



2023 Annual Population Survey Report –
Trended Results

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Background and methodology

Background



Netsafe is an independent, not-for-profit organisation with a mission to promote online safety among New Zealanders.

In order to effectively meet New Zealanders' needs, Netsafe commissions an annual survey (excluding 2021 and 2022 when surveys were not undertaken) to understand the ongoing role of technology in people's lives and their experiences online. Each survey measure contains a mix of questions: (a) core questions which don't change over time, and (b) topical questions, focused on providing detailed information about an issue.

The 2023 survey was focused on:

- Understanding New Zealanders' digital behaviour,
- Assessing awareness of rights and options under the Harmful Digital Communications Act,
- Measuring awareness and use of support services for unwanted digital communications,
- Gaining insight into New Zealanders' experiences of unwanted communications and the impact these have on those who receive them,
- Measuring New Zealanders' online experiences of hate speech,
- Understanding New Zealanders' experiences as perpetrators of harmful digital communications.

Reporting



This year, the following reports have been produced:

1. APS 2023 results
2. Trended results for APS core questions 2017-2023
3. Online hate speech – 2023 results and trends in 2018-2023
4. Māori population 2023 results

This report focuses on the trended results for APS core questions.

Methodology



1,664 New Zealanders completed an online survey between 12 and 28 June, 2023. The sample of survey participants were sourced from Kantar's online research panel and panel partners. The sample was structured to be representative of the population in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, and region.

Additional booster interviews were conducted with people aged 16 to 29 years, Māori, and Pacific peoples to ensure we had a sufficient sample sizes for each of these groups for in-depth analysis.

All data were weighted by age within gender, ethnicity and region to ensure booster interviews did not affect the representativeness of the overall results.



Average survey length: 17 minutes



Response rate: 27%



Statistically significant differences (at the 95% confidence interval) between the 2023 survey results and the 2020 results and the benchmark results (2017) are indicated by coloured arrows.

Methodology

The overall results have been weighted to 2018 Census figures to align the data with Census counts for age within gender, ethnicity, and region.

The table below illustrates how the sample has been weighted to the population, correcting for the over-representation created by the booster samples and other minor differences between the sample and the population.

	Unweighted sample proportion	Weighted sample proportion
16 to 17 years old*	5.0%	3.3%
18 to 29 years old	40.0%	21.1%
30 to 39 years old	10.9%	16.5%
40 to 49 years old	12.3%	16.5%
50 to 59 years old	11.6%	16.4%
60 to 69 years old	10.0%	13.2%
70 + years old	10.2%	13.1%
Male	50.2%	48.7%
Female	49.5%	50.9%
Gender diverse**	0.4%	0.4%
Māori	31.1%	13.8%
Pacific peoples	12.0%	6.6%
Asian peoples	11.7%	14.9%

	Unweighted sample proportion	Weighted sample proportion
Northland	3.5%	3.7%
Auckland	32.4%	33.0%
Waikato	10.4%	9.5%
Bay of Plenty	6.4%	6.4%
Gisborne/Hawke's Bay	4.7%	4.4%
Taranaki/ Manawatu-Whanganui	8.2%	7.4%
Wellington	10.9%	10.9%
Tasman/Nelson/Marlborough/West Coast	3.5%	4.2%
Canterbury	12.4%	13.1%
Otago/Southland/West Coast	7.6%	7.3%

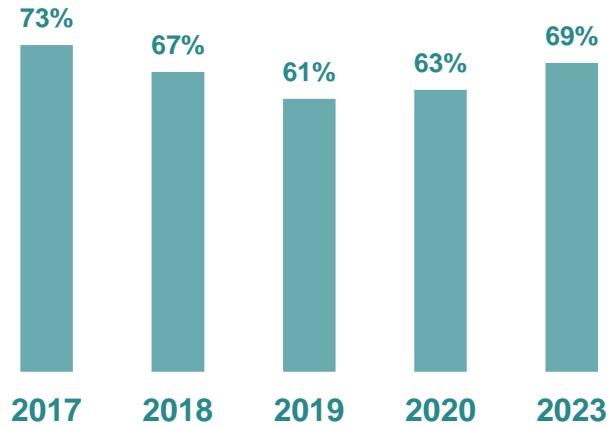
*Age group added in 2023, therefore all significance testing in this report will be against 18+ years old participants who responded in 2023.

**In this report those who are described as LGBTQI+ include: gender diverse people, those who are gay or lesbian, bisexual, Takatāpui, or another sexuality.

Key findings

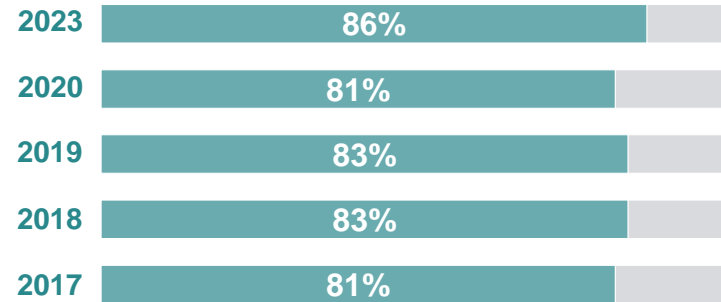
Key findings

Digital competency



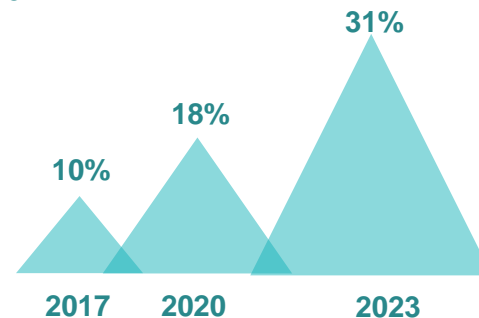
The digital competency of New Zealanders has improved – with 69% of people now saying they never or rarely requiring assistance with digital technology.

Keeping protected online



The proportion of New Zealanders who believe they know at least a fair amount about keeping safe and secure online has increased between 2020 and 2023.

New Zealanders biggest concern about going online is being scammed. Concern about this has tripled since 2017.



Awareness of rights and options

New Zealanders are less aware of some aspects of their rights and options under the HDC Act than they were in 2020.

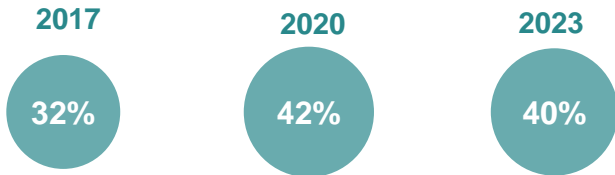
	AWARE		
	2023	2020	2017
The illegality of online behaviour that deliberately causes harm to a person	68%	74%	62%
Deliberately causing harm with digital communications is punishable with imprisonment or a fine	59%	65%	59%

Key findings

Unwanted digital communications

New Zealanders are receiving more unwanted digital communications now than they did in 2017. Additionally, unwanted digital communications are having a negative impact on a greater proportion of New Zealanders' lives than they did in 2017.

% of NZers who received unwanted digital communications in the past year



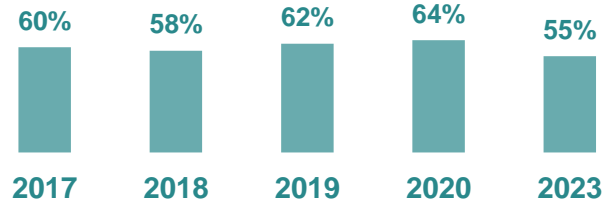
% of NZers who received unwanted communications which had a negative impact on their life



Effectiveness of responses

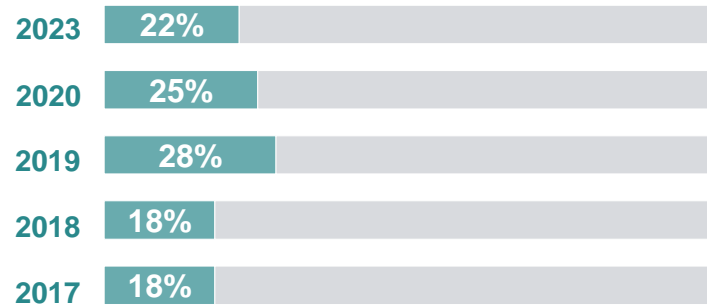
The perceived effectiveness of New Zealanders' responses to unwanted digital communication have dipped slightly, but not statistically significantly.

% of NZers who said their responses were effective



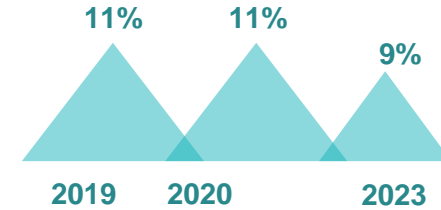
Accessing support services

The proportion of New Zealanders accessing a support service after receiving an unwanted digital communication has not changed significantly.



Perpetrators

9% of New Zealanders sent or shared at least one unwanted digital communication in the last 12 months. This proportion has not changed since we started asking the question in 2019.



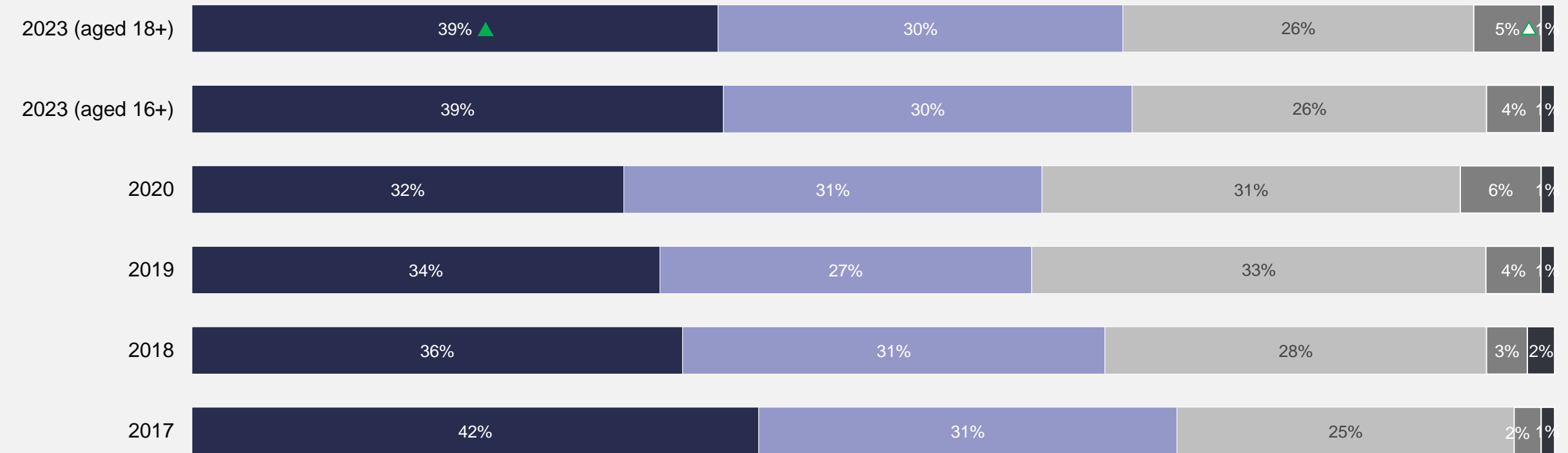
Use of technology

Digital competency

Between 2017 and 2020 New Zealanders had an increasing need for help when using digital devices. This trend has now abated and the percentage of New Zealanders never or rarely requiring assistance is at its highest since 2017.

Competence using digital technology

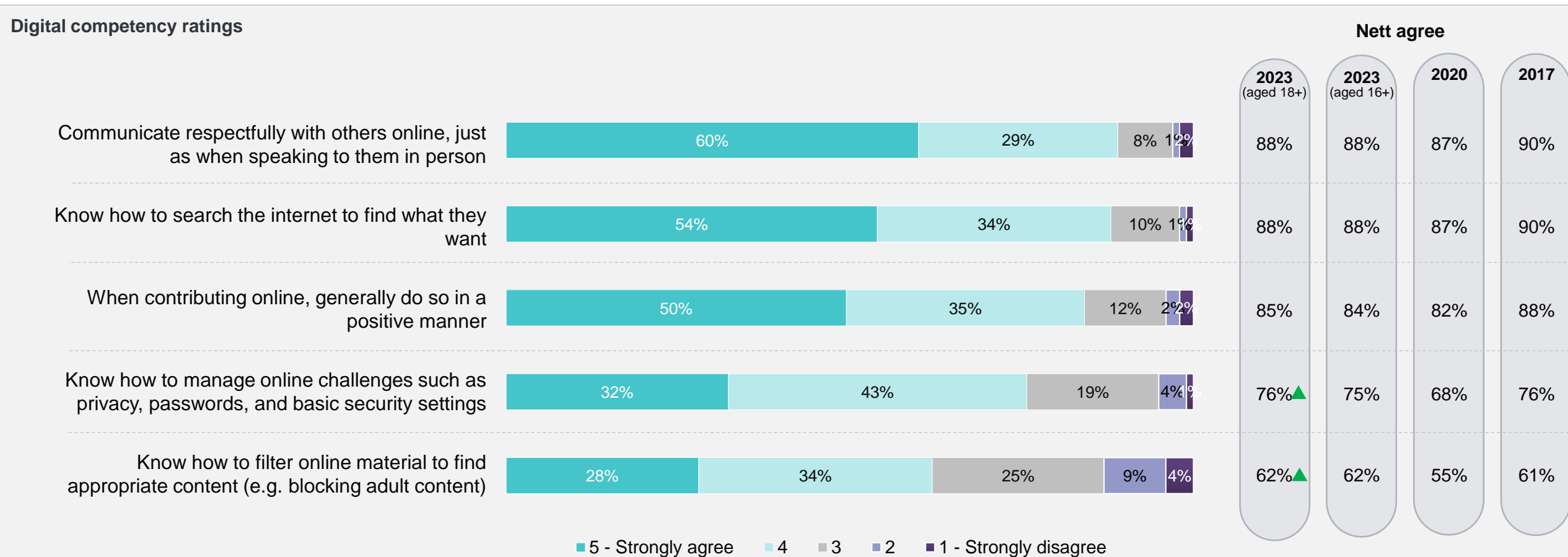
■ I very rarely or never require assistance ■ I rarely require assistance ■ I occasionally require assistance ■ I frequently require assistance ■ I usually or always require assistance



▲ ▼ Significant increase/decrease since 2020 ▲ ▼ Significant increase/decrease since 2017

Specific digital competency

New Zealanders' ability to handle online challenges such as privacy, security settings, and managing passwords (76%), as well as knowing how to use filters to find appropriate online content (62%) has improved significantly since 2020 (68% and 55% respectively). These abilities are now back to the levels observed in 2017.



