



Netsafe 2025 Annual Survey



Social Media Ban Report



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, since 2017 Netsafe has regularly commissioned surveys 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 2025 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,
- Understanding perceptions around online safety for young people, including a possible law preventing young people from accessing social media.

Reporting



This year, the following reports have been produced:

1. APS 2025 results
2. Trended results for APS core questions 2017-2025
3. Online hate speech – 2025 results and trends in 2018-2025
4. Social media ban – 2025 results
5. Māori population 2025 results and trends in 2023-2025

This report focuses on the social media ban results.

Methodology



1,648 New Zealanders aged 16 years and over completed an online survey between 6 and 30 June, 2025. The sample of survey participants was sourced from the same online research panels that were used in previous waves. 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 16-29 years and Māori.

All data in the full survey of 1,648 New Zealanders aged 16+ were weighted by age within gender, ethnicity and region to ensure the survey sample is demographically representative of 2023 census characteristics.

This report is based on a subset of 443 parents/caregivers.



Average survey length: 17 minutes



Key findings

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Online safety for children

32%

A third of New Zealand parents and caregivers find it challenging to keeping their children safe online.

5th

Most challenging

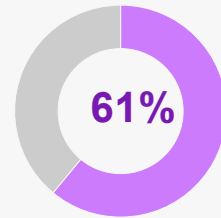
Online safety ranks as the fifth most challenging aspect of parenting in New Zealand. The top three challenges are juggling daily tasks, financial stress, and managing screen time.

2nd

Most challenging

For parents of teens aged 13-15, online safety is the second most challenging aspect of parenting, with 56% saying keeping their children safe when they are online is difficult.

Efficacy and support for a ban



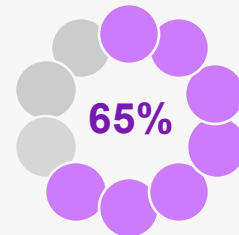
Three in five parents believe a law restricting social media access for under 16s would be very or somewhat effective.

Despite this support, a social media ban is seen as the least effective intervention of 10 options tested (based on 'very' or 'somewhat' effective ratings). Around four in five parents believe investing in digital literacy and providing mental health support would be effective.

3rd

ranked by intervention advocates

However, when forced to choose the one most effective intervention for effectiveness through a ranking process, a social media ban is deemed to be the third most effective solution.

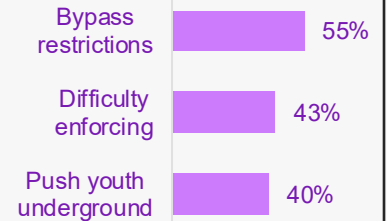


When asked directly, two thirds support the social media ban.

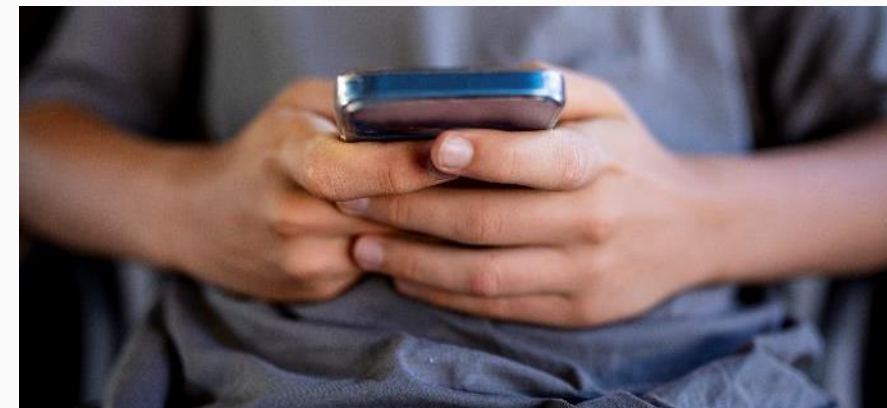
Supporters say a ban would ease peer pressure on children and reduce the burden on parents to monitor or understand their online activity.

Concerns about a ban

The main concerns about a social media ban are logistical – parents worry it would be easily bypassed, hard to enforce, and could drive young people underground.



