



Age ratings and content warnings – online survey

Summary report

November 2024

Prepared for
Classification Office

ak research & consulting

Background

- Te Mana Whakaatu-Classification Office is an independent Crown entity and has responsibility for censorship and classification of publications in New Zealand. Publications are broadly defined to be anything that shows an image, representation, sign, statement or word and can include films, streaming services, video games, books, magazines, CDs, t-shirts, street signs etc.
- This year the focus of this research was on New Zealand age ratings/classifications and content warnings used for movies, shows/TV series and video games, including subscription or pay-per-view online streaming services. Additional topic areas included views on streaming services and content online regarding age ratings and content warnings, and awareness of the complaints process.
- **Methodology**
- Results in this report (2024) are based upon questions asked in AKR's nation-wide online omnibus survey of n=1,000.
 - The sample for the online omnibus was sourced from Dynata, one of the largest global panel providers. The sample was stratified by gender, region, and age to reflect the New Zealand adult population. The margin of error for a probabilistic sample of 1,000 from this panel would be $\pm 3.1\%$ (for a 50% figure at the 95% confidence level).
 - The online survey was conducted from the 16th of October to the 22nd of October 2024.

Question set

- The question set was developed by Te Mana Whakaatu-Classification Office and includes questions on importance of ratings and content warnings and questions that focus on attitudes and concerns towards content warnings and ratings.
- Specific target audiences included:
 - Those who help choose movies/show/TV series or video games with or for a child/young person
 - Those who use streaming services
- **Reporting**
- This report includes the key findings from the online survey. Where there are significant demographic differences, these are commented on.
- Note on rounding:
 - *All numbers are shown rounded to zero decimal places. Hence specified totals are not always exactly equal to the sum of the specified sub-totals. The differences are seldom more than 1%.*
 - *For example: $2.7 + 3.5 = 6.2$ would appear: $3 + 4 = 6$*

SNAPSHOT 2024

Age ratings and content warnings

Amongst those who helped choose media for/or with* a child/young person (n=595)

84% (↑5%) declared content ratings are important.

79% (↑5%) declared age ratings are important.

Amongst ALL (n=1000)

62% (↑1%) declare age ratings are about right, **21%** (↑1%) too lenient, and **10%** (no change) too strict.

Concern about harmful content (total concern):

- 85%** social media, video sharing sites
- 74%** video games
- 65%** movies and TV shows.

**Note: Question changed to include for/ or with a child/ young person (previously for...)*

Streaming services - age and content warnings

Amongst those using a streaming services in last 6 months (n=755)

Likely to complain if concerned:
53% Yes/ Possibly, **38%** would not complain.

Making a complaint:
62% would complain to the Broadcasting Standards Authority (older more likely), **33%** to the streaming service, **29%** to The Classification Office (Te Mana Whakaatu).

Prompted awareness of Classification Office:
37% were aware they could contact the Classification Office to make a complaint.

Streaming services provide clear and easy to find information on how to make a complaint:
25% said 'yes' they do, **33%** that it depended, **20%** 'no', and **22%** were unsure.

Concerns about harmful content online

35% had seen at least one of the sensitive topics below.

Seen content in the last 12 months that promotes or encourages:

- **26%** ...violence towards others based on things like race, culture, religion, sexuality or gender
- **17%** ...violent extremism or terrorism
- **14%** ...suicide
- **12%** ...eating disorders such as anorexia or bulimia
- **12%** ...self-harm e.g. cutting , burning.

Amongst ALL (n=1000)

Views on harmful content (total agree):

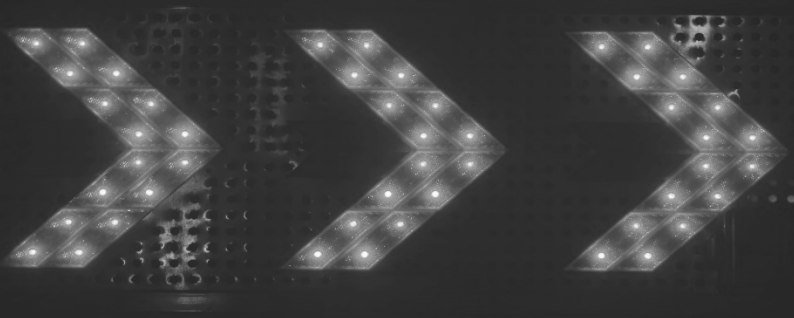
- 71%** (↑6%)...hard to protect children from inappropriate or harmful online content'
- 61%** (↑5%) ...know enough to help my family/whānau stay safe online'
- 46%** (↑5%)...hard for me to avoid seeing harmful or offensive content online'
- 35%** (↑1%) ...sites provide me with the tools and features I need to stay safe online'
- 28%** (↑6%) ...trust social media sites to remove dangerous or violent or harmful material'.

