



Harmful Digital Communications in New Zealand

ANNUAL POPULATION SURVEY 2018

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HARMFUL DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS IN NEW ZEALAND: ANNUAL POPULATION SURVEY 2018

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Contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Executive summary | 4 |
| Key findings | 5 |
| Methodology | 6 |
| Objectives | 6 |
| Survey tool | 6 |
| Population sample | 6 |
| Ethics | 7 |
| Limitations | 7 |
| Findings | 8 |
| New Zealanders' digital behaviour | 8 |
| Awareness of the legislation | 15 |
| Experiences of harmful digital communications | 17 |
| Accessing support services | 24 |
| Concluding remarks | 30 |
| Acknowledgements | 31 |
| Appendix | 32 |
| Demographic information | 32 |
| Summary of 2017 and 2018 results | 35 |
| References | 38 |

Executive summary

The Harmful Digital Communications Act 2015 (the Act) was introduced to deter, prevent and mitigate harm caused by digital communications and to provide victims of harmful digital communications with a quick and efficient means of redress. The Act recognises that online abuse and harassment is not something that can be improved through regulation and enforcement alone. In addition to the new tools it created for the Police and the courts, Netsafe was appointed as the Approved Agency. The role of the Approved Agency under the Act is to assist New Zealand internet users in dealing with harm and distress caused through any form of digital communication. To achieve this, Netsafe has statutory functions to provide online safety advice and education to the public and collaborate with government agencies and service providers.

Netsafe established a research programme in November 2016 to generate evidence that informs internet safety policy and practice as part of its broader role as the Approved Agency. As part of this work Netsafe conducts an Annual Population Survey (APS) to provide research-based insights into New Zealand adults' online experiences of unwanted digital communications, including when this results in emotional distress or harm. Specifically, it provides information about people's self-reported experiences of online risks and the actions they take to reduce them, their awareness of the communications principles underpinning the Act and other aspects of this legislation, and the responses people had to receiving unwanted communication. The first APS was carried out in 2017 with its findings being published in early 2018 (see Netsafe, 2018). This paper reports on the second APS carried out in June 2018. We believe that generating insightful, reliable evidence about New Zealanders' online experiences is vital to develop adequate support that reflects their experiences and needs.

The APS, as a research tool, was designed as a modular online survey allowing Netsafe flexibility to add questions to address new topics as they emerge. For the 2018 APS, we included two new modules based on topics about which reflection and discussion were based only on anecdotal evidence. The results from these have been reported separately. In November 2018, we released *Online hate speech: A survey on personal experiences and exposure among adult New Zealanders* (Pacheco & Melhuish, 2018). The study provides, for the first time, evidence of the extent and nature of a behaviour affecting, primarily, minority groups in New Zealand. This was followed by *Image-Based Sexual Abuse: A snapshot of New Zealand adults' experiences* (Netsafe, 2019) which explored the prevalence and complexity of a behaviour that is potentially more distressing and harmful compared to other negative online experiences. This approach increases the overall contribution the 2018 APS makes to the body of knowledge about online safety in New Zealand.

A key goal of the APS project is to identify trends regarding harmful digital communications in New Zealand over the period 2017-2021. We do this based on a core set of questions that are replicated every year. With a few exceptions the 2018 results are similar to those from 2017 i.e., within or around the margin of error. While it is too early to be able to identify longitudinal trends in the data, this report does provide comparisons of the 2018 and 2017 results where the differences between them are significant.

This study's findings will be of interest to policymakers, researchers, and any individuals or organisations involved in developing New Zealand's internet safety policies and practices.

Key findings

PEOPLE'S DIGITAL BEHAVIOUR

1. Over the last year New Zealanders have become more concerned about their privacy and conducting commercial or financial matters online. As observed in 2017, New Zealanders tend to view the most effective way of keeping safe online through a 'security lens'. This continues in 2018, with an increased focus on this aspect of keeping safe online.
2. Similar to last year, 7 in 10 people have taken action to protect themselves and others online because they are concerned about online security or want to avoid unwanted approaches from others.
3. Those aged over 50 are more likely than average to have taken protective action while those under 30 years old are more likely to believe they are safe and free from online risk or harm.
4. More than 5 in 6 of all New Zealanders would consider taking further protective action in the future. People tend to say they will keep up to date with security risks or update security settings rather than changing their online behaviour.

AWARENESS OF RIGHTS AND OPTIONS

5. New Zealanders' awareness of legislation around digital communications is consistent with 2017. The lesser known parts of legislation include the existence of legal principles about online communication and the fact that it's illegal to incite someone to suicide (regardless of whether they take action).

EXPERIENCES OF HARMFUL DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS

6. While over a third of New Zealanders have experienced unwanted digital communications in the last year, only 1 in 10 people said it had a negative impact on their daily life (this is similar to 2017).
7. Some types of online communication are more strongly associated with negative impacts including deliberately harmful, humiliating, or threatening communication, online stalking, false allegations, sharing of intimate pictures/recordings without permission, and, to a lesser extent, exclusion from friendship groups.

ACCESSING SERVICES

8. 18% of those experiencing unwanted digital communication contact support services (this proportion has not changed since the 2017 survey).

Methodology

Objectives

The general objective of the APS was to measure, describe and understand the attitudes, behaviours and experiences of adult New Zealanders when using new technologies and dealing with harm and distress caused by digital communications.

The specific objectives of the APS were:

1. To measure and explain people's digital behaviour aimed at addressing online harm and distress in the last twelve months;
2. To understand the extent of people's awareness of their rights and options under the Act;
3. To understand the extent of people's awareness and use of available services; and
4. To gauge the extent of people's perceived personal experiences of harm and distress through digital communications.

Survey tool

The questionnaire included dichotomous, multiple choice, and semantic differential questions to measure people's experiences in the last twelve months. The online survey was conducted from May 30 to June 30, 2018. The 2018 APS survey shared a set of core questions with the 2017 APS to enable results to be compared. However, questions asked in 2017 about the digital technologies people use in their daily lives, how they use them, and their perceived level of competence were omitted from the 2018 survey. As these questions are not directly related to the purpose of the Act they are not monitored annually. Their omission enabled the inclusion of two modules of questions focused on the topics of adults' experiences of online hate speech (Pacheco & Melhuish, 2018) and image-based sexual abuse (Netsafe, 2019). The APS also included the collection of some qualitative data. The reason for gathering this was to uncover new issues and insights based on the perceptions and views of the respondents.

Population sample

The 2018 APS survey was conducted online by Colmar Brunton with 1,001 New Zealanders. Participants came from a representative sample of New Zealand adults (aged 18+) in terms of age, gender, ethnicity and region¹. The maximum margin of error for the whole sample is $\pm 3.1\%$, and ± 4.4 when comparing survey results between 2017 and 2018 at the 95% confidence level (assuming 50% agreement).

The 2018 APS included consideration of the experiences of people identifying with different sexual orientations. Netsafe used Statistics NZ's (2018b, 2018a) proposed sexual orientation framework and the concept of sexual identity to inform the questions gathering data on sexual orientation in consultation with the Human Rights Commission. For the purpose of the 2018 APS, sexual orientation covers the ways in which a person's sexuality is expressed and the terms they choose to identify with. Respondents were asked which best describes how they

¹ In each of the 2017 and 2018 surveys, data has been weighted to 2013 Census proportions to ensure it represents the NZ population of those aged 18+ in terms of gender, age, ethnicity and regional distribution.

think of themselves: Heterosexual or straight, Gay or lesbian, Bisexual, Other (e.g. Pansexual)², or Prefer not to say. As there were relatively fewer respondents who identified as gay, lesbian, bisexual or other, these respondents have been combined for data analysis purposes in order to make statistically robust comparisons. Therefore, throughout this report we refer to participants as identifying either as heterosexual or as non-heterosexual.

A detailed description of the demographic profile for APS participants is provided in the Appendix.

Ethics

In carrying out the 2018 APS, Netsafe adhered to the ethical principles that underpin integrity and quality in social research. Ethics were given high consideration at all stages of the development of the project. Considering the nature of the study topic, namely digital communications and experiences of harm and distress, Netsafe sought to minimise disturbance to the survey participants. In this respect, the survey questions were designed to avoid harm. Informed consent from the participants was obtained at the beginning of the online survey. The participants received information about the purpose of the 2018 APS, the name of the institutions behind the study, and an explanation of how the data they provided will be protected and used. Netsafe also ensured that Colmar Brunton, the market research company in charge of delivering the online survey, had in place protocols to respect and safeguard the rights and safety of the participants. Furthermore, contact information for support services, such as Netsafe's helpline, were also provided to the survey respondents.

Limitations

The following limitations have been identified:

1. A general limitation of surveys is that they collect data at a single point of time. Hence, they present a snapshot of a particular reality. While the results of the 2017 and 2018 APS can be compared it is still too early to be able to identify trends in the data. This is why the APS is being conducted annually from 2017-2021.
2. Although the online survey collected qualitative data, it is necessary to be aware that surveys in general cannot fully capture the meanings and perceptions of respondents. To cope with this limitation, the qualitative questions in the survey were designed in a way that was easy to understand for the respondents, so they felt encouraged to share their opinions. The use of semantic differential questions in the online survey also helped to minimise this limitation.
3. Identifying specific challenges for "vulnerable" internet users is limited by the complexity of identifying individuals.

² Note, respondents who selected 'Other' were able to describe in their own words how they prefer to identify themselves.

Findings

This section describes the key findings from the APS survey. It is divided into four parts. The first presents findings about adult New Zealanders' digital behaviour in terms of the access to and use of new technologies. The second depicts findings regarding the level of participants' awareness of related New Zealand legislation, namely the Act. The subsequent part reports on participants' experiences of digital communications, including perceptions of harm and distress. The final sub-section describes participants' individual responses as well as access to services and resources to deal with the impact of digital communications.

