

EMBARGOED UNTIL 6AM THURSDAY 29 JANUARY 2026

Online harm now disrupting daily life for many New Zealanders, new Netsafe data shows

Unwanted communication online is no longer rare. It is persistent, widespread, and having tangible impacts on Kiwi lives, according to new nationwide data released today by Netsafe.

The 2025 Netsafe Annual Population Survey shows that 38% of New Zealanders experienced unwanted digital communications in the past year, with 14% reporting that these experiences had a negative impact on their everyday life - including on sleep, work, study and mental wellbeing.

The findings reveal:

- Nearly 4 in 10 (38%) New Zealanders received unwanted digital communication in the last 12 months.
- 14% said the experience negatively affected their life — the equivalent of hundreds of thousands of people feeling disrupted by online interactions.
- 58% of LGBTQI+ respondents experienced unwanted communication — far above the national average.
- 51% of people under 30 experienced unwanted digital communication in the past year.
- Men (41%) are more likely than women (34%) to report these experiences.
- Over half of unwanted communications come from unknown senders.
- 10% of respondents acknowledge having sent or shared at least one form of unwanted communication themselves in the past year.

The harms go beyond annoyance — they affect everyday life

The survey finds repeated contact from the same person is the most common form of unwanted communication, followed by:

- Unwanted sexual advances
- Offensive messages
- Exclusion from peer groups
- False allegations
- Physical threats
- Online monitoring to intimidate or control

More than a third of those affected say these experiences interfered with their ability to participate online in the way they usually do, to sleep or eat properly, or to go to work or study.

“This data shows us that unwanted digital communication isn’t just unpleasant, it’s impacting people’s daily lives,” says Netsafe CEO Brent Carey.

“We’re seeing real disruption to sleep, work, study and wellbeing, and that’s why support and reporting options matter now more than ever.”

Reporting is high in principle, but support use remains low

While three-quarters of people say they would report harmful or dangerous content if they saw it, only 28% of those who received unwanted communication sought help from a support service.

Of those who did seek support:

- Around half found it helpful, with people who contacted Netsafe or their telecommunications provider most likely to rate their support as effective.

“People want to do the right thing, but many still try to cope on their own,” Carey says.

“We want people to know they don’t have to go through this alone - free, confidential help is available.”

Digital safety is a priority, but concern remains high

Two-thirds of New Zealanders say they have taken action in the past year to protect themselves or others online (e.g. changing settings, strengthening passwords, avoiding scams), and 90% say they would consider even more protective actions.

Support available

Netsafe provides free, confidential support to anyone experiencing online harm, including unwanted digital contact, harassment and bullying.

Contact Netsafe:

- Online report: <https://netsafe.org.nz/report/>
- Email: help@netsafe.org.nz
- Text: 4282
- Free phone: 0508 NETSAFE (0508 638 723)
(Available 9 am–6 pm weekdays)

Full reports

- 2025 Annual Population Survey (full report):
<https://resource.netsafe.org.nz/2025-Netsafe-APS-report-8-Aug—New-branding.pdf>
- 2025 Māori Population Report:
<https://resource.netsafe.org.nz/Netsafe-2025-APS-report-Māori-population-5-Aug-25.pdf>

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About Netsafe

Netsafe is an independent charitable organisation supporting people in Aotearoa to have safe and positive online experiences. We keep people of all ages safe online by providing free support, advice, and education.