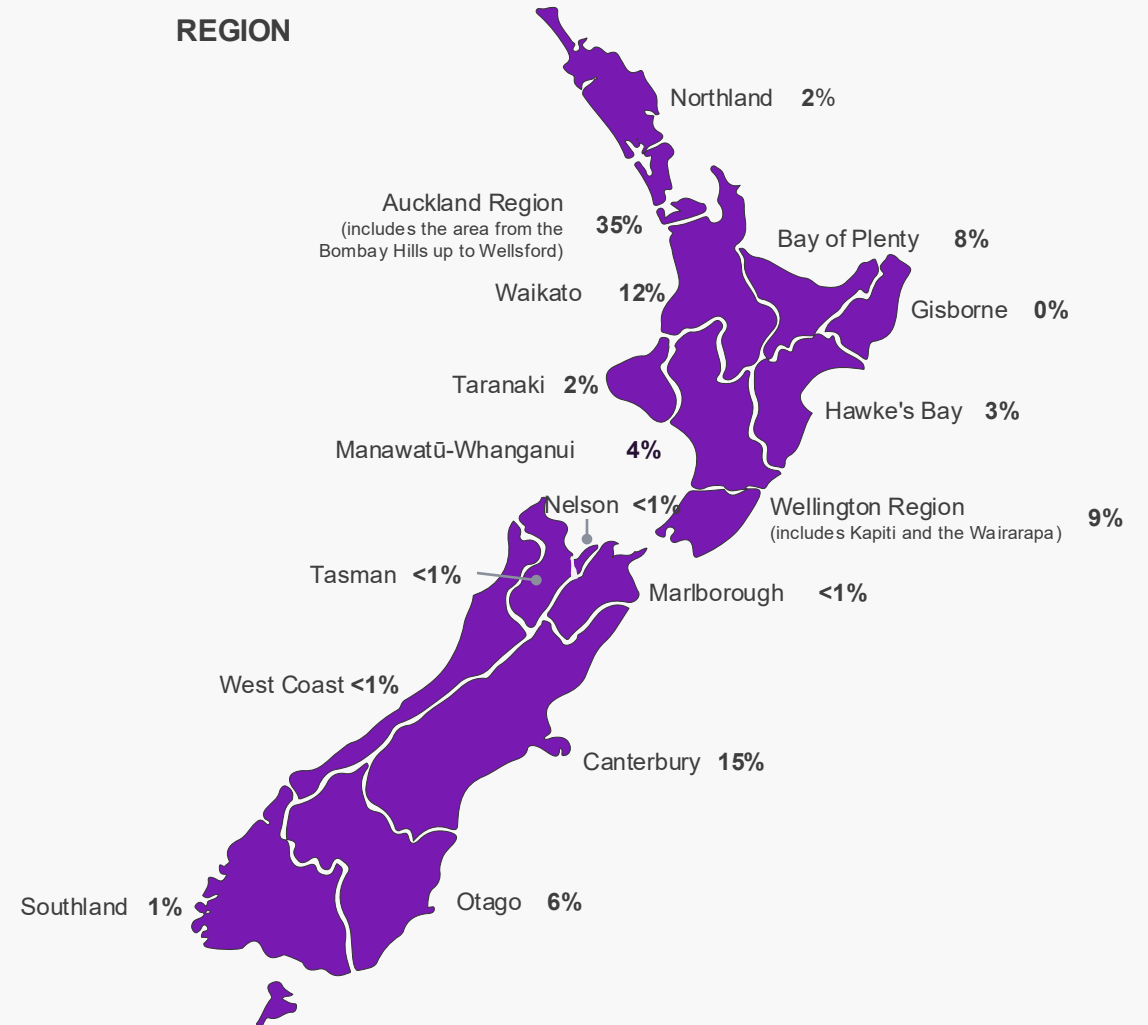
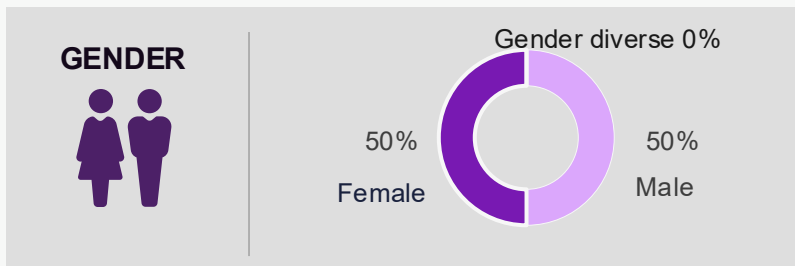
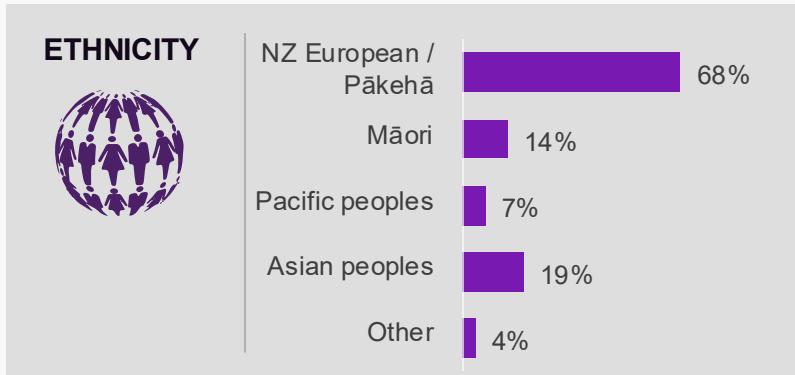
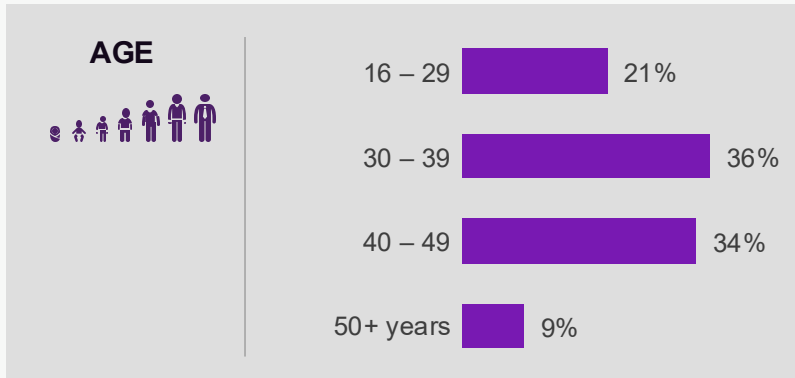
Ninety-four percent of parents and caregivers believe children are at least somewhat likely to bypass the social media ban, with 30% saying it's extremely likely.