New Zealanders' digital behaviour

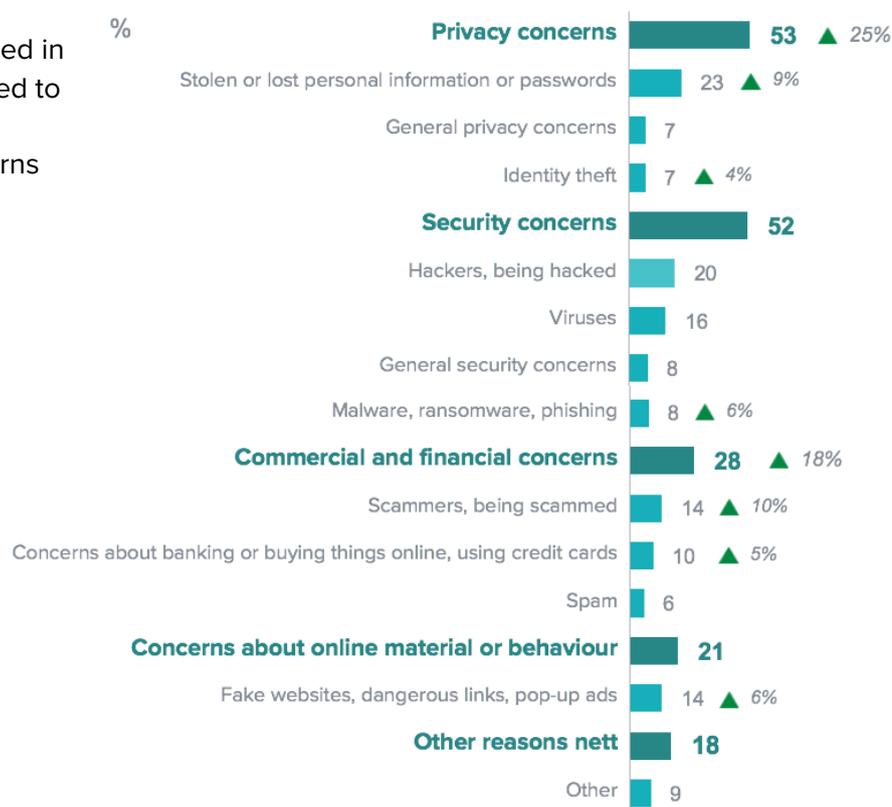
FOCUS OF INQUIRY

- People's biggest concerns and perceived risks about going online
- Actions people have taken, and plan to take, to protect themselves or others online

BIGGEST CONCERNS AND PERCEIVED RISKS ABOUT GOING ONLINE

Over the last year New Zealanders have become more concerned about their privacy and conducting commercial or financial matters online. Respondents generally described a larger number of specific concerns compared with last year.

The average number of specific concerns described in 2017 was 1.5; this increased to 1.8 in 2018 (driven by an increase in privacy concerns and commercial/financial concerns).



▲ ▼ indicates a significant increase/decrease since 2017

Base: All respondents (1,001)

In their own words

“Have to watch out for fake websites, phishing scams and spam emails, even by people that are trusted. Friends’ email addresses can become compromised. Click bait.”

– Male, 18-29 years, NZ European

“Access of my information from outside sources like new websites. Online purchases of products or services with my financial details. Online storage - How do I know how safe they are and what happens if I want to change my storage service?”

– Male, 50-59 years, Pacific

“Giving too many people my email address and answering personal questions from inquirers.”
Female, 70 years or older, NZ European

“Cookies and targeted advertising.”

– Female, 18-29 years, NZ European/Māori

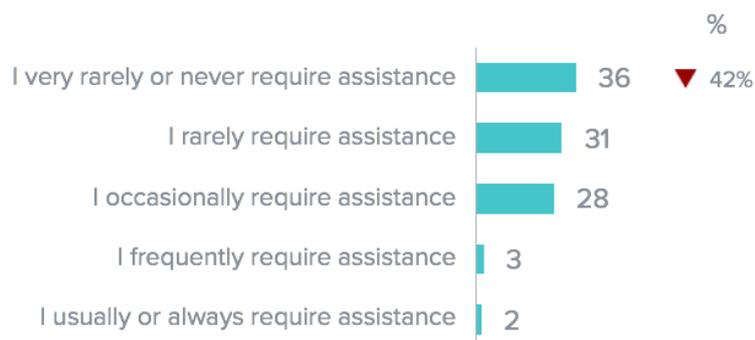
“Being phished for personal information, unauthorized use of cookies, malwares clogging up the PC (the possibility of getting infected with viruses).”

– Male, 30-39 years, Asian

DIGITAL COMPETENCY

Q2. Which of the following best describes your experience when using digital devices?

Two thirds say they rarely require assistance when using technology. Since 2017 there has been a slight decrease in the proportion that say they ‘very rarely/never’ require assistance (from 42% to 36%). This decrease was prominent among those who express concern about online commercial/financial risks (-10%). On the other hand, the proportion that say they ‘frequently/usually/always’ require assistance has grown slightly to 5% (up from 2% in 2017).

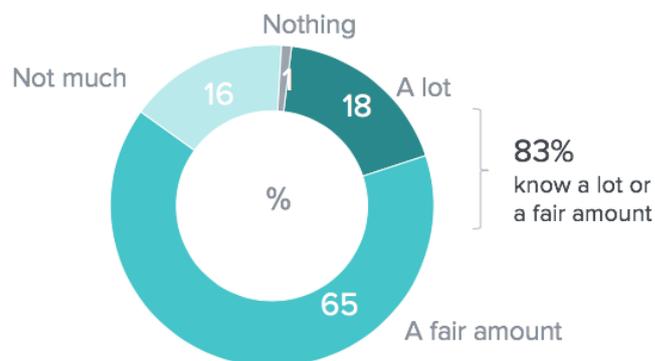


▲ ▼ indicates a significant increase/decrease since 2017

Base: All respondents (1,001)

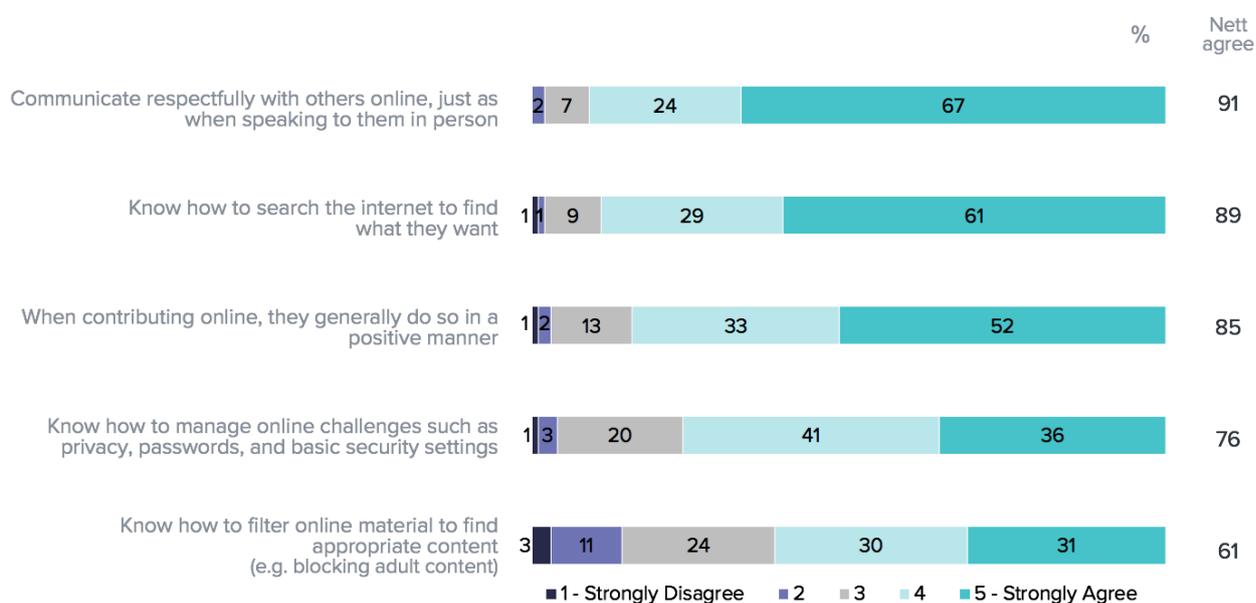
Q3. How would you rate your personal knowledge about keeping safe and secure online?

More than 8 in 10 say they know at least a fair amount about keeping safe online. Only 6 in 10 agree they know how to filter for appropriate content. These findings (about knowledge and specific aspects of competency) have not significantly changed since 2017.



Base: All respondents (1,001)

Q4. On a scale of 1 – 5, with 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree, how would you rate the following statements...



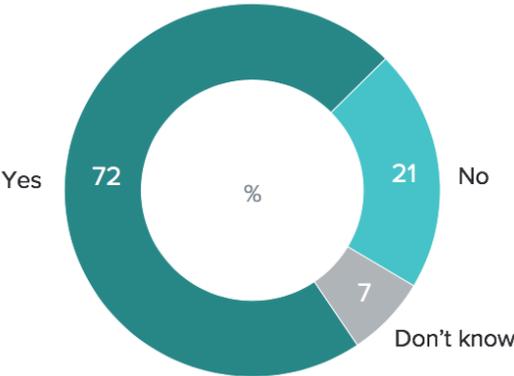
Base: All respondents (1,001)

Those aged under 40 are less likely to require assistance when using technology (83% rarely require assistance, compared to the average of 66%). Those who are Asian (94%), aged under 30 (91%) and males (86%) are more likely to say they know a lot or a fair amount about keeping safe online. Self-reported knowledge about filtering online material and managing online safety challenges is higher among those aged under 40.

ACTION TAKEN TO PROTECT SELF OR OTHERS ONLINE

72% of New Zealanders have taken action in the past year to protect themselves or others online. This was similar in 2017 (70%) although, since last year, an increasing proportion have been prompted (by a website) to change their profile. Those aged over 50 are more likely to have taken protective action (78%).

Q5. In the last 12 months, have you taken any action(s) to protect yourself or others from potential risks or harm online?



Base: All respondents (1,001)

Q5.a And which of the following describes your reasons for taking action(s)?

Typical motivations include concern about online security or preventing unwanted approaches from others. Those aged over 60 are more likely to say the reason was because they were sent (37%) or came across (25%) unwanted content. Pacific people are also more likely to give the reason that they were sent unwanted content (43%). Those who haven't taken recent action tend to believe they have done everything they can to protect themselves online. These findings are very similar to 2017.



▲ ▼ indicates a significant increase/decrease since 2017

Base: Respondents who have taken action to protect self or others online in last 12 months (713)

Q5.b And which of the following describes your reasons for not taking action to protect yourself and others online?

