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Insights into New Zealand's experience of online hate speech

Online safety organisation Netsafe shares insights into peoples' experiences of online hate speech.

Nearly nine months after the Christchurch terrorist attacks, new research reveals that seven in 10 adults in New Zealand think that online hate speech is spreading and that a third of personal incidents occurred after March 15.

"Online hate speech is a complex issue and hard problem to solve," says Martin Cocker, Netsafe CEO. "It is difficult to help people with the current legal and technical tools available, but we do our best to support people who are impacted."

According to the research 52 percent of Muslim respondents said they were personally targeted with online hate speech in the last 12 months. This was also the case for 32 percent of Hindus, 13 percent of Christians and a small percentage of Buddhists (3 percent).

Netsafe's research also found that online hate is more prevalent among minority groups, people with disabilities were exposed to online hate speech at a higher rate than non-disabled people (34 percent compared to 27 percent) and male and younger adults are targeted more than females and older adults.

"Online hate speech affects groups unequally and some people are experiencing serious harm as a result", said Cocker. "People can disagree or have an alternate viewpoint online, but when actions become harmful there should be support, resolution and even prosecution options available."

This is a view echoed by respondents with Netsafe's research revealing that a large majority (80 percent) believe that everyone plays a role in addressing hateful speech. More than half disagree with the idea that people should be entitled to say whatever they want online.

The most common reasons people are experiencing online hate speech is because of their religion, political views, race and gender. The research also finds that 30 percent of people have seen or encountered content that targeted someone else.

Netsafe has conducted this research as part of a larger project regarding online risks and harm. The full report provides insights to better understand online hate speech in a New Zealand context.

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About the Research

Netsafe conducted this research to understand the extent, and impact of, online hate speech in New Zealand. Despite the growing interest in this topic, New Zealand-based research looking at personal experiences and/or exposure to online hate is absent. This study seeks to address the gap.

A total of 1,161 people aged 18 and older completed an online survey. The data was collected between 4-26 June 2019. The research sample is representative of the population in terms of age, gender, ethnicity and religion.

Demographics	Statistical breakdown
Gender	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Female: 51.7%• Males: 47.9%• Gender diverse: 0.4%
Ethnicity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• NZ European/Pakeha: 71%• Maori: 12%• Pacific: 5%• Asian: 12%• Other: 10%
Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 18-29 years: 21%• 30-39 years: 16%• 40-49: 19%• 50-59: 17%• 60-69: 14%• 70 years or older: 13%

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 638 723 seven days a week for free help with an online incident.

Media Contact

Angela Boundy: Senior Marketing Communications Advisor

Email: angelab@netsafe.org.nz

[Netsafe.org.nz](https://netsafe.org.nz) - 0508 NETSAFE (0508 638 723)