Sample profile

Weighted sample profile - parents and caregivers of young people under 16 yrs

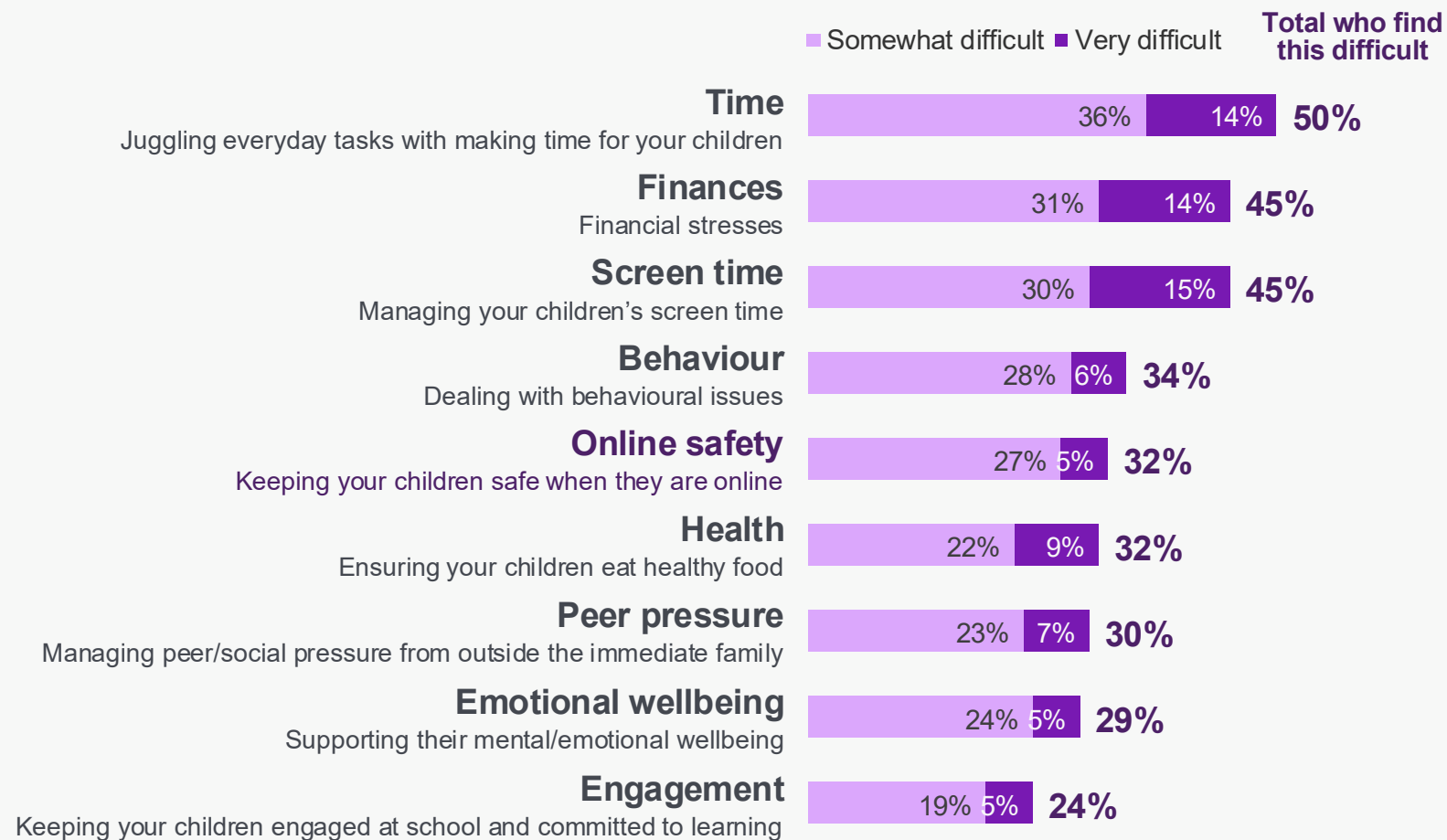




Receptiveness to a social media ban

A third of parents and caregivers find it difficult to keep their children safe online, on par with concerns about their health and peer pressure. However, managing daily tasks, finances and managing screen time are even more challenging than online safety.