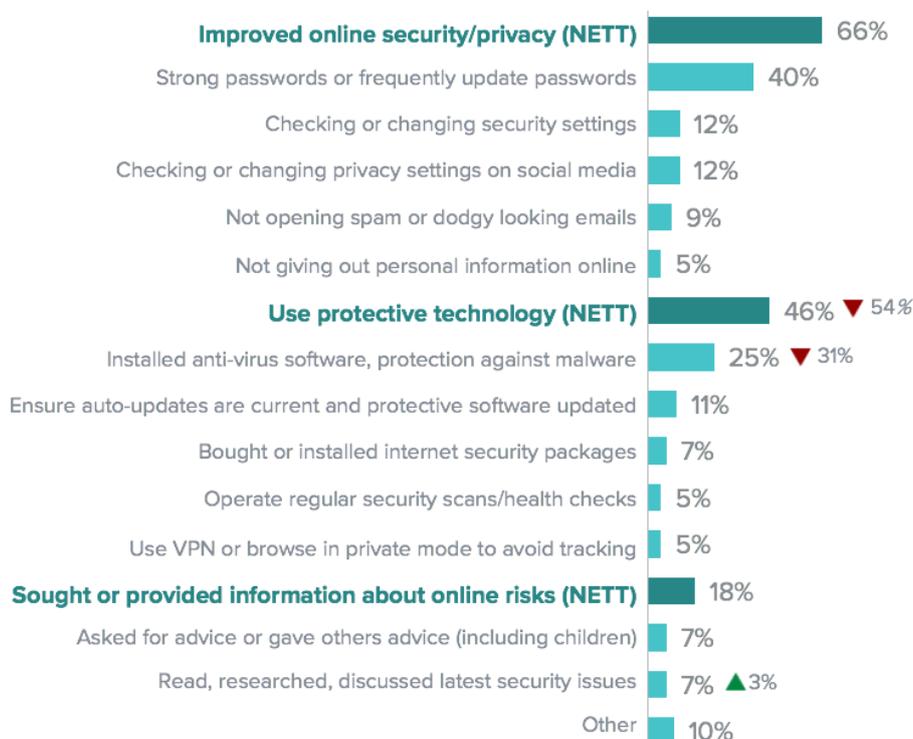
Those aged under 30 are more likely to say they feel safe and free from risk and harm online (32%). Those aged over 60 (16%) and females (13%) are more likely to have someone else take action on their behalf.



Base: Respondents who have not taken action to protect self or others online in last 12 months (218)

Q6 Please describe any action(s) you have taken in the last 12 months to protect yourself and others from potential risks or harm online.

Two thirds of New Zealanders have improved their online security or privacy settings in the last year. Since 2017, fewer mentioned using protective technology such as antivirus software.



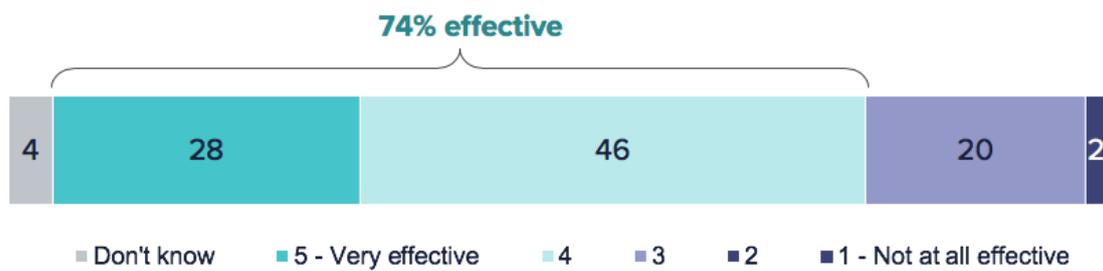
▲ ▼ indicates a significant increase/decrease since 2017

Base: Respondents who have taken action to protect self or others online in last 12 months (713)

Q6.a. Overall how effective do you think these actions were?

Three quarters of those who have taken protective actions believe their actions were effective (this has not significantly changed since 2017). People believe their actions to have been more effective at protecting them online when they have bought or installed protective software, or if protective software automatically updates.

Males are more likely to use protective technology (57%) while females are more likely to improve their online security or privacy (75%).



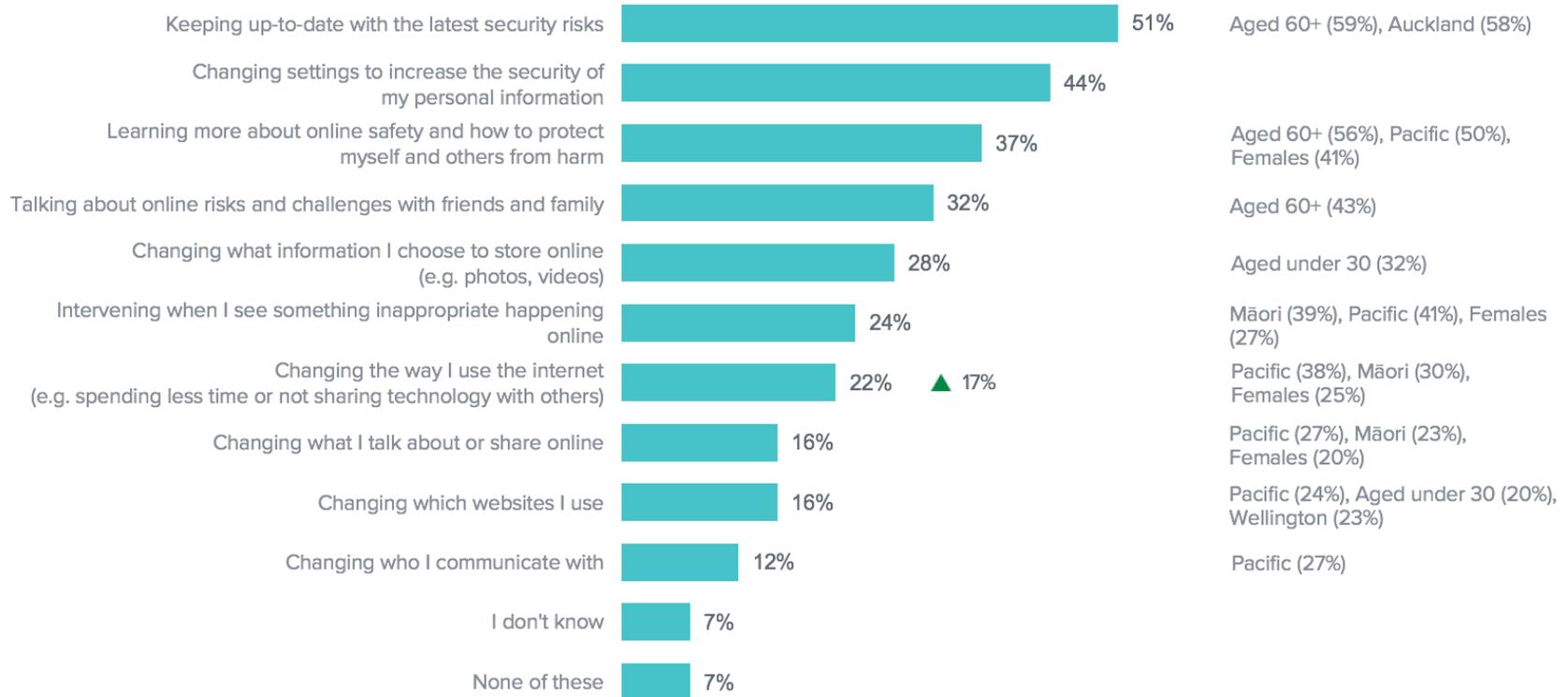
Base: Respondents who have taken action to protect self or others online in last 12 months (713)

CONSIDERATION OF FUTURE PROTECTIVE ACTIONS

More than 5 in 6 New Zealanders would consider taking further action to protect themselves and others online in future. People tend to say they will keep up-to-date with security risks and update security settings to protect personal information, rather than changing what they do online. These findings have not significantly changed since 2017 (although a slightly larger proportion now say they would consider changing the way they use the internet – such as spending less time online).

Q7. Now thinking ahead to the next 12 months, which of the following precautions would you consider taking to protect yourself and others from potential online risk or harm?

Actions that are not currently being taken



Base: All respondents (1,001)

Awareness of the legislation

FOCUS OF INQUIRY

- The principles that people believe are most important when communicating online
- People's awareness of aspects of the Harmful Digital Communications Act 2015

MOST IMPORTANT PRINCIPLES WHEN COMMUNICATING ONLINE

Q8. Below is a list of ten statements about what digital communication should NOT be or include. Select the three most important to you.

New Zealanders believe the three most important principles for communicating online are: not to get someone to harm themselves, not to share intimate images of someone without their permission, and not to share indecent or obscene content. See Appendix for more detailed results.

| Digital communication should <u>not</u> ... | Rated in top 3 (combined) | Considered more important among: | 2017 % |
|--|---------------------------|--|--------|
| Try to get someone to hurt themselves (e.g. self-harm, commit suicide) | 62 | Canterbury (72%), NZ European (66%), Females (65%), and those who identify as heterosexual (63%) | 61 |
| Share intimate images or recordings of someone without their permission | 47 | Pacific (56%), Females (50%) | 46 |
| Include indecent or obscene content (e.g. extreme violence or sexually explicit) | 41 | Those aged 70+ (58%), Māori (50%), Long-term health issues (48%), and Females (46%) | 43 |
| Share other personal information about someone without their permission | 34 | Those aged under 30 (42%) | 32 |
| Threaten to hurt someone or damage their property | 30 | Males (35%) | 32 |
| Insult someone because of their personal characteristics, what they look like, their lifestyle, where they come from or what they believe in | 21 | | 20 |
| Make a false allegation about someone | 20 | Those aged 70+ (33%), Males (25%) | 19 |
| Encourage other people to send messages to someone as a way to try and harm them | 18 | | 18 |
| Be used as a way to get back at someone by harassing them | 15 | Asian (24%) | 17 |
| Include content that most people would agree is offensive to the person receiving it | 14 | | 12 |