Importance of age ratings and content warnings


Key findings

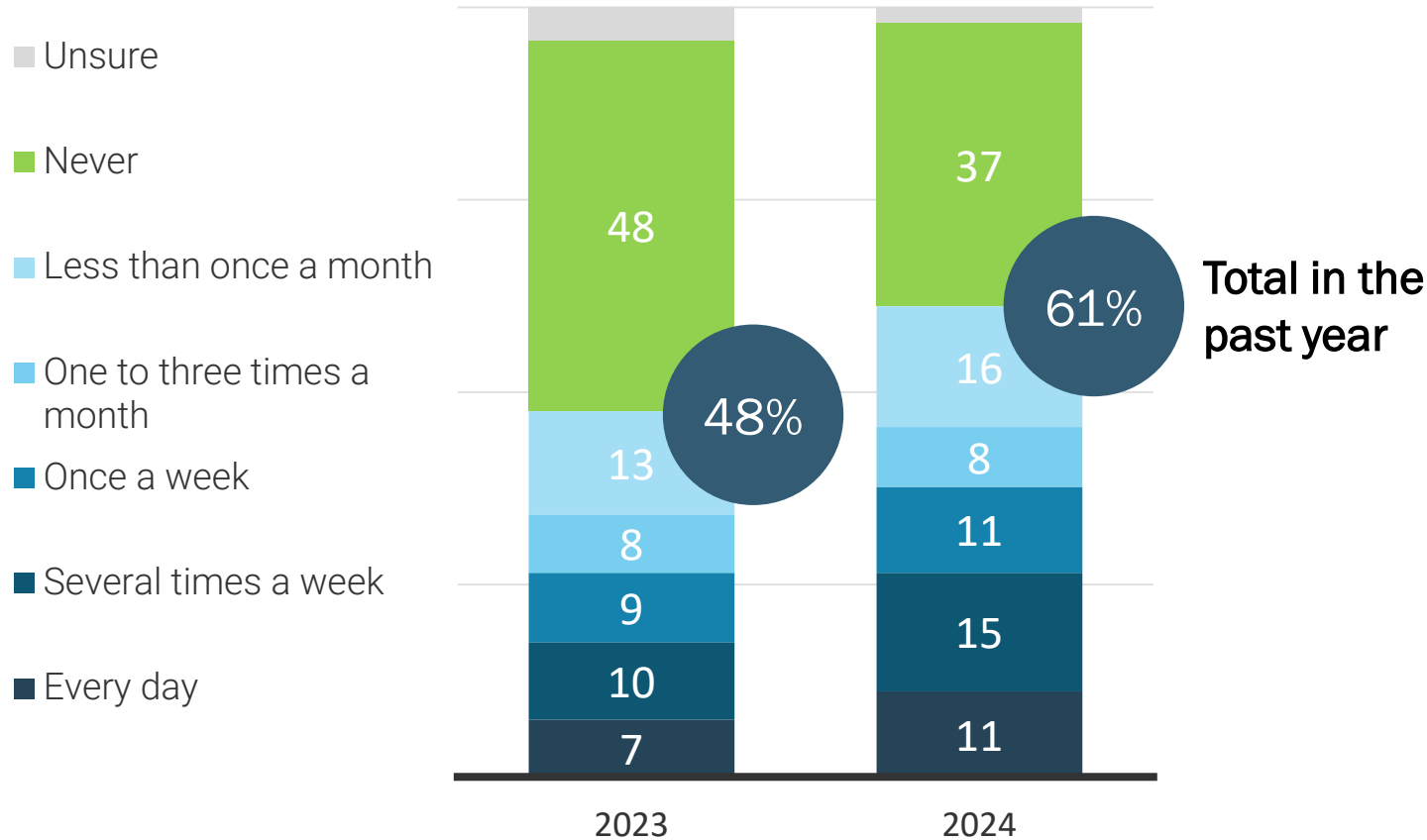
This section showed continued concern about exposure to harmful content for children and young people. Age ratings and content warnings increased in importance on already high levels, while views of current age ratings remained steady with 62% believing they were 'about right', and a fifth that felt they were too lenient.

- **Parental/Caregiver Involvement:** The majority of respondents (61%) reported helping choose media for or with a child or young person in the past year, a 13% increase from 2023. The rate was higher (94%) among those with dependent children and among respondents aged 30-44 (79%).
- **Importance of Age Ratings:** Age ratings were considered important by most (79%) of those involved in choosing media for children or young people, an increase of 5% from the previous year.
- **Content Warnings:** Content warnings were deemed even more important, with 84% of respondents considering them important, a 5% increase. These warnings cover areas like violence, and sex scenes.
- **Perception of Age Ratings:** Opinions on the appropriateness of age ratings remained steady compared to 2023. About 62% believed the ratings were "about right," while 21% found them too lenient and 10% too strict.
- **Concerns About Harmful Content:** The greatest concern was about children encountering harmful content on social media or in other websites (85%), followed by video games (74%) and movies/TV shows (65%). Women and older respondents showed higher levels of concern, with women being more worried about video games and older groups expressing more concern across all types.



A majority (61%) reported helping choose a movie, television show, series or video game for/with a young person at least once in the past year. This was up 13% from 2023, albeit, noting a slight wording change from 2023.

 How often in the last 12 months have you been involved in choosing or helping to choose a movie, show/TV series, or video game for/or with* a child or young person (i.e., someone under 18)? (%)



Those with dependent children were more likely to help choose media for or with a young person at least once in the past year (94%) compared to those without (45%).