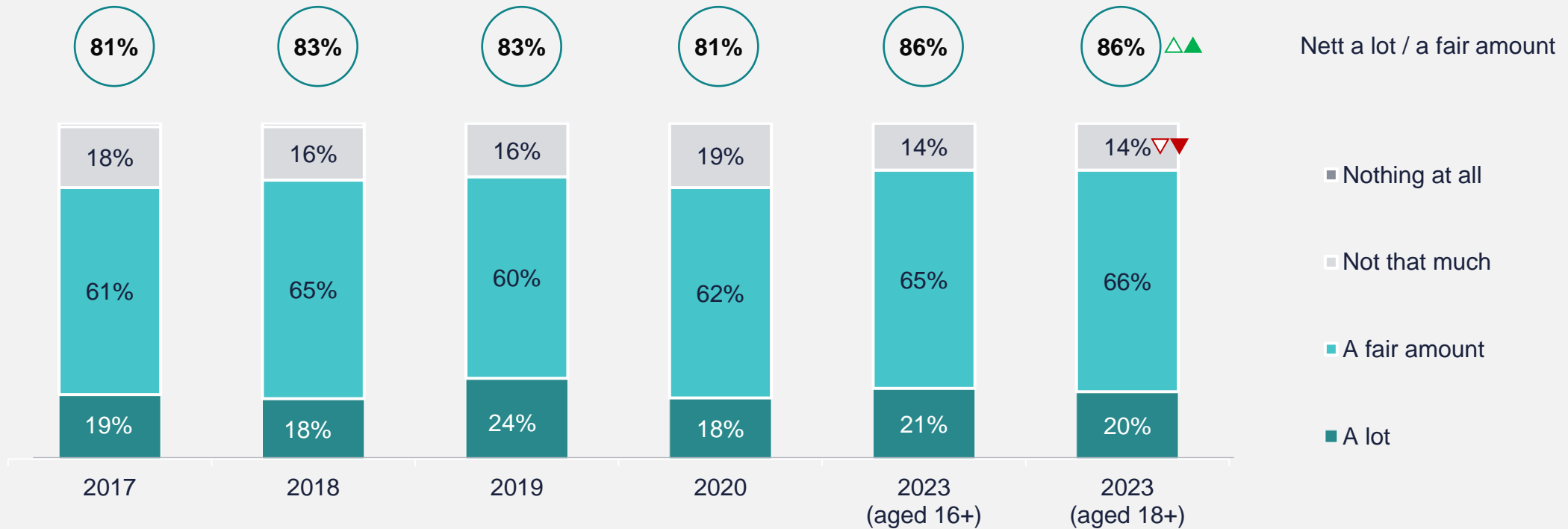
▲ Significant increase/decrease since 2020 ▲ Significant increase/decrease since 2017

Keeping protected online

Knowledge of online safety

Self-rated knowledge about keeping safe and secure online has improved significantly among those aged 18 years or more (from 81% in 2020 to 86%).

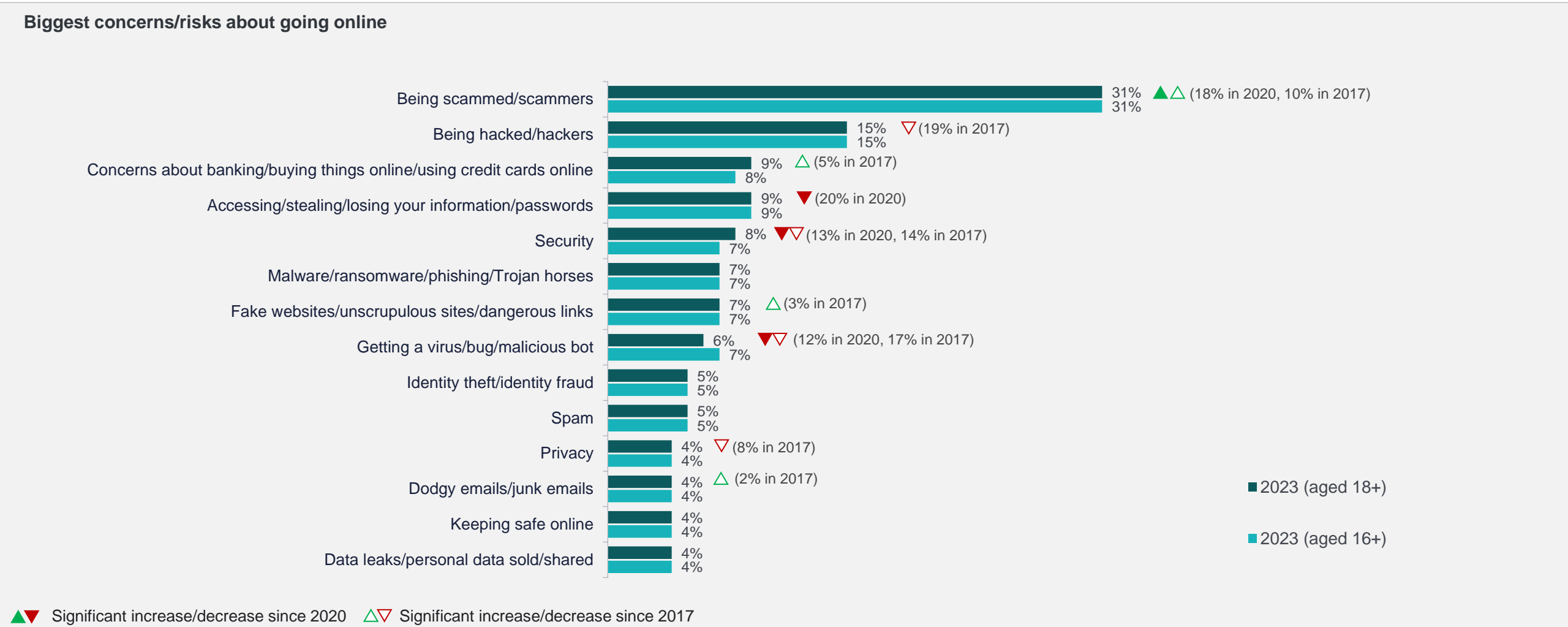
Personal knowledge of online safety



▲▼ Significant increase/decrease since 2020 ▲▼ Significant increase/decrease since 2017

Biggest concerns and perceived risks about going online

New Zealanders are increasingly concerned about being scammed online (from 18% to 31% in 2023); this level of concern has tripled since 2017 (10%). Compared to 2020, New Zealanders are significantly less concerned about losing access to their personal information (from 20% to 9% in 2023), online security (13% to 9% in 2023), and getting a virus (from 12% to 6% in 2023).

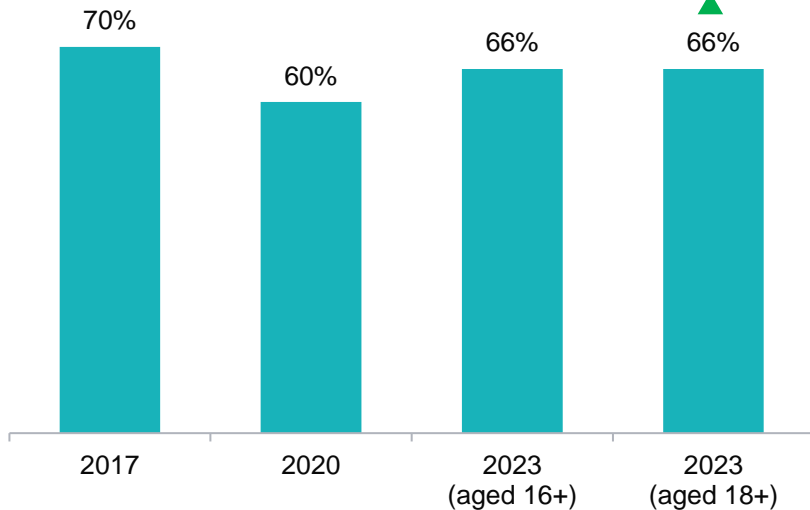


Action taken to protect self or others online

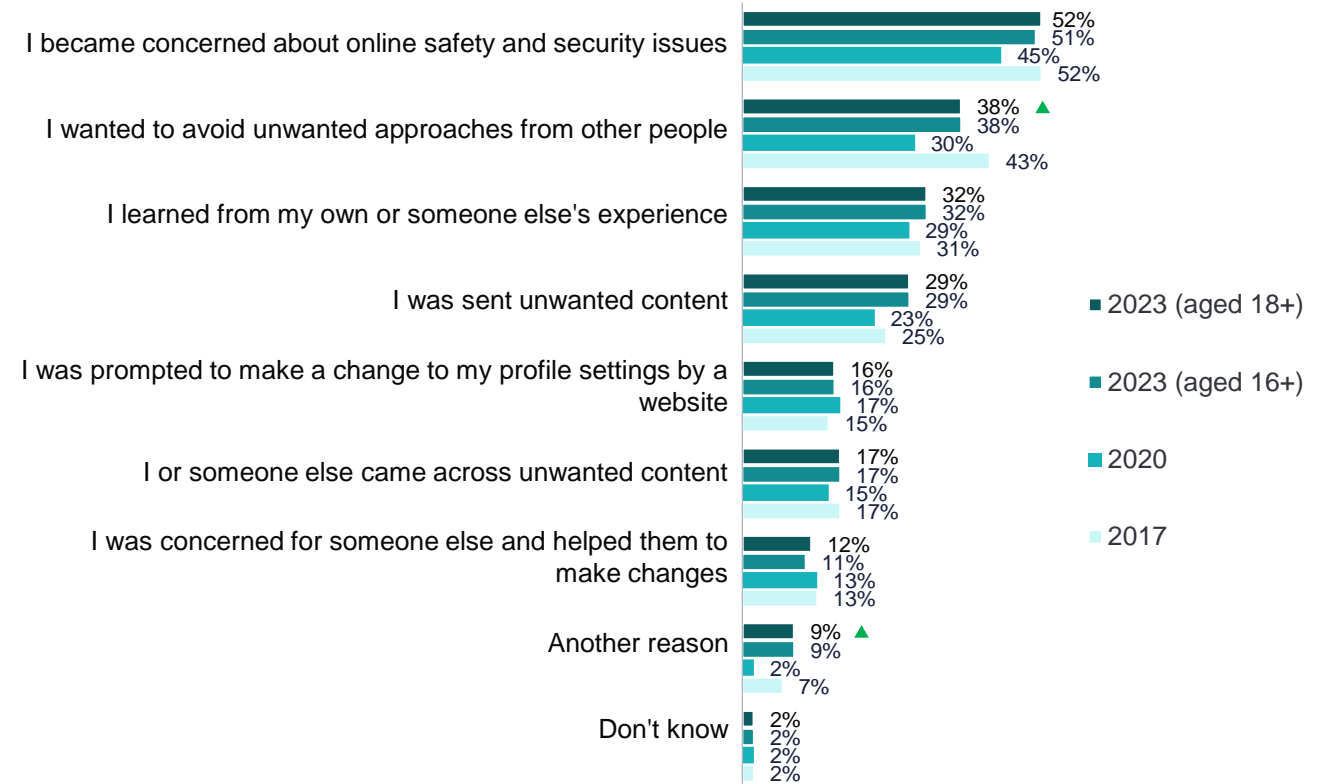
Two-thirds of New Zealanders took steps to protect themselves or others online in the past year; this is a significant increase since 2020 (from 60% to 66% in 2023). While general concern about online safety is still the main driver of these protective measures, there was a significant increase in the proportion motivated to avoid unwanted approaches from people (from 30% to 38% in 2023).

66%

have taken action to protect themselves or others online in the past 12 months



Reasons for taking action to protect self and others online

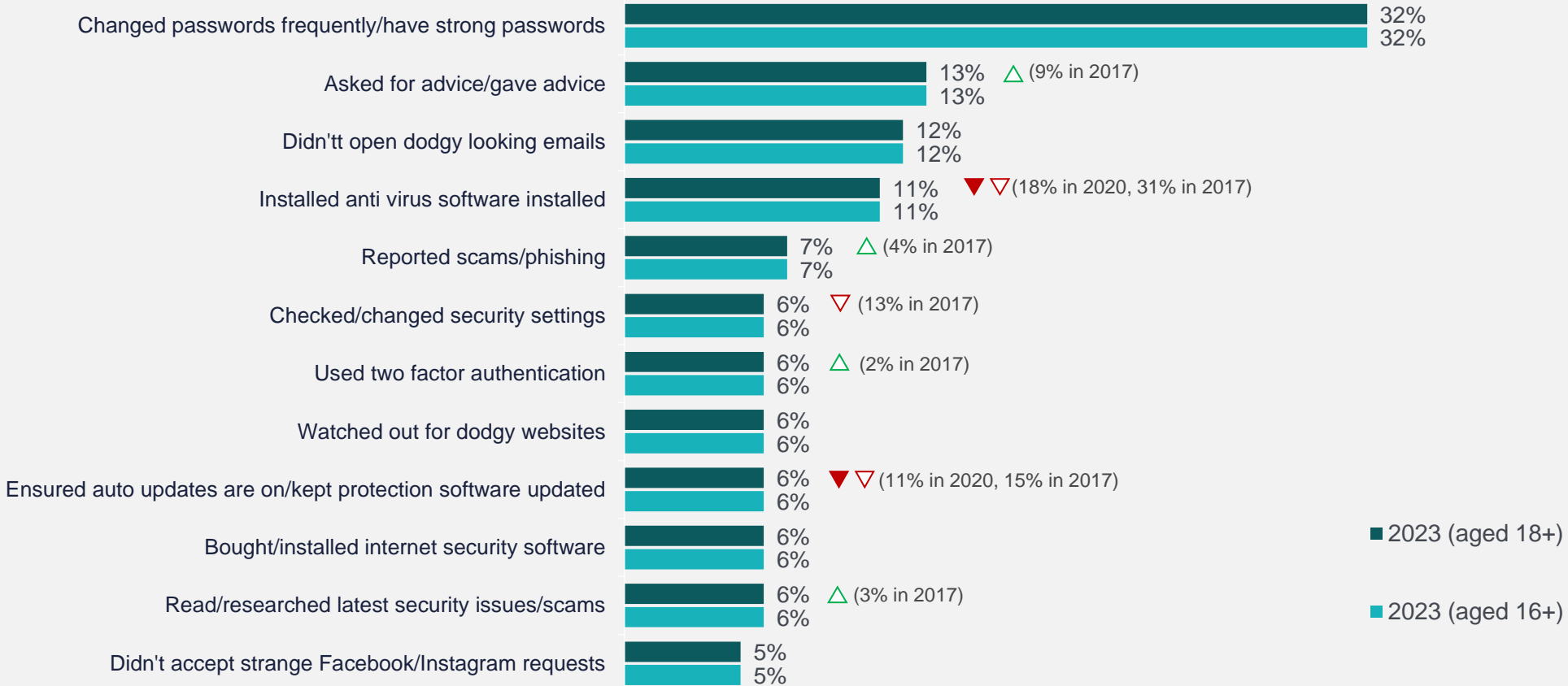


▲▼ Significant increase/decrease since 2020 ▲▼ Significant increase/decrease since 2017

Action taken to protect self or others online

Amongst those who've taken action to protect themselves or others in the last 12 months, the most common protective measures undertaken are being conscientious about passwords (changing them, choosing strong passwords) (32%). Compared to 2020, the rates of anti-virus software usage have fallen significantly (from 18% to 11% in 2023), as has ensuring auto-updates are current (from 11% to 6% in 2023).

