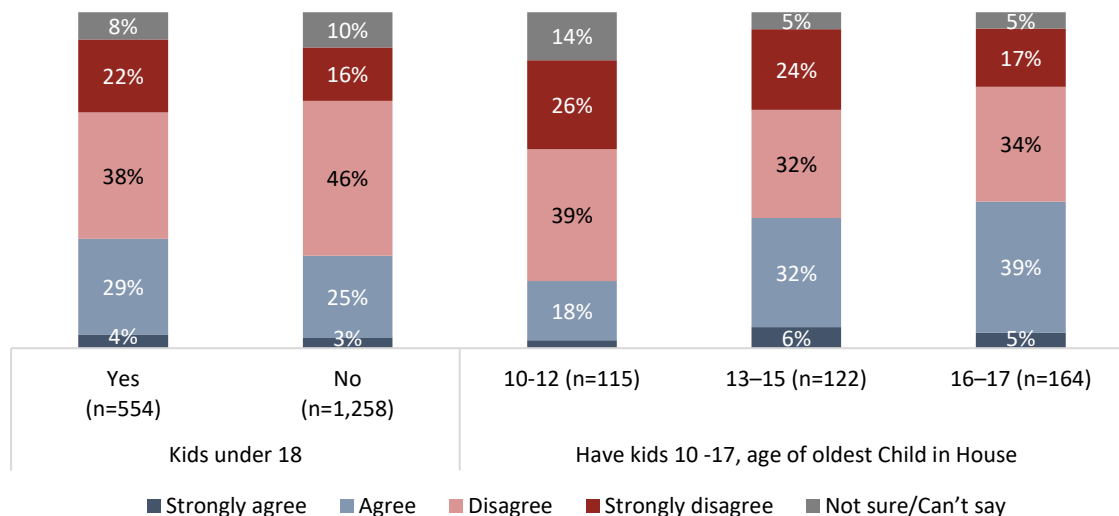
Though it may be difficult to imagine life before social media – a mere 20 or so years ago – the platforms, in the history of societies – remain a relatively new phenomenon. As such, the impacts using them on both society as a whole, and especially on children – aren’t fully known. As the picture has emerged, however, the negative impacts appear clear to most. While there are benefits, including finding likeminded people and connecting with friends, studies find that frequent and unregulated social media use among adolescents is associated with a range of mental health harms, including depression, anxiety, poor sleep, and social pressures.

The first question is then, what is the right age to permit children to have their own accounts? Canadians in general and Canadian parents have differing views. Parents with older children are more likely than those with younger children to say that the age of 10 to 12 is appropriate. That said, a lack of consensus is largely the story:

And what is the minimum age you feel a child should reach before being able to use social media?					
	Kids under 18		Have kids 10 -17, age of oldest Child in House		
	Yes (n=554)	No (n=1,258)	10-12 (n=115)	13–15 (n=122)	16–17 (n=164)
10 to 12	20%	9%	17%	20%	28%
13	11%	8%	6%	20%	8%
14	12%	17%	8%	14%	14%
15	12%	13%	19%	8%	10%
16	26%	35%	27%	25%	22%
17	19%	17%	24%	13%	19%

On the broader question of whether or not teenagers are generally capable of using social media responsibly, Canadians are twice as likely to disagree. Even those with older children aged either 16 or 17 are more likely to disagree (51%) than agree (44%), suggesting that at the very least, they may view monitoring as necessary:

Agree vs Disagree - "Most teens are capable of using social media responsibly"



No shortage of concerns for parents

Those concerns are numerous and evidently significant. Five items – addiction, mental health impacts, online predators, misinformation, and cyberbullying – are all a concern to at least 90 per cent of Canadians. Privacy, exposure to explicit content and political radicalization are a concern to more than three-quarters:

Percentage of Canadians concerned about each of the following when it comes to children and social media:			
	All respondents (n=1,812)	Kids Under 18	
		Yes (n=554)	No (n=1,258)
Addiction or excessive screen time	94%	92%	95%
Mental health impacts	94%	92%	94%
Online predators	93%	89%	95%
Exposure to misinformation	92%	89%	93%
Cyberbullying	90%	83%	92%
Privacy/data collection	86%	82%	88%
Exposure to pornography or explicit content	85%	85%	84%
Political radicalization	77%	62%	83%

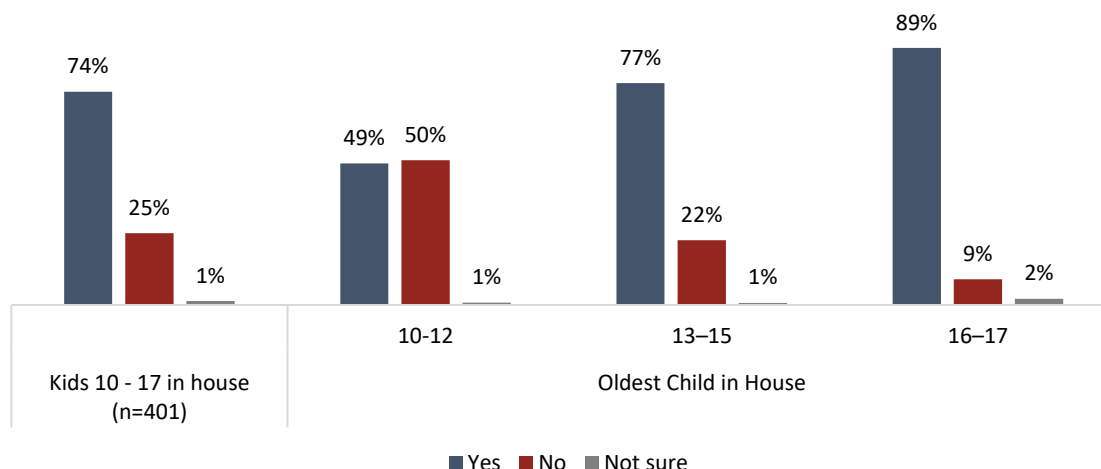
Restrictions and monitoring common

Among those parents in the survey with children aged 10 to 17 at home, three-quarters say that their child(ren) currently use(s) social media. Notably, those whose oldest child is in the 10 to 12 range report similar current usage to those with older children:

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**Do any of your 10–17-year-old children currently use social media?
(Has kids 10-17, n=401)**



Four-in-five parents whose children are using social media report self-implementing some form of restriction, with younger children more likely to be the subject of such oversight. Notably, just 29 per cent of parents with 16- to 17-year-olds say they have no restrictions in place, suggesting even older teenagers are being monitored to some extent.

Do you place any restrictions on your child’s social media use?				
	Have kids 10-17 using social media (n=296)	Oldest Child in House		
		10-12	13-15	16-17
Restrictions on certain apps	52%	77%	63%	36%
Monitoring their activity	49%	62%	59%	37%
Parental approval before downloading apps	48%	70%	58%	34%
Time limits	48%	70%	54%	35%
No phones in bedroom at night	38%	62%	43%	25%
No restrictions	19%	1%	13%	29%

Part Two: Views on a proposed Under-16 Ban

Increasingly, there is a push for government legislation on the use of social media. Australia became the first country in the world to ban social media use for kids younger than 16 in December 2025. Those under 16 are no longer allowed to use the major social media apps of TikTok, X, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Snapchat and Threads. New accounts are subject to age verification, previous profiles were deactivated. The goal of the ban is to reduce the negative impact of social media’s “design features that encourage [young people] to spend more time on screens, while also serving up content that can harm their health and wellbeing”. Other countries, including Denmark, France, Germany, the U.K. and notably, Canada, are following suit or considering heading down that path.