What parents/caregivers find difficult



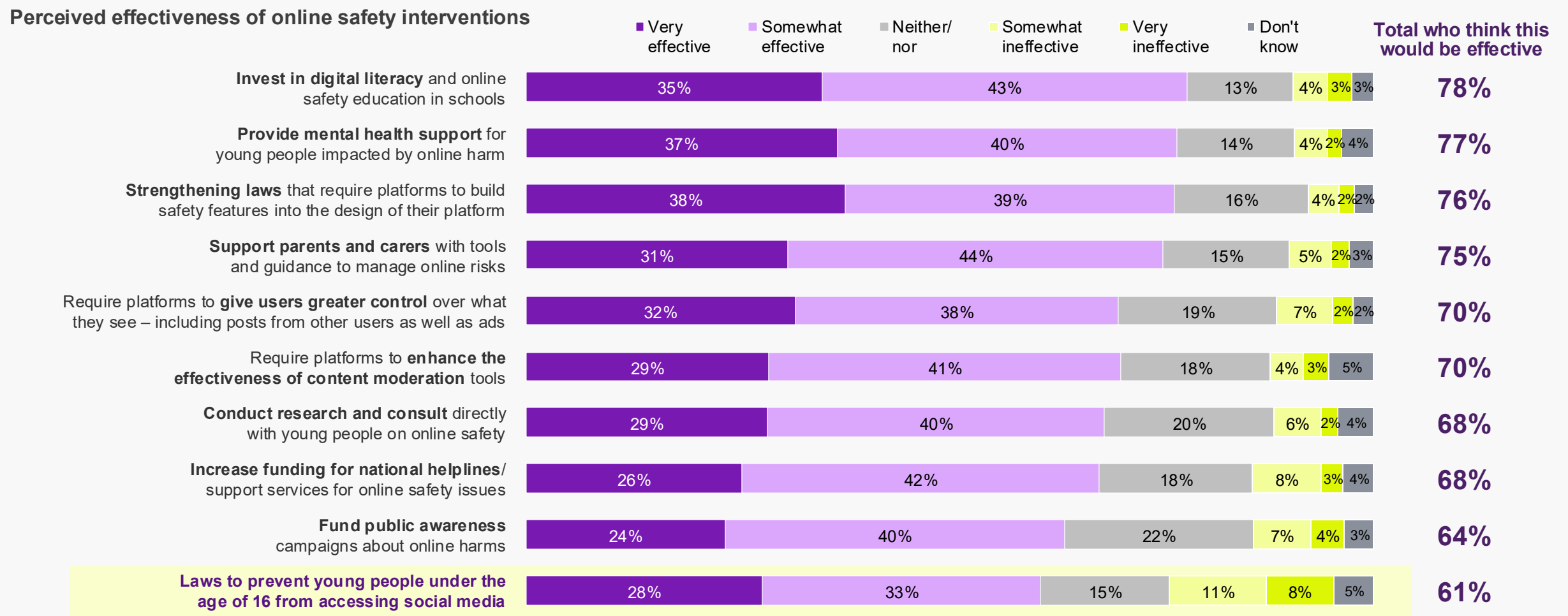
As children get older and more independent online, parental concerns increase – over two fifths of parents say it’s difficult to keep tweens and teens safe online. For those with teens, online safety ranks as the second most challenging issue they face.