Protective actions taken

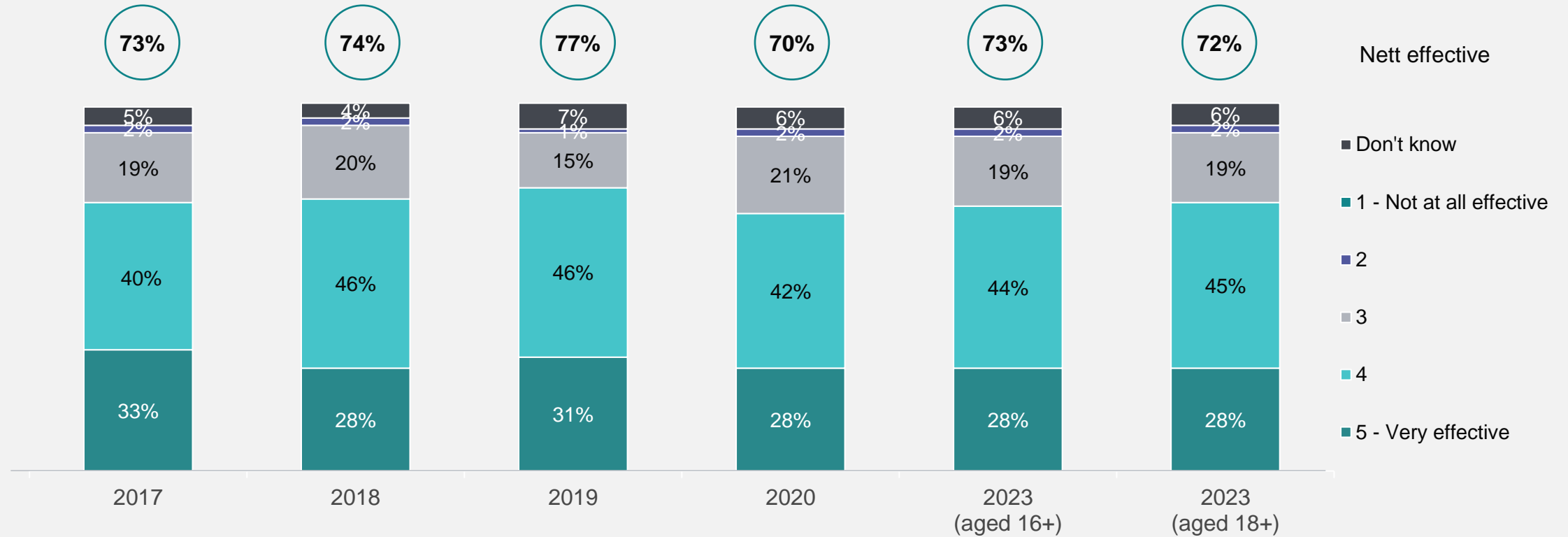


▲▼ Significant increase/decrease since 2020 △▽ Significant increase/decrease since 2017

Action taken to protect self or others online

Just over 70% of people who've acted feel their measures were effective.

Perceived effectiveness of protective actions taken

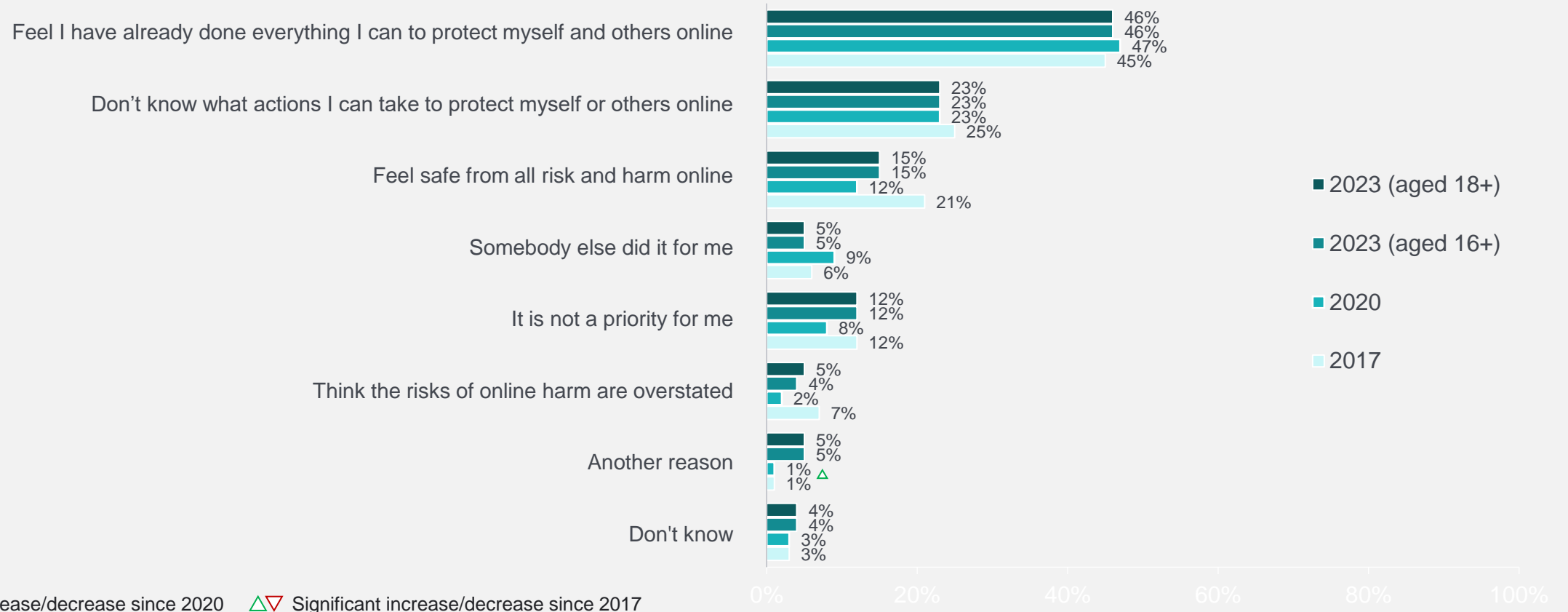


▲▼ Significant increase/decrease since 2020 ▲▼ Significant increase/decrease since 2017

Action taken to protect self or others online

The one-third of New Zealanders who haven't taken action to protect themselves or others in the last 12 months, tend to say they haven't taken action because they feel they've already done everything they can or they don't know what actions to take.

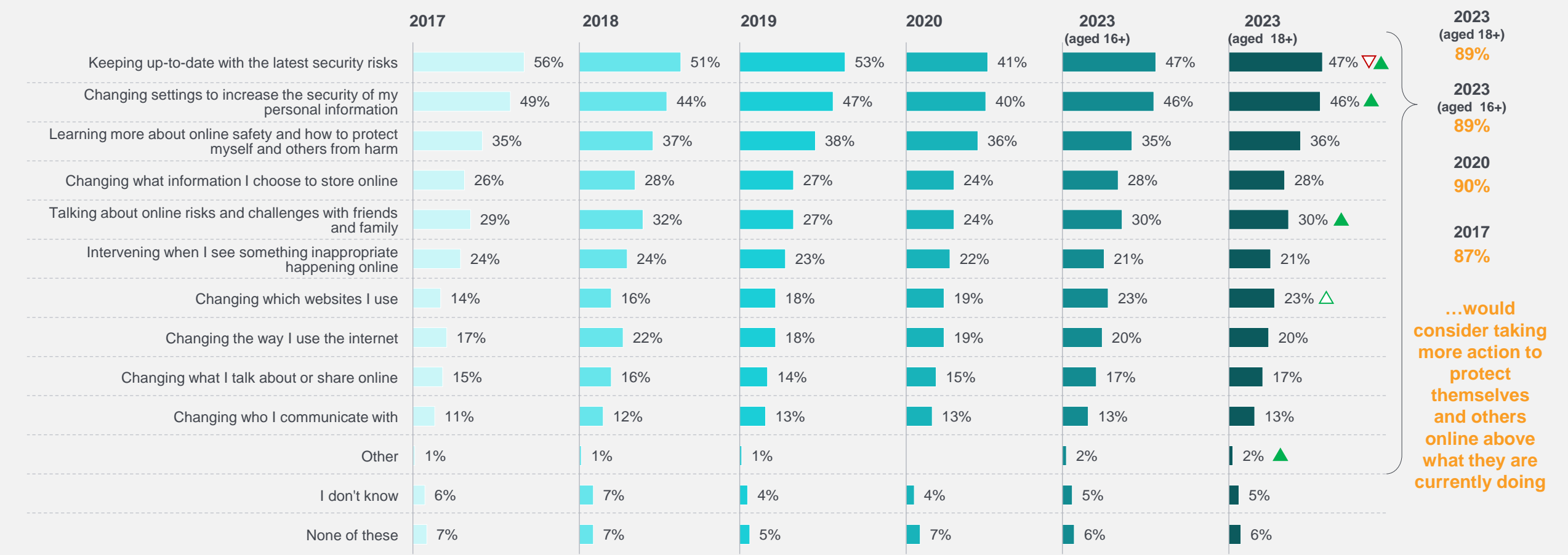
Reasons for not taking action



Consideration of future protective actions

New Zealanders are more likely to consider keeping up to date with security risks, changing their settings for increased security, and talking to their family and friends about online risks and challenges than they were in 2020. This improvement in intention, however, is just a reversion to pre-2020 levels of intention rather than representing an overall trend upwards.

Consideration of taking protective online actions in future (actions that are not currently being taken)



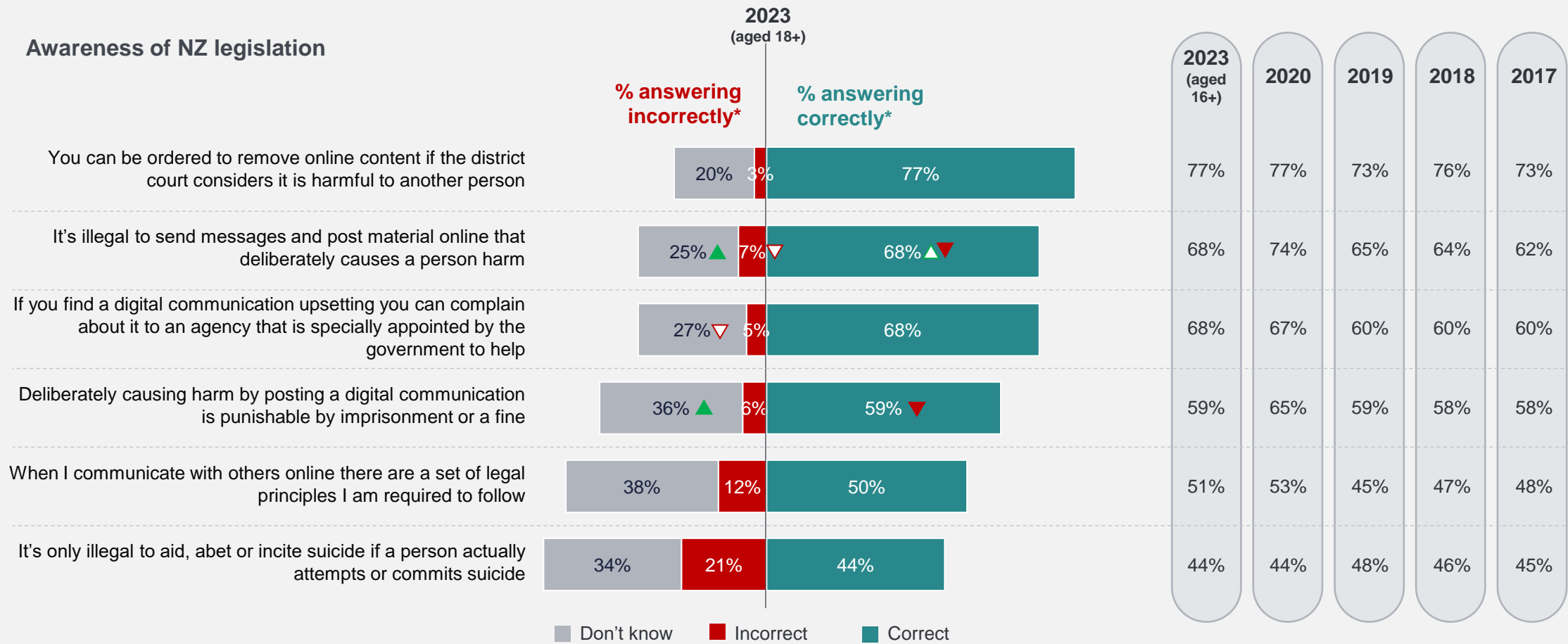
...would consider taking more action to protect themselves and others online above what they are currently doing

▲▼ Significant increase/decrease since 2020 ▲▼ Significant increase/decrease since 2017

Awareness of rights and options

Awareness of legislation

Knowledge of some key aspects of the law has declined since 2020: fewer understand that it is illegal to post content that deliberately causes a person harm and fewer understand that this kind of behaviour is punishable by imprisonment or a fine.



▲▼ Significant increase/decrease since 2020 ▲▼ Significant increase/decrease since 2017

*All statements are true, except for 'it's only illegal to aid, abet, or incite suicide if a person actually commits suicide' – this is false.
 Base: All respondents (2017 n=1,018; 2018 n=1,001; 2019 n=1,161; 2020 n=1,150; 2023 aged 16+ n=1,665; 2023 aged 18+ n=1,582)
 Source: Q17. Now thinking about your rights and responsibilities under current New Zealand legislation, please indicate whether you think the following is true or false. If you are not sure, then please tick 'Don't know'.


Most important things not to do or include when communicating online

Trying to get someone to hurt themselves, sharing intimate images or recordings, and including indecent or obscene content, remain the three most important things not to do or include in digital communication and are relatively unchanged since 2020. In contrast to the stability of the top three, it has become less important to New Zealanders that false allegations not be made about someone and more important that online communication not be used as a form of revenge or harassment.

Digital communication should not*...

