

Poles' Attitudes towards Social Media Regulation

CATI Survey 2026



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Contents

Contents

Key Findings.....	3
Study Methodology and Theoretical Framework.....	4
Study Sample	8
Regional Distribution of the Sample.....	9
Question 1: Do you ever block or remove content on social media that you consider harmful?	12
Question 2: If a minimum age requirement for having a social media account were introduced in Poland, what age do you think would be appropriate?	16
Question 3: In Polish schools, pupils' use of smartphones should be.....	19
Question 4: Do you support the introduction of financial penalties (fines) for publicly humiliating other people on social media?	21
Question 5: Do you support the introduction of regulations that would restrict parents from posting photos or videos of children (persons under 16 years of age) on social media?	24
Restrictiveness of Attitudes Index.....	26
Index Construction	26
Variation in the Index by Demographic Factors	27
Regression Analysis	29
Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)	30
Expert Commentaries.....	33
References	35

Key Findings

- Most Poles expect clear restrictions on social media – for adults and children alike.
- The nationwide CATI survey conducted in April this year by the Laboratory of Media Studies, University of Warsaw (LBM UW) and the Institute of Journalism, Media and Social Communication, Jagiellonian University (IJMSC, JU) shows that more than three quarters of respondents support fines for public humiliation online, more than half want the minimum age for setting up an account to be raised to at least 16, and 62% would support a ban on smartphone use in schools, at least during lessons.
- Poles also call for the regulation of so-called sharenting – the publication of images of children by their parents. The survey was conducted on 20–24 April 2026 on a sample of 4,530 adult respondents. For the regional distribution, the base comprises 3,918 respondents who could be assigned to a voivodeship on the basis of the postcode they provided.
- Responses to the question about blocking or removing content regarded as harmful were distributed as follows: 15% of respondents do so often, 30% sometimes, 14% rarely and 17% never. One in five respondents (21%) state that they do not use social media at all, and 3% are unable to answer the question about how they respond to harmful content.
- Among social media users, around half of respondents actively respond to harmful content (often or sometimes). At the same time, a considerable group (17% of Poles) never take such action despite using the platforms.
- The most frequently indicated minimum age threshold for having a social media account is 16 – chosen by 31% of respondents. A further 20% would raise this limit to 18. One in four respondents (23%) believe that the limit should be set at 15, while one in ten (11%) favour 13 (i.e. the threshold currently applied by most platforms). Having no age limit is supported by a marginal 4% of Poles, and 11% have no opinion on the matter.
- In practice, this means that 51% of Poles favour a threshold of at least 16, and as many as 74% a threshold of at least 15. Public expectations are therefore clearly higher than the platform standards currently in force.
- There is therefore no doubt that, since 74% of respondents favour a limit of at least 15 and 51% a limit of at least 16, the small size of the demographic effects means that this direction of opinion is relatively uniform across different segments of society, rather than being championed by specific, selected groups (e.g. parents, older people or residents of large cities).

Study Methodology and Theoretical Framework

The study was carried out on 20–24 April 2026 by the Laboratory of Media Studies, University of Warsaw (LBM UW) in cooperation with the Institute of Journalism, Media and Social Communication, Jagiellonian University (IJMSC, JU). The subject of the study was the survey “Polacy wobec regulacji mediów społecznościowych i ochrony dzieci w sieci” [Poles on Social Media Regulation and the Protection of Children Online], conducted using CATI (Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing).

A total of 4,530 complete interviews were conducted ($N = 4,530$). During fieldwork, 27,576 telephone calls were answered, yielding 4,530 consents to participate in the study against 21,549 refusals, which corresponds to a consent rate of 21.02%. The average duration of a call ending in a successfully completed interview was approximately 3 minutes and 30 seconds, while the average duration of a single call – regardless of its outcome – was approximately 52 seconds.

Calling dates and hours	UW interviews	UJ interviews	Total
20 April 2026 (Monday) UW: 13:00–21:00 UJ: 12:00–20:00	725	626	1,351
21 April 2026 (Tuesday) UW: 13:00–21:00 UJ: 12:00–20:00	517	419	936
22 April 2026 (Wednesday) UW: 08:00–21:00 UJ: 12:00–20:00	822	348	1,170
23 April 2026 (Thursday) UW: 15:00–21:00 UJ: 12:00–20:00	339	300	639
24 April 2026 (Friday) UW: 13:00–21:00 UJ: 12:00–16:00	261	173	434
Total	2,664	1,866	4,530

The total net working time at interviewer workstations amounted to 780 hours, 39 minutes and 39 seconds. The project involved 165 interviewers (89 from the University of Warsaw and 76 from the Jagiellonian University) and 13 supervisors responsible for overseeing the course of the study (5 from the University of Warsaw and 8 from the Jagiellonian University). In addition, the utilisation of the available computer workstations designated for CATI interviewing was monitored. The Jagiellonian University team used 503 of the 540 available interviewer workstation slots, corresponding to an occupancy rate of 93%. The University of Warsaw team used 589 of the 731 available slots, achieving an occupancy rate of 81%. In total, 1,092 of the

1,271 available computer workstation slots were filled, which represents an average infrastructure utilisation rate of 85.9% during the fieldwork period. This organisation of work made it possible to carry out the study efficiently within five working days while maintaining uniform quality-control procedures and supervision of the data collection process.

The study was conducted at a time of particularly intense debate on the use of social media, the protection of minors and responsibility for user safety in the digital environment. This debate now covers not only the way online platforms operate, but also possible ways of countering verbal abuse, users' responsibility for the content they publish online, and the protection of children and young people from the negative impact of digital tools. The subject matter of the CATI study is directly related to current regulatory changes – at both national and European level.

The Digital Services Act (DSA¹) requires providers of online platforms accessible to minors to put in place appropriate and proportionate measures to ensure a high level of privacy, safety and security for them. These obligations cover the way services are designed, the operation of recommender systems, content reporting mechanisms and the methods used to determine users' age. Another important element of this regulatory architecture is the Artificial Intelligence Act (AI Act²), the main body of which has applied since August 2026. The Regulation governs the use of AI systems and prohibits, among other things, certain manipulative practices that exploit the vulnerability of persons due to their age.

In parallel, since 1 September 2026 statutory restrictions on the use of mobile phones and other electronic devices in pre-schools and primary schools have been in force in Poland. The amendment to the Education Law Act (Prawo oświatowe) introduces a ban on their use by primary school pupils while at school and during educational activities organised off school premises³. In secondary schools, the conditions for using electronic devices are to be laid down in school statutes. The explanatory memorandum to the bill explicitly refers to the results of academic research and public opinion surveys, stating that Poles support the ban and want uniform regulation at national level.

The Polish measures are part of a clear international trend. Australia has introduced a nationwide system under which regulated social media platforms must take reasonable steps to prevent persons under the age of 16 from creating and keeping accounts. In France, parliament has adopted legislation providing for a ban on access to social media for children under the age of 15.

¹ Regulation (EU) 2022/2065 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 October 2022 on a Single Market For Digital Services and amending Directive 2000/31/EC (Digital Services Act), OJ L 277, 27.10.2022, p. 1–102.

² Regulation (EU) 2024/1689 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 June 2024 laying down harmonised rules on artificial intelligence and amending Regulations (EC) No 300/2008, (EU) No 167/2013, (EU) No 168/2013, (EU) 2018/858, (EU) 2018/1139 and (EU) 2019/2144 and Directives 2014/90/EU, (EU) 2016/797 and (EU) 2020/1828 (Artificial Intelligence Act), OJ L 2024/1689, 12.07.2024.

³ Kancelaria Prezesa Rady Ministrów [Chancellery of the Prime Minister], *Projekt ustawy o zmianie ustawy – Prawo oświatowe* [Draft act amending the Education Law Act] (UD381), <https://www.gov.pl/web/premier/projekt-ustawy-o-zmianie-ustawy--prawo-oswiatowe3> (accessed 6 August 2026).

In other European countries – such as Denmark, Spain and Greece – work is under way to establish a minimum age for using platforms or to develop more effective age verification systems⁴.

The questionnaire consisted of a sociodemographic section and a main section comprising five substantive questions with closed-ended response options. The substantive questions were as follows:

- **QUESTION 1:** Do you ever block or remove content on social media that you consider harmful?
- **QUESTION 2:** If a minimum age requirement for having a social media account were introduced in Poland, what age do you think would be appropriate?
- **QUESTION 3:** In Polish schools, pupils' use of smartphones should be...
- **QUESTION 4:** Do you support the introduction of financial penalties (fines) for publicly humiliating other people on social media?
- **QUESTION 5:** Do you support the introduction of regulations that would restrict parents from posting photos or videos of children (persons under 16 years of age) on social media?

The sociodemographic section, subsequently used to assess the impact of individual sociodemographic factors on the distribution of responses, covered age, gender, postcode, education and, as an auxiliary variable, type of locality. Derived variables describing the geographical distribution of the respondent population, including voivodeship and type of locality (urban/rural), were determined on the basis of postcodes. In addition, information was collected on whether respondents have children.

The results obtained in the study were subjected to a weighting procedure using data on the demographic structure of the population of Poland published by Statistics Poland (GUS). The aim of weighting was to ensure the representativeness of the results by adjusting the structure of the study sample to the structure of the adult population of Poland.

The weighting process involved comparing the gender and age structure of the respondents taking part in the computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) study with the corresponding demographic structure of the population of Poland. On the basis of this comparison, each response was assigned an appropriate weight, which made it possible to adjust the study results to account for differences between the sample and the population.