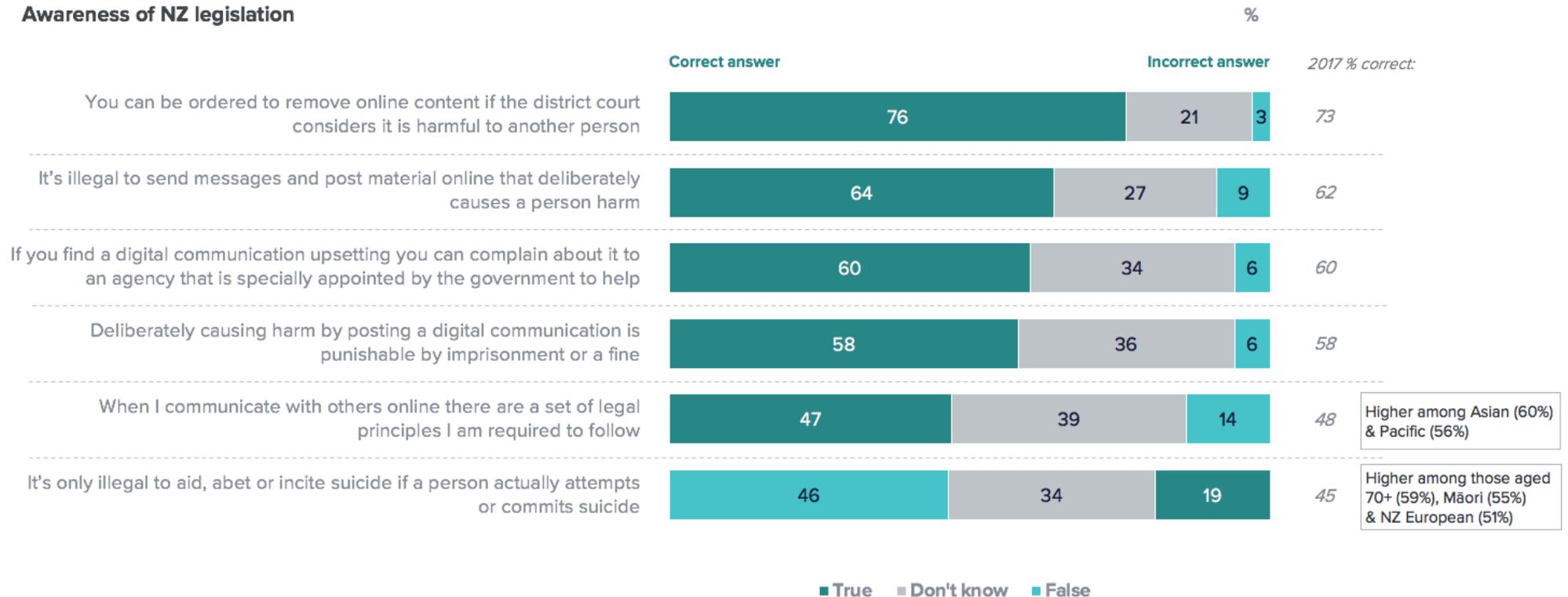
Base: All respondents (1,001)

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Q9. Now thinking about your rights and responsibilities under current New Zealand legislation, please indicate whether you think the following is true or false.

Three quarters of New Zealanders are aware that the district court can order the removal of harmful online content. Consistent with last year, the lesser known aspects of legislation are the existence of legal principles when communicating online, and that it's illegal to incite someone to suicide regardless of whether they take action. These findings have not significantly changed since 2017.

Awareness of NZ legislation



Base: All respondents (1,001)

Experiences of harmful digital communications

FOCUS OF INQUIRY

- Prevalence of unwanted digital communications, including those that cause harm
- Relationship between sender and receiver of unwanted digital communications
- Channel(s) that unwanted digital communications were received through
- Whether people's online experiences are part of a wider issue happening offline
- Emotional and behavioural impacts of the experience

NEW ZEALANDERS' EXPERIENCE OF UNWANTED DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS

Over a third of New Zealanders (35%) have experienced at least one type of unwanted digital communication in the past year. 1 in 10 (10%) experienced an unwanted digital communication which had a negative impact on their ability to perform daily activities³.

Around 1 in 10 have received digital communication(s) that:

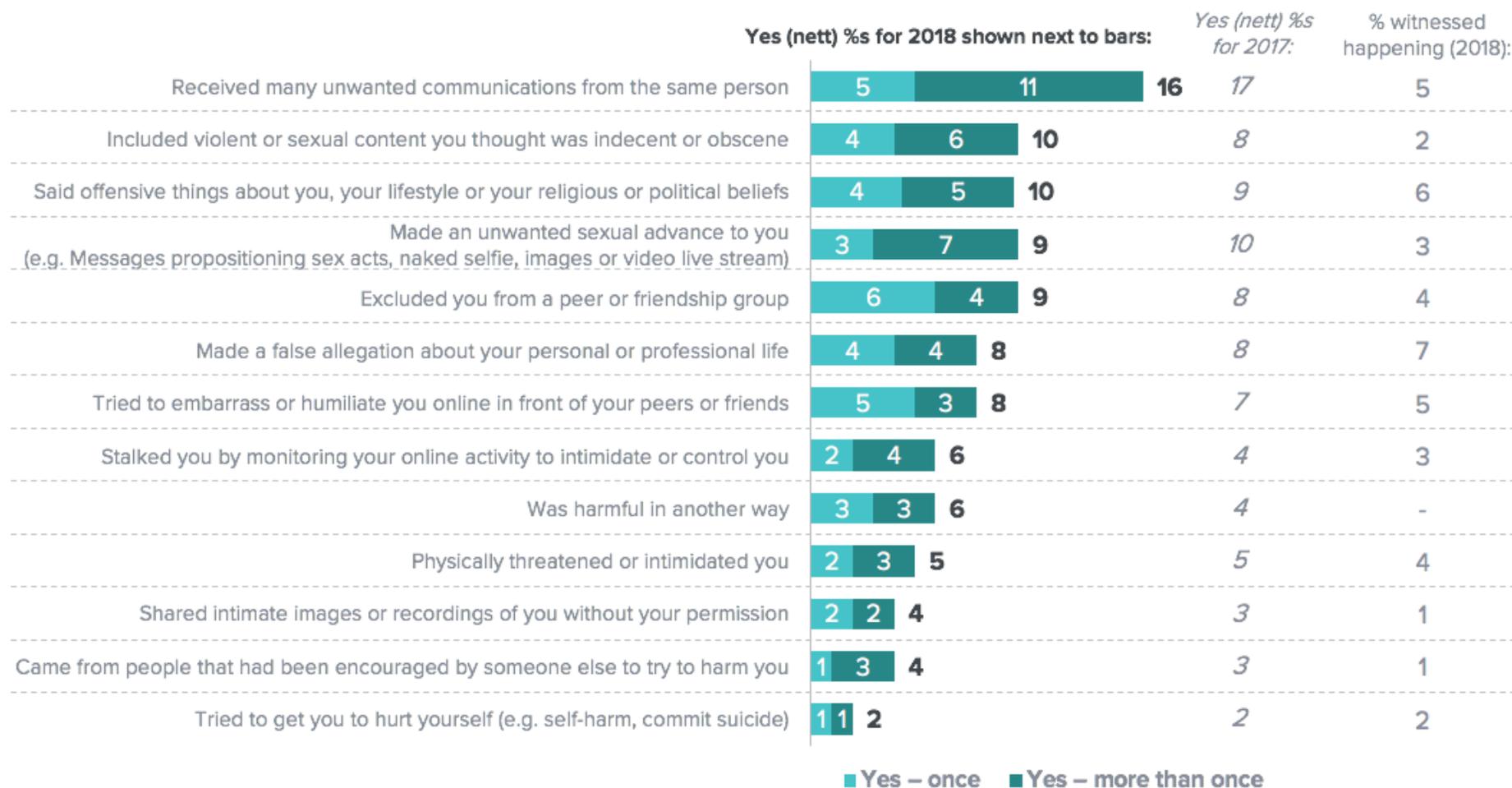
- were indecent/obscene with violent or sexual content;
- said offensive things about their lifestyle or religious/political beliefs;
- included unwanted sexual advances; or
- excluded them from a peer or friendship group.

Those who are aged under 30 and do not identify as heterosexual have a greater risk of experiencing almost all types of unwanted digital communications. Those with long-term health issues, Māori, and Asian respondents have a greater risk of experiencing particular types of unwanted communications – see Appendix for more detail on demographic differences in experience of unwanted digital communications.

³ In 2017, 32% experienced one or more incidents, with 9% experiencing an online communication that had a negative impact on their life.

Q10. In the last 12 months, have you personally received an unwanted digital communication (e.g. email, text, photo, video, or online comment) that...

The most common experience is receiving many unwanted digital communications from the same person (16% in the past year).



Base: All respondents (1,001)

Q11. And in the last 12 months, have you seen or heard about an unwanted digital communication (e.g. email, text, photo, video, or online comment) about someone you know (friend, family or colleague)?

11% of those who haven't personally experienced unwanted communications have witnessed such an incident happening to someone close to them.

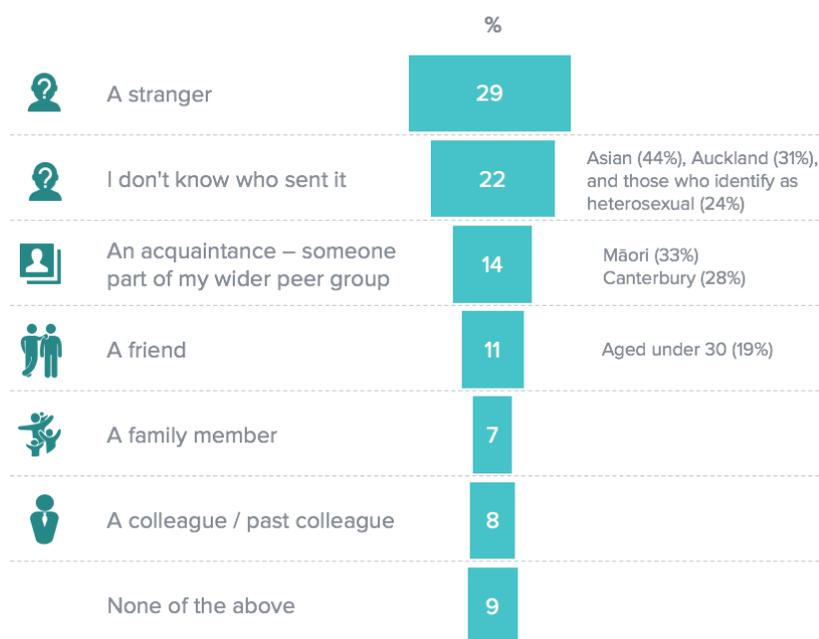
| | % witnessed happening (2018): |
|--|----------------------------------|
| Received many unwanted communications from the same person | 5 |
| Included violent or sexual content you thought was indecent or obscene | 2 |
| Said offensive things about you, your lifestyle or your religious or political beliefs | 6 |
| Made an unwanted sexual advance to you (e.g. Messages propositioning sex acts, naked selfie, images or video live stream) | 3 |
| Excluded you from a peer or friendship group | 4 |
| Made a false allegation about your personal or professional life | 7 |
| Tried to embarrass or humiliate you online in front of your peers or friends | 5 |
| Stalked you by monitoring your online activity to intimidate or control you | 3 |
| Was harmful in another way | - |
| Physically threatened or intimidated you | 4 |
| Shared intimate images or recordings of you without your permission | 1 |
| Came from people that had been encouraged by someone else to try to harm you | 1 |
| Tried to get you to hurt yourself (e.g. self-harm, commit suicide) | 2 |

Base: All respondents (1,001)

PROXIMITY TO SENDER OF UNWANTED DIGITAL COMMUNICATION

Q12. Who was the person that sent this communication?