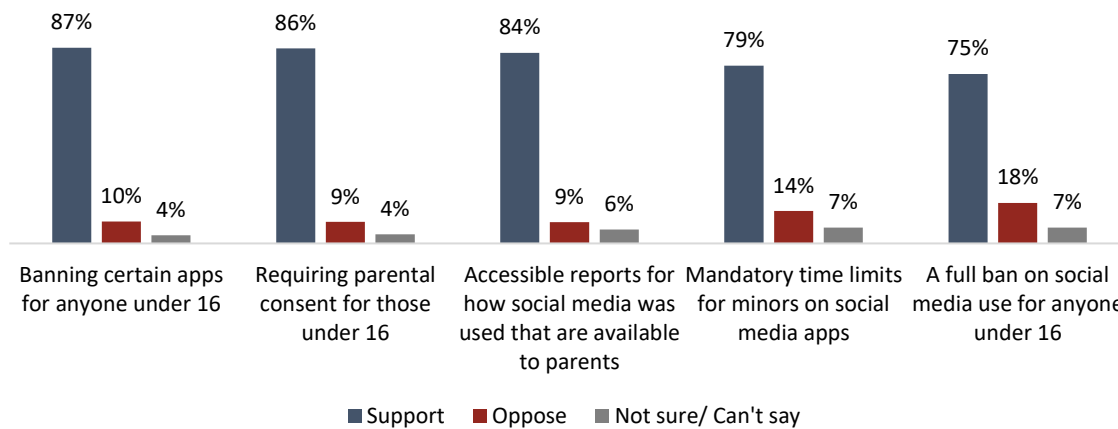
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Widespread support for banning social media for those younger than 16

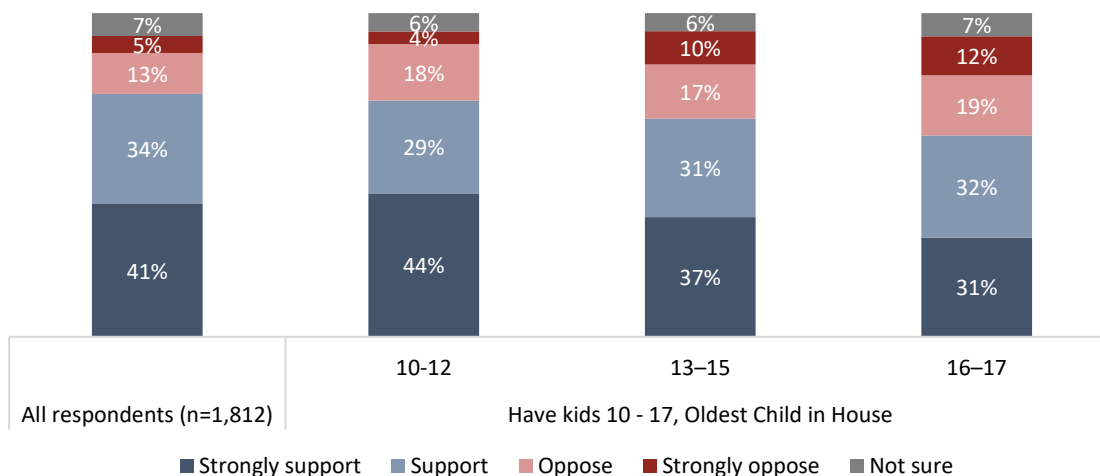
The federal government’s pursuit of a social media ban for under-16s is overwhelmingly supported by Canadians. Approaching nine-in-ten (87%) say they support banning certain apps for those under 16. Measures such as requiring parental consent for social media use for younger kids (86%), reports on social media use available in app (84%), and mandatory time limits (79%) are also supported by four-in-five or more. Extending the ban to all social media receives the support of 75 per cent:

**Support vs. oppose each policy measure:
(All respondents, n=1,812)**

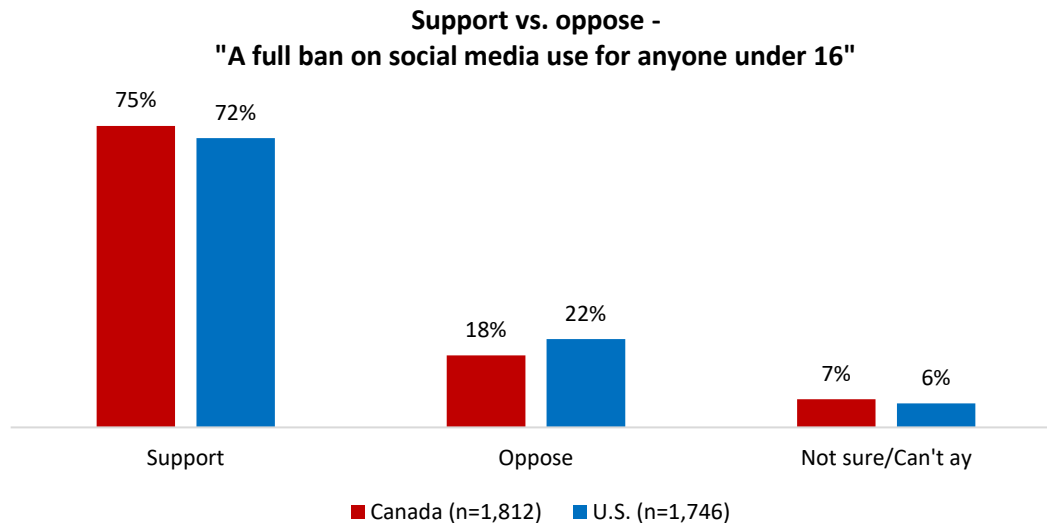


Parents with kids of all ages support a full ban on social media use for those under 16 at majority levels. But support does dwindle the older the oldest child in the parents’ household. Three-quarters (73%) of parents whose oldest kid is between 10- and 12-years-old support a full ban for under-16s; two-thirds (63%) of those whose oldest kid is 16 or 17 agree:

**Support vs. oppose -
"A full ban on social media use for anyone under 16"**



Notably, as these discussions take place in the United States as well, support levels for banning social media for kids under 16 are remarkably similar in both countries:



[See full report on these same questions in the United States here.](#)

Support for blocking access to most apps, division over YouTube

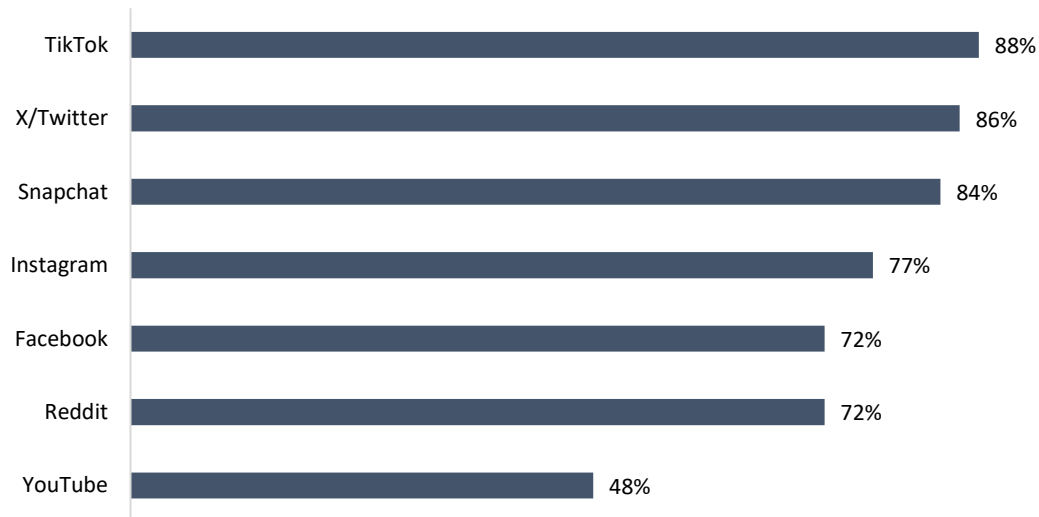
The gap in support between banning certain apps (87%) and a full ban on social media use for anyone under 16 (75%) noted above suggests there is some hesitation to fully restrict children from using all types of social media. Those who would only ban certain apps were asked which apps they would ban under-16s from using. TikTok (88%), X/Twitter (86%), and Snapchat (84%) are the top choices, followed by Instagram (77%), Facebook (72%) and Reddit (72%). YouTube (48%) is only chosen by half.