The weighting was based on gender and age data from the Local Data Bank of Statistics Poland (as at 2026). In addition, two persons (1.8‰ of respondents) in the sample declared their gender as “other”. Owing to the lack of corresponding reference data from Statistics Poland, it was not possible to estimate weights correctly for this category.

⁴ Reuters, *From Australia to Europe, countries move to curb children's social media access*, 24 April 2026, <https://www.reuters.com/legal/government/australia-europe-countries-move-curb-childrens-social-media-access-2026-04-24/> (accessed 6 August 2026).

The following pages of the report present the characteristics of the study sample and an analysis of the responses to all questions included in the survey.

Study Sample

Complete responses were obtained from 4,530 respondents (N = 4,530), which constitutes the base for calculating percentages in the analyses of individual questions. The tables below present the structure of the sample broken down by basic sociodemographic variables. In the table on the regional distribution, the base comprises 3,918 respondents who could be assigned to a voivodeship on the basis of their postcode.

Gender	Number of respondents	% of sample	% of population 18+
Woman	2,055	45.4%	52.4%
Man	2,460	54.3%	47.6%
Other	3	0.1%	N/A
No answer	12	0.3%	N/A

Population data: Local Data Bank of Statistics Poland, complete data for 2023

Age	Number of respondents	% of sample	% of population 18+
19-24	299	6.6%	7.0%
25-34	591	13.0%	15.3%
35-44	1,187	26.2%	20.3%
45-54	923	20.4%	17.7%
55-64	623	13.8%	14.9%
65 and over	907	20.0%	24.8%

Population data: Local Data Bank of Statistics Poland, complete data for 2023

Education	Number of respondents	% of sample	% of population 18+*
Primary	105	2.3%	14.8%*
Basic vocational	394	8.7%	19.6%
Secondary	1,503	33.2%	32.4%
Higher	2,528	55.8%	23.1%

Population data: National Population and Housing Census (NSP) 2021 results

*Figures do not add up to 100% – the census results include the education categories ‘Undetermined’ and ‘Incomplete primary’, for which there are no reference groups in our survey

*** the primary category also includes lower secondary (gimnazjum) education*

Type of locality	Number of respondents	% of sample	% of population 18+
Urban	3,435	79.5%	60.5%
Rural	886	20.5%	39.5%

Population data: Local Data Bank of Statistics Poland, complete data for 2023

Parental status	Number of respondents	% of sample*
Parent	3,386	74.7%
Childless	1,144	25.3%

As there is no reference dataset corresponding exactly to the scope of the question, no reference population is given here

Regional Distribution of the Sample

The table below compares the distribution of the sample by voivodeship with the share of each region in the national population.

Region	Number of respondents	% of sample	% of population 18+
Lower Silesian Voivodeship	254	6.5%	7.6%
Kuyavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship	160	4.1%	5.4%
Lublin Voivodeship	234	6.0%	5.5%
Lubusz Voivodeship	98	2.5%	2.6%
Łódź Voivodeship	261	6.7%	6.4%
Lesser Poland Voivodeship	399	10.2%	8.9%
Masovian Voivodeship	959	24.5%	14.1%
Opole Voivodeship	62	1.6%	2.6%
Subcarpathian Voivodeship	144	3.7%	5.5%
Podlaskie Voivodeship	130	3.3%	3.1%
Pomeranian Voivodeship	214	5.5%	6.1%
Silesian Voivodeship	369	9.4%	11.8%

Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship	93	2.4%	3.2%
Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship	149	3.8%	3.7%
Greater Poland Voivodeship	262	6.7%	9.1%
West Pomeranian Voivodeship	130	3.3%	4.4%
Total	3,918		

Population data: Local Data Bank of Statistics Poland, complete data for 2023

Compared with projects carried out in previous years, it should be emphasised that the increase in sample size has resulted in a marked improvement in the accuracy of estimates concerning its geographical distribution by voivodeship. As in previous editions of the study, the largest deviations from the structure of the population of Poland were recorded for the Masovian Voivodeship, which was clearly over-represented, and the Lesser Poland Voivodeship, which showed significant over-representation. The Greater Poland and Silesian Voivodeships, in turn, were significantly under-represented. At the same time, for most of the other voivodeships, especially the smaller ones, the structure of the sample was very closely aligned with that of the population. The only exception was the Opole Voivodeship, for which a significant deviation was recorded.

The indicators of deviation from the national population distribution used for sample weighting are presented in the table below. The colour coding is based on a scheme in which the ideal state is the value '0' – no deviation from the national distribution – while colour intensity reflects a positive deviation (blue, overestimation in the sample) or a negative deviation (red, underestimation in the sample) from the frequency distribution of the respective groups in the national population.

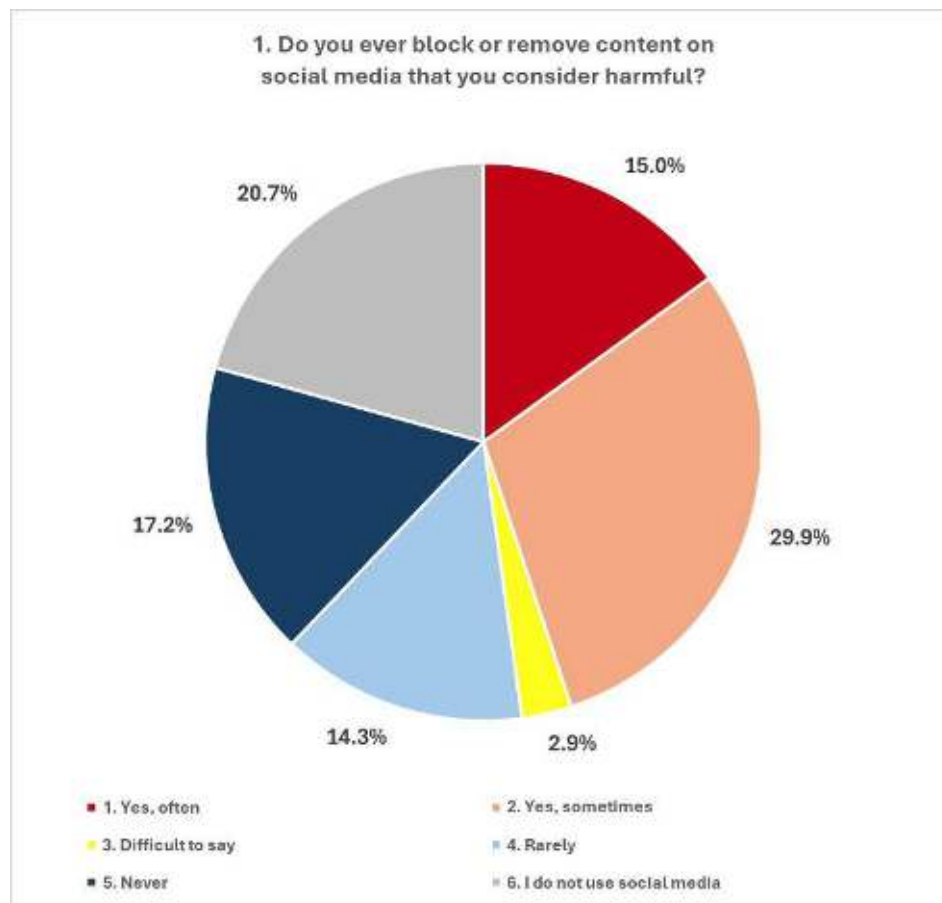
Group	N in sample	% of sample	N in reference population	% of population	WEIGHT 2026
19-24M	163	3.61%	1,090,453	3.59%	0.993256
19-24F	133	2.95%	1,045,453	3.44%	1.167064
25-34M	365	8.08%	2,366,262	7.78%	0.962525
25-34F	224	4.96%	2,290,755	7.53%	1.518352
35-44M	671	14.86%	3,117,389	10.25%	0.68978
35-44F	515	11.41%	3,051,003	10.03%	0.879584
45-54M	515	11.41%	2,683,815	8.83%	0.773726
45-54F	408	9.04%	2,689,075	8.84%	0.978554
55-64M	332	7.35%	2,173,694	7.15%	0.972081
55-64F	287	6.36%	2,352,166	7.73%	1.216825
65+M	414	9.17%	3,042,688	10.01%	1.091187
65+F	488	10.81%	4,507,206	14.82%	1.371291

It should also be noted that, owing to the way the sample was constructed – based on randomly generated telephone numbers – it was not possible to control the selection of respondents according to geographical criteria at the fieldwork stage. Nevertheless, the resulting correspondence between the geographical distribution of the sample and that of the population of Poland should be assessed as good. This made it possible to include voivodeship as an additional demographic factor in the analysis and weighting of the data.

Question 1: Do you ever block or remove content on social media that you consider harmful?

The first question concerned users' active responses to content they regard as harmful – by blocking or removing it. The question serves as an introduction to the issue of individual moderation practices on social media.

Figure 1. Distribution of responses to Question 1.