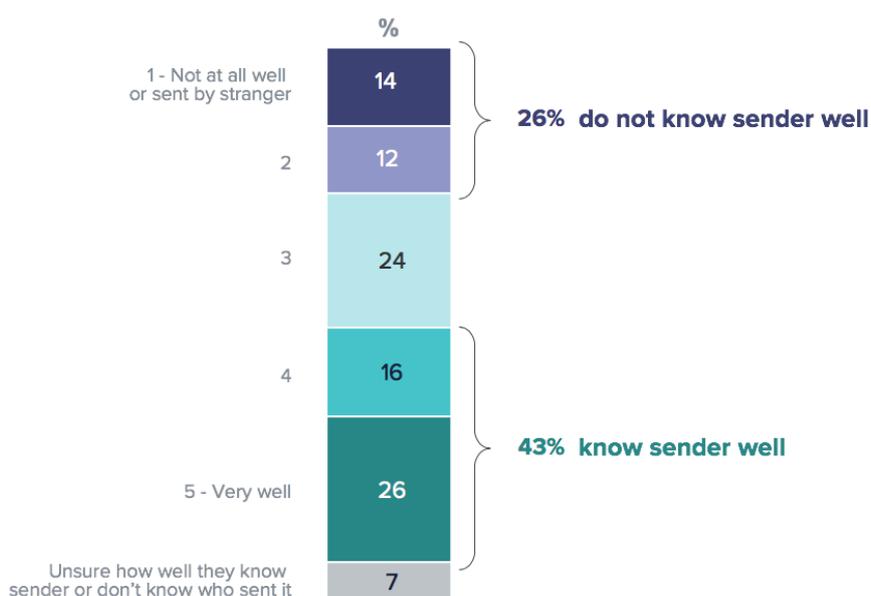
Half of unwanted digital communications are either sent by a stranger or it is unclear who the sender was (these findings are not significantly different from 2017).



Base: Respondents at least one incident of unwanted digital communications in the last year (362)

Q12.a. And how well do you know the person that sent this communication?

The sender is known well by just over two in five (43%) of people who received unwanted communications (the equivalent proportion in 2017 was similar at 41%).

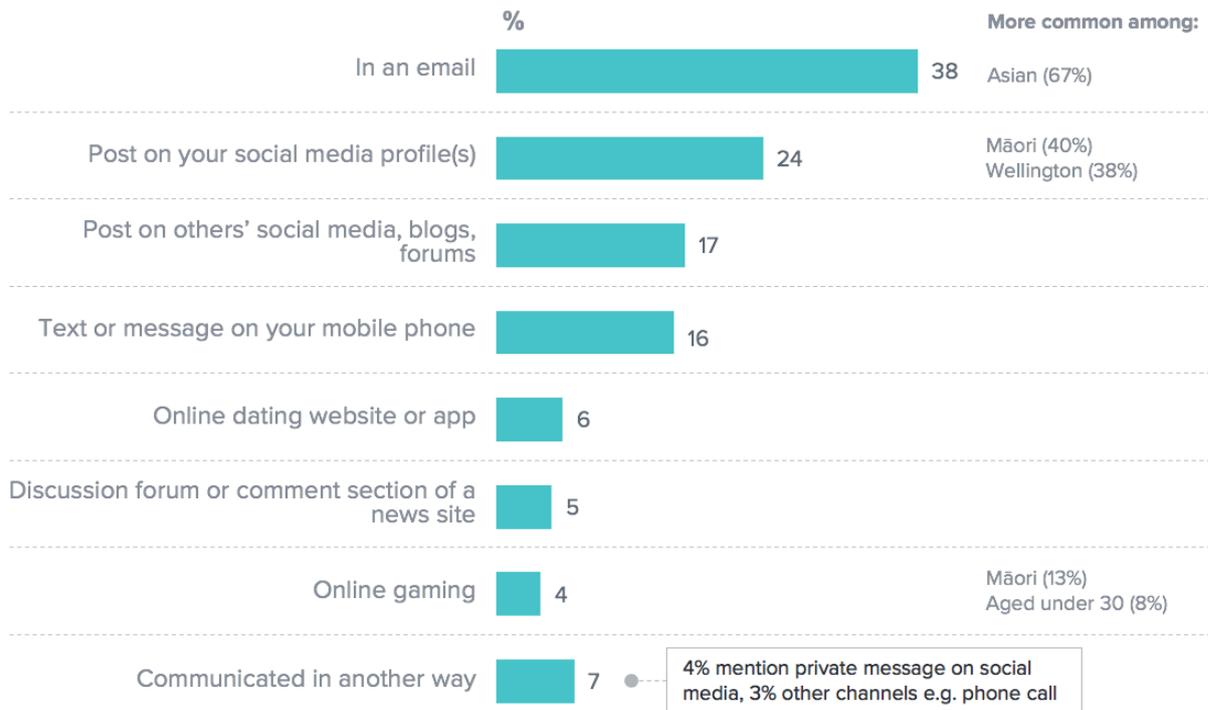


Base: All respondents (1,001)

CHANNELS FOR UNWANTED COMMUNICATIONS AND LINKS TO OFFLINE EVENTS

Q13. Where did this experience of harmful digital communication occur?

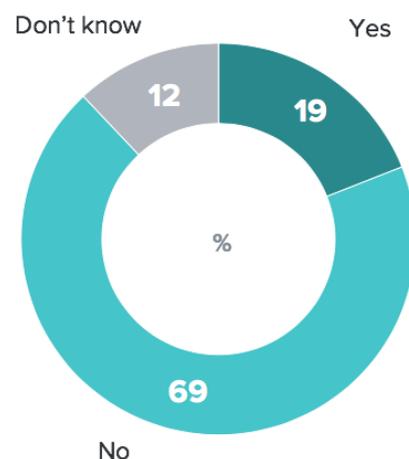
Unwanted digital communications are primarily received via email (often spam), followed by posts on social media. These findings are very similar to the 2017 survey.



Base: Respondents experiencing at least one incident of unwanted digital communications in the last year (362)

Q14. And was this experience part of a wider issue that was happening offline?⁴

These communications tend to be confined to online interactions, with only about one in five of all participants experiencing an unwanted digital communication reporting that this was part of a wider issue that crossed into their offline lives. In contrast, this was true for 36% of people with a long-term disability.



Base: Respondents experiencing at least one incident of unwanted digital communications in the last year (362)

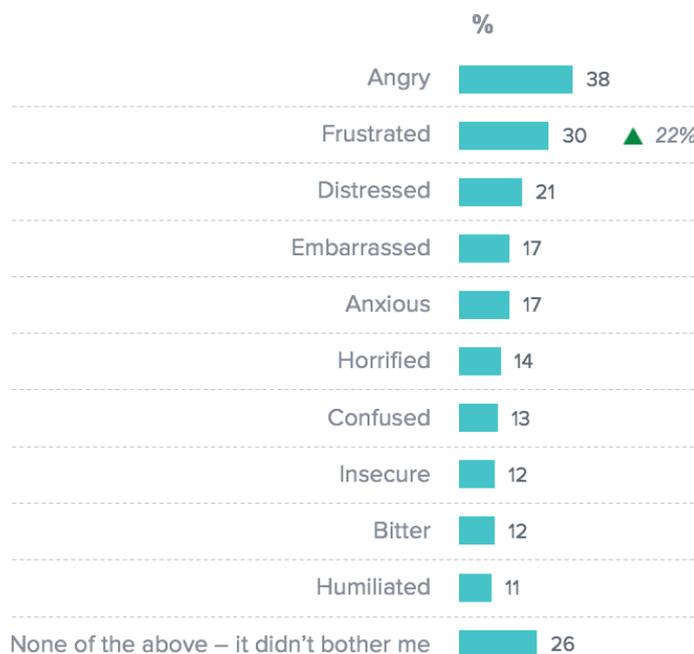
⁴ By offline we mean in a physical environment, such as through face-to-face interactions.

IMPACT OF UNWANTED DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS

Q15. Which of the following describes your emotional reaction to this experience?

Seven in ten people who received unwanted digital communications say it did not negatively affect their ability to do everyday activities. A quarter of people also did not experience a negative emotional impact. The most common emotional reactions are anger and frustration. Males (32%) and those who identify as heterosexual (28%) are more likely to say they were not bothered.

The only significant change since 2017 is an increase in the proportion that report feeling 'frustrated' (from 22% to 30% of those experiencing unwanted digital communication).