	2017 Rated in top 3 (combined)	2018 Rated in top 3 (combined)	2019 Rated in top 3 (combined)	2020 Rated in top 3 (combined)	2023 16+ Rated in top 3 (combined)	2023 18+ Rated in top 3 (combined)
Try to get someone to hurt themselves (e.g. self-harm, commit suicide)	61%	62%	61%	59%	58%	58%
Share intimate images or recordings of someone without their permission	46%	47%	41%	45%	49%	49%
Include indecent or obscene content (e.g., extreme violence or sexually explicit)	43%	41%	50%	44%	40%	40%
Share other personal information about someone without their permission	32%	34%	34%	34%	33%	34%
Threaten to hurt someone or damage their property	32%	30%	25%	26%	27%	27% ▼
Insult someone because of their personal what they look like, their lifestyle, where they come from or what they believe in	20%	21%	24%	24%	28%	28% ▲
Make a false allegation about someone	19%	20%	19%	22%	17%	17% ▼
Encourage other people to send messages to someone as a way to try and harm them	18%	17%	16%	18%	17%	17%
Include content that most people would agree is offensive to the person receiving it	12%	14%	18%	14%	11%	11%
Be used as a way to get back at someone by harassing them	17%	15%	12%	13%	19%	19% ▲

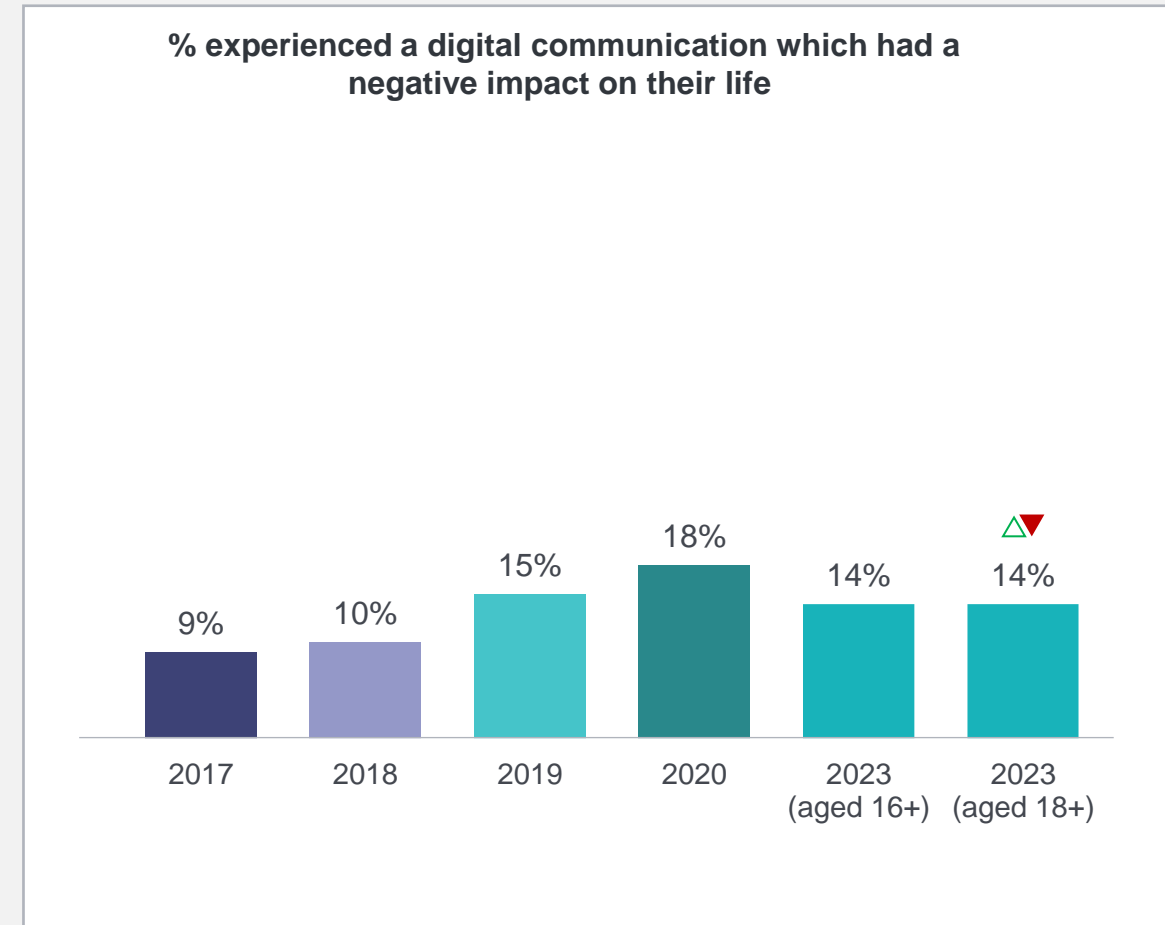
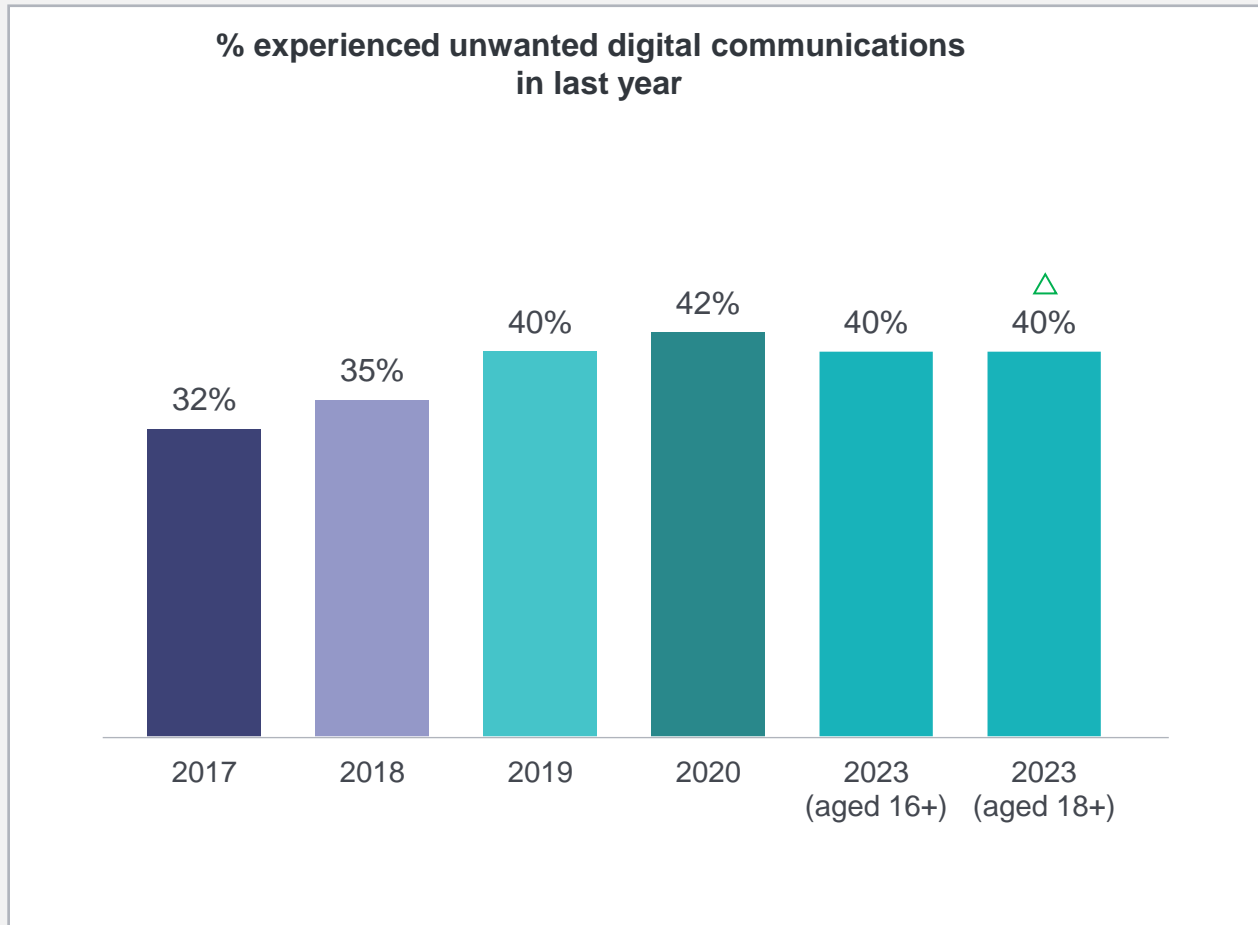
▲ ▼ Significant increase/decrease since 2020 ▲ ▼ Significant increase/decrease since 2017

 *Detailed survey results can be found in the Appendix.
 Base: All respondents (2017 n=1,018; 2018 n=1,001; 2019 n=1,161; 2020 n=1,150; 2023 aged 16+ n=1,665; 2023 aged 18+ n=1,582)
 Source: Q16. Below is a list of ten statements about what digital communication should NOT be or include. Please select the three statements you consider to be most important.

Experience of unwanted digital communications

New Zealanders' experience of unwanted digital communications

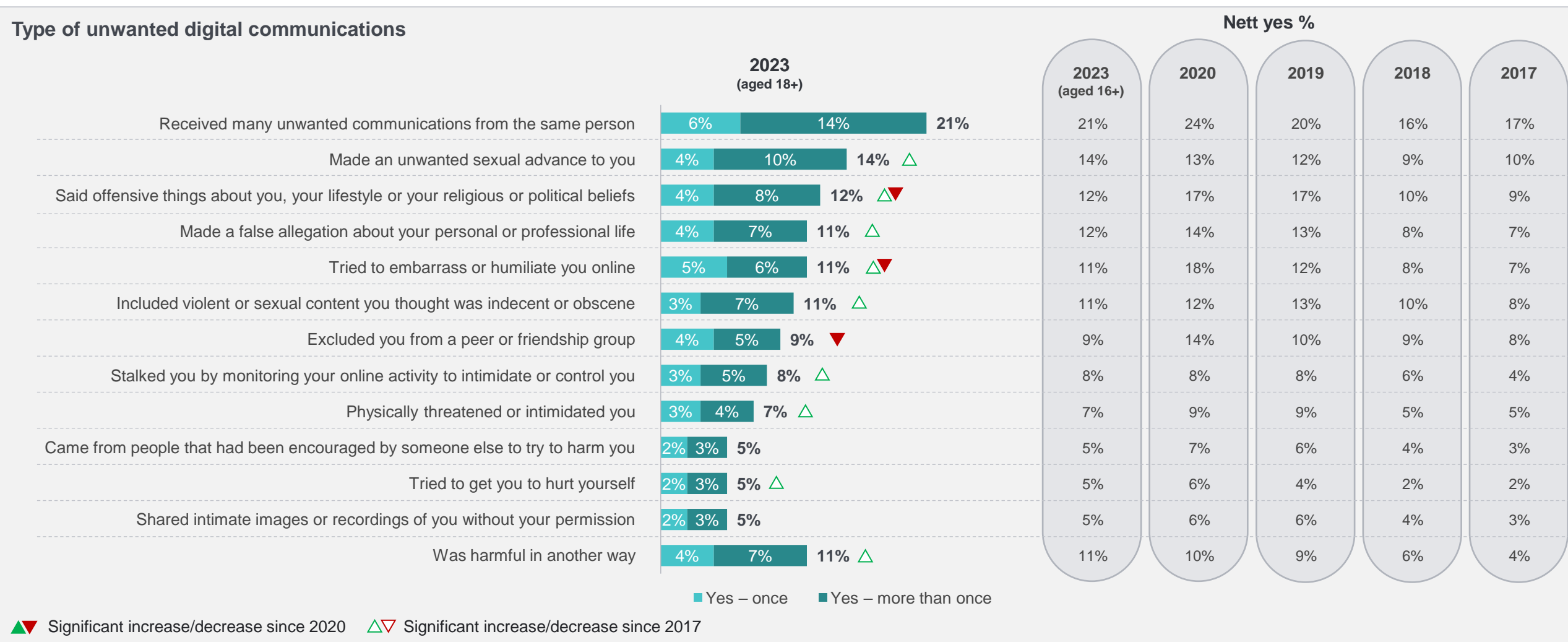
Forty percent of New Zealanders experienced unwanted digital communications in the last 12 months, consistent with the levels seen in 2019 and 2020. The percentages of New Zealanders experiencing harm from a digital communication has declined from the peak in 2020.



▲▼ Significant increase/decrease since 2020 ▲▼ Significant increase/decrease since 2017

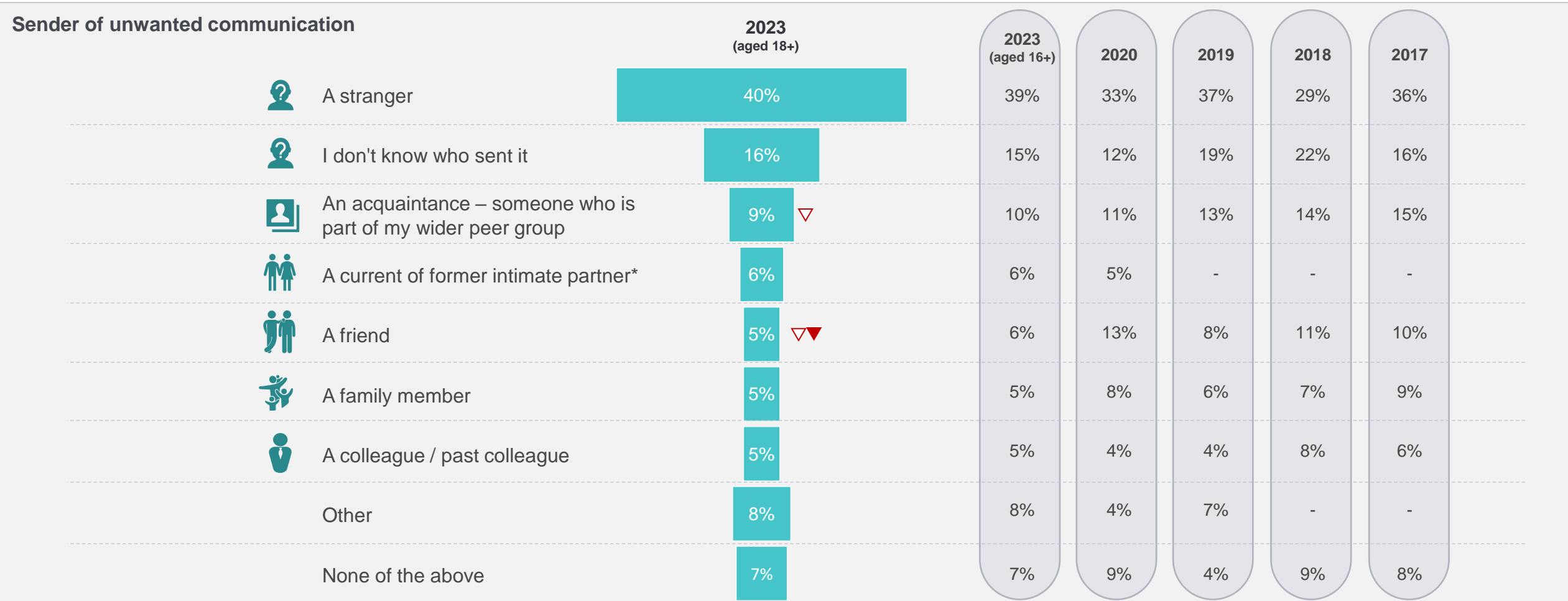
New Zealanders' experience of unwanted digital communications

Since 2020 New Zealanders have experienced significantly fewer instances of offensive things being said about their lifestyle, religion, or political beliefs (from 17% to 12% in 2023), and fewer communications attempting embarrass or humiliate (from 18% to 11% in 2023) or exclude them from a peer group (from 14% to 9% in 2023).