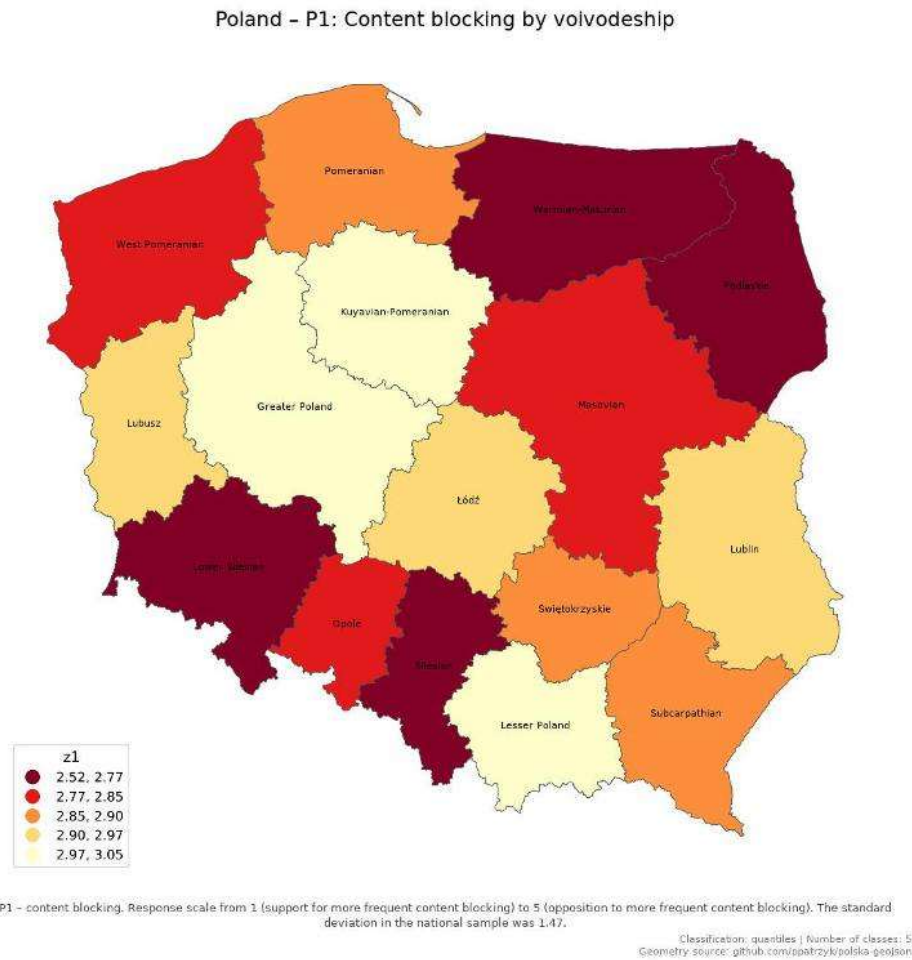
Source: Authors' own work.

Responses to the question about blocking or removing content regarded as harmful were distributed as follows: 15% of respondents do so often, 30% sometimes, 14% rarely and 17% never. One in five respondents (21%) state that they do not use social media at all, and 3% are unable to answer the question about how they respond to harmful content.

This means that, among social media users, around half of respondents actively respond to harmful content (often or sometimes). At the same time, a considerable group (17% of Poles) never take such action despite using the platforms. This provides important context for the remaining questions: regulatory expectations are being formulated by a society in which a considerable proportion of people either distance themselves from social media or remain passive towards the problematic content found there.

It is worth emphasising that the rapid growth of social media in Poland has resulted in 75.6% of the population already using them, which amounts to more than 29 million active users (*Social Media w Polsce 2025* [Social Media in Poland 2025] – Raport Digital Poland). The average Pole uses as many as 6 different platforms each month, the most popular being Facebook (almost 19 million users), TikTok (11.4 million) and Instagram (11.3 million). This vast space generates a huge amount of harmful content, including health and political disinformation, fraudulent offers and impersonation of trusted institutions. The scale of the problem is reflected in the daily work of the NASK Disinformation Analysis Centre (Ośrodek Analizy Dezinformacji, OAD; NASK, 2026), which carries out monitoring seven days a week and in the whole of 2025 identified and forwarded to platform administrators as many as 46,511 substantiated reports in total. Aggregate statistics on social media platforms' responses to reports in 2025 reveal serious challenges in the area of content moderation. Of the more than 46,000 incidents reported by NASK analysts, the platforms decided to remove completely and permanently only 12%, i.e. 5,572 items. By far the most common response was moderation in the broad sense, applied to 68% of reports (31,638 cases), which, according to the adopted methodology, includes applying information overlays, adding contextual notes or suspending accounts. However, the proportion of reports rejected outright or ignored by administrators remains alarmingly high, at as much as 20% (9,301 cases). The X platform (formerly Twitter) follows a distinctive moderation strategy, almost entirely forgoing the removal of content in favour of labelling it. This service rejected 7% of reports and removed only 2%, opting in as many as 91% of cases for moderation consisting mainly of attaching external community notes. Google (YouTube and Google Ads), in turn, shows enormous passivity, rejecting as many as 91.13% of NASK reports and removing only 8.62% of harmful materials. Users' complete defencelessness is evident on platforms such as Telegram, LinkedIn, Discord and Bluesky, which in 2025 rejected, without exception, 100% of the reports of violations submitted to them.

Figure 2. Content blocking – P1 indicator values by voivodeship



Source: Authors' own work. Map geometry: github.com/ppatryk/polska-geojson.

Demographic Variation in Responses

The table below presents the results of chi-square tests of independence and the strength of association (Cramér's V) between the distribution of responses and demographic variables.

Demographic variable	χ^2	df	p	Cramér's V	Significance	Strength of association
Gender	37.95	15	<0.001	0.053	Significant	Very weak
Age	412.95	25	<0.001	0.135	Significant	Weak
Education	129.11	15	<0.001	0.098	Significant	Very weak
Voivodeship	74.95	75	0.480	0.062	Not significant	Very weak
Type of locality	11.78	5	0.038	0.052	Significant	Very weak

Parental status	58.14	5	<0.001	0.113	Significant	Weak
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The distribution of responses to the question on blocking content differs significantly across almost all of the demographic variables analysed. The strongest association is found for age (Cramér's $V = 0.135$; $p < 0.001$) and having children ($V = 0.113$; $p < 0.001$) – both weak in strength. Differences by gender, education and type of locality are also significant, albeit very weak. The only variable that did not differentiate responses was voivodeship ($p = 0.480$), which confirms the absence of a clear regional pattern on the P1 indicator map.

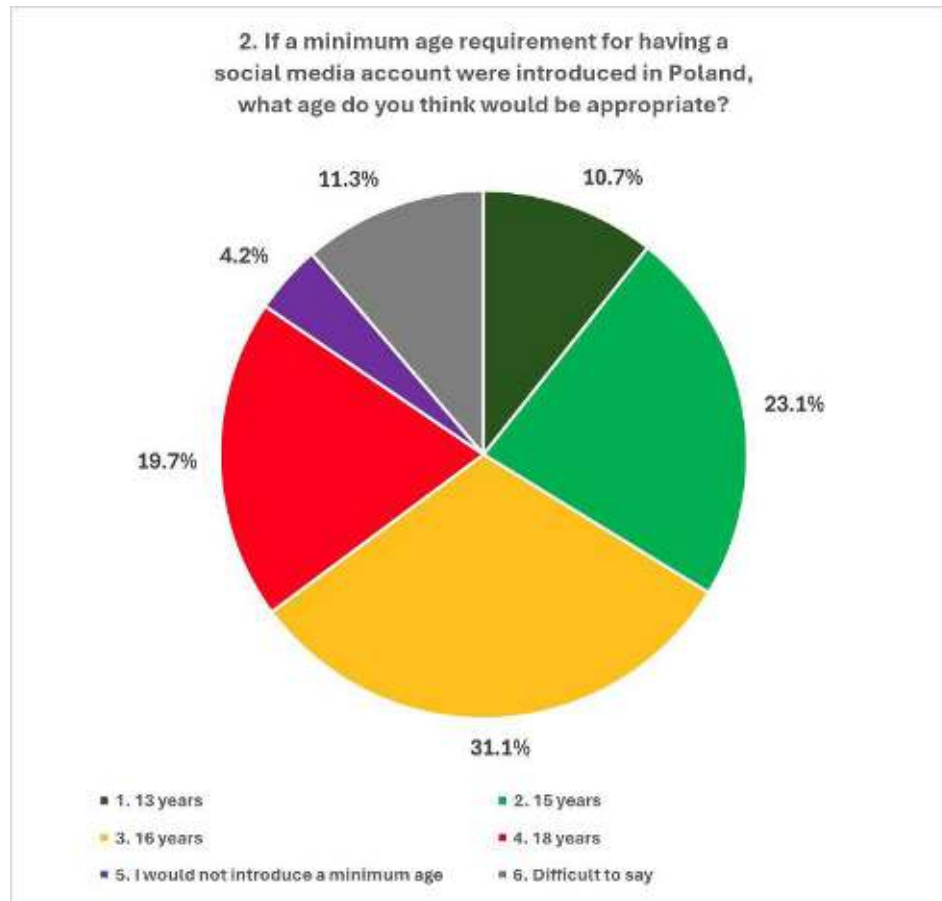
The map above shows that, in the case of question number 2 (blocking content), the relatively most restrictive respondents are residents of the Lower Silesian, Silesian, Warmian-Masurian and Podlaskie Voivodeships. The least restrictive appear to be residents of the Kuyavian-Pomeranian, Greater Poland and Lesser Poland Voivodeships. It should be noted that these differences are not significant and that it is difficult to identify the reason for this particular distribution.