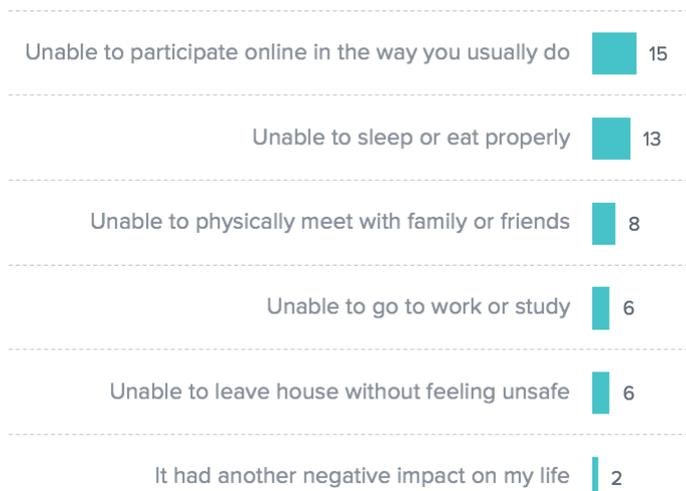
▲ ▼ indicates a significant increase/decrease since 2017

Base: Respondents experiencing at least one incident of unwanted digital communications in the last year (362)

Q16. As a result of this experience, what was the impact on daily life?

70% of participants were not negatively affected by the unwanted digital communication.

Experiencing a negative impact on daily life due to unwanted digital communication is more common among those with a long-term disability (52%), those with long-term health issues (49%) and Māori (46%).



Base: Respondents experiencing at least one incident of unwanted digital communications in the last year (362)

Those experiencing multiple types of unwanted digital communication tend to encounter negative impacts (70% of those who have experienced 5 or more types of unwanted communications in the past year experienced negative impacts). However, it should be noted this group is only small within the overall population (6% of all New Zealanders experienced five or more types of unwanted digital communication in the past year).



Base: Respondents experiencing at least one incident of unwanted digital communications in the last year (362)

Accessing support services

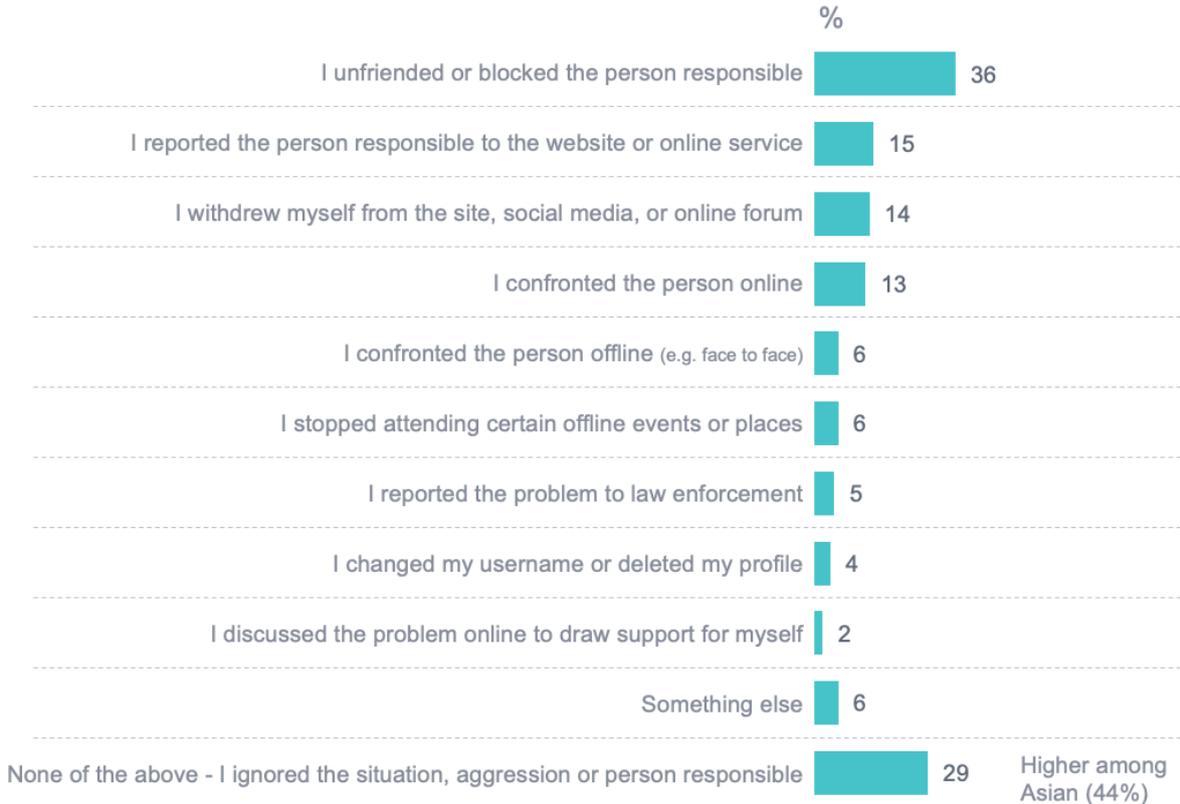
FOCUS OF INQUIRY

- The types of responses that people have to receiving unwanted digital communications
- How effective their responses were in mitigating the impact of the situation
- Which support services people accessed and how effective they were
- The support services that people may consider using in future

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RESPONSES TO UNWANTED DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS AND PERCEIVED EFFECTIVENESS

Q17. How did you respond to this experience in order to change the situation?

The most common responses to receiving an unwanted digital communication continue to be either blocking the person responsible or ignoring the situation.

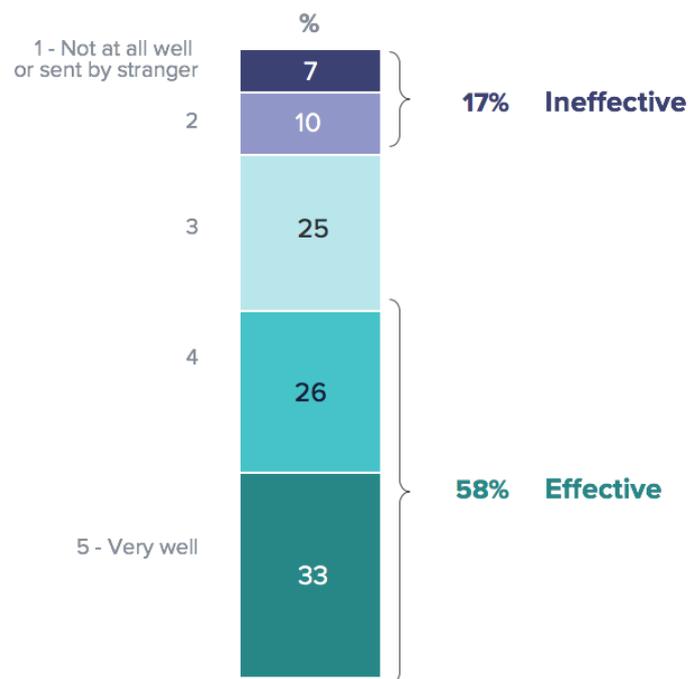


Base: Respondents experiencing at least one incident of unwanted digital communications in the last year (362)

Q18. And, overall, how effective was your response(s) at changing the situation?

Of those who took action to change the situation, a small majority (58%) considered their response effective at having changed the situation (this is similar to the equivalent proportion in 2017, which was 60%).

Responses tended to be perceived as ineffective because it is hard to change other people (including their online behaviour).



Base: Respondents experiencing an unwanted digital communication who did not ignore the situation (262).

In their own words

"There will always be a way for someone to interact with you in the way they choose if they are intent on doing so."

- Female (18-29 years, Asian) who reported the person responsible to the website or online service, withdrew from the social media site or online forum and unfriended or blocked the person responsible.

"Was told there is nothing that can be done about it by Police and Facebook didn't do a thing."

- Male (40-49 years, NZ European/Maori) who reported the person responsible to the website or online service, and reported the problem to law enforcement

"The person causing harm had no idea how I really felt about the situation."

- Male (40-49 years, NZ European) who stopped attending certain offline events or places

"I don't know what happened after that. It was a viral post sent via a message that the sender wasn't aware of."

- Female (18-29 years, Māori) who reported the person responsible to the website or online service

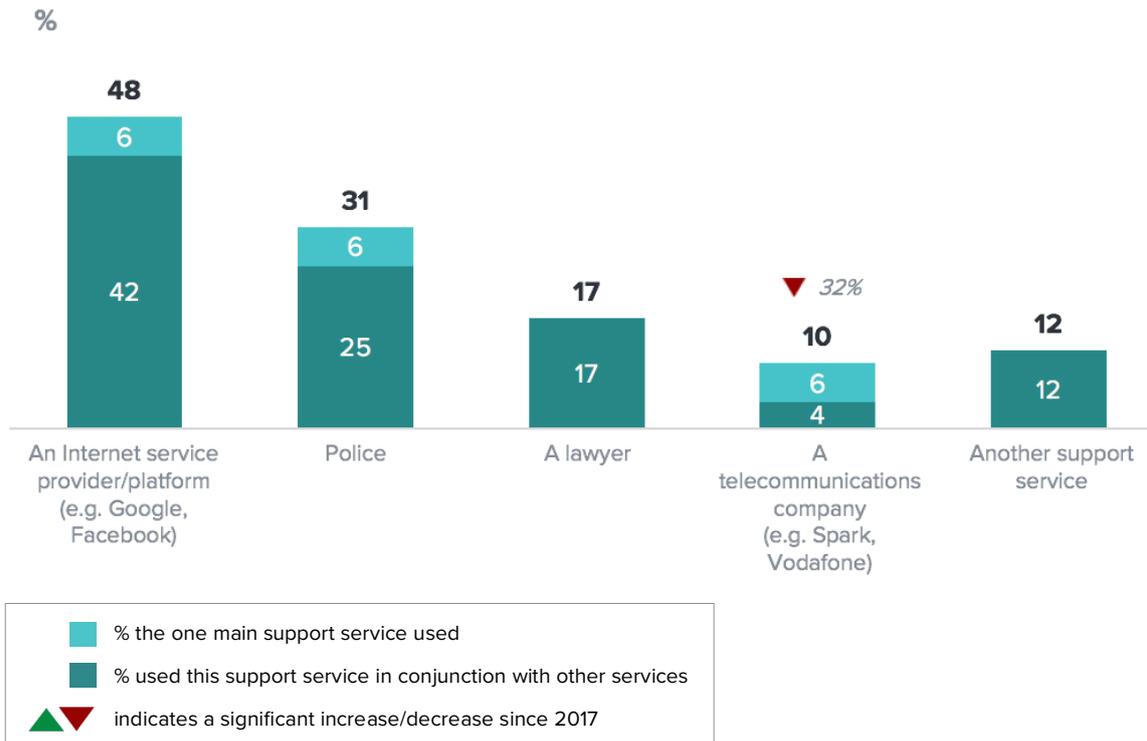
"It didn't change anything about what was said."