In Australia, YouTube was included in the ban because it was the “[most frequently cited platform](#)” where children under 16 saw harmful content. However, YouTube argues that banning users under 16 from creating accounts makes them less safe because they are no longer able to access YouTube’s parental control and wellbeing functions.

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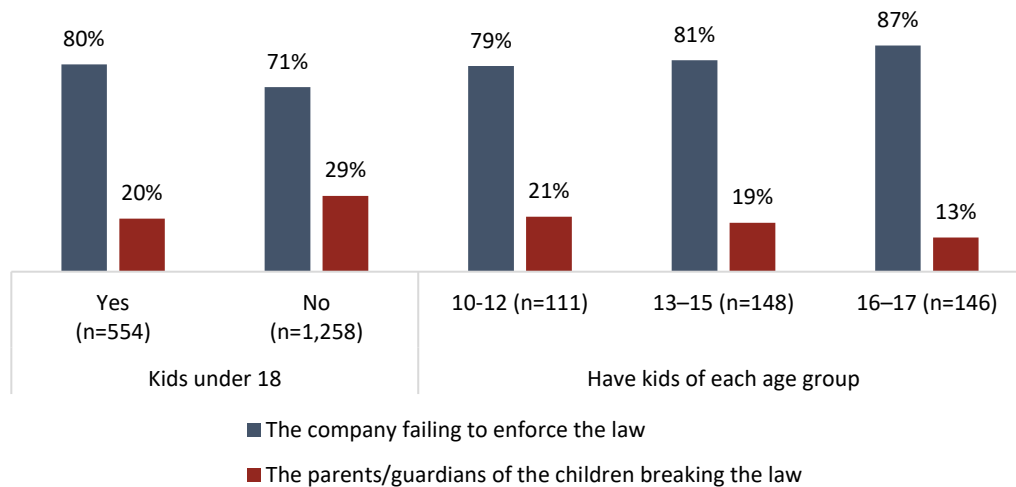
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**Which social media apps would you ban children under 16 from using?
(Among those who would ban certain apps - n=1,517)**



The onus on enforcing the social media ban in Australia is on the companies. Parents do not face fines or punishment if their child is found using a banned app. Canadians, by a three-to-one margin, say if Canada passes a similar social media ban, companies should face the legal responsibility of enforcing it:

Suppose social media is banned for those under 16 in Canada, who should face punishment when the law is broken?



But – ban or no ban – should government or parents regulate teens’ social media use?

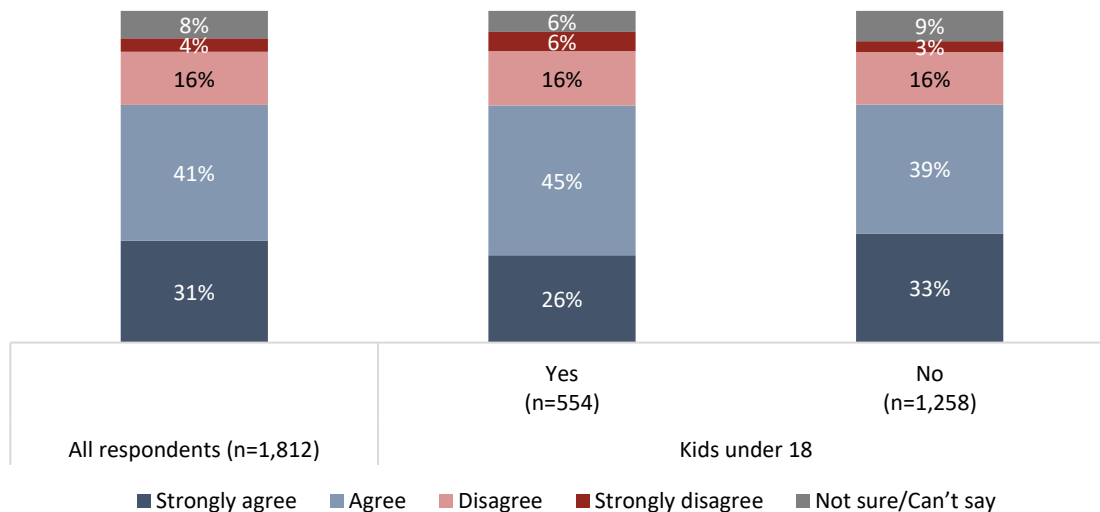
There is a curious juxtaposition in Canadians’ views of who should be responsible for managing the social media use of teens. More than seven-in-ten (72%) Canadians agree that parents should be primarily