There is, however, a statistically significant association between gender and respondents' answers, although its strength is very weak. This means that women and men differ in their responses to a statistically detectable degree, but these differences are small. Women are more restrictive than men. One interpretative lead in this context is whether respondents have children. Namely, having children is associated with statistically significant differences in respondents' answers. The strength of this association is weak, but higher than in the case of gender or education. It follows that being a mother differentiates the way this question is answered – mothers are more restrictive (the logic of protecting one's offspring). In this context, it is worth noting that, of all the variables, age matters most ($V = 0.135$), followed by parental status ($V = 0.113$), whereas gender, education and type of locality show only a marginal effect.

Question 2: If a minimum age requirement for having a social media account were introduced in Poland, what age do you think would be appropriate?

The second question concerned the preferred age threshold for being allowed to have a social media account – a key element of the debate on the protection of minors in the digital environment.

Figure 3. Distribution of responses to Question 2.



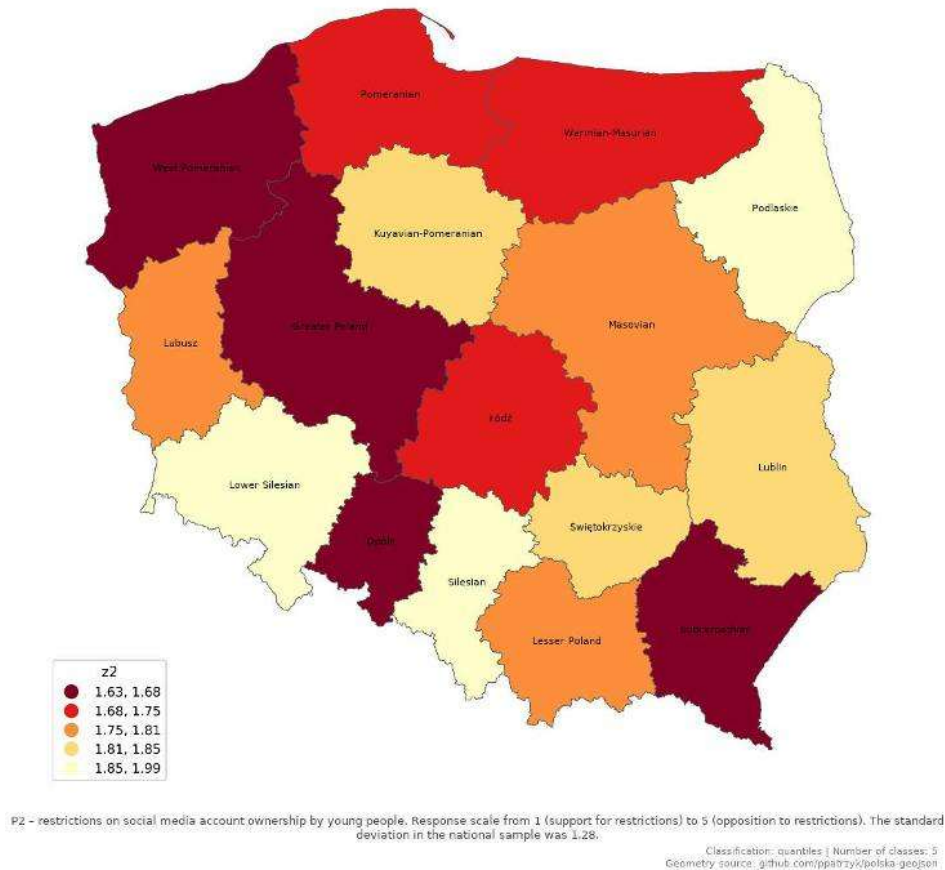
Source: Authors' own work.

The most frequently indicated minimum age threshold for having a social media account is 16 – chosen by 31% of respondents. A further 20% would raise this limit to 18. One in four respondents (23%) believe that the limit should be set at 15, while one in ten (11%) favour 13 (i.e. the threshold currently applied by most platforms). Having no age limit is supported by a marginal 4% of Poles, and 11% have no opinion on the matter.

In practice, this means that 51% of Poles favour a threshold of at least 16, and as many as 74% a threshold of at least 15. Public expectations are therefore clearly higher than the platform standards currently in force.

Figure 4. Age restrictions – P2 indicator values by voivodeship

Poland – P2: Restrictions on account ownership for young people by voivodeship



Source: Authors' own work. Map geometry: github.com/ppatryk/polska-geojson.

Demographic Variation in Responses

The table below presents the results of chi-square tests of independence and the strength of association (Cramér's V) between the distribution of responses and demographic variables.

Demographic variable	χ^2	df	p	Cramér's V	Significance	Strength of association
Gender	69.04	15	<0.001	0.071	Significant	Very weak
Age	307.97	25	<0.001	0.117	Significant	Weak
Education	291.98	15	<0.001	0.147	Significant	Weak
Voivodeship	77.79	75	0.390	0.063	Not significant	Very weak
Type of locality	7.01	5	0.220	0.040	Not significant	Very weak
Parental status	38.80	5	<0.001	0.092	Significant	Very weak

The preferred age threshold is most strongly differentiated by education ($V = 0.147$; $p < 0.001$) and respondent's age ($V = 0.117$; $p < 0.001$) – both associations being weak in strength. Differences by gender and having children are also significant, but very weak. Voivodeship ($p = 0.390$) and type of locality ($p = 0.220$) proved not statistically significant, which indicates that the position on the age threshold is not linked to place of residence.

Analysis of the χ^2 tests of independence indicates that the preferred minimum age for having a social media account differs significantly by gender, age, education and parental status ($p < 0.001$). However, no significant differences were found by voivodeship ($p = 0.390$) or type of locality of residence ($p = 0.220$). This means that expectations regarding age regulation of access to social media are supra-regional in nature and do not depend on place of residence.

At the same time, the values of Cramér's V range from 0.071 to 0.147, which means that all of the significant associations are small in strength. Of the characteristics analysed, education matters most ($V = 0.147$), followed by age ($V = 0.117$), then parental status ($V = 0.092$) and gender ($V = 0.071$). However, even the strongest of the observed effects should be interpreted as weak, which means that differences between groups exist but are not large.

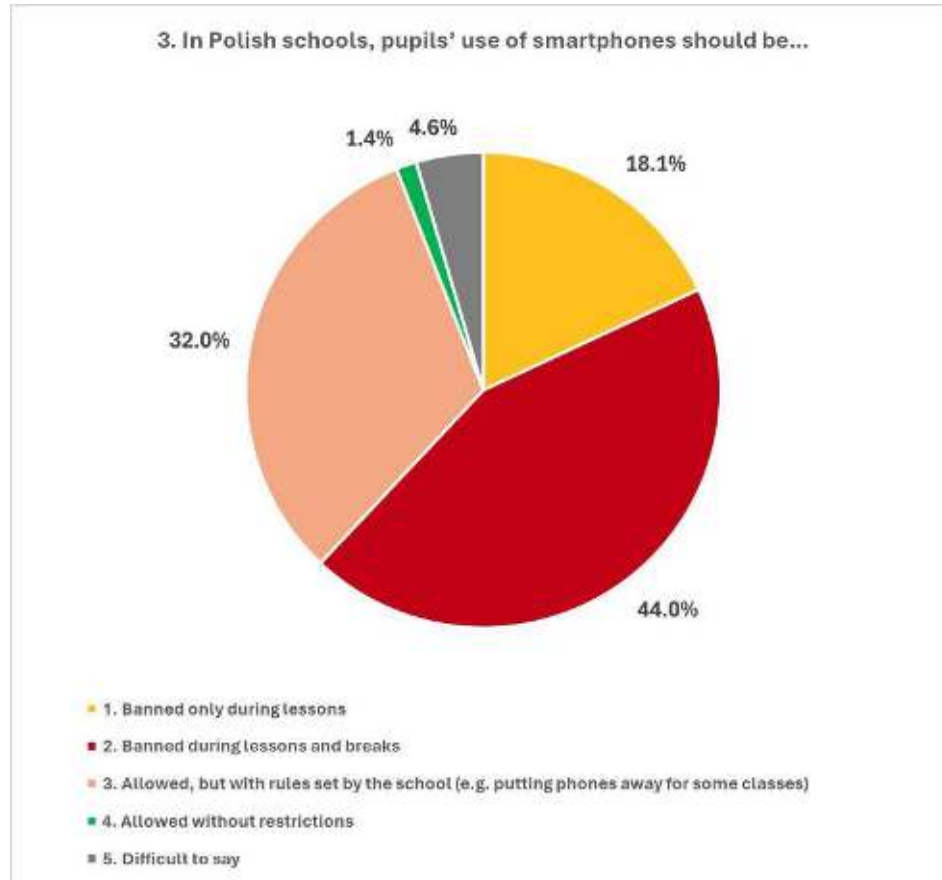
In practice, therefore, the most important conclusion is not that individual demographic groups differ substantially, but that strong support for raising the minimum age of access to social media is relatively widespread across society as a whole. In other words, although people of different ages, levels of education or parental status distribute their responses somewhat differently, demographic characteristics explain only a small part of the variation in opinion.

Particularly noteworthy is the absence of significant differences by region or by size of locality. This result suggests that the belief that the minimum age for using social media should be raised is not characteristic of particular regions of Poland or of residents of large cities or rural areas, but is rather a widely shared social norm. There is therefore no doubt that, since 74% of respondents favour a limit of at least 15 and 51% a limit of at least 16, the small size of the demographic effects means that this direction of opinion is relatively uniform across different segments of society, rather than being championed by specific, selected groups (e.g. parents, older people or residents of large cities).

