

# Polling - The public’s expectations of social media companies

*January 2021*

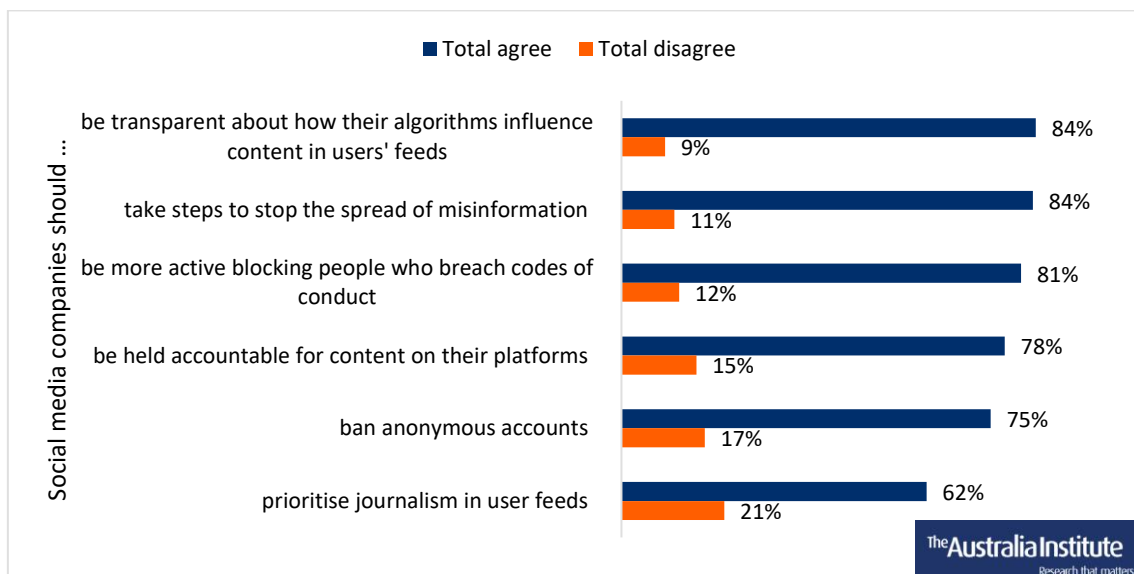
## Key results

The Australia Institute surveyed a nationally representative sample of 1,003 Australians about the policies and behaviour of social media companies.

Most Australians agree or strongly agree with six propositions regarding social media:

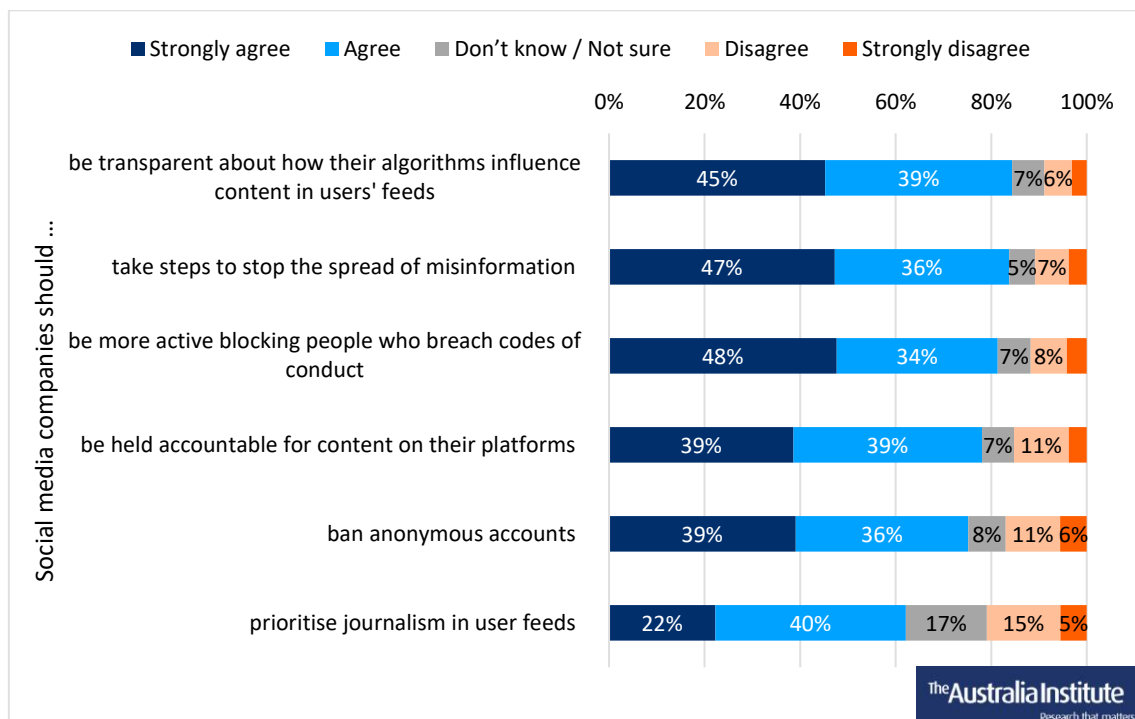
- Four in five Australians (81–84%) agree that social media companies should:
  - be transparent about the way their algorithms influence users’ feeds.
  - take steps to stop the spread of misinformation.
  - be more active in blocking people who breach codes of conduct.
- Three in four Australians (75–78%) agree that social media companies should:
  - be held accountable for content posted on their platforms.
  - ban anonymous accounts.
- Three in five Australians (62%) agree that social media companies should prioritise journalism from news websites in user feeds.