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responsible for regulating teens' social media use, not governments. That includes 70 per cent of those who would support a full ban on social media use for those under 16. Views among those with kids under 18 at home versus those who do not have them are nearly identical:

Agree vs Disagree - "Parents, not governments, should be primarily responsible for regulating teens' social media use"



Part Three: Response to Tumbler Ridge

Three-quarters say AI companies should be required to report users breaking law

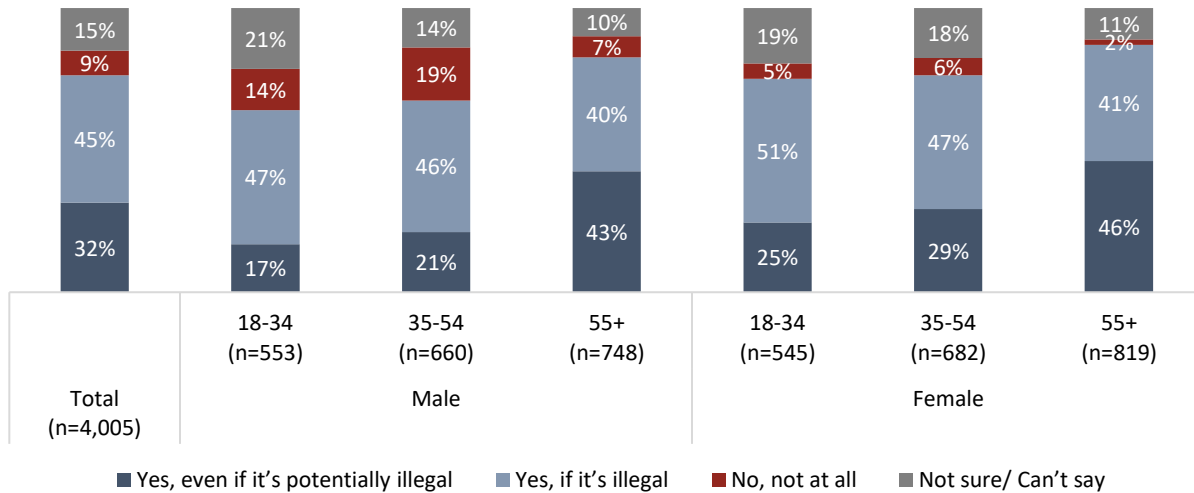
The Tumbler Ridge mass shooting in February raised concerns about the use of AI chatbots by teens and the responsibility of AI companies to report illegal or suspicious behaviour. The 18-year-old suspect was [banned by OpenAI seven months prior to the shooting](#) but did not alert authorities because the account did not meet the company's threshold for "credible and imminent planning" of serious violence. OpenAI said it planned to [implement changes to its policies](#), including loosening restrictions on referral to police and establishing a direct point of contact with Canadian law enforcement.

One-third (32%) of Canadians believe that companies like OpenAI should be required to report users to Canadian law enforcement even if their activity is only "potentially" illegal. More than two-in-five (45%) believe AI companies should report it only if it IS illegal. Men are more likely than women to believe AI companies should not be required to report the activity of its users:

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In general, when it comes to situations like this, where a user of an AI chatbot is using it to discuss illegal, or potentially illegal, topics, should companies like OpenAI be legally required to report this to Canadian authorities or not?



For detailed results by age, gender, region, education, and other demographics, [click here](#).

For detailed results by presence of children in house, [click here](#).

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