Respondents aged 30-44 were more likely to help choose media for a young person at least once in the past year:

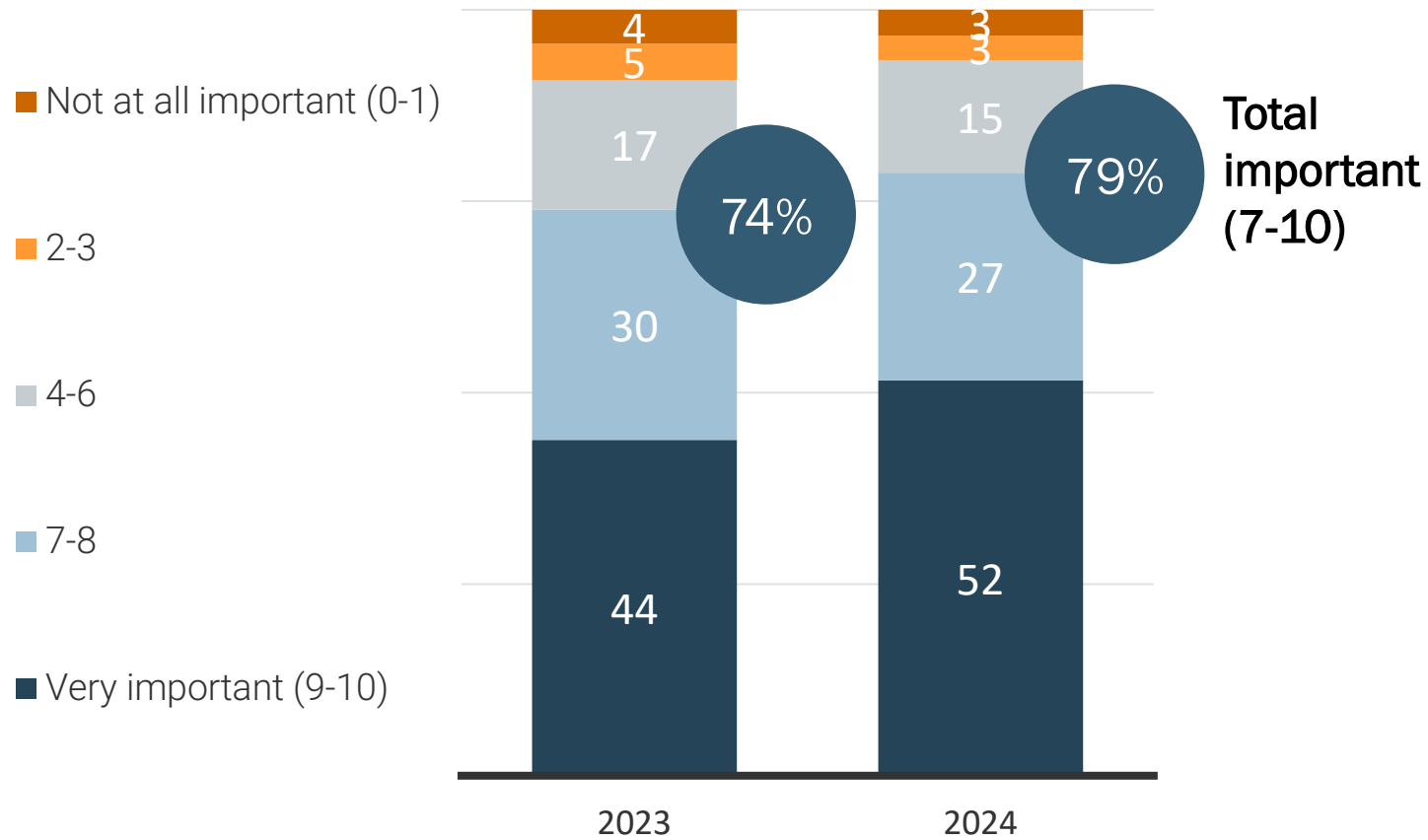
- Under 30: 75%
- 30-44: 79%
- 45-59: 60%
- 60+: 35%

*Note: Previously the question read 'How often in the last 12 months have you been involved in choosing or helping to choose a movie, show/TV series, or video game **for a** child or young person (i.e., someone under 18)?

Base: All respondents (n=1000)

Among those who have helped choose media for/or with a young person in the past year, most continued to believe age ratings were important (79%, up 5%).


 [Those involved in choosing content for a child or young person:] How important is the age rating (e.g. PG, M, R16), when you're choosing a movie, show/TV series or video game for /or with* a child or young person? (%)