Question 3: In Polish schools, pupils' use of smartphones should be...

The third question concerned expectations regarding the rules on pupils' use of smartphones in schools – ranging from a ban limited to lessons to full permission without restrictions.

Figure 5. Distribution of responses to Question 3.



Source: Authors' own work.

Regarding pupils' use of smartphones, the largest group of respondents – 44% – favour a complete ban during both lessons and breaks. A further 18% would opt for a milder variant, namely a ban limited to lessons only. 32% of Poles would prefer to leave the decision to schools, allowing intermediate rules, e.g. putting phones away in special containers during selected classes. Only 1% of respondents favour complete freedom for pupils, and 5% have no opinion.

In total, therefore, 62% of Poles support a systemic ban on smartphone use in school during lessons (and almost half also during breaks). Almost all respondents agree that phones at school require some kind of rules – the “no restrictions” option receives practically no support. In other words, a total of 94% of respondents support some form of restriction on smartphone use. This means that the belief that their use at school should be controlled or banned clearly prevails. A permissive stance is marginal – only 1.4% of respondents support complete freedom to use phones. At the same time, the proportion of undecided respondents is low (4.6%), which indicates that the issue is clear to respondents and tends to elicit unequivocal opinions.

Demographic Variation in Responses

The table below presents the results of chi-square tests of independence and the strength of association (Cramér's V) between the distribution of responses and demographic variables.

Demographic variable	χ^2	df	p	Cramér's V	Significance	Strength of association
Gender	74.34	12	<0.001	0.074	Significant	Very weak
Age	300.04	20	<0.001	0.129	Significant	Weak
Education	99.15	12	<0.001	0.085	Significant	Very weak
Voivodeship	83.60	60	0.024	0.073	Significant	Very weak
Type of locality	10.91	4	0.028	0.050	Significant	Very weak
Parental status	208.62	4	<0.001	0.215	Significant	Weak

Opinions on smartphones in schools differ significantly across all six demographic variables. The strongest association was recorded for having children ($V = 0.215$; $p < 0.001$) and age ($V = 0.129$; $p < 0.001$) – parents and older people are clearly more likely to favour restrictive solutions. Differences by gender, education, voivodeship and type of locality are also significant, albeit weaker. This is the only question for which the regional breakdown also proved statistically significant ($p = 0.024$).

Parents and older people are slightly, or only to a limited extent, more inclined towards restrictions. This is a phenomenon we would intuitively expect, for two reasons. First, this is the question that most directly affects respondents' own children – unlike the abstract questions about punishing online hate or protecting children's images. We know from other studies that children's online safety is a priority for almost all parents (Munoz-Carril et al., 2023; Barbovski et al., 2020; Marsh et al., 2024; Rega et al., 2022), and that most expect regulators and institutions to introduce tougher rules (McClain et al., 2025; Gottfried, J. and Anderson, M., 2026).

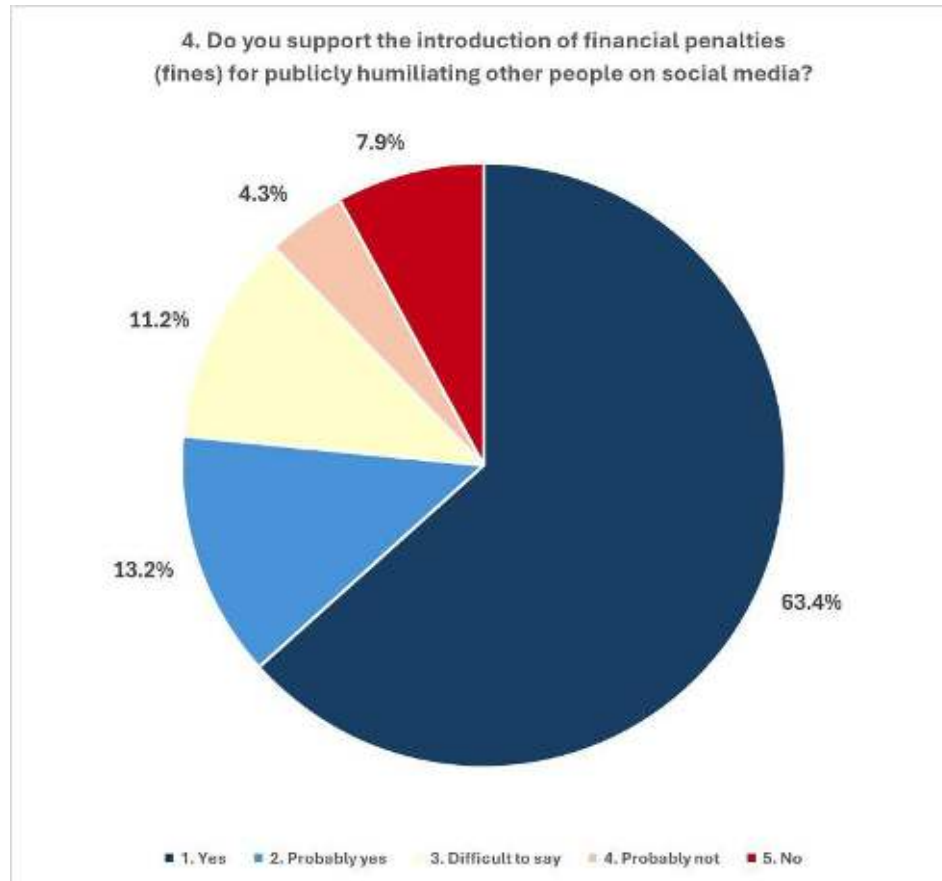
If we are looking for the sources of regional variation in responses, it should be borne in mind that (at the time of the survey) school smartphone policy was often administered and experienced locally, so regional school norms may shape attitudes specifically in the case of this question.

Looking at the strength of association, however, it should be noted that the dominant feature of the distribution is not division but a broad consensus across social groups – a generally restrictive attitude is shared by women and men, younger and older people, and urban and rural residents. The real dispute should therefore not be about whether to regulate, but about how restrictive the adopted solutions should be.

Question 4: Do you support the introduction of financial penalties (fines) for publicly humiliating other people on social media?

The fourth question examined support for financial sanctions (fines) for publicly humiliating other people on social media – a punitive instrument targeting hate speech and harassment.

Figure 6. Distribution of responses to Question 4.

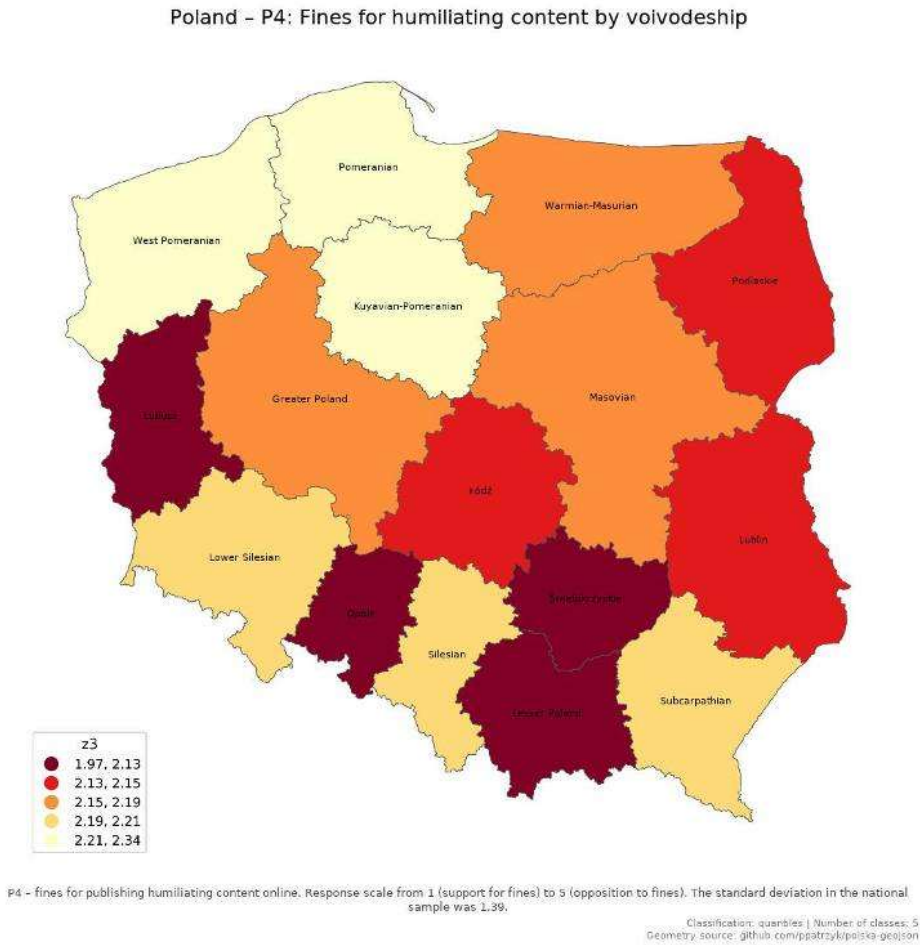


Source: Authors' own work.

The strongest consensus can be seen in the question on financial penalties for publicly humiliating other people on social media. 63% of respondents answer a definite “yes”, and a further 13% “probably yes”. In total, as many as three quarters (77%) of Poles support fines for online hate. Only 12% of respondents are of the opposite opinion (4% “probably not”, 8% “no”), and 11% have no opinion.