Proximity to sender of unwanted digital communication

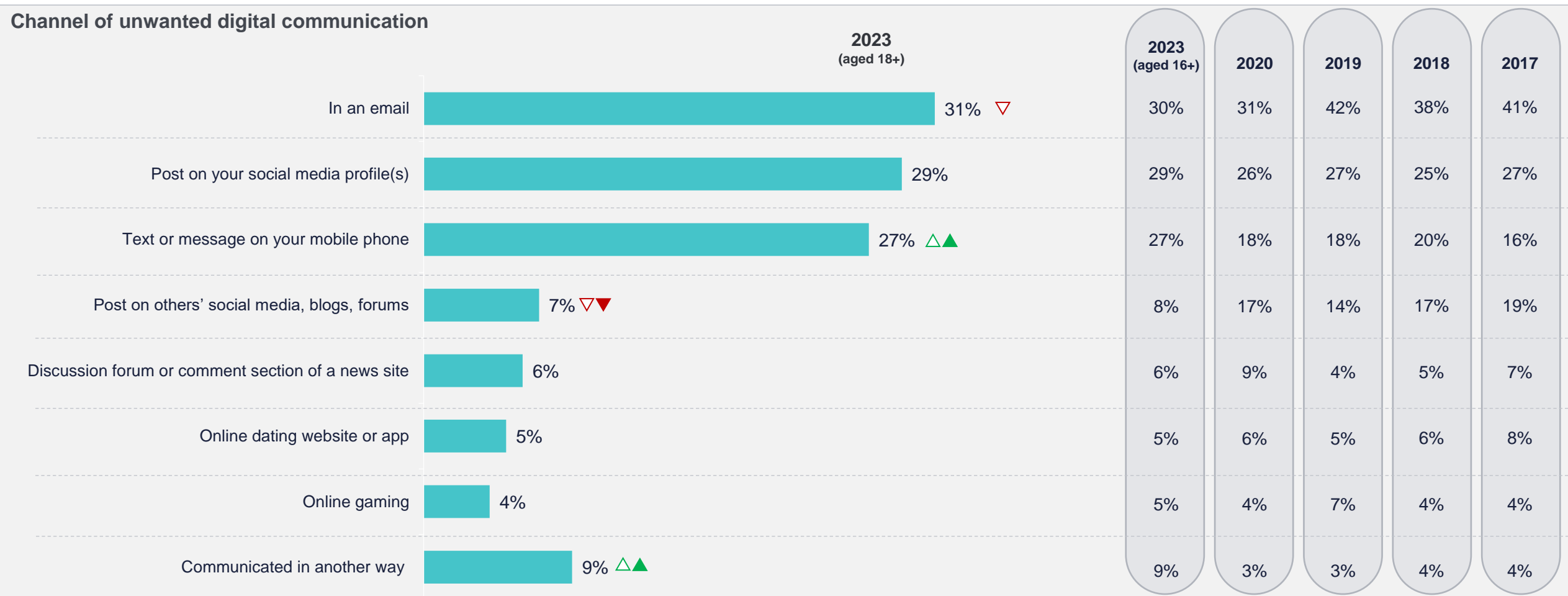
Two in five New Zealanders had unwanted communication from a stranger; this has been the most common source of unwanted communications since 2017. Since 2020 there have been significantly fewer unwanted communications from someone they consider to be a friend (from 13% to 5% in 2023).



Significant increase/decrease since 2020 Significant increase/decrease since 2017

Channels for unwanted communications

Unwanted communications tended to be experienced through email, social media, or text message. The proportion experienced by text has increased since 2020 as well as compared to 2017.

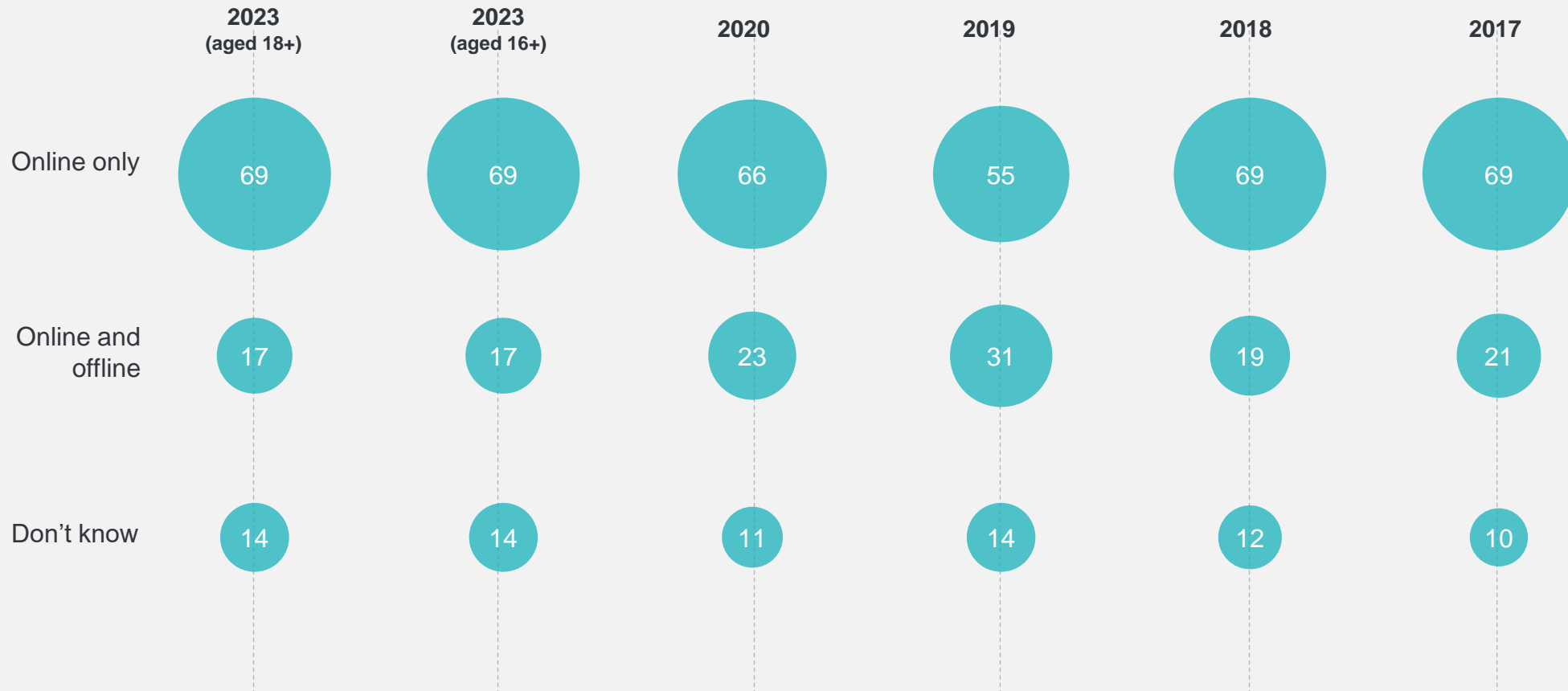


▲▽ Significant increase/decrease since 2020 ▲▽ Significant increase/decrease since 2017

Connection of unwanted communications to offline events

Sixty-nine percent of New Zealanders who've experienced unwanted digital communication said that it only happened online.

Part of a wider issue happening offline



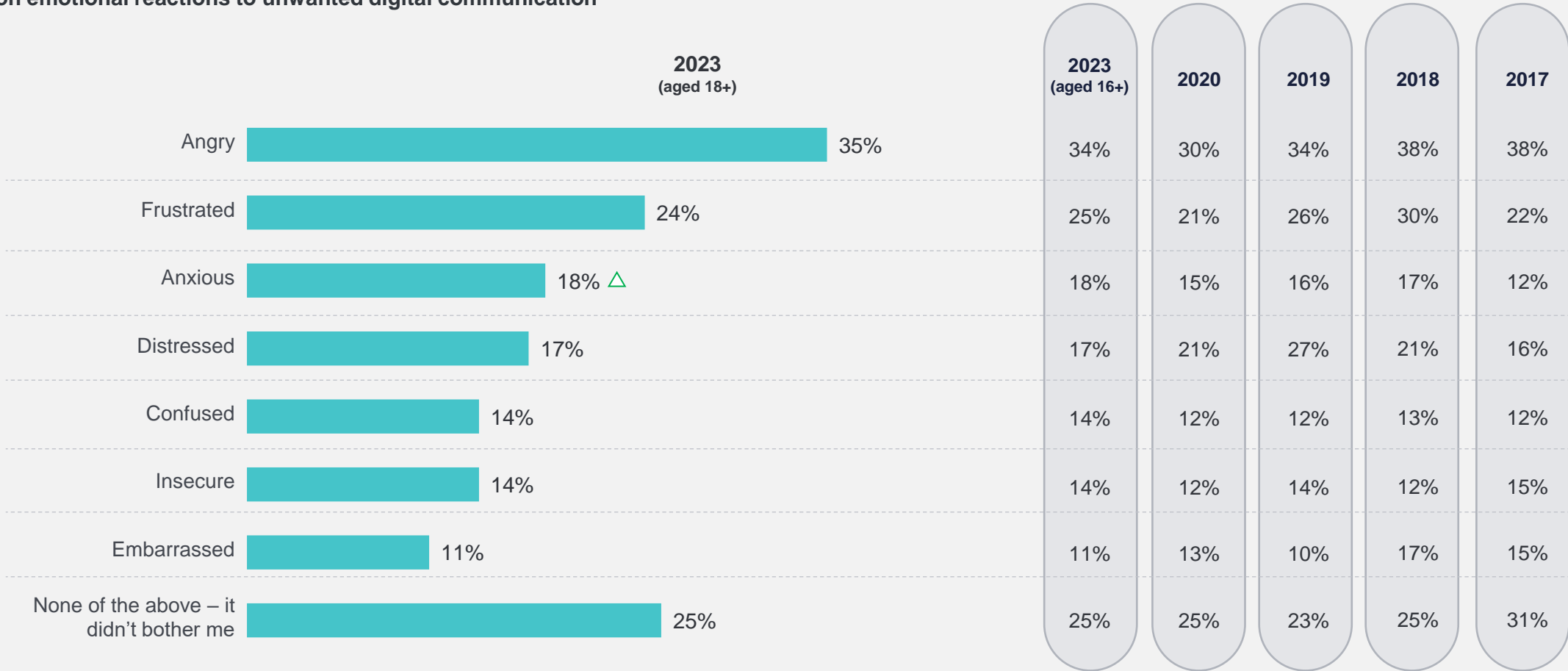
▲▼ Significant increase/decrease since 2020 ▲▼ Significant increase/decrease since 2017

Base: Respondents who had experienced at least one incident of unwanted digital communications in the last year (2017 n=337, 2018 n=362; 2019 n=511; 2020 n=484; 2023 aged 16+ n=737; 2023 aged 18+ n=695)
Source: Q19. Where did this experience of harmful digital communication occur? Q20. And was this experience part of a wider issue that was happening offline? By offline we mean in a physical environment, such as through face-to-face interactions.

Impact of unwanted digital communications

Over the past five years, there has been an increase in anxiousness when receiving an unwanted digital communication (from 12% in 2017 to 18% in 2023).

Most common emotional reactions to unwanted digital communication

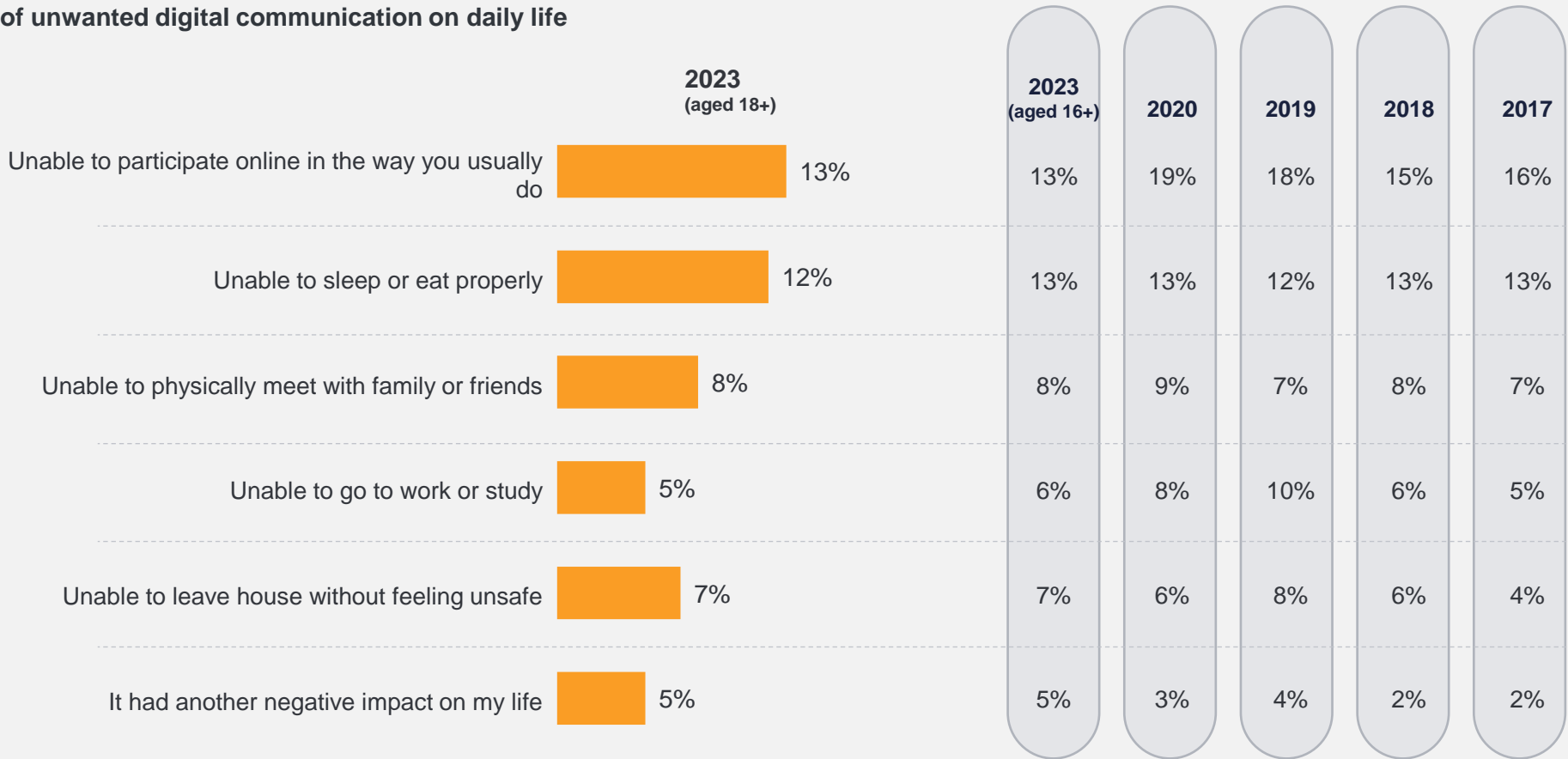


▲ Significant increase/decrease since 2020 ▲ Significant increase/decrease since 2017

Impact of unwanted digital communications

A third (34%) of those who received unwanted digital communications in the last year said that it impacted their daily lives, most commonly preventing them from participating online as they would normally do and affecting their sleep and eating habits. The 34% represents the reversal of a trend of increasing impact (29% in 2017, 30% in 2018, 39% in 2019, 44% in 2020).