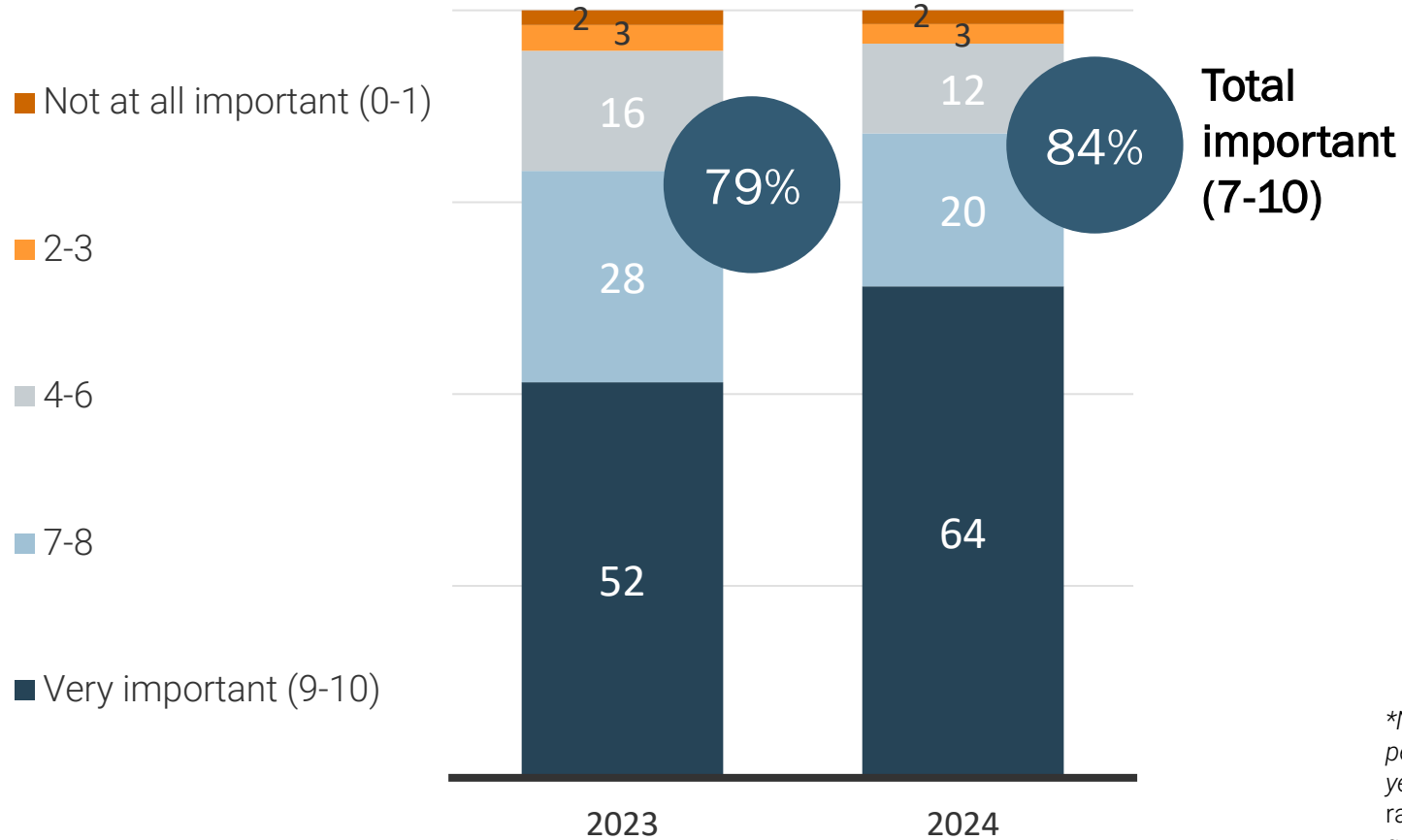


Base: Those who have been involved in the last 12 months in choosing a movie, show/TV series or video game for a child or young person (n=595)

*Note: Previously the question read 'How often in the last 12 months have you been involved in choosing or helping to choose a movie, show/TV series, or video game **for** a child or young person (i.e., someone under 18)?

Among those who have helped choose media for/or with a young person in the past year, content warnings were considered important by a large majority (84%, up 5%).

 [Those involved in choosing content for a child or young person:] How important is the content warning (e.g. "violence" or "sex scenes"), when you're choosing a movie, show/TV series, or video game for/or with* a child or young person? (%)