Significantly, the most decisive option dominates the responses – a plain “yes” is chosen by almost five times as many people as “probably yes”. This points to strong and unnuanced public opinion on this issue. The results thus show a predominance of restrictive attitudes and strong public support for formally penalising the humiliation of others online.

Figure 7. Fines for humiliating content – P4 indicator values by voivodeship



Source: Authors' own work. Map geometry: github.com/ppatryk/polska-geojson.

Demographic Variation in Responses

The table below presents the results of chi-square tests of independence and the strength of association (Cramér's V) between the distribution of responses and demographic variables.

Demographic variable	χ^2	df	p	Cramér's V	Significance	Strength of association
Gender	181.49	12	<0.001	0.116	Significant	Weak
Age	99.48	20	<0.001	0.074	Significant	Very weak
Education	31.81	12	0.001	0.048	Significant	Very weak
Voivodeship	67.29	60	0.242	0.066	Not significant	Very weak
Type of locality	3.67	4	0.453	0.029	Not significant	Very weak
Parental status	81.46	4	<0.001	0.134	Significant	Weak

Support for financial penalties is most strongly differentiated by gender ($V = 0.116$; $p < 0.001$) and having children ($V = 0.134$; $p < 0.001$) – women and parents are significantly more likely to support sanctions. Differences by age and education are also significant, but very weak. Voivodeship ($p = 0.242$) and type of locality ($p = 0.453$) remain not statistically significant, which points to the supra-regional nature of support for this measure.

This direction is consistent with previous research – women have been shown to be more sensitive to online harms and are more likely to prioritise safety over freedom of expression (McClain, 2022), while parents are characterised by a generalised protective orientation, particularly associated with intensive parenting (Balleys, 2022; Nagy et al., 2022; Eastin et al., 2006). It is notable that, compared with the question on smartphones in schools, the role of gender increases here while the role of parental status decreases: the question on humiliation touches on the domain of harm, where the gender difference is strongest, rather than on a parent's direct interest relating to their own child.

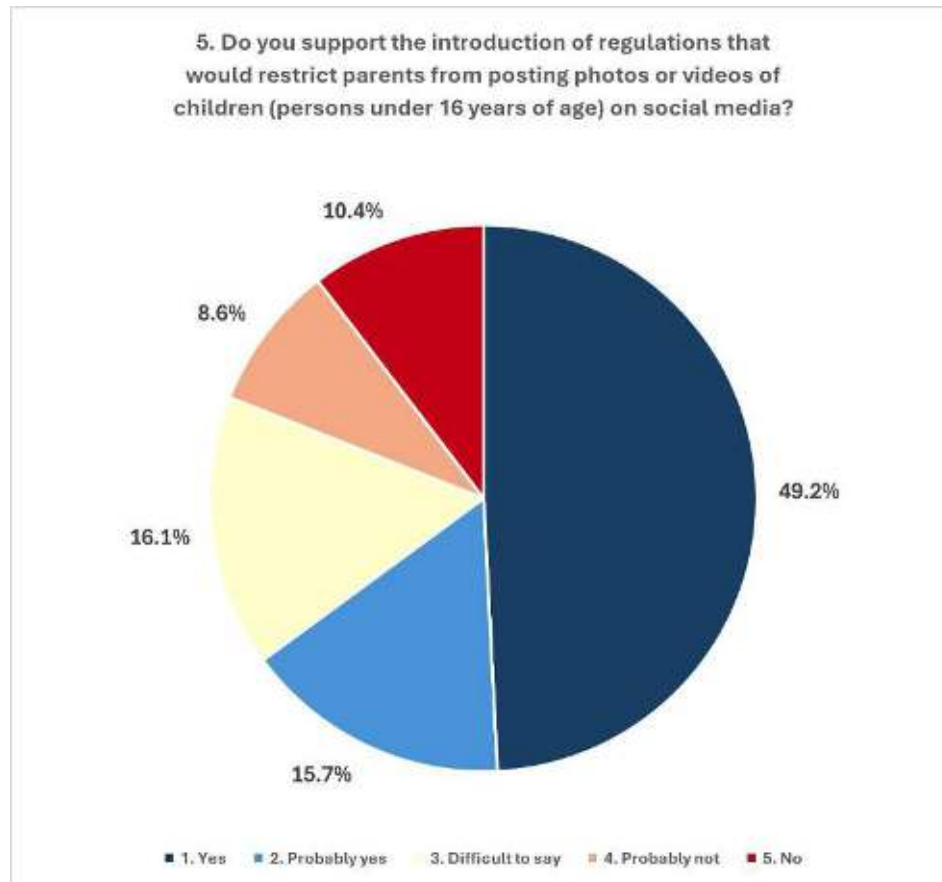
The fact that being a woman and being a parent predict a stronger preference for penalising humiliating behaviour online presumably also stems from the fact that women and children are the groups most often targeted by such behaviour and report higher levels of emotional distress following such experiences (UN Women 2023; Enock et al., 2026; Bailey, 2015; Duggan, 2017; Xiao et al., 2023).

Overall, however, the results clearly demonstrate a very broad social consensus on the legal penalisation of public humiliation on the internet. The real dispute is therefore not about whether to penalise, but at most about the scope and severity of penalties – and the group that rejects the idea altogether is small.

Question 5: Do you support the introduction of regulations that would restrict parents from posting photos or videos of children (persons under 16 years of age) on social media?

The fifth question concerned the phenomenon of so-called sharenting – parents publishing images of their children online – and support for regulations restricting this practice with regard to persons under the age of 16.

Figure 8. Distribution of responses to Question 5.



Source: Authors' own work.

The introduction of regulations restricting parents from posting photos and videos of children under the age of 16 is supported by 49% of respondents (“yes”), and a further 16% answer “probably yes” – in total, two thirds of Poles (65%) would like to restrict the practice of so-called “sharenting” by law. 19% of Poles are of the opposite opinion (9% “probably not”, 10% “no”), and 16% have no definite position.

This relatively high proportion of undecided responses (“difficult to say”) suggests that, for some members of the public, the issue is new or less familiar than conventional online verbal abuse. Opponents of such a solution are in the minority: 10.4% chose “no” and 8.6% “probably not”. As many as 16.1% of respondents chose “Difficult to say” – the highest level of indecision among all

the questions asked in this year's survey. This suggests that the issue of interfering in parents' decisions is more complex for some respondents and raises doubts: it brings into conflict questions of child protection, parental autonomy and personal freedom.

Demographic Variation in Responses

The table below presents the results of chi-square tests of independence and the strength of association (Cramér's V) between the distribution of responses and demographic variables.

Demographic variable	χ^2	df	p	Cramér's V	Significance	Strength of association
Gender	122.03	12	<0.001	0.095	Significant	Very weak
Age	74.07	20	<0.001	0.064	Significant	Very weak
Education	31.73	12	0.002	0.048	Significant	Very weak
Voivodeship	54.36	60	0.681	0.059	Not significant	Very weak
Type of locality	0.44	4	0.979	0.010	Not significant	Very weak
Parental status	3.10	4	0.542	0.026	Not significant	Very weak

Analytical note

Attitudes towards restrictions on publishing children's images are most strongly differentiated by gender ($V = 0.095$; $p < 0.001$) – women are clearly more likely to support such regulations. Differences by age and education are also significant, albeit very weak. Importantly, this is the only question in which having children does not differentiate responses ($p = 0.542$); voivodeship ($p = 0.681$) and type of locality ($p = 0.979$) also remain not significant. This suggests that support for protecting children's images is widespread and independent of respondents' own parental status.

The data suggest that support for protecting children's images does not stem from a parent's own direct interest, but is rather a general norm shared regardless of whether respondents are themselves raising children. The protection of a child's image thus appears to be a widely accepted value, only weakly dependent on demographic characteristics and differentiated at most – and only slightly – by gender, for the reasons described in relation to the previous question.

Furthermore, it is worth bearing in mind that opinions on this issue may to some extent reflect the tone of the public debate on sharenting (if such a debate is taking place at all) – we usually highlight the negative aspects and/or consequences of this phenomenon, citing extreme cases as examples (e.g. photo coverage of childbirth) or discussing them critically (the Gimper vs. Lil Masti case – Wirtualnimedia.pl, 22 July 2025).

Restrictiveness of Attitudes Index

Index Construction

A composite index of the restrictiveness of attitudes towards social media regulation was constructed on the basis of three substantive questions: Question 1 (blocking harmful content), Question 4 (financial penalties for humiliation) and Question 5 (restricting the publication of children's images). Simple recoding was applied, whereby lower values indicate a more restrictive attitude and higher values a more permissive one. Respondents who stated in Question 1 that they do not use social media were excluded from the index calculations.

The correlations between the component questions are significant but moderate, which confirms that the index combines three distinct components of a complex phenomenon. In raw form, the index takes values from 3 (extremely restrictive attitude) to 15 (extreme permissiveness).