- Male (60-69 years, NZ European) who stopped attending certain offline events or places

USE OF SUPPORT SERVICES

Q19. Did you contact any of the following services in order to help you? Which of the following did you rely on as your main source of help or support?⁵

Those who reached out for support often contacted an Internet service provider (48% of those who contacted a support service) or the police (31%)⁶.

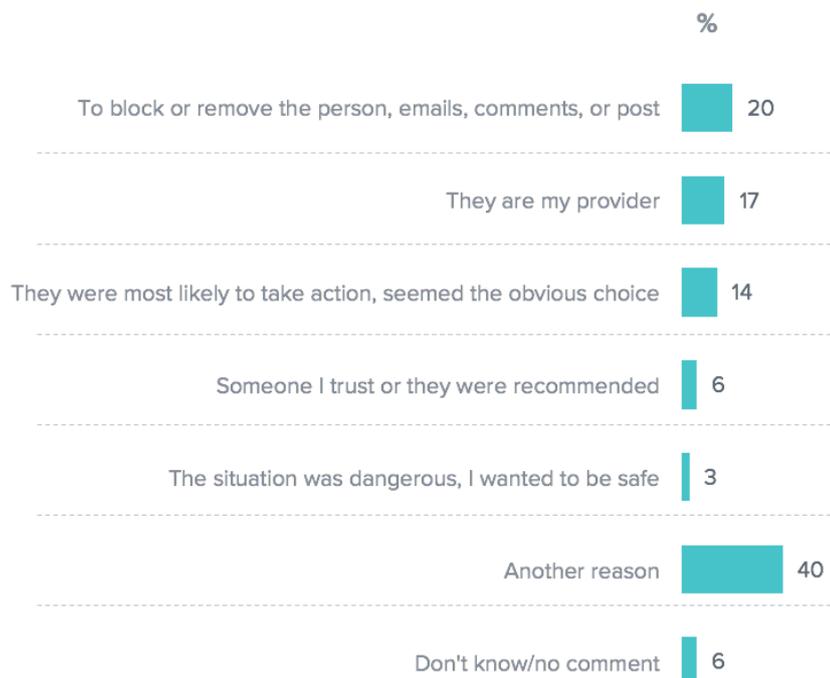


Base: Respondents experiencing at least one incident of unwanted digital communications in the last year (362)

⁵ Other sources of support are family, friends, church and human resources.

⁶ Note, because of the small sample sizes involved in this analysis (n=66 in 2018), it is inappropriate to compare changes in the specific support services used since the previous survey.

Q20. Please describe your reasons for choosing to contact the support service⁷.

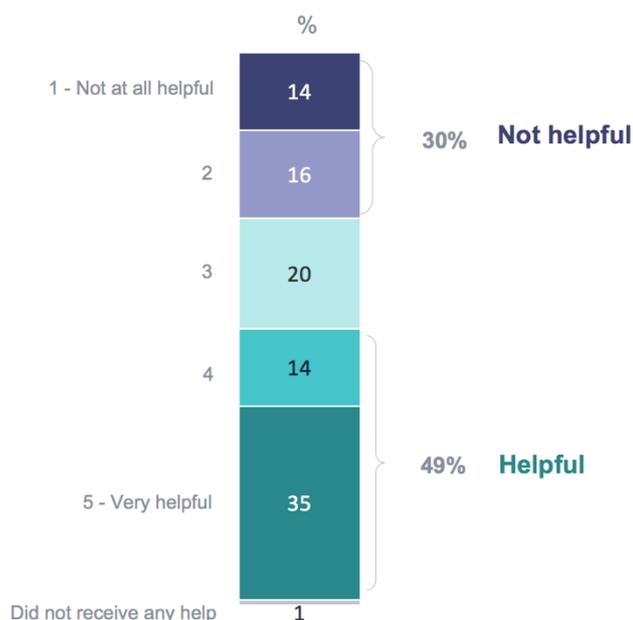


Base: Respondents who had used a support service to help them (66)

Q21. And how helpful was the support you received?

Of those who contacted a support service, 4 in 10 found the support helpful and a further 3 in 10 were neutral.

Those who did not find the support helpful tend to say this because they felt that no action was taken or were not informed what action was taken to resolve the matter.



Base: Respondents who had used a support service to help them (66)

⁷ Other reasons include checking the legality of the incident, making others aware of the issue or person responsible, or to find out their legal rights or options.

In their own words

"They told me it was a civil matter and that it was beyond their powers. Basically, didn't want to know me."

- Male (30-39 years, NZ European/Māori) who sought help from the Police after someone physically threatened or intimidated them, tried to embarrass or humiliate them online and said offensive things about them, their lifestyle or their religious or political beliefs.

"I feel they don't want to have to do the paperwork involved in dealing with it. A small-town police station."

- Female (30-39 years, NZ European) who sought help from the Police after someone physically threatened or intimidated them and they had received many unwanted communications from the same person.

"The time, money and effort spent did not support a favourable outcome."

- Male (60-69 years, Asian) who sought help from a lawyer after someone "maligned their reputation", excluded them from a friend group, and received many unwanted communications from the same person.

"The lawyer had never come up with anything like this before with things in social media."

- Female (50-59 years, NZ European) who sought help from a lawyer due to being excluded from a peer or friendship group.

"Not enough follow up. A notification to say 'this post has been removed' would have sufficed."

- Female (18-29 years, Māori) who sought help from an Internet service provider/platform after seeing violent or sexual content that was indecent or obscene.

FUTURE CONSIDERATION (FOR THOSE WHO HAVE NOT EXPERIENCED UNWANTED COMMUNICATIONS)

Q22. Imagine you received an unwanted online message. Who would you turn to for help? And who would you turn to for help first?

Those who had not experienced certain types of unwanted digital communications were asked who they would turn to for help if they received a particular type of unwanted content in the future. Police are considered the primary source of support in most cases, but in particular for dealing with intimate images/recordings being shared without consent or for being intimidated or physically threatened online. People tend to say they would deal with the issues themselves if excluded from friendship groups or receiving unwanted sexual advances.



Base: All respondents, excluding those personally experiencing each type of unwanted digital communications in the last year (1,001)

*Other support services mentioned are iwi or marae member (1%) and someone else (3%).

Concluding remarks

This report has presented the main findings of a nationally representative study about the experiences, attitudes, and behaviours of New Zealand adults regarding new technologies and digital communications. It is the second annual report to explore this topic in the context of the implementation of the Harmful Digital Communications Act 2015.

In relation to the most important findings in this report – the prevalence of unwanted digital communications people receive and their impact – again, the results are consistent with 2017: over a third of New Zealanders have experienced unwanted digital communications, with 1 in 10 people saying it had a negative impact on their daily life. This, and the closer look at adults' experiences of image-based sexual abuse (Netsafe, 2019) and online hate speech (Pacheco & Melhuish, 2018), reinforces the 2017 conclusion that “adults can also be affected by digital communications, sometimes with devastating outcomes” (Netsafe, 2018, p. 44). Specifically, this study again highlights how certain population groups (including young adults, people with long-term health issues, Māori and Asian peoples) are at increased risk of experiencing online challenges and risk – see page 37. It is of particular interest and concern to note how non-heterosexual New Zealanders are at elevated risk of experiencing a wide range of unwanted digital communication, including having offensive things said about them, being excluded from friendship groups, being physically threatened or intimidated or receiving an unwanted sexual advance. This finding is again reflected in Netsafe's reports about online hate speech and image-based sexual abuse (Netsafe, 2019; Pacheco & Melhuish, 2018) and reflects the findings from other research highlighting the vulnerability of same or both sex attracted New Zealanders to bullying and discrimination (Henrickson, 2007; Lucassen et al., 2014). Netsafe believes that, notwithstanding the extensive media coverage of Israel Folau's controversial online comments in 2018 and 2019 (Newshub, 2018; Radio New Zealand, 2018; Stuff, 2019), this is an issue that deserves more public attention.

The findings from the 2018 APS show that most New Zealanders continue to think about improved technical security as the best way to keep safe online, and this is reflected in the nature of the concerns they report about the challenges or risks of going online. At the same time, while it is encouraging that more than 80% say they know at least a fair bit about keeping safe online, there is clearly more work to be done on developing people's capability to stay safe online. However, while digital competency is a prerequisite for taking action to protect from potential risks or harm online, the only area in which there was a significant shift from 2017 was caused by default rules requiring users to change or review their profile settings. People's use of protective technology such as antivirus software is still important, though it is interesting to note the reduction in reported use of antivirus software and, in the absence of other respective data on the install base for this type of product, it will be interesting to see whether this develops into a trend in future APS studies.

While the reported level of awareness regarding New Zealand legislation is around the same level in 2018 as in 2017 the rates are consistent between the years. As was noted in the 2017 APS report, while most New Zealanders may not be familiar with specific aspects of the Act presented to them, their views of what behaviour is important online are generally well aligned with them.

With a few exceptions the 2018 results are similar to those from 2017 i.e., within or around the margin of error. The range of contextual factors that could influence New Zealanders' experiences of harmful digital communications are not currently well understood. For example, there are uncertainties in the tractability of social change related to sending and sharing such communications, and divergent viewpoints on definitions of online risk and harm. Such challenges are not unique to understanding and addressing harmful digital communications issues. As a consequence, while the APS data collected so far provides valuable insights into New Zealanders' experiences of unwanted digital communications it is still early to identify longitudinal trends. However, as Netsafe continues to collect data from the APS over coming years a better understanding of this phenomenon will emerge.

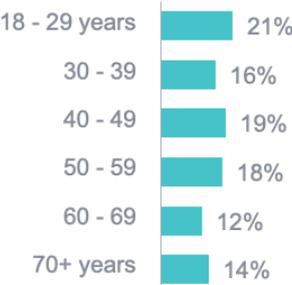
Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Taine Polkinghorne, the Human Rights Commission's Advisor on Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Sex Characteristics (SOGISC), who provided advice on gathering data on sexual orientation. Our gratitude also goes to Lisa Thornhill, Colmar Brunton, and Ian Binnie, Solasta Consulting, for their contribution to the development of the survey and initial data analysis.