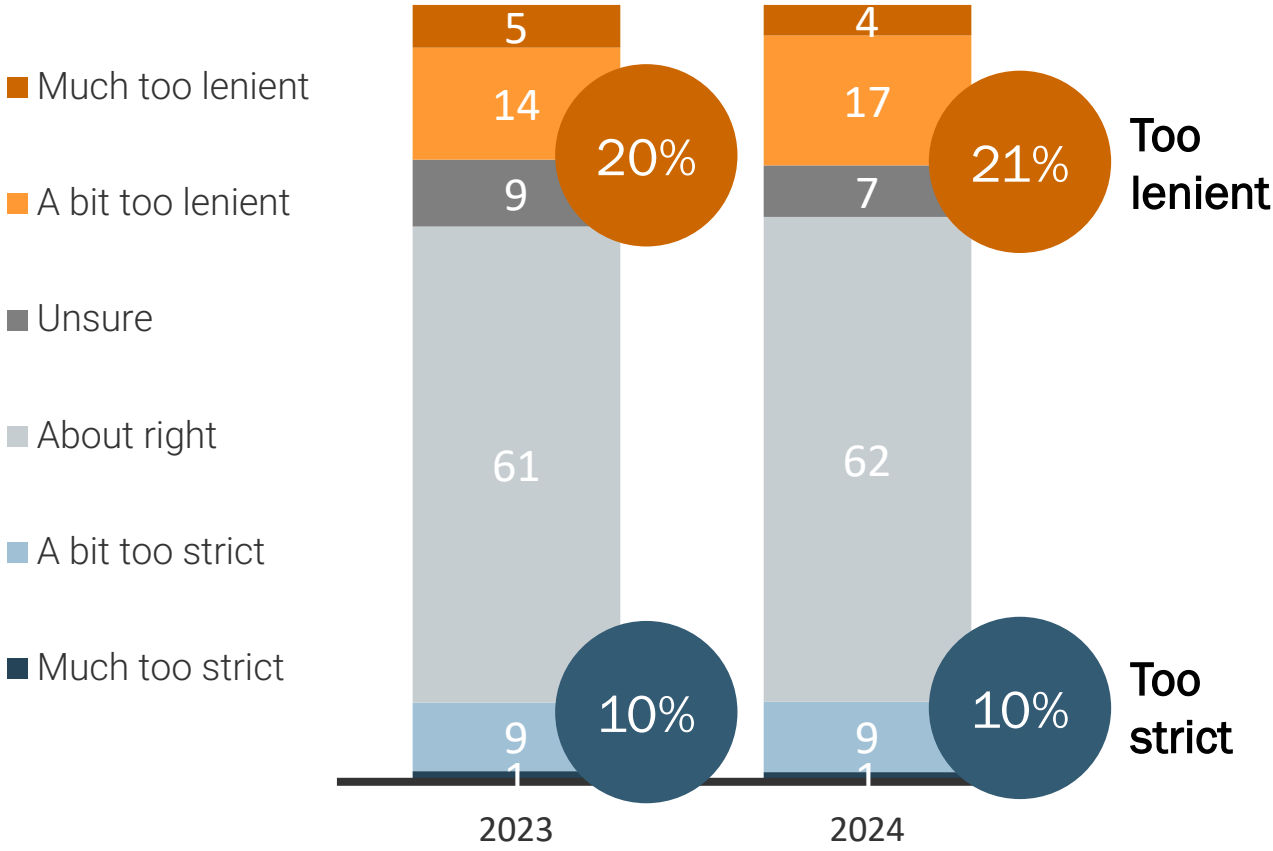
Base: Those who have been involved in the last 12 months in choosing a movie, show/TV series or video game for a child or young person (n=595)

*Note: Previously the question read 'For a child or young person', offensive language replaced with sex scenes. This year the question included the following introduction: Age rating information for movies, shows/TV series, and video games includes content warnings to help people decide what to watch. Content warnings can include things like sex scenes, nudity, violence, offensive language, self-harm or suicide, drug use, or sexual violence.

Views of age ratings for movies, shows and video games remained much the same as in 2023, with 62% (up 1%) that thought age ratings were about right, 21% (up 1%) too lenient, and 10% (no change) too strict.



Thinking about the age ratings for movies and shows/TV series that you might see on subscription or pay-per-view online streaming services (like Netflix or Neon*), on DVD/Blu-ray, and at the cinema. Overall, would you say the age ratings for movies, shows, and video games are: ? (%)



Men were more likely to say too strict (16%) than women (5%).

Younger respondents were more likely to say age ratings for movies were too strict:

- Under 30: 17%
- 30-44: 12%
- 45-59: 10%
- 60+: 4%

Amongst those who have helped choose media for a young person in the past year, 14% said the ratings were too strict, 63% about right and 21% too lenient.

Base: All respondents (n=1000)

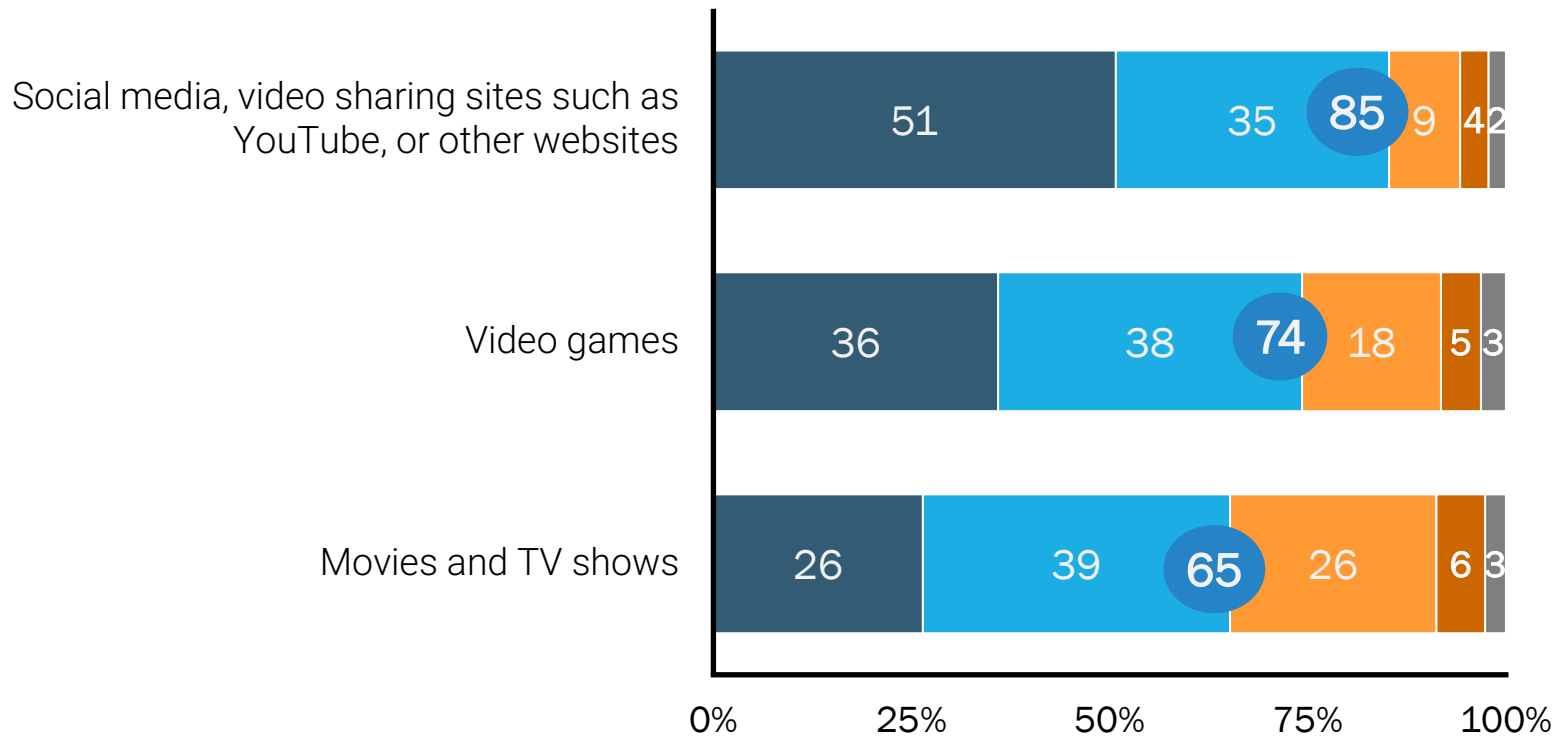
*Note: Google play movies replaced with Neon