Correlation matrix of the component questions

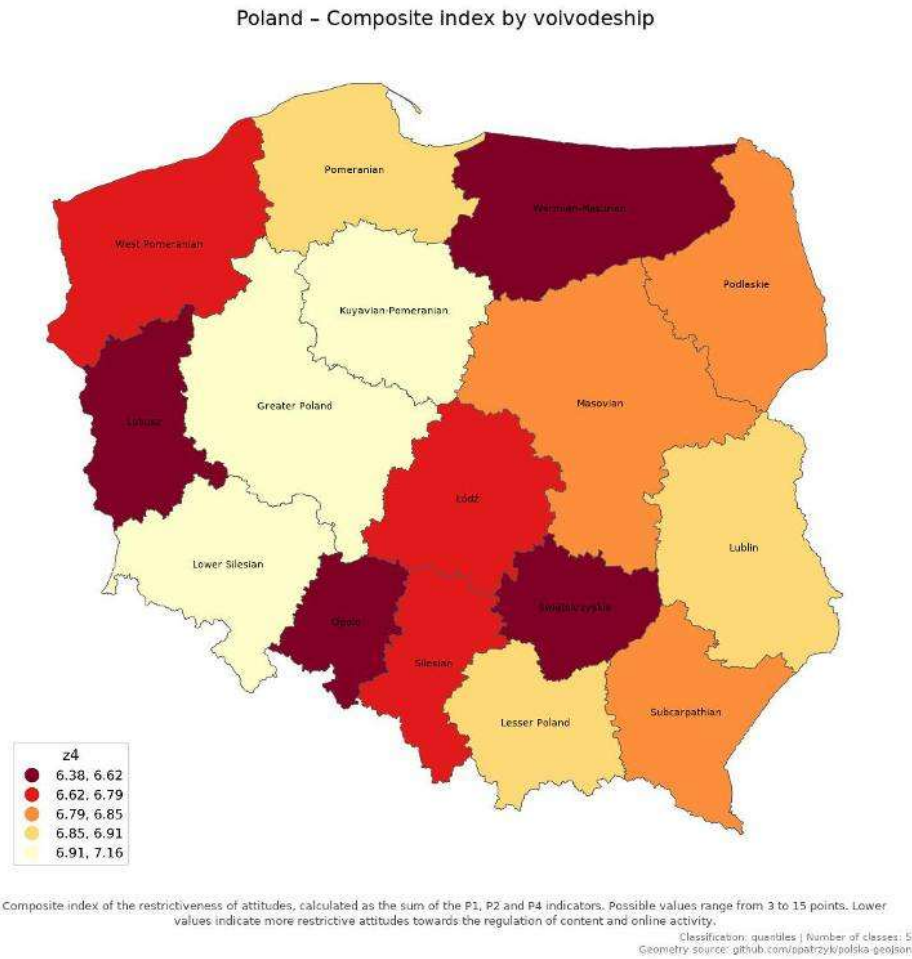
	Question 1	Question 4	Question 5
Question 1	—		
Question 4	0.078	—	
Question 5	0.105	0.239	—

Owing to the specific distributions of the component variables, standardised data (Z-scores for each component variable) were used for the statistical calculations. The standardised index takes theoretical values from -9 to +9. Its empirical distribution is characterised by the descriptive statistics below.

Descriptive statistics of the standardised index

Mean	-0.012
Standard deviation	1.947
Q1	-1.372
Q3	1.382
Min	-2.769
Max	5.935

Figure 9. Composite Restrictiveness of Attitudes Index by voivodeship.



Source: Authors' own work. Map geometry: github.com/ppatryk/polska-geojson.

Variation in the Index by Demographic Factors

The table below presents the mean values of the standardised index (Z-index) broken down by demographic category. Negative values (red) indicate a more restrictive attitude than average, and positive values (blue) a more permissive one.

Gender	Z-index
Woman	-0.477
Man	0.393
Other	0.132
No answer	0.215

Type of locality	Z-index
Urban	-0.023
Rural	0.041
No answer	-0.057

Education	Z-index
Primary	0.190
Basic vocational	0.255
Secondary	0.067
Higher	-0.096

Age	Z-index
19-24	0.189
25-34	0.092
35-44	-0.083
45-54	0.078
55-64	-0.083
65 and over	-0.143

Parental status	Z-index
Parent	-0.078
Childless	0.161

Voivodeship	Z-index
Lower Silesian Voivodeship	0.105
Kuyavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship	0.191
Lublin Voivodeship	0.013
Lubusz Voivodeship	-0.270
Łódź Voivodeship	-0.091

Lesser Poland Voivodeship	-0.003
Masovian Voivodeship	-0.034
Opole Voivodeship	-0.376
Subcarpathian Voivodeship	-0.054
Podlaskie Voivodeship	-0.012
Pomeranian Voivodeship	0.002
Silesian Voivodeship	-0.052
Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship	-0.194
Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship	-0.354
Greater Poland Voivodeship	0.061
West Pomeranian Voivodeship	-0.148

Regression Analysis

The linear regression model explained the standardised restrictiveness index in terms of demographic variables (gender, education, voivodeship, age, having children, type of locality). The table below presents the model coefficients together with standard errors, t statistics, p-values and 95% confidence intervals.

Variable	coef	std err	t	p	[0.025	0.975]	Notes
Intercept	0.046	0.326	0.14	0.889	-0.593	0.685	
Gender: man	0.826	0.068	12.09	<0.001	0.692	0.960	women clearly more restrictive
Educ.: basic vocational	-0.213	0.316	-0.67	0.502	-0.833	0.408	
Educ.: secondary	-0.264	0.295	-0.89	0.372	-0.842	0.315	
Educ.: higher	-0.343	0.295	-1.16	0.245	-0.921	0.236	
Voiv.: Kuyavian-Pomeranian	0.021	0.215	0.10	0.924	-0.400	0.442	
Voiv.: Lublin	-0.090	0.194	-0.47	0.642	-0.471	0.290	
Voiv.: Lubusz	-0.323	0.253	-1.28	0.202	-0.819	0.173	
Voiv.: Masovian	-0.077	0.150	-0.52	0.606	-0.372	0.217	

Voiv.: Lesser Poland	-0.043	0.170	-0.25	0.802	-0.376	0.291	
Voiv.: Opole	-0.409	0.301	-1.36	0.174	-0.998	0.181	
Voiv.: Subcarpathian	-0.126	0.220	-0.57	0.566	-0.558	0.305	
Voiv.: Podlaskie	-0.072	0.229	-0.32	0.752	-0.520	0.376	
Voiv.: Pomeranian	-0.128	0.194	-0.66	0.509	-0.509	0.252	
Voiv.: Warmian-Masurian	-0.453	0.223	-2.04	0.042	-0.890	-0.017	clearly more restrictive attitude
Voiv.: Greater Poland	-0.070	0.186	-0.38	0.705	-0.435	0.294	
Voiv.: West Pomeranian	-0.238	0.232	-1.03	0.305	-0.692	0.216	
Voiv.: Łódź	-0.168	0.184	-0.91	0.361	-0.529	0.193	
Voiv.: Silesian	-0.122	0.173	-0.71	0.480	-0.462	0.217	
Voiv.: Świętokrzyskie	-0.257	0.247	-1.04	0.299	-0.742	0.228	
Age: 25-34	-0.048	0.162	-0.29	0.769	-0.365	0.270	
Age: 35-44	-0.039	0.161	-0.24	0.808	-0.354	0.276	
Age: 45-54	0.178	0.170	1.05	0.295	-0.155	0.510	
Age: 55-64	0.033	0.179	0.19	0.854	-0.317	0.383	
Age: 65 and over	-0.048	0.175	-0.28	0.782	-0.391	0.295	
Parent: yes	-0.172	0.092	-1.88	0.061	-0.352	0.008	parents more restrictive (close to significance)
Locality type: rural	0.018	0.086	0.21	0.833	-0.150	0.187	

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

Multifactor analysis of variance made it possible to assess the effect of individual demographic variables and their interactions on the variation in the restrictiveness index. The main effects and the most important interactions are presented below.

Factor	sum_sq	df	F	p (PR>F)	Notes
Gender (d1)	497.0	1	141.0	<0.001	gender is a critical

					differentiator of attitudes towards regulation
Education (d2)	11.80	3	1.12	0.341	
Voivodeship (d3)	35.98	15	0.68	0.784	
Age (d4)	24.03	5	1.36	0.235	
Parental status (d5)	11.15	1	3.16	0.075	having children is a near-significant predictor
Type of locality (d6)	1.40	1	0.40	0.529	
Gender × Age	37.59	5	2.13	0.059	gender–age interaction close to significance
Voivodeship × Parental status	90.71	15	1.72	0.042	regional variation and having children
Residual	10,345.8	2935			

By far the strongest predictor of attitudes towards social media regulation is gender. In the regression model, the coefficient for men is 0.826 ($p < 0.001$), which means that women take a significantly more restrictive position – this difference is the largest and the only strongly significant main effect in the entire model. This is confirmed by the analysis of variance, in which gender accounts for by far the largest share of the explained variance ($F = 141.0$; $p < 0.001$).

The second predictor, close to significance, is having children: parents hold more restrictive attitudes (coef = -0.172; $p = 0.061$ in the regression; $F = 3.16$; $p = 0.075$ in the ANOVA). Although the effect does not reach the 0.05 significance threshold, its direction is consistent with the observations for the individual questions – particularly the one on smartphones in schools.

The remaining variables – education, age and type of locality – show no significant main effects. At the regional level, a significantly more restrictive attitude was recorded in the Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship (coef = -0.453; $p = 0.042$). Among the interactions, two associations close to or exceeding the significance threshold are noteworthy: the interaction between gender and age ($p = 0.059$) and the significant interaction between voivodeship and having children ($p = 0.042$), which indicates that the effect of parental status on the restrictiveness of attitudes varies by region.

The literature indicates that gender differentiates attitudes in the areas discussed in this report. This results from several independent mechanisms that nevertheless operate in the same direction.