What parents/caregivers find difficult – Top 3 challenges by age of children

	All parents/ caregivers	0 to 4 yrs	5 to 9 yrs	10 to 12 yrs	13 to 15 yrs
Time Juggling everyday tasks with making time for your children	50%	53%	49%	54%	40%
Finances Financial stresses	45%	35% ▼	44%	53%	66% ▲
Screen time Managing your children’s screen time	45%	47%	41%	48%	54%
Behaviour Dealing with behavioural issues	34%	36%	36%	37%	24%
Online safety Keeping your children safe when they are online	32%	17% ▼	30%	44% ▲	56% ▲
Health Ensuring your children eat healthy food	32%	31%	33%	47% ▲	30%
Peer pressure Managing peer/social pressure from outside the immediate family	30%	19% ▼	26%	42% ▲	45% ▲
Emotional wellbeing Supporting their mental/emotional wellbeing	29%	26%	31%	38%	30%
Engagement Keeping your children engaged at school and committed to learning	24%	13% ▼	24%	30%	41% ▲
		n=182	n=179	n=110	n=91

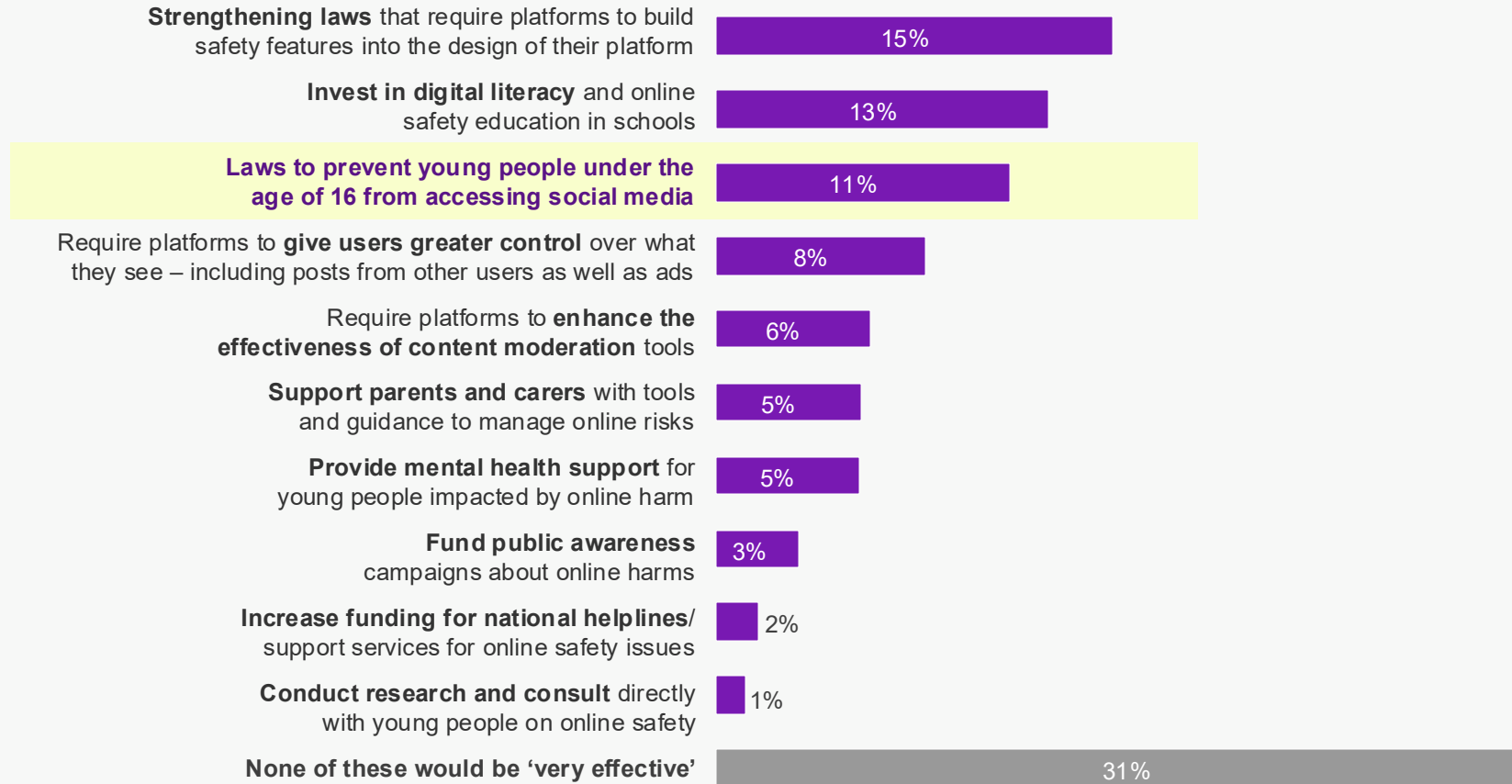
▲▼ Significantly higher or lower than average

Parents and caregivers view a social media ban as the least effective of ten interventions tested – only three in five believe it would be effective to some extent, compared with almost four in five for digital literacy education or mental health support. However, seven of the ten interventions attract similar ‘very effective ratings’ (between 24% and 31%).