Impact of unwanted digital communication on daily life



34%

were negatively impacted by unwanted communication (significantly lower than the 44% observed in 2020, but higher than the 29% observed in 2017).

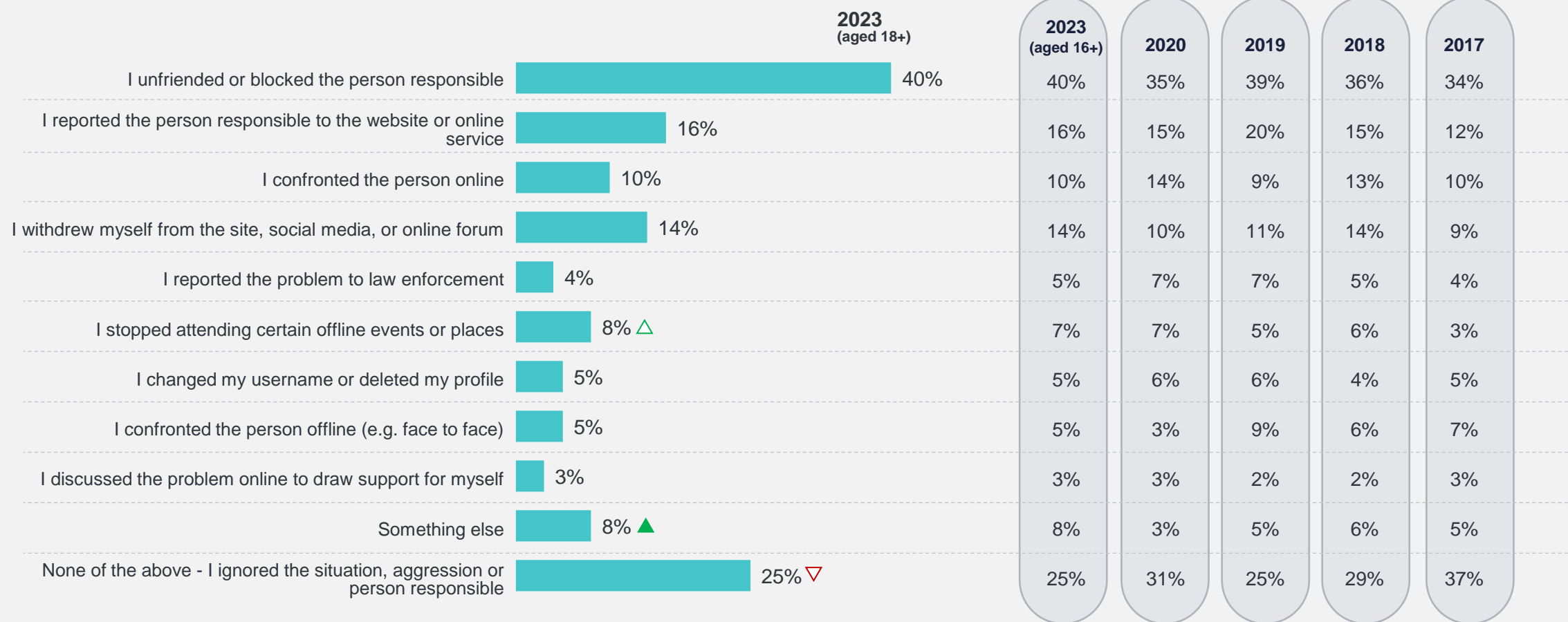
▲▼ Significant increase/decrease since 2020 ▲▼ Significant increase/decrease since 2017

Emotions mentioned by less than 10% of respondents not shown.
 Base: Respondents who had experienced at least one incident of unwanted digital communications in the last year (2017 n=337, 2018 n=362, 2019 n=511, 2020 n=484; 2023 aged 16+ n=737; 2023 aged 18+ n=695)
 Source: Q22. As a result of this experience, were you unable to...

Responses to unwanted digital communications

Blocking unwanted digital communication remains the most common form of action taken (40%), followed by just ignoring the situation altogether (25%).

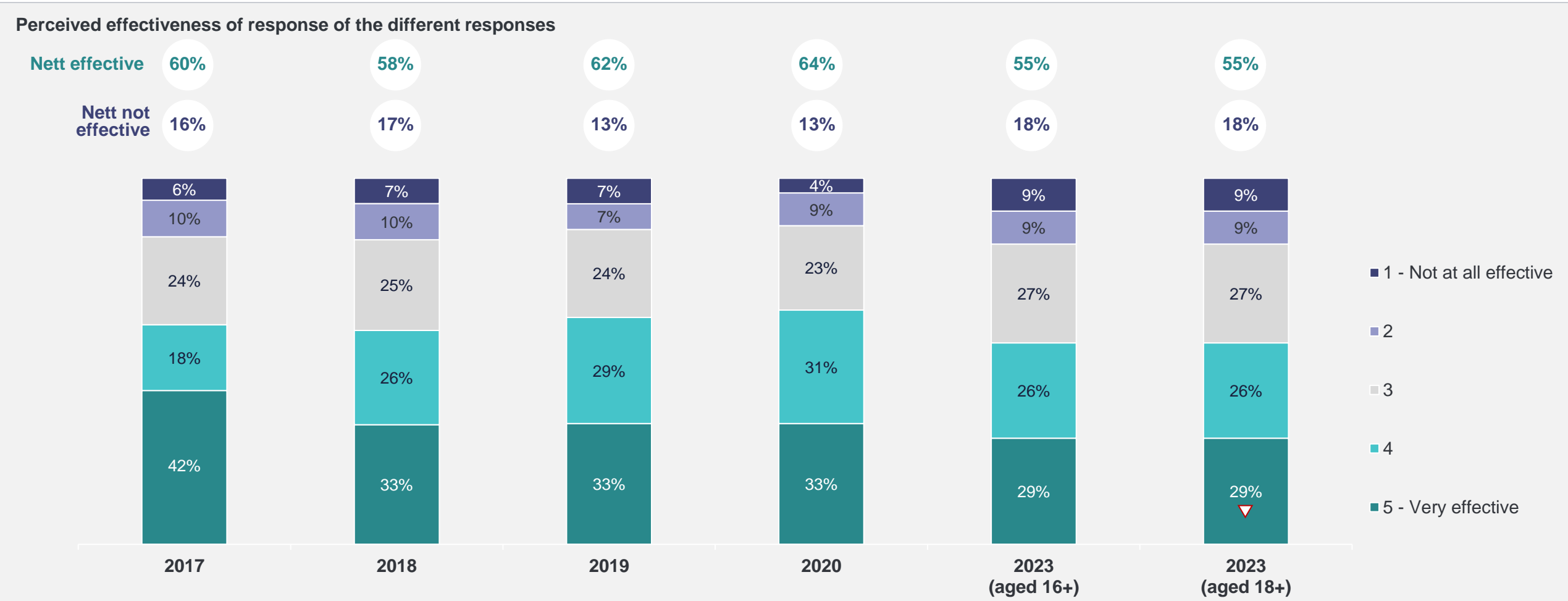
Response to situation



▲ ▼ Significant increase/decrease since 2020 ▲ ▼ Significant increase/decrease since 2017

Perceived effectiveness of responses to unwanted digital communications

The perceived effectiveness of the methods used to combat unwanted digital communications are now less likely to be very effective than they were in 2017.



▲ Significant increase/decrease since 2020 ▲ Significant increase/decrease since 2017

Base: 2023 18+ Respondents who had experienced at least one incident of unwanted digital communications in the last year (2017 n=224; 2018 n=262; 2019 n=372; 2020 n=321; 2023 aged 16+ n=570; 2023 aged 18+ n=538)
 Source: Q24. And, overall, how effective was your response(s) at changing the situation?

Accessing support services

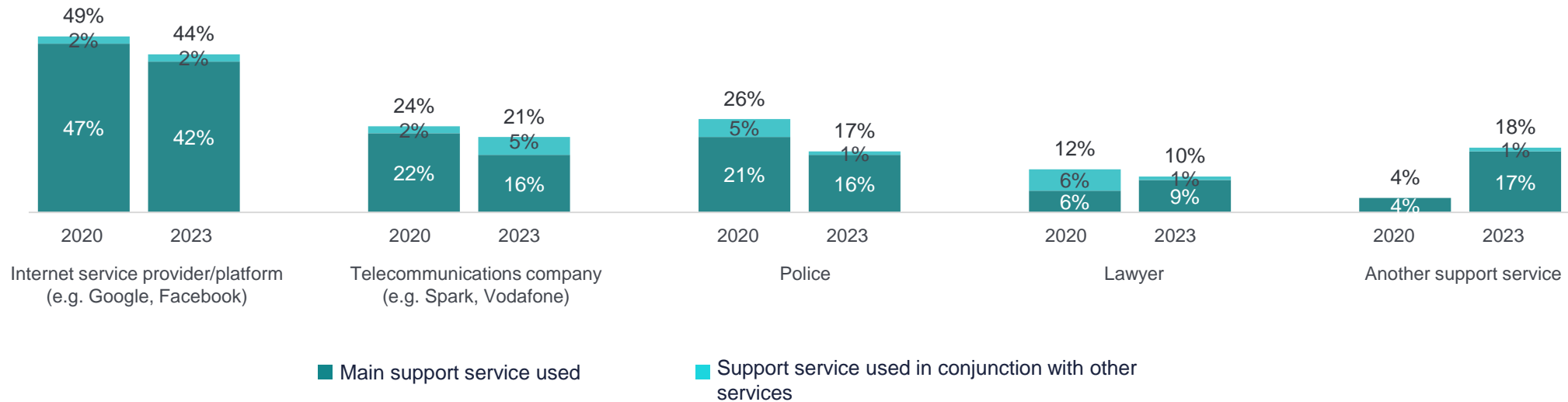
Use of support services

One in five who experienced unwanted digital communications in the last year contacted a support service. Internet service providers and platforms are by far the most frequently contacted, followed by telecommunications services and police.

Used a support service:



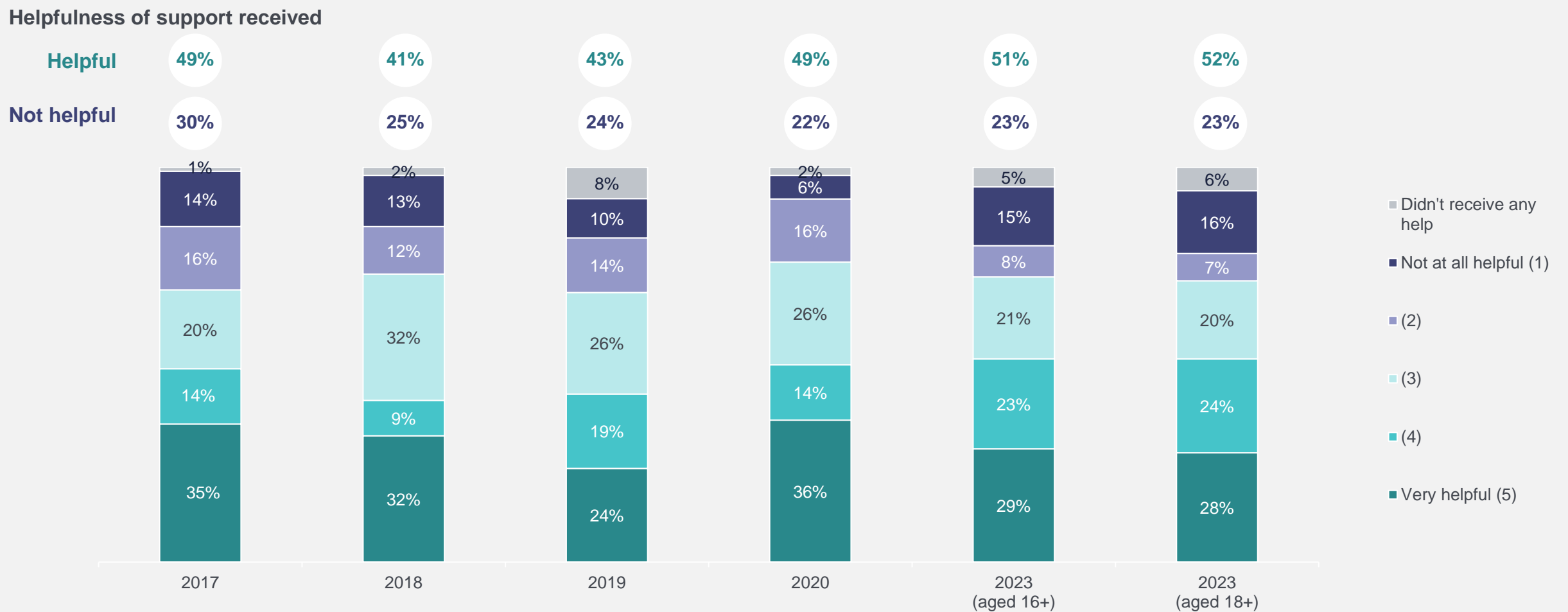
In 2020 and 2023 those who did, sought support from...



Base: Respondents who had experienced at least one incident of unwanted digital communications in the last year (2018 n=362; 2019 n=511; 2020 n=484; 2023 aged 16+ n=737; 2023 aged 18+ n=695).
 *Those who contacted a support service to help deal with an unwanted digital communication (2018 n=66; 2019 n=125; 2020 n=99; 2023 aged 18+ n=166)
 Source: Q26. Did you contact any of the following services in order to help you? Q27. Which of the following did you rely on as your main source of help or support? Q28. Please describe your reasons for choosing to contact [main support service].

Helpfulness of support services

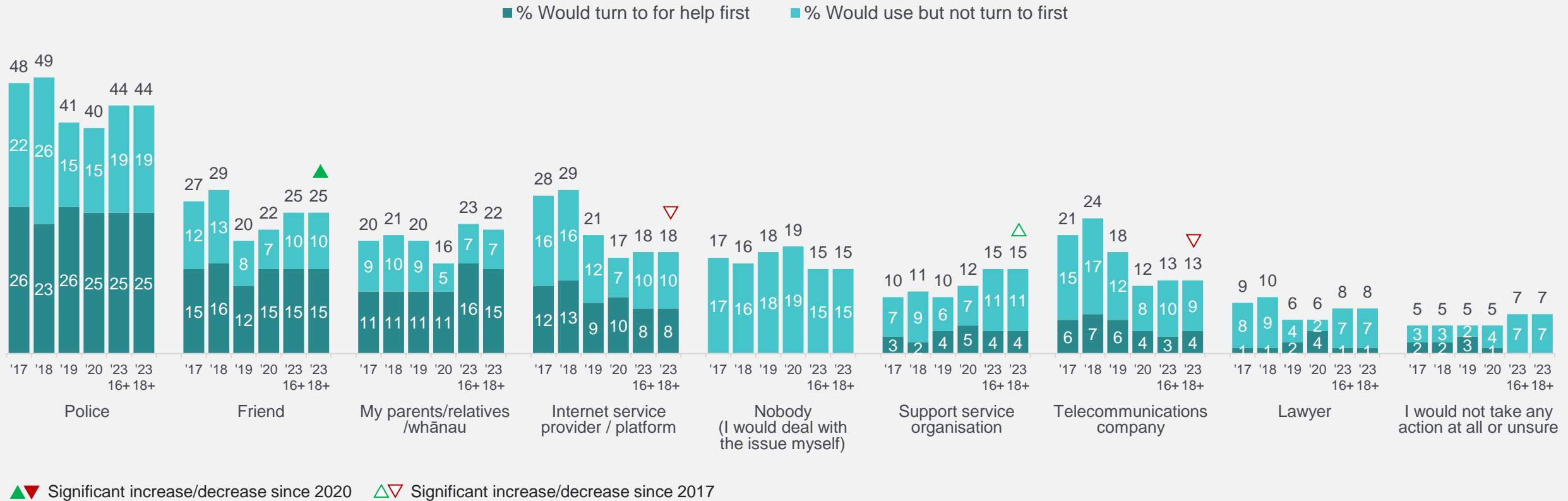
Just over half of those who sought help from a support service felt that it was helpful. The percentage who are finding the support service helpful has been gradually increasing since 2018.



