



**EMBARGOED UNTIL 6AM 20 AUGUST 2020**

## **Survey reveals at least 50% of Kiwis have experienced fake news**

**New education campaign launches to teach people how to spot fake news as survey results show misinformation needs to be tackled now**

Kiwis are getting caught up on what's fact and what's fiction with 52 percent admitting they have fallen for fake news, mostly due to misleading articles or headlines.

Online safety organisation Netsafe has undertaken a New Zealand first survey to better understand the awareness towards misleading and false information.

Misinformation can impact on people's wellbeing and cause social harm - and the Netsafe survey exposes that Kiwis are not immune.

Netsafe's survey has revealed 93 percent of Kiwis have heard of the term fake news, nearly half (48 percent) are concerned about mistakenly spreading it and 14 percent mention seeing misleading stories related to COVID-19.

Eight in 10 Kiwis recall seeing fake news on social media, 52 percent have seen it on NZ online news sites, 40 percent in print newspapers and one in three think they have seen it on NZ television.

"People spreading false and misleading information is not a new phenomenon," says Martin Cocker, Netsafe CEO. "However, it is now much easier for anyone to publish and share information online."

Variances in digital literacy and the ease in which malicious content can spread means there has never been a greater need for people to develop critical thinking skills. It can be hard to know where to get started which is why Netsafe has been supported by Facebook to create an education campaign to help people spot fake news and tackle misinformation.

The new campaign called *Your News Bulletin* includes a series of light-hearted videos depicting a newsroom with presenters reporting fake news that will be released on traditional and social media.

The Your News Bulletin 'presenters' use tactics like clickbait, misleading headlines, satire and much more to try to lure people into going to [yournewsbulletin.co.nz](https://yournewsbulletin.co.nz). Once there you can test your fake news knowledge, learn techniques to identify misinformation and use the resources to have conversations with family and friends.

Cocker says, “We know first-hand the harm misinformation can potentially create so we wanted to develop something to reduce the impact. The levity in the campaign is to get people’s attention – so that we can do the serious job of raising awareness and improving knowledge.”

Netsafe’s survey also demonstrated that three-quarters of the population are confident in their own ability to identify fake news, but many are worried that family members (like their children or parents) won’t be able to identify or will mistakenly share fake news.

And there is a generational divide too with young people thinking older people are more likely to fall for fake news and vice versa - 72 percent of young people believe older people are likely to believe in fake news and 66 percent of people aged over 50 think young people will believe in fake news.

“The results reinforce that access to reliable information is more important than ever before especially given the different ways there are to be informed”, said Cocker. “People need to be able to make their own decisions on what’s real and what’s not, and *Your News Bulletin* will give you the tools to do that.”

The new education program is available at [yournewsbulletin.co.nz](http://yournewsbulletin.co.nz)

### **Netsafe’s tips to spot fake news**

1. **Understand the context:** Information is presented to you everywhere. Check where the original story appeared and who is promoting it. Find out if the source is credible before sharing it.
2. **Check the facts:** Fake news often contains incorrect details, unreliable sources or altered timelines. You can often research and cross reference key facts with a simple web search.
3. **Understand the subtlety:** Sometimes real information can be distorted to become fake news. Be especially wary of image or video descriptions that might be misrepresenting what is happening in them.
4. **Compare other sources:** Every news source has its limitations. When news is important, it’s hard to contain. If you can only find it in one place, you should be cautious. Check the differences between similar reports to understand the facts before sharing it.
5. **Know your biases:** We quickly and subconsciously accept news that aligns with our beliefs and negatively react to information that is different. It’s important to take time and reflect on how news is making you feel before reacting or sharing.
6. **Stop the spread:** You can minimise the spread of misinformation by reporting fake accounts, or pages and domains repeatedly sharing misinformation using the Help Centre on the social media platform you are using.
7. **Use trusted sources:** Netsafe is advising people wanting the most accurate health information about COVID-19 to rely on the [Ministry of Health](http://Ministry of Health) or [covid19.govt.nz](http://covid19.govt.nz) websites. Other helpful resources are available at [netsafe.org.nz](http://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 safe online by providing free support, advice, and education - whether it is scams, online bullying or advice on digital parenting, we can help. Visit [netsafe.org.nz](https://netsafe.org.nz) for useful resources or call 0508 638 723 seven days a week for expert incident advice.

**About Netsafe's Survey**

A national representative sample of 1000 people aged over 18 participated in the survey between 13 – 22 March 2020. Netsafe commissioned Colmar Brunton to conduct this survey to gather people's perceptions and knowledge on fake news and misinformation.