**Figure 1: Agreement with propositions about social media companies**



- Four in five Australians (84%) agree that social media companies should be transparent about the way their algorithms influence users' feeds, including 45% who strongly agree.
  - 9% disagree that social media companies should be transparent about the way their algorithms influence users' feeds.
  - By voting intention, agreement is highest among Coalition voters (88% agree), Labor (86%) and One Nation (84%) voters.
- Four in five Australians (84%) agree that social media companies should take steps to stop the spread of misinformation, including 47% who strongly agree.
  - 11% disagree that social media companies should take steps to stop the spread of misinformation.
  - By voting intention, agreement is highest among Coalition voters (88%) and Labor voters (85%).
- Four in five Australians (81%) agree that social media companies should be more active in blocking people who breach their codes of conduct, including 48% who strongly agree.
  - 12% disagree that social media companies should be more active in blocking people who breach their codes of conduct.
  - One Nation voters are most likely to disagree with this proposition, although even among One Nation voters almost three times as many agree as disagree (69% vs 24%).

**Figure 2: Agreement with propositions about social media companies**

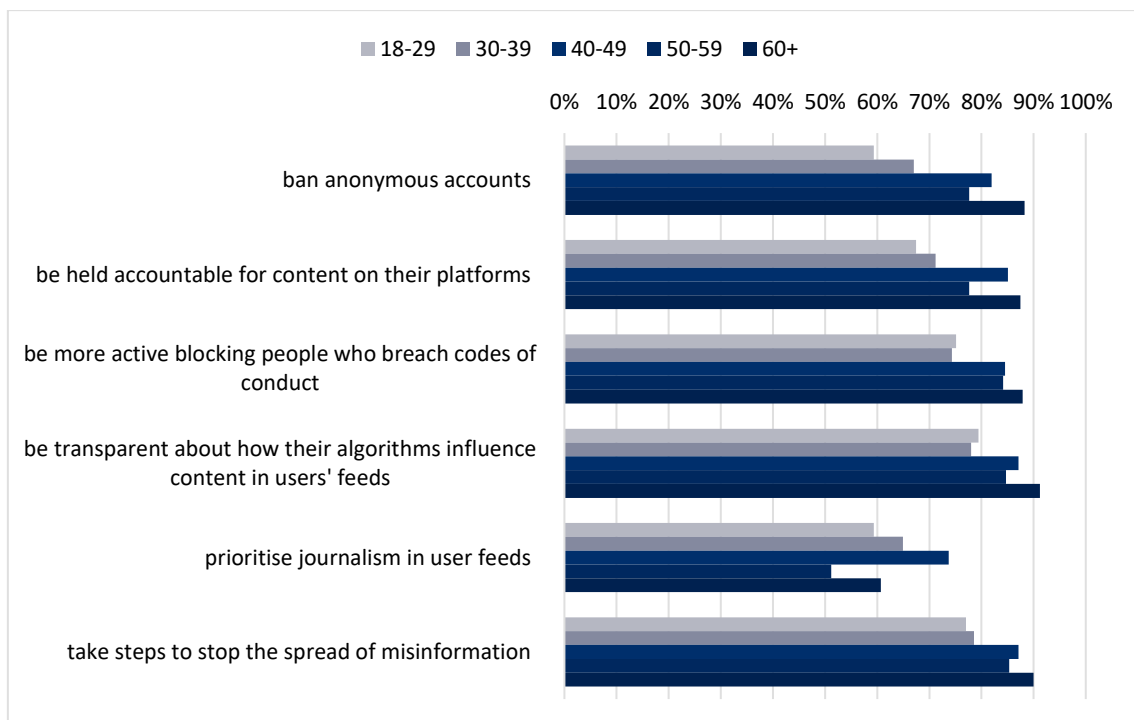


- Three in four Australians (78%) agree that social media companies should be held accountable for content posted on their platforms, including 39% who strongly agree.
  - 15% disagree that social media companies should be held accountable for content posted on their platforms.
  - Coalition and Labor voters were most likely to agree with this proposition (82% and 80% respectively). Agreement is lowest among Greens and Independent/Other voters (69% and 65% respectively).
- Three in four Australians (75%) agree that social media companies should ban anonymous accounts, including 39% who strongly agree.
  - 17% disagree that social media companies should ban anonymous accounts.
  - There is a significant difference in agreement levels between Greens voters (62% agreement) and Coalition voters (81% agreement).
- Three in five Australians (62%) agree that social media companies should prioritise journalism from news websites in user feeds, including 22% who strongly agree.
  - 21% disagree that social media companies should prioritise journalism in user feeds. This is the highest level of disagreement for any of the six propositions.
  - Three in five Coalition (66%), Labor (61%) and Greens (65%) voters agreed with the proposition, compared to 55% of Independent/Other voters and 47% of One Nation voters.