Future consideration (for those who have not experienced unwanted communications)

When asked who people would turn to for help if they received unwanted online communication, more people are likely to turn to a friend compared to 2020. People are less likely to turn to internet service providers and telecommunications companies but more likely to turn to support service organisations than in 2017.

Support services in future situations involving unwanted digital communications

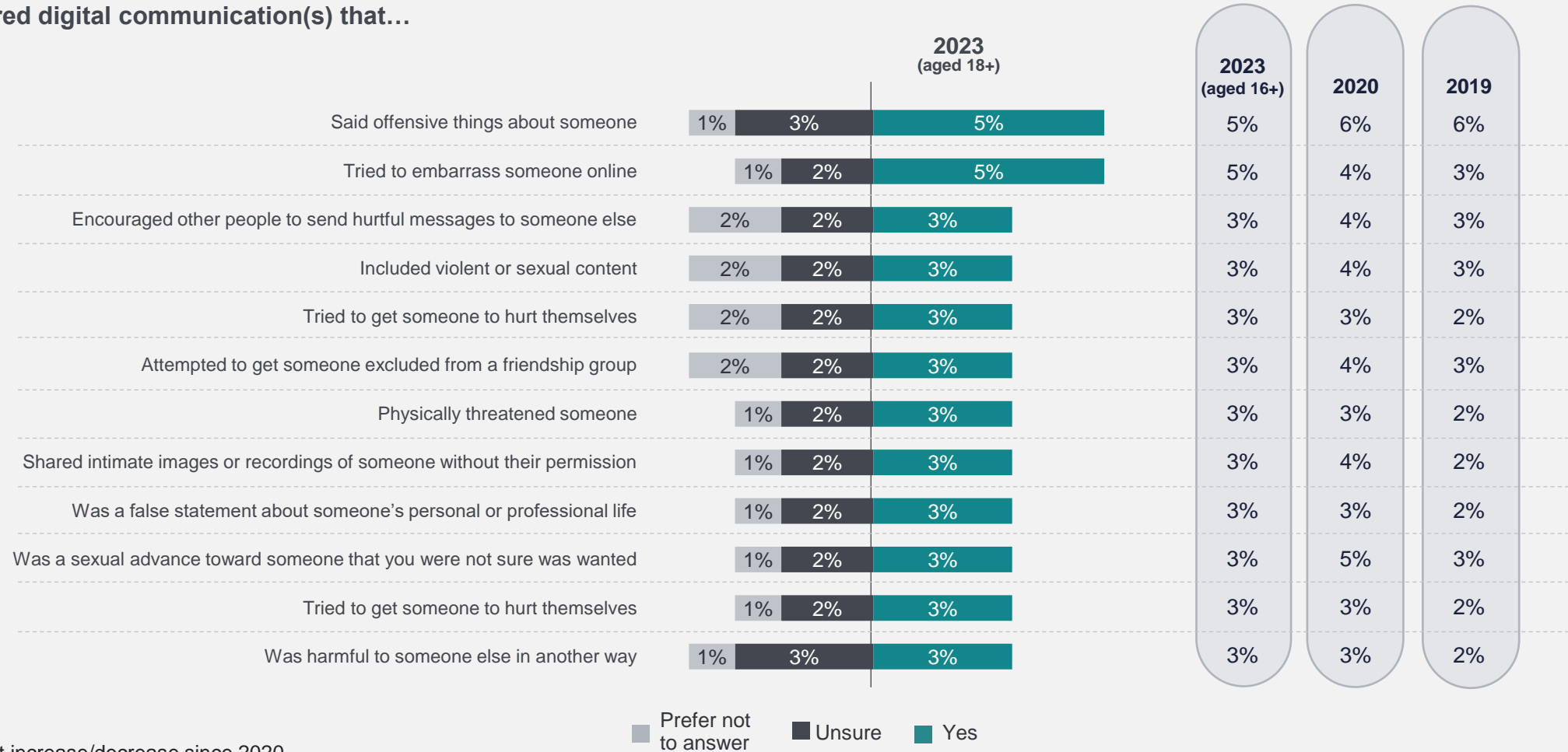


Perpetrators

New Zealanders sending or sharing unwanted digital communications

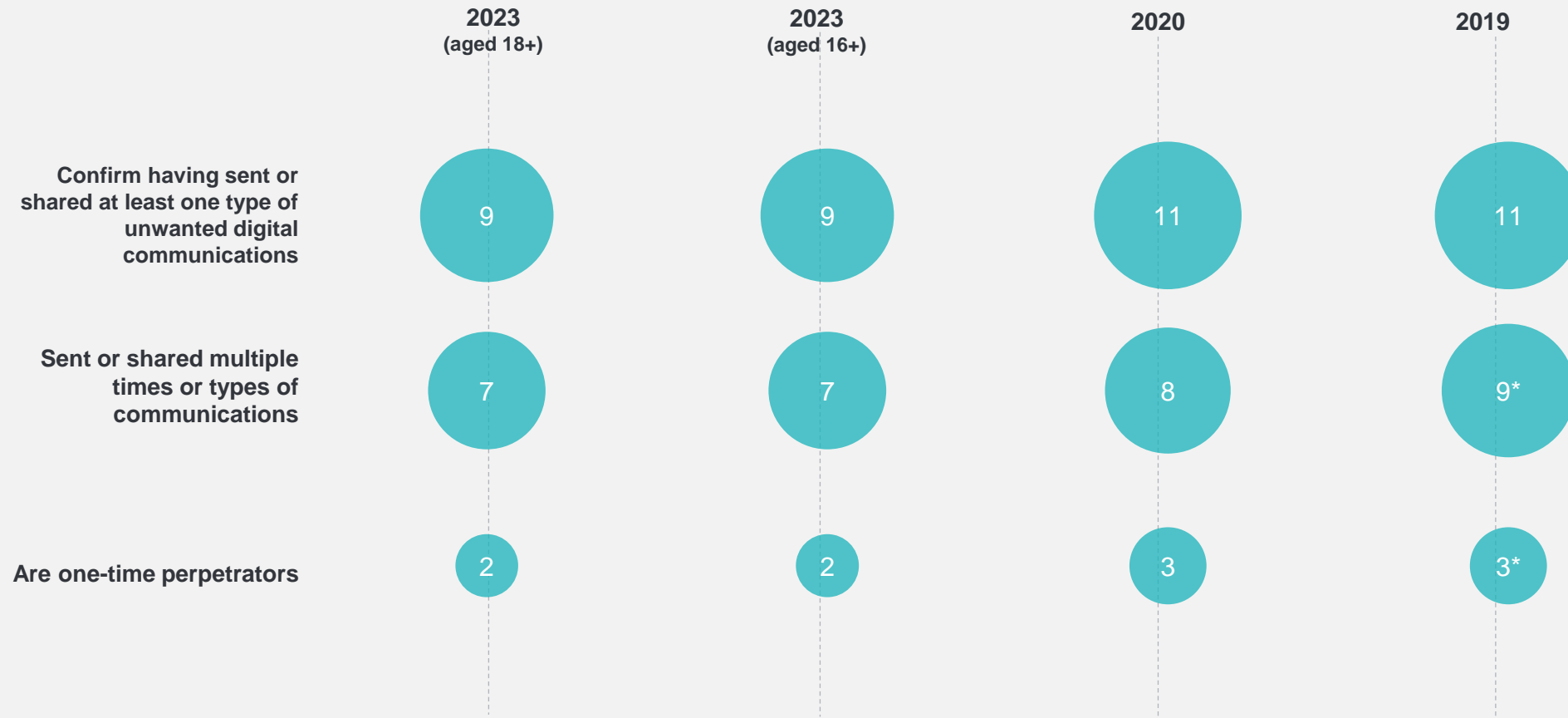
The proportion of New Zealanders sending or sharing different types of unwanted digital communication has not changed since 2020.

Sent or shared digital communication(s) that...



New Zealanders sending or sharing unwanted digital communications

While the proportion of New Zealanders sending or sharing at least one unwanted digital communication has dropped from 11% to 9%, this is not a statistically significant change.



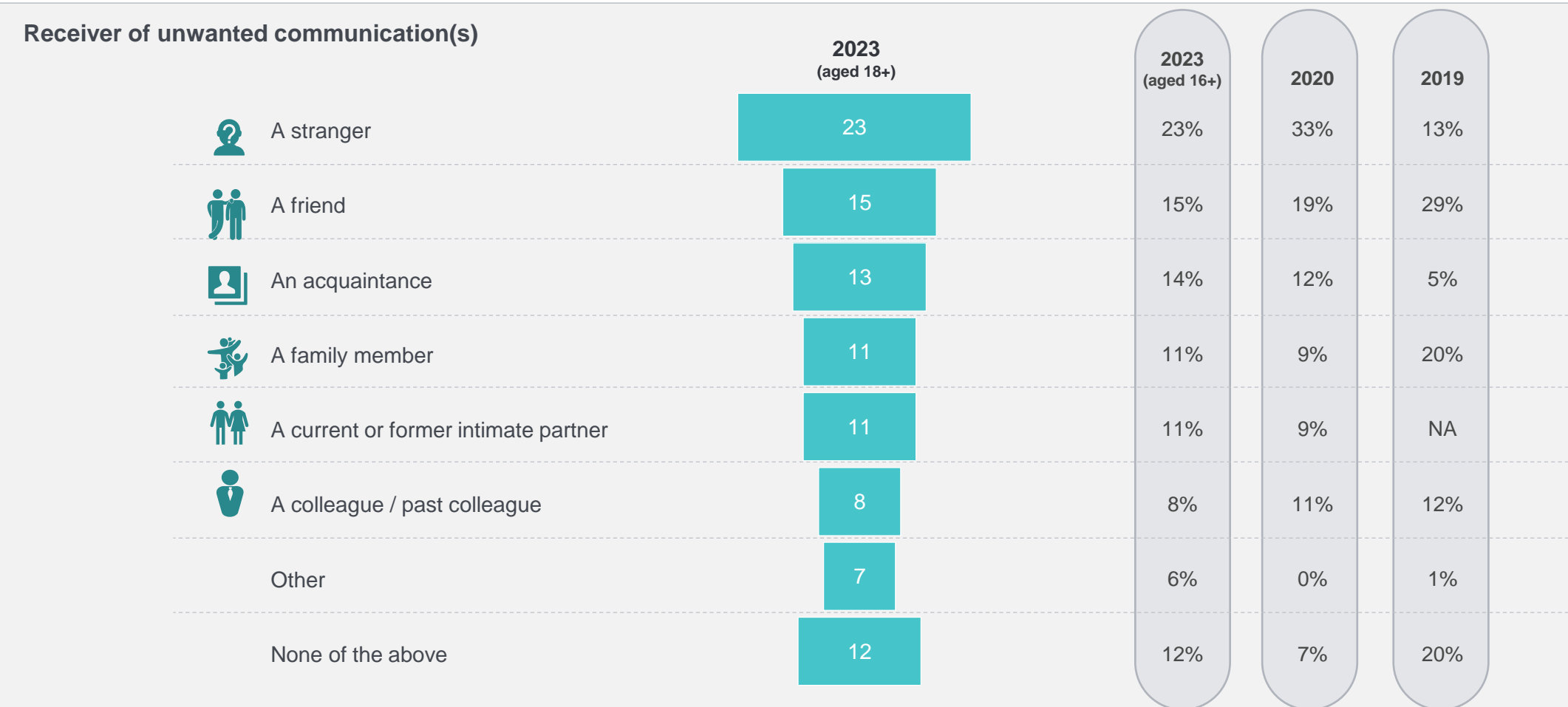
*Does not add to 11 due to rounding.

Base: All respondents (2020 n=1,150; 2019 n=1,161; 2023 aged 16+ n=1,665; 2023 aged 18+ n=1,582)

Source: Q54. In the last 12 months, have you personally sent or shared a digital communication (e.g. email, text, photo, video, or online comment) that:

Proximity to victim of unwanted digital communication

Perpetrators' most frequent targets for unwanted digital communication were strangers.