A well-documented pattern is women's systematically higher perception of risk in the environmental, technological and health domains (Flynn, Slovic and Mertz, 1994). Classic studies have shown that risks are rated lower by men than by women, and this difference has proved replicable across many hazard domains (the so-called "white male effect", resulting from the interaction of cultural worldviews with gender and race; Finucane et al., 2000).

The second pillar is the persistent "gender gap" in attitudes towards public policy. Women consistently show stronger support for government programmes that protect the vulnerable, are more in favour of gun control and environmental regulation, and less in favour of the death penalty and the use of force. The mechanisms identified in the literature (greater empathy, stronger concern for vulnerable groups, different emotional responses to social problems) explain why women more often prioritise issues concerning children, older people and marginalised groups (Schlesinger and Heldman, 2001; Lizotte, 2017).

The third phenomenon is most closely related to the subject of our study. Studies by the Pew Research Center (2014, 2017, 2021) show a clear gender difference in perceptions of online harm: 70% of women consider online harassment a serious problem, compared with 54% of men, and among the youngest (aged 18–29) the gap widens to 83% vs 55%. It is worth remembering here that overall rates of experiencing harassment are similar for both genders (with men even slightly higher), so the difference relates mainly to how the problem is assessed and to attitudes, rather than to exposure itself. Moreover, women are more likely to put safety before freedom of speech online.

As regards parental status, the literature also provides several important interpretative leads. In the report "Parenting in the digital age", parents attach very high importance to children's online safety – almost all (94%) consider it important – and this translates into clear support for tougher rules: around two thirds of parents (67%) believe that technology companies should do more to protect children, and 55% that legislators should do more (eSafety Commissioner, 2019).

The effect of parental status on attitudes towards technology regulation tends to be real but moderate and strongly domain-dependent – strongest where respondents' own children are involved. The effect is most evident in the question on smartphones in schools, as this question most directly concerns parents' everyday experience.

Expert Commentaries

Agnieszka Hess, Professor

Institute of Journalism, Media and Social Communication, Jagiellonian University

The nationwide CATI survey – carried out jointly by researchers from the University of Warsaw and the Jagiellonian University – revealed a clear gap between Poles’ individual willingness to respond to harmful content online (around half of social media users take action to limit its spread) and their expectations of systemic legal solutions in this area (supported by more than 70 per cent of citizens). **The relatively low level of activity in responding to harmful content does not stem from tolerance of it, but from the expectation that it is the state, not the individual user, that should guarantee safety in the digital space.** Since individual mechanisms (reporting posts, blocking users) fail or are considered insufficient, citizens are turning to tougher regulation. The overwhelming majority of Poles support penalties for online hate and the introduction of systemic bans on smartphone use in educational institutions. The survey also showed strong support for raising the minimum age of social media users to at least 16 and for providing legal protection for children’s images by curbing the phenomenon of sharenting. Our study has revealed Poles’ expectation that the state should bring order to the digital space in order to protect social capital and the safety of the youngest. In my opinion, the survey results can be read as an expression of public opposition to the passivity of the tech giants and of a desire to regain control over the quality of public debate.

Tomasz Gackowski, Professor

Laboratory of Media Studies, University of Warsaw

The CATI survey by the Laboratory of Media Studies, University of Warsaw – this year conducted with our Partners from the Jagiellonian University on a record sample of more than 4,500 respondents from all over Poland – shows plainly that Poles are saying a clear “stop” to the violation of other people’s dignity on social media platforms. More than 70 per cent of respondents are in favour of introducing fines for publicly humiliating other people on social media. This is a loud and clear demand that should be heard by those in government and by those running the companies that own social media platforms. It seems that we have managed to capture the dimension of social media that users judge to be the most critical, namely the mechanisms for moderating (or the absence or inadequacy of such mechanisms) content published on social media as posts and comments that hurt, set people against each other, polarise, undermine trust and social capital, and ultimately cause harm in ways that, in our respondents’ view, should be curbed by introducing financial penalties – fines. Just as a driver who speeds in a built-up area or a passenger who travels without a ticket must reckon with a penalty, so a user who chooses to use hate speech should expect to be punished – not only by having their content or account blocked, but also with a fine that they will feel in their pocket. This is an important voice – let us not ignore it! Society is waking up, and social media must, after all, become increasingly social – not isolating, polarising and trapping us in bubbles that drive us apart rather than bring us together. This is not what the creators of the big social media platforms promised us.

Agnieszka Walecka-Rynduch, Professor

Institute of Journalism, Media and Social Communication, Jagiellonian University

The joint research initiative of the University of Warsaw and the Jagiellonian University, which resulted in the public opinion survey conducted in April using the CATI method, revealed a widening **gap in media education**, particularly with regard to responding to harmful content, i.e. content that may threaten the well-being of minors online. Our result shows that more than 1/3 of respondents are not in the habit of actively responding to pathological content online: 17% of respondents stated that they never take such action, while 3% were unable to answer the question about how they respond to harmful content, choosing the answer “difficult to say”. This therefore demonstrates respondents’ relatively poor skills in building media competences, as well as the existence of what is known as individual resilience. At the declarative level, respondents indicated that they understand the problems associated with harmful messages on social media, disinformation, fake news, and pathological content and behaviour online (2/3 of respondents were in favour of introducing penalties for publicly humiliating other people on social media); however, as our study has shown, in the practice of media behaviour individuals do not always take remedial action. I believe that the results of our study will become an important voice in the discussion on society’s need for continuous awareness-raising about the importance of media and communication competences, especially in the coming year of media education in Poland.

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This year’s study is part of the debate, taking place in Poland but also in many other countries around the world, on the systemic regulation of digital platforms. From my perspective, this is the most interesting conclusion of the entire study: in the Polish public debate, we still say too little about the destructive impact of social media platforms on democracy and social capital. About algorithms that reward extreme content because it is what generates engagement. About business models based on monetising teenagers’ attention. Meanwhile, the results of our study form a coherent picture: in 2026, Poles expect the state to actively bring order to the digital world. The strongest consensus concerns penalising verbal abuse (77%) and restricting smartphone use in schools (62%). A clear majority also want the age for using social media to be raised (51% in favour of a threshold of ≥ 16) and sharenting to be restricted (65%). Importantly, in the questions on the most stringent regulations (fines, bans at school), the “probably not” and “no” answers add up to between 10 and 20 per cent – so we are talking about a decisive, not an uncertain, majority. This unequivocal voice of Polish citizens should be heard far more clearly and taken far more seriously by the legislator.

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This report on a study conducted by the Laboratory of Media Studies, University of Warsaw, prepared for the first time jointly by research teams from the University of Warsaw, led by Professor Tomasz Gackowski, and the Jagiellonian University, led by Professor Agnieszka Hess, addresses an extremely important and topical subject. The CATI survey, whose analysed results are presented in the report, concerns the opinions of Polish women and men on the regulation of social media platforms and children's presence online. The study was carried out on a large sample of more than 4,500 respondents.

The survey was conducted at a very particular time: issues concerning the protection of minors online are being raised ever more frequently in the public and media sphere, the problem of responsibility for the safety of internet users is being debated, and statutory restrictions on the use of mobile phones in certain educational institutions are coming into force.

The results presented in the report clearly show that Poles are increasingly aware of the risks posed by the internet, including social media, and that the youngest internet users are particularly exposed to these risks. This translates into a public expectation that the minimum age for having a social media account should be raised from its current level to at least 15 (74% of respondents want this, while more than half – 51% – point to an age of at least 16), that publicly humiliating others online should be punished, e.g. with a fine (a solution supported by as many as 77% of respondents), and that a ban on smartphone use should apply in schools, at least during lessons (62% of respondents were in favour). As parents, we have finally owned up to our own failings when it comes to posting images of our own children online. Almost two thirds of Poles (65%) would like to restrict the practice of so-called “sharenting” by law.

There is still a long way to go, as only around half of respondents react to harmful content on social media. What matters, however, is that the first step has already been taken.

In summary, readers are presented with a report containing interesting research findings on extremely sensitive issues that have recently been raised in the public and media sphere. The data and their analysis will undoubtedly be of use not only to researchers and students, but also to representatives of the public services, civil servants, parents and carers, and everyone concerned with the safety of internet users, especially the youngest.

Prof. Agnieszka Łukasik-Turecka

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The report addresses one of the key problems of contemporary digital policy, namely how to protect users – especially children and young people – from the risks arising from engaging with an environment that is today shaped above all by digital platforms. A strength of the report is that many issues usually studied separately – responding to harmful content, the minimum age for using platforms, smartphone use in schools, sanctions for public humiliation – are addressed together, forming a multidimensional picture of public expectations regarding digital governance.

The publication is based on impressive data collected by teams from the University of Warsaw and the Jagiellonian University, which conducted 4,500 telephone interviews. The analysis goes beyond presenting the distribution of responses: it uses tests of association, regression analyses and a composite attitude index. This shows not only the level of support for individual regulations but also how that support varies across society.

The main conclusion of the report is unequivocal: Poles do not want an internet without any rules. In demonstrating clear support for child protection, a ban on verbal abuse and the regulation of digital practices, the researchers have produced a publication that serves as a valuable point of reference for media researchers, legislators, educational institutions and civil society organisations. The report is timely, demonstrates the rigour of the research carried out and provides a solid foundation for a debate that all too often relies on intuition, individual cases and journalistic simplifications.

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