There is a noticeable difference in responses by age group. Younger respondents are less likely to agree, and more likely to disagree, with propositions that would limit social media companies or impose additional responsibilities upon them.

- The greatest disparity between the youngest age group (18–29) and the oldest (60+) is on whether social media companies should ban anonymous accounts. 59% of those aged 18–29 and 88% of those aged 60+ agree, a 29 percentage point difference.
- There is a 20 percentage point gap on the whether social media companies should be held accountable for content on their platforms (67% of those aged 18–29 and 87% of those aged 60+ agree).
- Those aged 18–29 and those aged 60+ are about as likely to agree that social media companies should prioritise journalism from news websites in user feeds (59% and 61% respectively).
- Most people in every age group agree with each proposition.

**Figure 3: Social media companies should ... (by age group)**



## Method

The Australia Institute surveyed 1,003 people on 14 to 15 January 2021, online through Dynata's Rapid Results polling, with nationally representative samples by gender, age and region.

The margin of error (95% confidence level) for the national results is 3%.

Results are shown only for larger states.

Voting crosstabs show voting intentions for the House of Representatives. Those who were undecided were asked which way they were leaning; these leanings are included in voting intention crosstabs. "Coalition" includes separate responses for Liberal and National. "Other" refers to Independent/Other.

## Detailed results

*What follows are questions about social media platforms, like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, Snapchat, Pinterest, Reddit and TikTok.*

*To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?*

**Social media companies should be held accountable for content posted on their platforms**

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>NSW</b>	<b>Vic</b>	<b>Qld</b>	<b>WA</b>
<b>Strongly agree</b>	39%	42%	36%	41%	35%	40%	33%
<b>Agree</b>	39%	36%	43%	37%	41%	38%	46%
<b>Disagree</b>	11%	12%	11%	11%	13%	12%	10%
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	4%	5%	3%	4%	5%	3%	3%
<b>Don't know / Not sure</b>	7%	6%	7%	6%	6%	7%	8%

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Coalition</b>	<b>Labor</b>	<b>Greens</b>	<b>One Nation</b>	<b>Other</b>
<b>Strongly agree</b>	39%	43%	35%	39%	33%	38%
<b>Agree</b>	39%	39%	45%	30%	40%	28%
<b>Disagree</b>	11%	11%	9%	17%	15%	15%
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	4%	3%	4%	3%	5%	10%
<b>Don't know / Not sure</b>	7%	4%	7%	11%	7%	10%