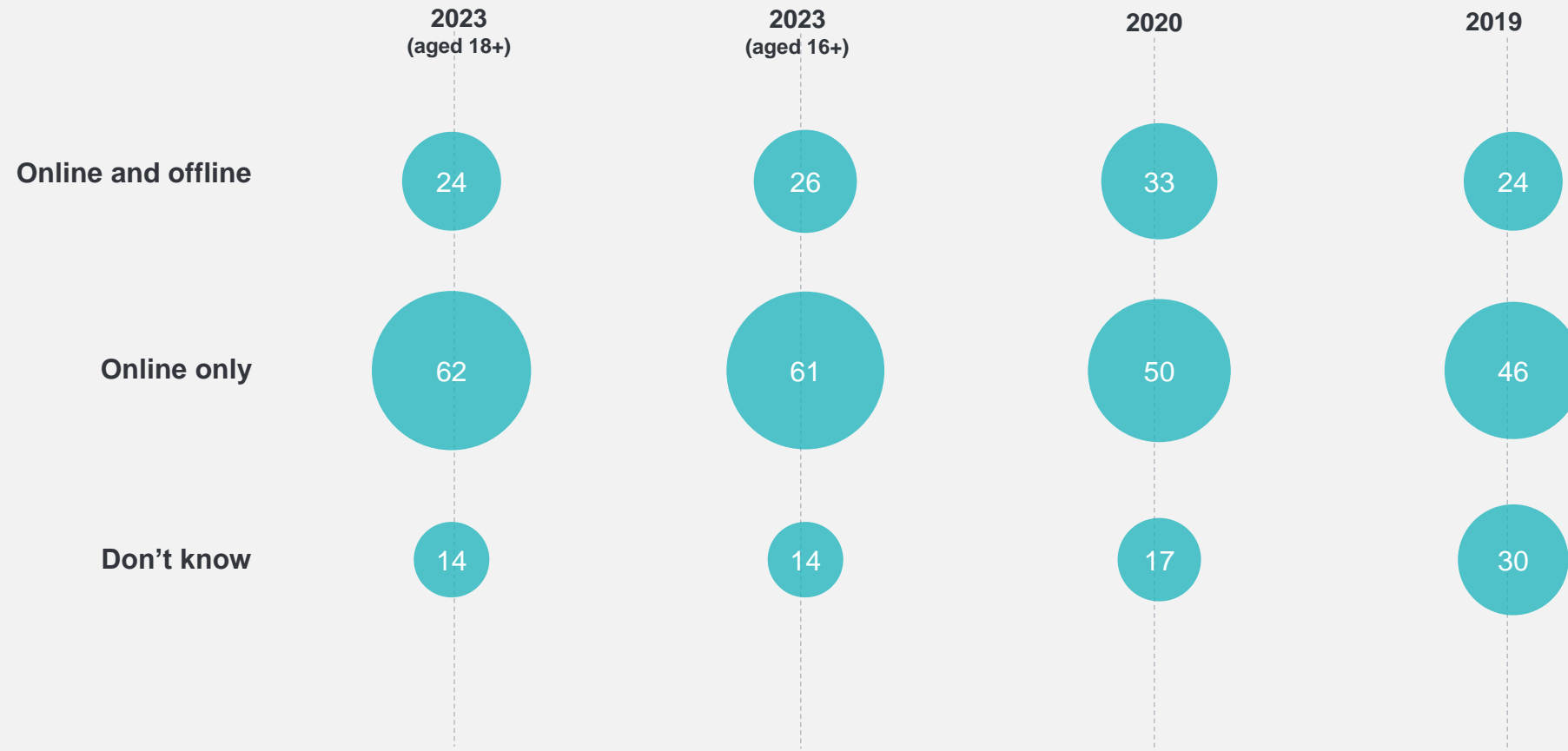


▲▼ Significant increase/decrease since 2020

Connection of unwanted digital communication to offline events

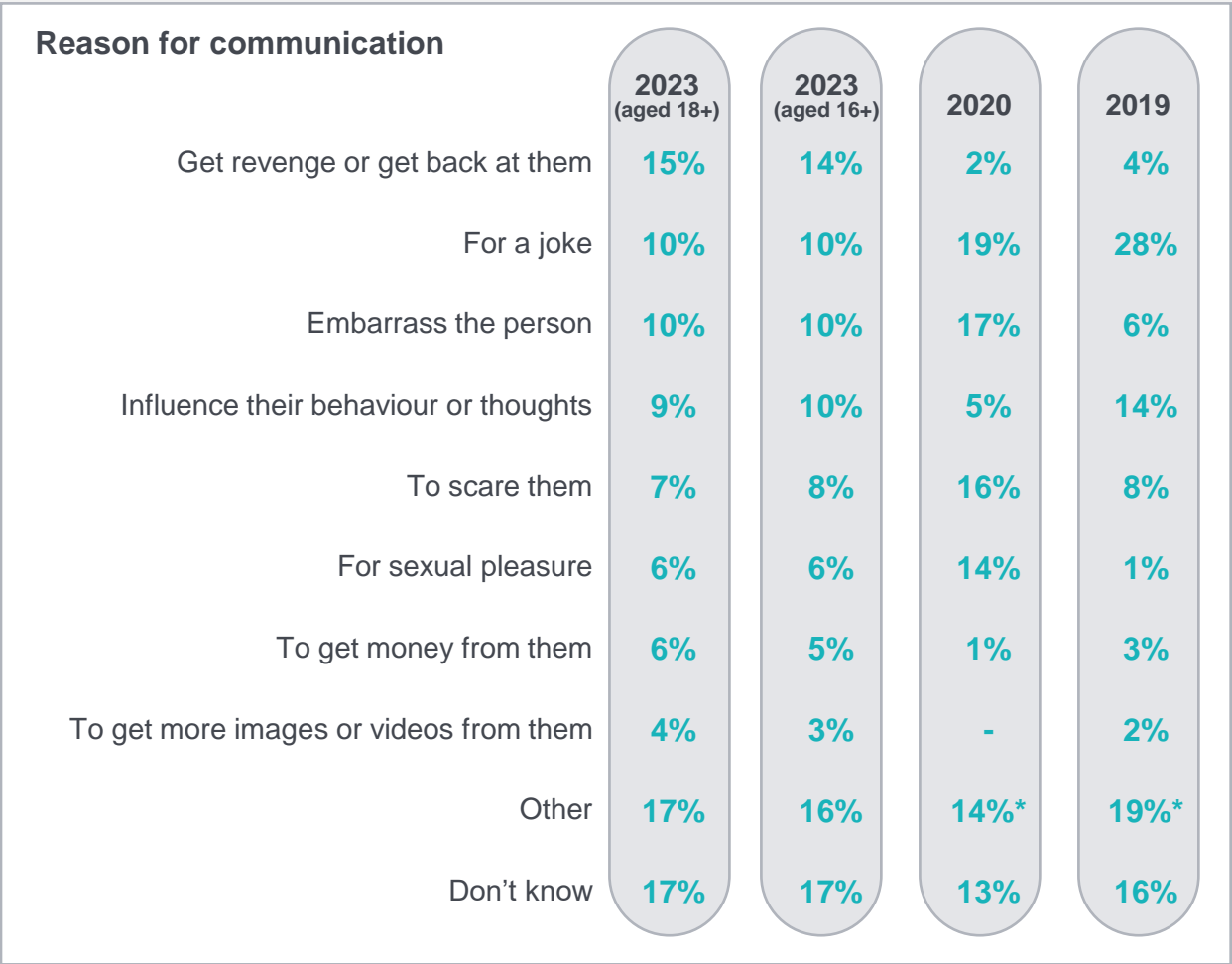
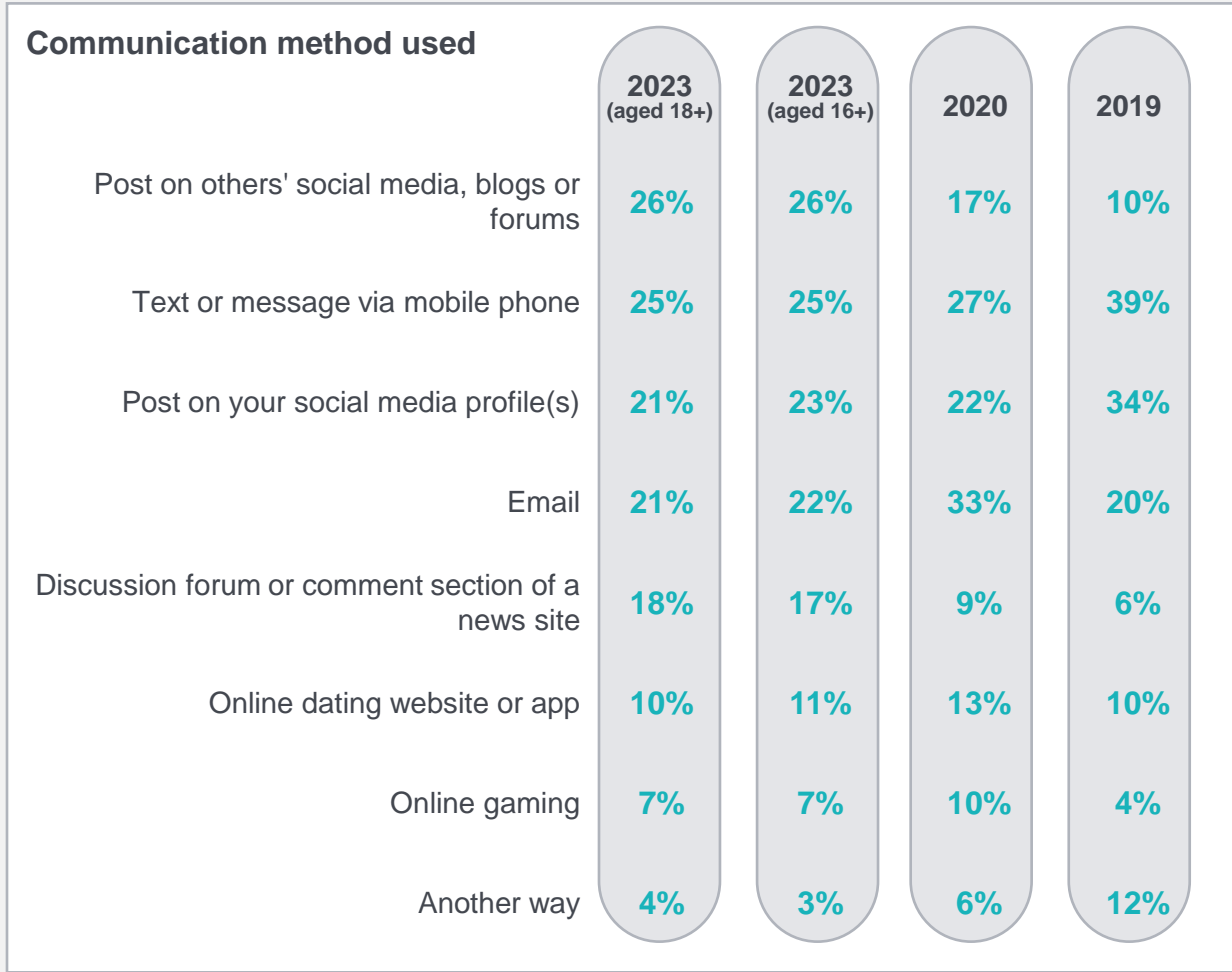
Most of the unwanted communications sent were in relation to an issue that only existed online (62%).

Online actions part of a wider issue happening offline



Channels and reasons for unwanted communications

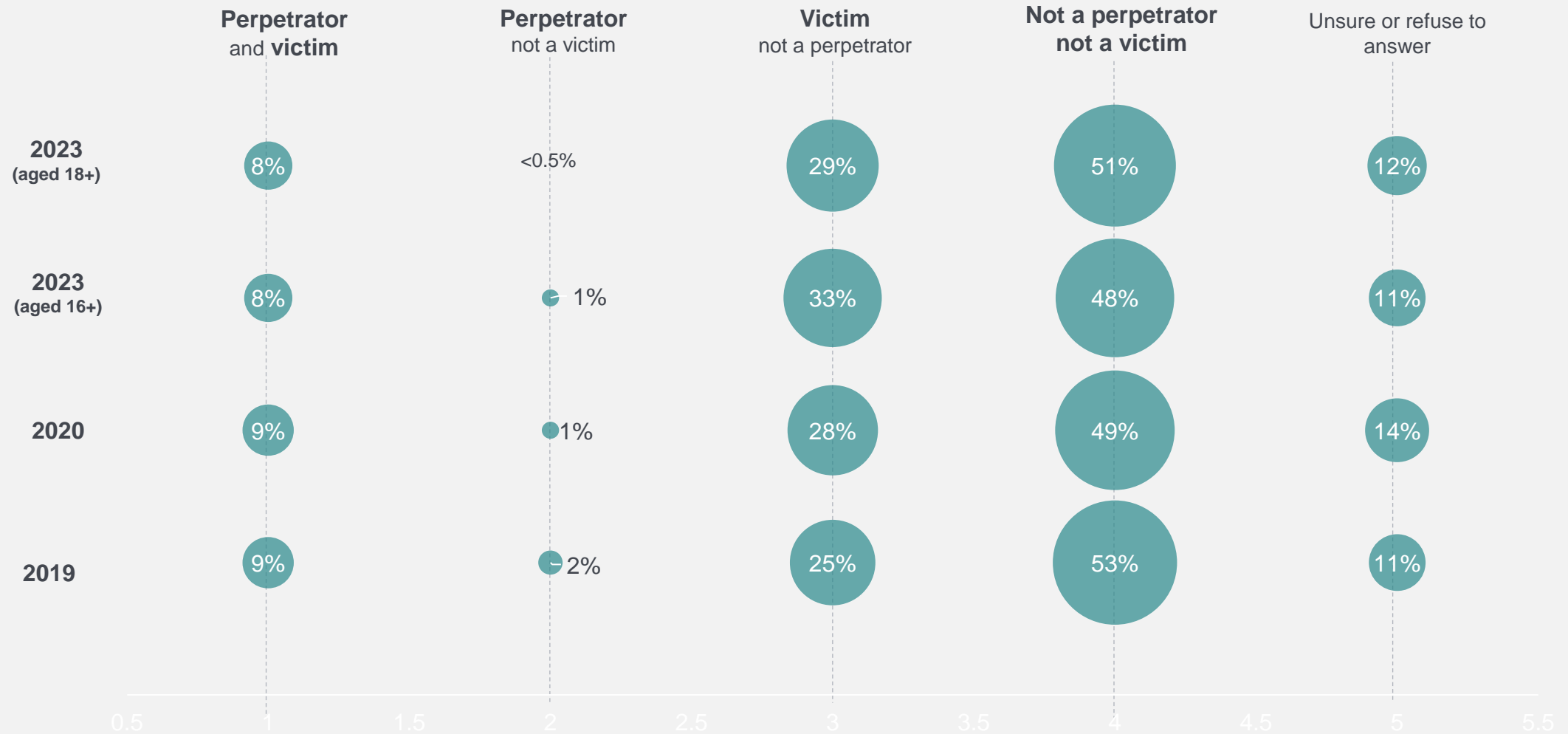
Posts on other peoples' social media was the most common channel for New Zealanders sending unwanted communications (26%), followed by text message (25%). Perpetrators gave a variety of reasons for their actions – most commonly revenge, as a joke, or to embarrass.



Base: Perpetrators (2023 aged 16+ n=203; 2023 aged 18+ n=188; 2020 n=102; 2019 n=140)
 Source: Q55. We now have some questions about the most recent unwanted digital communication you sent or shared that. Q56. What was the main reason that motivated you to send this communication?

Overlap between victims and perpetrators

Most perpetrators of harmful digital communications are also victims. However, most victims are not perpetrators.



Base: All respondents (2020 n=1,150; 2019 n=1,161; 2023 aged 16+ n=1,665; 2023 aged 18+ n=1,582)

Source: Q54. In the last 12 months, have you personally sent or shared a digital communication (e.g. email, text, photo, video, or online comment) that: Q40. In the last 12 months, have you received a digital communication that offended, discriminated, denigrated, abused and/or disparaged you because of your personal identity/beliefs? (e.g. race, ethnicity, gender, nationality, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, and/or other).

Appendix

Most important principles when communicating online (break down of rankings)

Digital communication should not...

	Most important	2nd important	3rd important
Try to get someone to hurt themselves (e.g., self-harm, commit suicide)	72%	18%	10%
Share other personal information about someone without their permission	30%	32%	38%
Insult someone because of their personal what they look like, their lifestyle, where they come from or what they believe in	26%	35%	40%
Include indecent or obscene content (e.g., extreme violence or sexually explicit)	25%	38%	37%
Share intimate images or recordings of someone without their permission	24%	44%	32%
Include content that most people would agree is offensive to the person receiving it	24%	31%	46%
Encourage other people to send messages to someone as a way to try and harm them	22%	40%	38%
Threaten to hurt someone or damage their property	21%	31%	46%
Make a false allegation about someone	21%	26%	53%
Be used as a way to get back at someone by harassing them	17%	38%	46%

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