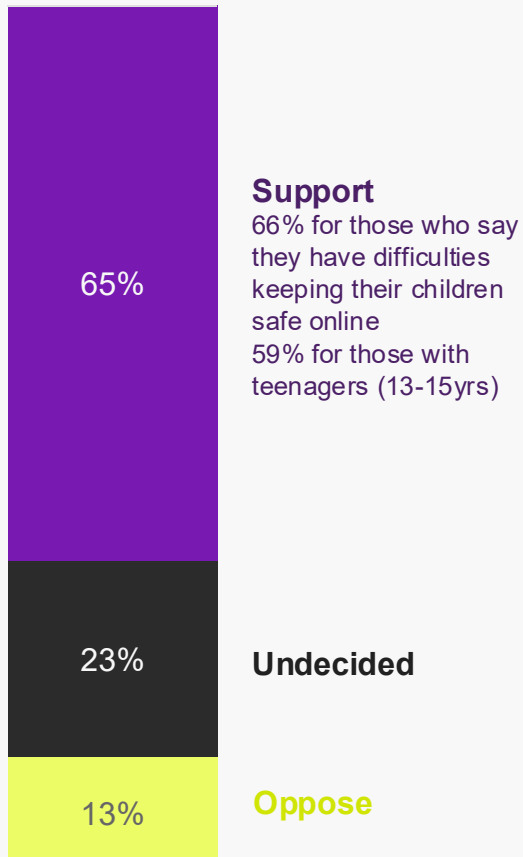
When ranking the interventions considered to be ‘very effective’, one in ten parents and caregivers place a social media ban at the top – making it the third most effective approach amongst advocates for intervention. Nonetheless, strengthening laws and enhancing digital literacy education remain the most widely supported interventions.