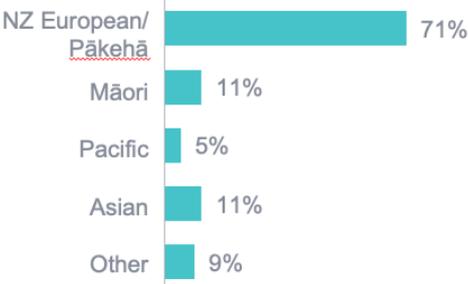
Appendix

Demographic information

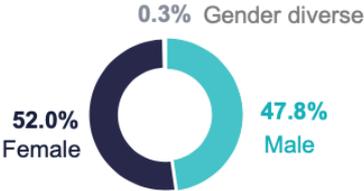
AGE GROUP



ETHNICITY



GENDER IDENTITY



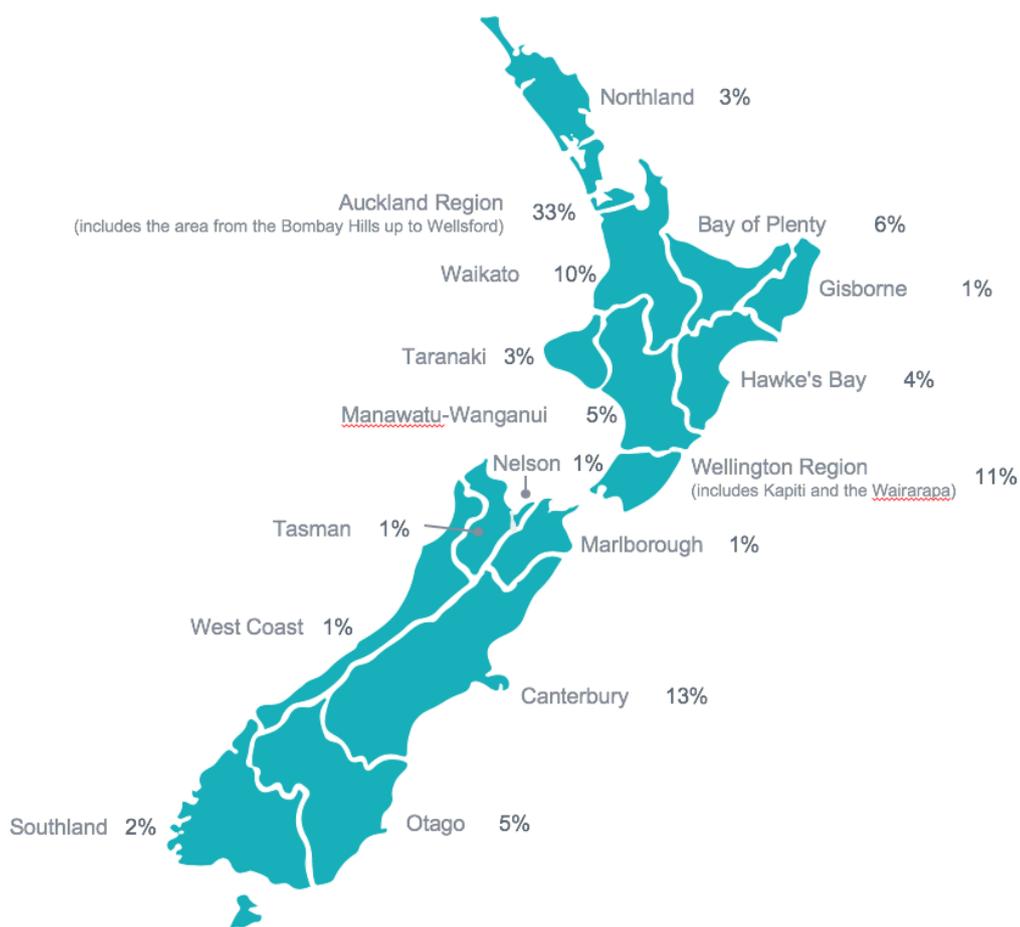
Base: All respondents (1,001)

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

| Sexual orientation | Percentage | |
|--------------------------|------------|---------------------|
| Heterosexual or straight | 89% | |
| Gay or lesbian | 3% | |
| Bisexual | 3% | 6% non-heterosexual |
| Other (e.g. pansexual) | 0.3% | |
| Prefer not to answer | 5% | |

Base: All respondents (1,001)

REGIONAL LOCATION



Base: All respondents (1,001)

HIGHEST EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OR QUALIFICATION

| Highest educational qualification | Percentage |
|---|------------|
| Post-graduate qualification | 13% |
| University degree | 27% |
| Trade qualification | 8% |
| Tertiary diploma/certificate that does not require degree | 22% |
| High school qualification | 22% |
| No qualification | 6% |
| Unsure | 1% |

Base: All respondents (1,001)

ANNUAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME, BEFORE TAX

| Annual household income | Percentage |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| \$20,000 or less | 4% |
| \$20,001 - \$30,000 | 5% |
| \$30,001 - \$50,000 | 13% |
| \$50,001 - \$70,000 | 15% |
| \$70,001 - \$100,000 | 19% |
| \$100,001 - \$150,000 | 16% |
| \$150,001 or more | 8% |

Base: All respondents (1,001)

LONG-TERM HEALTH PROBLEMS

| Health problem or a condition (lasting 6 months or more) causing difficulty with, or stopping respondents from... | Percentage |
|--|-------------------|
| seeing, even when wearing glasses or contact lenses | 4% |
| hearing, even when using a hearing aid | 3% |
| walking, lifting or bending | 14% |
| using your hands to hold, grasp or use objects | 4% |
| learning, concentrating or remembering | 4% |
| communicating, mixing with others or socialising | 4% |
| no difficulty with any of these | 78% |

Base: All respondents (1,001)

LONG-TERM DISABILITY

| Disability (lasting 6 months or more) stopping participants from doing everyday things other people can do | Percentage |
|---|-------------------|
| Yes | 11% |
| No | 89% |

Base: All respondents (1,001)

Summary of 2017 and 2018 results

| Use of technology and change in digital behaviour | 2017 (n=1,001) | 2018 (n=1,001) |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Frequently or always require assistance | 2% | 5% ▲ |
| Change in digital behaviour in last 12 months to protect self/others online | 70% | 72% |
| Perceived effectiveness of actions taken to protect self/others online | 73% | 74% |
| Perceptions of most unacceptable types of online behaviour (forced to pick top 3) | | |
| Digital communication should not... | 2017 (n=1,001) | 2018 (n=1,001) |
| Try to get someone to hurt themselves (e.g. self-harm, commit suicide) | 61% | 62% |
| Share intimate images or recordings of someone without their permission | 46% | 47% |
| Include indecent or obscene content (e.g. extreme violence or sexually explicit) | 43% | 41% |
| Share other personal information about someone without their permission | 32% | 34% |
| Threaten to hurt someone or damage their property | 32% | 30% |
| Insult someone because of their personal characteristics (what they look like, their lifestyle, where they come from or what they believe in) | 20% | 21% |
| Make a false allegation about someone | 19% | 20% |
| Encourage other people to send messages to someone as a way to try and harm them | 18% | 18% |
| Be used as a way to get back at someone by harassing them | 17% | 15% |
| Include content that most people would agree is offensive to the person receiving it | 12% | 14% |

▼▲ *Significant increase/decrease since 2017*

| Knowledge of rights and obligations under the Harmful Digital Communication Act (% correctly answered) | 2017 (n=1,001) | 2018 (n=1,001) |
|--|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| You can be ordered to remove online content if the district court considers it is harmful to another person | 73% | 76% |
| It's illegal to send messages and post material online that deliberately causes a person harm | 62% | 64% |
| If you find a digital communication upsetting you can complain about it to an agency that is specially appointed by the government to help | 60% | 60% |
| Deliberately causing harm by posting a digital communication is punishable by imprisonment or a fine | 58% | 58% |
| When I communicate with others online there are a set of legal principles I am required to follow | 48% | 47% |
| It's only illegal to aid, abet or incite suicide if a person actually attempts or commits suicide | 45% | 46% |
| Experience of unwanted digital communications | 2017 (n=1,001) | 2018 (n=1,001) |
| Experienced unwanted digital communications in last year | 32% | 35% |
| Experienced unwanted digital communication that had a negative impact on them | 9% | 10% |
| Use of support services ⁸ | 18% | 18% |

⁸ Among those who experienced an unwanted digital communication (n= 337 and 362)

Experience of unwanted digital communications – Demographic differences

| | Yes (nett) % | More likely among the following groups (in 2018): |
|---|--------------|--|
| Received many unwanted communications from the same person | 16 | Non-heterosexual (28%) |
| Included violent or sexual content you thought was indecent or obscene | 10 | Asian respondents (18%) |
| Said offensive things about you, your lifestyle or your religious or political beliefs | 10 | Non-heterosexual (26%), those aged under 30 (18%), those with long-term health issues (17%) and Māori (17%) |
| Made an unwanted sexual advance to you (e.g. messages propositioning sex acts, naked selfie, images or video live stream) | 9 | Non-heterosexual (28%), those aged under 30 (21%), and Asian respondents (20%) |
| Excluded you from a peer or friendship group | 9 | Non-heterosexual (25%), those aged under 30 (18%), those with long-term health issues (8%) |
| Made a false allegation about your personal or professional life | 8 | Non-heterosexual (24%), those aged under 30 (12%), and Māori (15%) |
| Tried to embarrass or humiliate you online in front of your peers or friends | 8 | Non-heterosexual (19%), those aged under 30 (15%), those with long-term health issues (13%) |
| Stalked you by monitoring your online activity to intimidate or control you | 6 | Those aged under 30 (11%), those with long-term health issues (10%) |
| Was harmful in another way | 6 | Those with long-term health issues (11%), Māori (11%) |
| Physically threatened or intimidated you | 5 | Non-heterosexual (13%), those aged under 30 (11%), those with long-term health issues (15%), and Māori (17%) |
| Shared intimate images or recordings of you without your permission | 4 | Non-heterosexual (11%), those aged under 30 (8%), and Asian respondents (10%) |
| Came from people that had been encouraged by someone else to try to harm you | 4 | Those aged under 30 (7%), those with long-term health issues (8%), and those with a long-term disability (10%) |
| Tried to get you to hurt yourself (e.g. self-harm, commit suicide) | 2 | Those aged under 30 (6%), those with long-term health issues (6%), Māori (6%), and Asian respondents (7%) |

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