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Kiwis think the internet is more dangerous: new research

***State of the Online Nation* study unveiled as Netsafety Week launches**

Netsafe, Aotearoa's online safety organisation, has released new research showing 68 percent of people believe the internet is more dangerous than it was five years ago. It will be even more dangerous in 2026 according to 52 percent of respondents.

Although Aotearoa has a somewhat pessimistic outlook on the internet – many think there is a range of things that can be done to make it safer, including education.

This is timely as Netsafe's *State of the Online Nation* study is being released to coincide with the start of Netsafety Week. The country's first-ever online safety week runs from 26-30 July and is designed to Make Aotearoa Safer Online.

Hundreds of schools, businesses and agencies have joined together to create more positive experiences for everyone. They have united to share the ways to make online spaces safe and reinforce where to get help if things don't pan out.

"The internet has played a major part in keeping us connected over the past year, and that isn't slowing down anytime soon," says Martin Cocker, Netsafe's CEO.

"Netsafety Week is an opportunity to raise awareness about the safe and positive use of technology and to korero about the role we can all play in creating a better internet in our community."

This is important because the study found that 52 percent of respondents had experienced an online safety issue in the past year. Of those who had, 23 percent were exposed to unwanted contact on social media, 11 percent were tracked using technology without their consent, and 10 percent received and then passed on information they passed on that later proved false. Seven percent were bullied or harassed.

More than 102,000 people (three percent) indicated they had intimate images or videos shared without their consent. Parliament is currently considering the Harmful Digital Communications (Unauthorised Posting of Intimate Visual Recording) Amendment Bill. Netsafe supports the proposed amendments because strengthening the law is critical to helping people experiencing image-based sexual abuse.

On a brighter note, 71 percent of people think the internet and digital technologies have positively impacted them, and most people support a range of measures to improve the overall safety of the internet and those accessing it.

Fifty-eight percent of respondents indicated that the country should have stronger laws against people who deliberately spread false information.

Sixty-five percent want more public awareness campaigns about online safety, and 79 percent believe more information should be shared with children at school.

A filter that blocks illegal content at a national level was supported by 60 percent of respondents, and 57 percent backed a national strategy tackling online safety.

“There is a range of things that can be done at a national level that could achieve a difference to overall online safety, but there are also actions that everyone can take today to have an immediate effect,” Cocker added.

He pointed to five online safety tips Netsafe wants to be spread during Netsafety Week: korero with whānau, be a good digital citizen, swipe left on fake news, discuss sensitive topics and know your rights under the Harmful Digital Communications Act.

Netsafe also encourages people to access a plethora of free self-help resources, including the *Staying Safe Online Guide*, the seven-step *Online Safety Parent Toolkit* and the new *Online Gaming Whānau Toolkit* by visiting netsafe.org.nz.

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About Netsafe

Netsafe is an independent non-profit organisation with an unrelenting focus on online safety. We keep people of all ages safe online by providing free support, advice, and education. Visit netsafe.org.nz for useful resources or call 0508 NETSAFE for help with an online incident.

About the research

The *State of the Online Nation* is a nationwide study commissioned by Netsafe which asked 809 people aged between 18 and 60 about online safety between 1 and 12 July 2021. Participants represented the New Zealand population in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, religion and region.

About Netsafety Week

Netsafety Week is being held between 26 - 30 July. This is the first time New Zealand has held its online safety week and it is designed to *Make Aotearoa Safer Online*.

Netsafety Week calls upon young people, parents, carers, teachers, social workers, law enforcement, companies, policymakers, and wider, to join together and help to create a better internet for all of us. For more information, visit netsafe.org.nz/netsafetyweek.

Netsafe is grateful to the sponsors of Aotearoa’s first online safety week.