Children and young people seeing harmful content in social media or other websites was of most concern (85%), followed by video games (74%), and movies and TV shows (65%).



Overall, how concerned, if at all, are you about children and young people seeing harmful content in.....? (%)

■ Very concerned ■ Somewhat concerned ■ Not that concerned ■ Not concerned at all ■ Unsure + Prefer not to say



Women (80%) were more concerned than men (68%) about video games.

Older respondents were more concerned about all types of content:

- Under 30: 45-75%
- 30-44: 64-87%
- 45-59: 69-84%
- 60+: 76-91%

Those with dependent children (72%) were more concerned about movies and TV shows than those without (62%).

Base: All respondents (n=1000)


Streaming services – age and content warnings

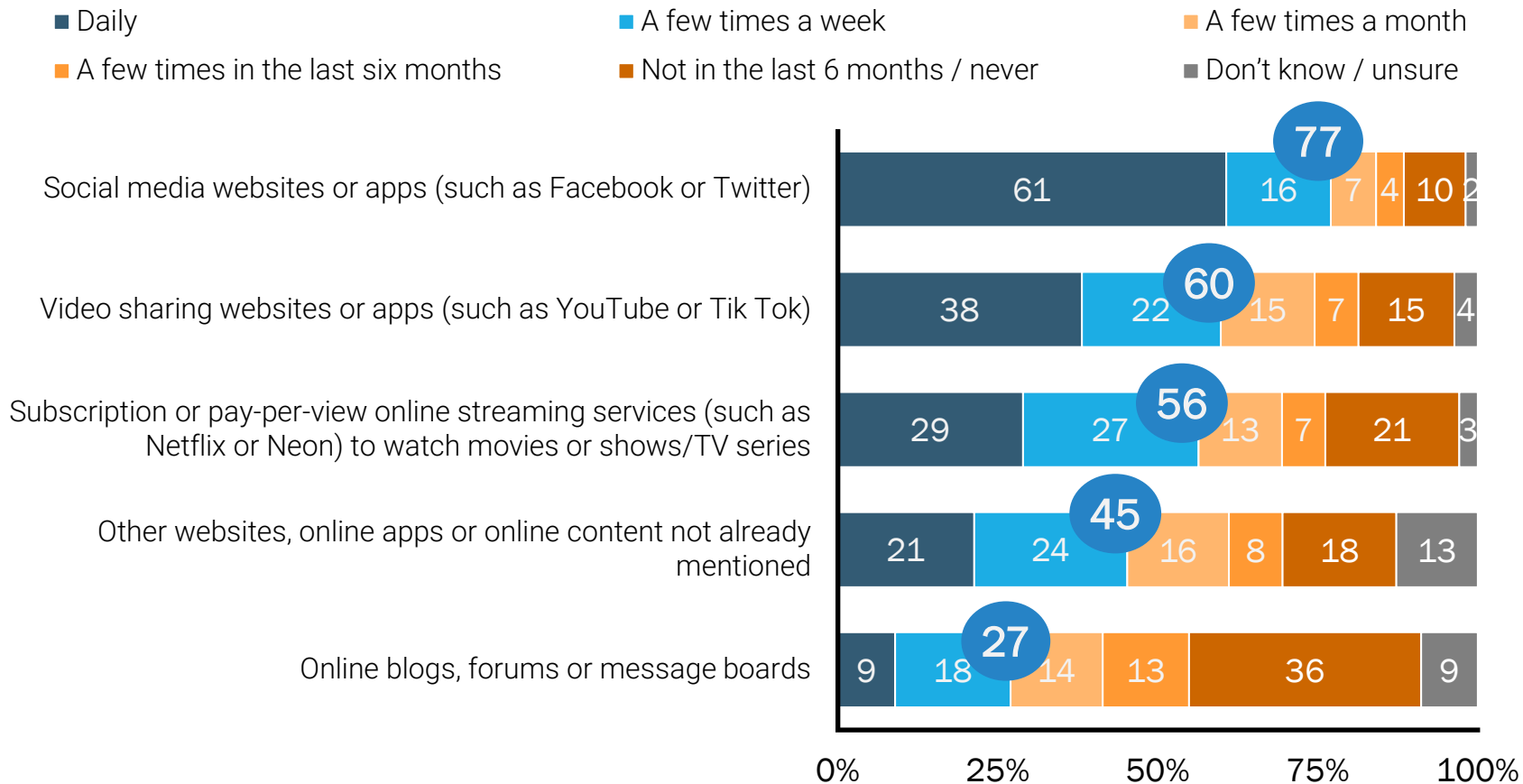
Key findings

Around three-quarters of participants had used a streaming or pay-per-view service in the past 6 months. Within this group there was a moderate likelihood that people would complain about age ratings or content warnings on streaming services. Streaming services were seen to provide variable access to information on how to make a complaint and there was also limited awareness of complaint mechanisms, especially involving the Classification Office.

- **Usage of Online Content:** Social media (77%), video sharing sites (60%), and subscription/pay-per-view streaming services (56%) were the most frequently used online platforms. Younger respondents and those with dependent children used these services more often.