	<b>Total</b>	<b>18-29</b>	<b>30-39</b>	<b>40-49</b>	<b>50-59</b>	<b>60+</b>
<b>Strongly agree</b>	39%	25%	26%	44%	43%	53%
<b>Agree</b>	39%	42%	46%	41%	35%	35%
<b>Disagree</b>	11%	20%	16%	8%	9%	5%
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	4%	5%	4%	3%	5%	3%
<b>Don't know / Not sure</b>	7%	8%	9%	5%	8%	5%

**Social media companies should be transparent about the way their algorithms influence the content in users' feeds**

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>NSW</b>	<b>Vic</b>	<b>Qld</b>	<b>WA</b>
<b>Strongly agree</b>	45%	44%	47%	47%	46%	45%	45%
<b>Agree</b>	39%	39%	39%	36%	39%	39%	40%
<b>Disagree</b>	6%	8%	4%	7%	6%	6%	2%
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	3%	4%	2%	4%	3%	2%	5%
<b>Don't know / Not sure</b>	7%	6%	8%	6%	6%	8%	8%

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Coalition</b>	<b>Labor</b>	<b>Greens</b>	<b>One Nation</b>	<b>Other</b>
<b>Strongly agree</b>	45%	49%	43%	43%	38%	44%
<b>Agree</b>	39%	39%	43%	28%	45%	33%
<b>Disagree</b>	6%	5%	5%	12%	4%	6%
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	3%	3%	1%	6%	7%	6%
<b>Don't know / Not sure</b>	7%	4%	8%	10%	5%	11%

	<b>Total</b>	<b>18-29</b>	<b>30-39</b>	<b>40-49</b>	<b>50-59</b>	<b>60+</b>
<b>Strongly agree</b>	45%	32%	36%	47%	56%	56%
<b>Agree</b>	39%	48%	42%	40%	29%	36%
<b>Disagree</b>	6%	10%	9%	5%	4%	2%
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	3%	5%	5%	2%	2%	2%
<b>Don't know / Not sure</b>	7%	6%	8%	6%	9%	5%

#### Social media companies should take steps to stop the spread of misinformation

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>NSW</b>	<b>Vic</b>	<b>Qld</b>	<b>WA</b>
<b>Strongly agree</b>	47%	47%	47%	48%	51%	45%	46%
<b>Agree</b>	36%	35%	38%	35%	32%	38%	41%
<b>Disagree</b>	7%	8%	5%	8%	6%	6%	8%
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	4%	5%	3%	3%	6%	4%	1%
<b>Don't know / Not sure</b>	5%	5%	6%	5%	5%	6%	4%

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Coalition</b>	<b>Labor</b>	<b>Greens</b>	<b>One Nation</b>	<b>Other</b>
<b>Strongly agree</b>	47%	49%	47%	49%	38%	43%
<b>Agree</b>	36%	39%	38%	25%	33%	34%
<b>Disagree</b>	7%	5%	7%	12%	11%	9%
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	4%	3%	2%	5%	13%	6%
<b>Don't know / Not sure</b>	5%	3%	6%	8%	5%	9%

	<b>Total</b>	<b>18-29</b>	<b>30-39</b>	<b>40-49</b>	<b>50-59</b>	<b>60+</b>
<b>Strongly agree</b>	47%	37%	34%	49%	53%	62%
<b>Agree</b>	36%	40%	45%	38%	32%	28%
<b>Disagree</b>	7%	11%	11%	7%	4%	3%
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	4%	6%	4%	3%	4%	3%
<b>Don't know / Not sure</b>	5%	7%	7%	3%	7%	4%

**Social media companies should prioritise journalism from news websites in user feeds**

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>NSW</i>	<i>Vic</i>	<i>Qld</i>	<i>WA</i>
<b>Strongly agree</b>	22%	26%	19%	24%	23%	21%	20%
<b>Agree</b>	40%	38%	42%	39%	37%	45%	38%
<b>Disagree</b>	15%	17%	14%	15%	17%	14%	19%
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	5%	5%	6%	6%	4%	5%	7%
<b>Don't know / Not sure</b>	17%	14%	20%	16%	18%	15%	16%