Ranking of interventions – % ranked #1 most effective intervention

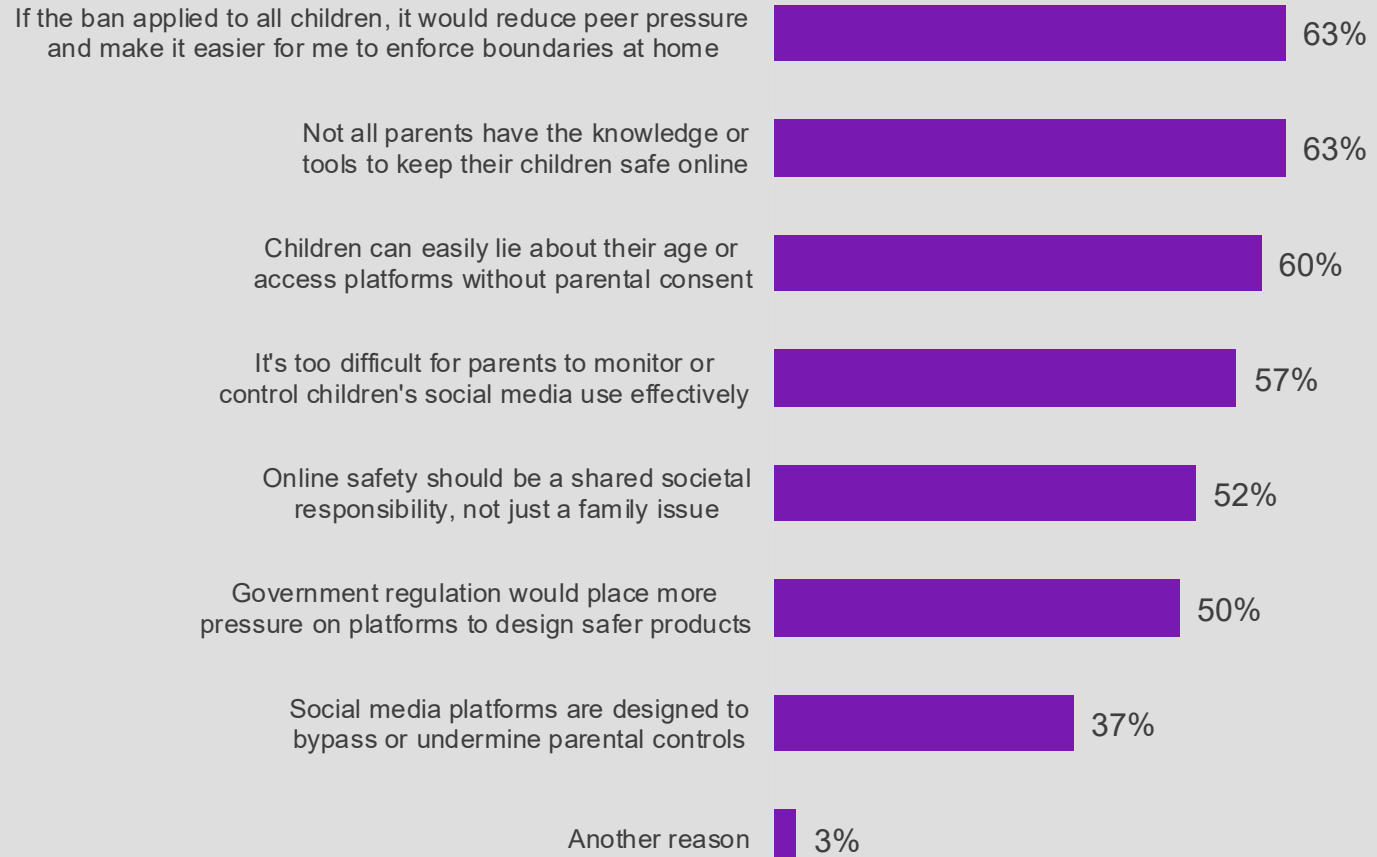


When asked directly, around two thirds of parents and caregivers support a social media ban for under 16s, while just one in ten oppose it (the rest remain on the fence). Supporters believe a ban would ease pressures, including peer pressure for children, and the burden on parents to monitor, or understand how to monitor online activity.

Support/opposition towards a social media ban (prompted)