- **Complaint Propensity:** Among users of streaming services in the past six months, 14% stated they would likely complain if dissatisfied with age ratings or content warnings, while 39% might consider it, and 38% would not. Those with dependent children and frequent users (daily) were more inclined to complain.
- **Preferred Channels for Complaints:** The Broadcasting Standards Authority (BSA) was the top choice for complaints (62%), followed by contacting the streaming service directly (33%) and the Classification Office (29%). Older respondents (60+) preferred the BSA (81%), while younger respondents (under 30) and those choosing media for children leaned toward contacting the streaming service.
- **Clarity of Complaint Processes:** Only 25% of respondents felt that streaming services provided clear and accessible information on how to make a complaint. This perception was higher among those with dependent children (33%) and those that use the services daily (32%).
- **Awareness of the Classification Office's Role:** Just over a third (37%) were aware that they could contact the Classification Office to make complaints about content on streaming services. Awareness was higher among those with dependent children (41%), men (43%), Māori (54%), and those who choose media for children (40%).

The most frequently used online content were social media websites or apps (77% used at least a few times a week), video sharing websites or apps (60%), and subscription or pay-per-view online streaming services (56%).

 Thinking back over the last **6 months**, around how often have you used... ..? (%)
If you're not sure, please select your best guess




Base: All respondents (n=1000)

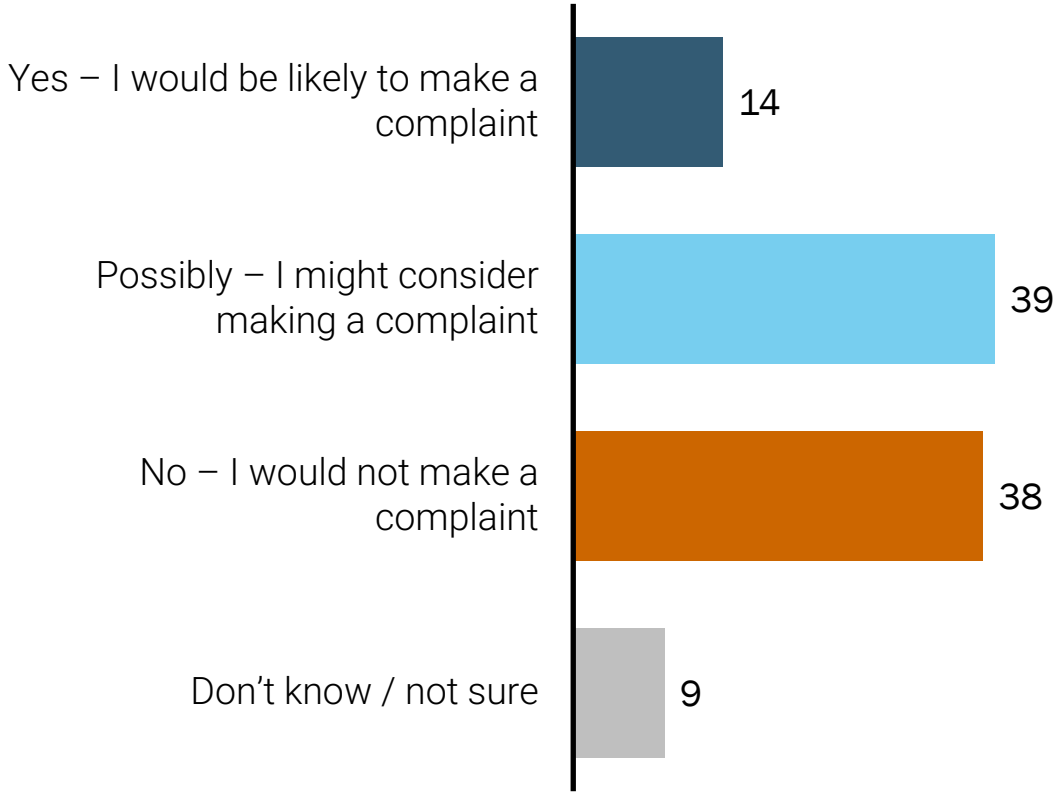
Younger respondents tended to use all forms of content more frequently, as were those with dependent children.