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Coalition</i>	<i>Labor</i>	<i>Greens</i>	<i>One Nation</i>	<i>Other</i>
<b>Strongly agree</b>	22%	25%	22%	21%	13%	15%
<b>Agree</b>	40%	40%	39%	44%	35%	40%
<b>Disagree</b>	15%	15%	15%	15%	18%	19%
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	5%	5%	4%	6%	15%	8%
<b>Don't know / Not sure</b>	17%	14%	20%	14%	20%	19%

	<i>Total</i>	<i>18-29</i>	<i>30-39</i>	<i>40-49</i>	<i>50-59</i>	<i>60+</i>
<b>Strongly agree</b>	22%	22%	24%	25%	19%	22%
<b>Agree</b>	40%	38%	41%	48%	32%	39%
<b>Disagree</b>	15%	21%	19%	11%	15%	11%
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	5%	6%	5%	3%	8%	6%
<b>Don't know / Not sure</b>	17%	14%	11%	12%	26%	22%

**Social media companies should be more active in blocking people who breach their codes of conduct**

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>NSW</i>	<i>Vic</i>	<i>Qld</i>	<i>WA</i>
<b>Strongly agree</b>	48%	46%	50%	50%	46%	49%	49%
<b>Agree</b>	34%	33%	35%	30%	33%	34%	34%
<b>Disagree</b>	8%	9%	6%	9%	8%	5%	7%
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	4%	6%	3%	4%	5%	5%	4%
<b>Don't know / Not sure</b>	7%	6%	7%	7%	8%	6%	5%

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Coalition</i>	<i>Labor</i>	<i>Greens</i>	<i>One Nation</i>	<i>Other</i>
<b>Strongly agree</b>	48%	51%	51%	42%	22%	39%
<b>Agree</b>	34%	32%	34%	36%	47%	29%
<b>Disagree</b>	8%	7%	7%	10%	9%	11%
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	4%	5%	1%	2%	15%	8%
<b>Don't know / Not sure</b>	7%	5%	7%	9%	7%	14%



	<i>Total</i>	<i>18-29</i>	<i>30-39</i>	<i>40-49</i>	<i>50-59</i>	<i>60+</i>
<b>Strongly agree</b>	48%	34%	38%	47%	56%	62%
<b>Agree</b>	34%	41%	37%	37%	28%	26%
<b>Disagree</b>	8%	12%	12%	6%	6%	3%
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	4%	6%	5%	4%	3%	4%
<b>Don't know / Not sure</b>	7%	7%	9%	6%	7%	5%

### Social media companies should ban anonymous accounts

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>NSW</i>	<i>Vic</i>	<i>Qld</i>	<i>WA</i>
<b>Strongly agree</b>	39%	39%	39%	39%	37%	44%	41%
<b>Agree</b>	36%	36%	36%	33%	38%	37%	35%
<b>Disagree</b>	11%	11%	12%	13%	12%	7%	13%
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	6%	6%	5%	6%	5%	7%	4%
<b>Don't know / Not sure</b>	8%	7%	8%	10%	8%	5%	7%

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Coalition</i>	<i>Labor</i>	<i>Greens</i>	<i>One Nation</i>	<i>Other</i>
<b>Strongly agree</b>	39%	46%	37%	29%	31%	36%
<b>Agree</b>	36%	36%	38%	33%	42%	30%
<b>Disagree</b>	11%	9%	10%	22%	15%	11%
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	6%	5%	5%	5%	7%	10%
<b>Don't know / Not sure</b>	8%	4%	10%	11%	5%	13%

	<i>Total</i>	<i>18-29</i>	<i>30-39</i>	<i>40-49</i>	<i>50-59</i>	<i>60+</i>
<b>Strongly agree</b>	39%	23%	26%	42%	48%	55%
<b>Agree</b>	36%	36%	41%	40%	29%	33%
<b>Disagree</b>	11%	23%	15%	7%	8%	4%
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	6%	8%	10%	3%	4%	3%
<b>Don't know / Not sure</b>	8%	10%	7%	8%	10%	5%