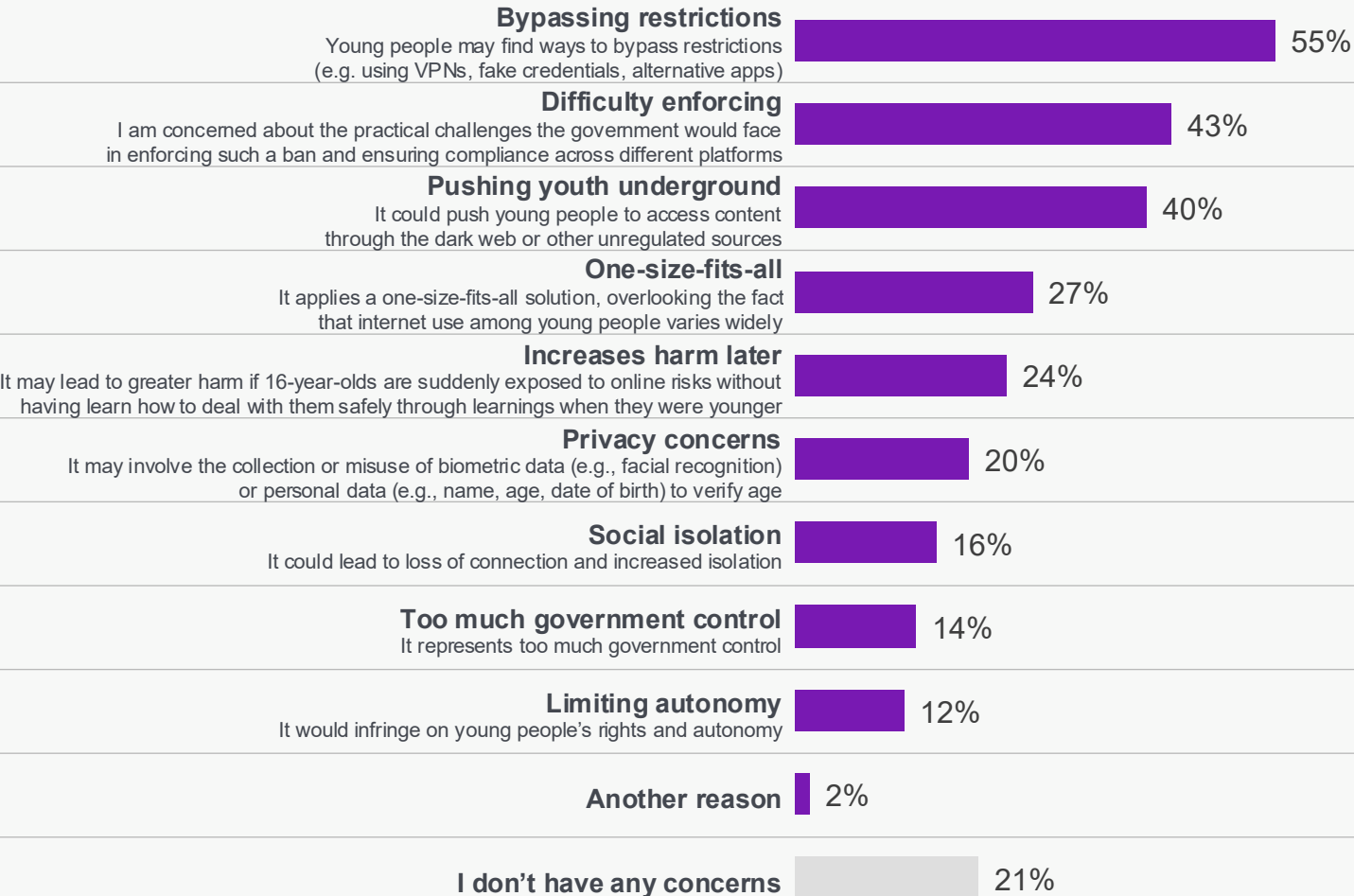


Supporters like the idea because...*

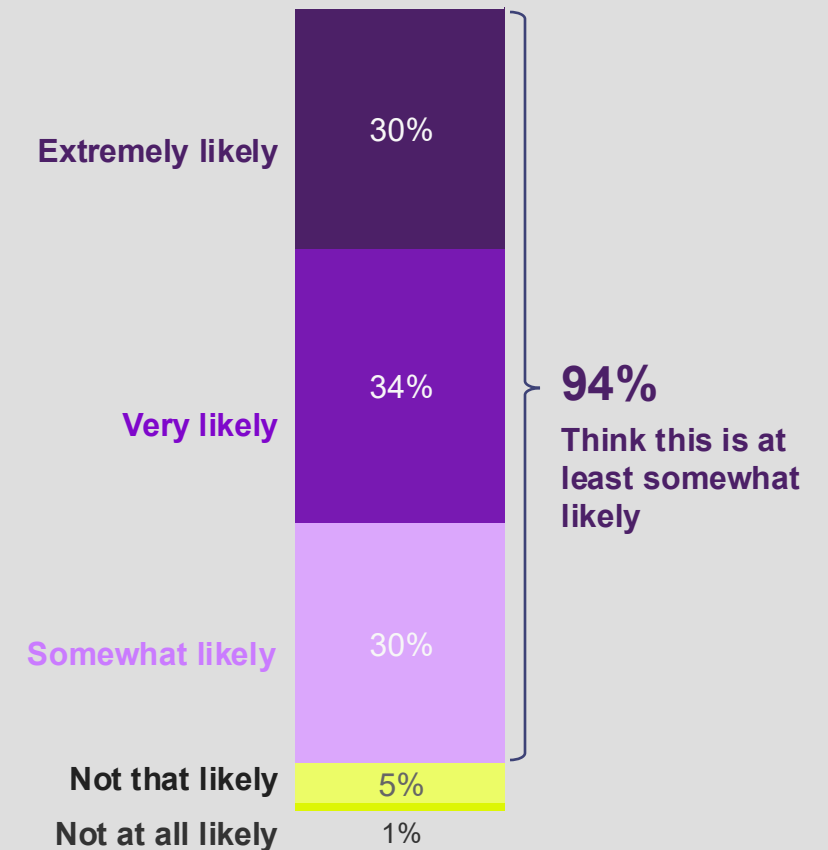


The main concerns around a social media ban are logistical – many parents worry it would be hard to enforce and easy to bypass. In fact, 94% believe children are at least somewhat likely to find ways around it, with three in ten saying it's **extremely** likely.

Concerns about a social media ban



Likelihood that children could bypass the ban and still be exposed to harmful content*



Base: All parents/caregivers (n=443)

Source: G3b If the New Zealand Government were to implement a law preventing young people under 16 from accessing social media, what would be your main concerns about it?

*G7 If the New Zealand Government were to implement a law preventing young people under 16 from accessing social media, how likely do you think it is that children will find ways to bypass the ban and still be exposed to harmful content?

Note: This was asked for the first time in 2025, so no data is available prior to this. Multiple responses can be selected, so totals may not add to 100%



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