Men were more likely to say they use video sharing (65%), online blogs (33%) and other websites (51%) weekly or more.

Māori were more likely to say they were using subscriptions/ pay per view (71%) and other websites (62%) weekly or more.

Among those who have used a streaming service in the past six months, 14% said they would be likely to complain if concerned or dissatisfied about the age rating or content warning on a streaming service, a further 39% said they might consider complaining, while 38% would not complain.

 [Those that have used a streaming service in the last 6 months:] *If you were concerned or dissatisfied with the age rating or content warning on a streaming service, would you be likely to make a complaint? (%)*




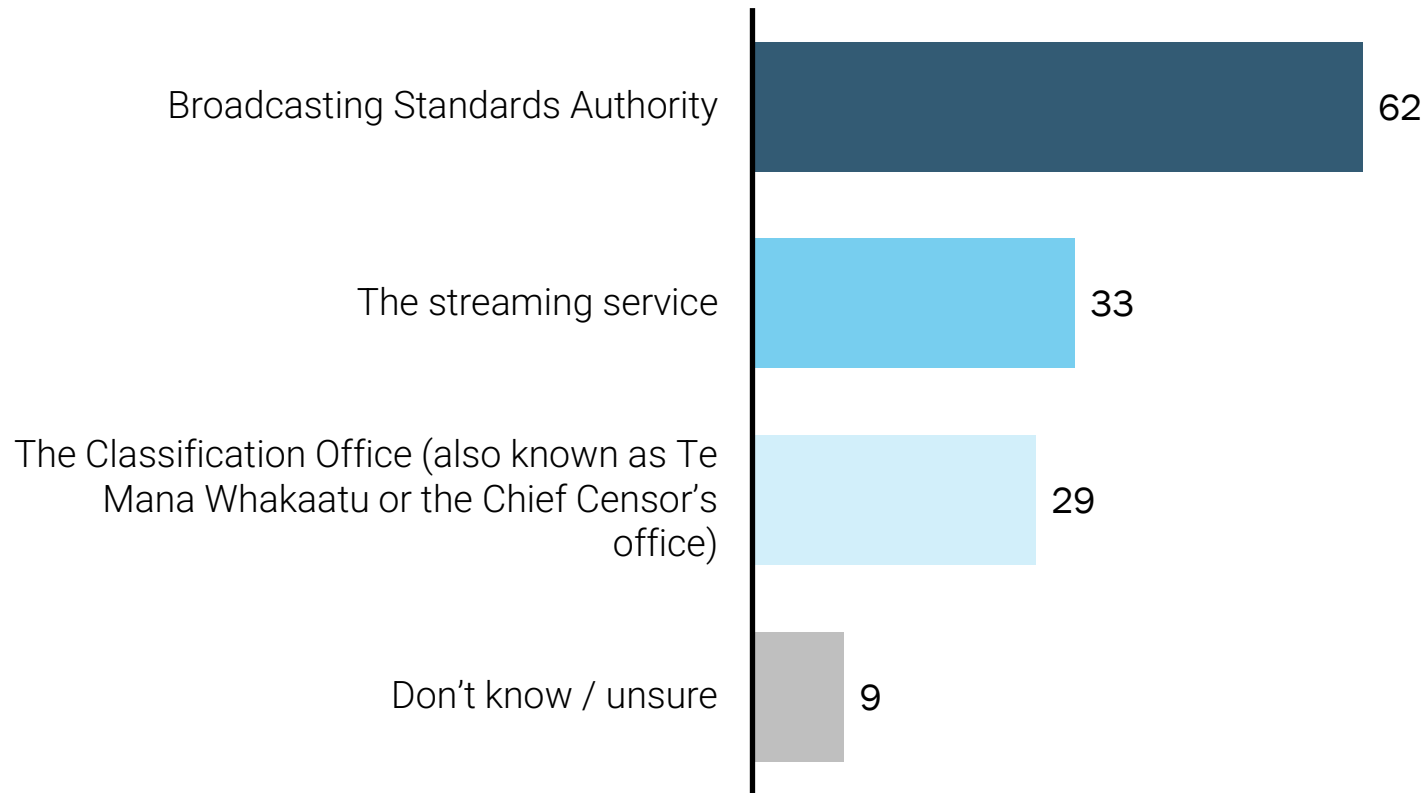
Those with dependent children (22%) and those who choose media for children (18%) were more likely to say they would complain.

Those who use the services daily (21%) were more likely to complain than those who use them weekly (11%) or less (7%).

Base: Those who have used a streaming service in the last 6 months (n=755)

Among those who have used a streaming service in the past six months and would potentially make a complaint about the age ratings or content on a streaming service, most said they would complain to the Broadcasting Standards Authority (BSA) (62%), followed by directly contacting the streaming service (33%), and the Classification Office (29%).

 [Those that have used a streaming service in the last 6 months and would make a complaint:] *Who would you make your complaint to? Please tick all that apply (%)*



Older respondents were more likely to say the BSA (81% amongst 60+) while younger respondents were more likely to say the streaming service (54% among under 30s)

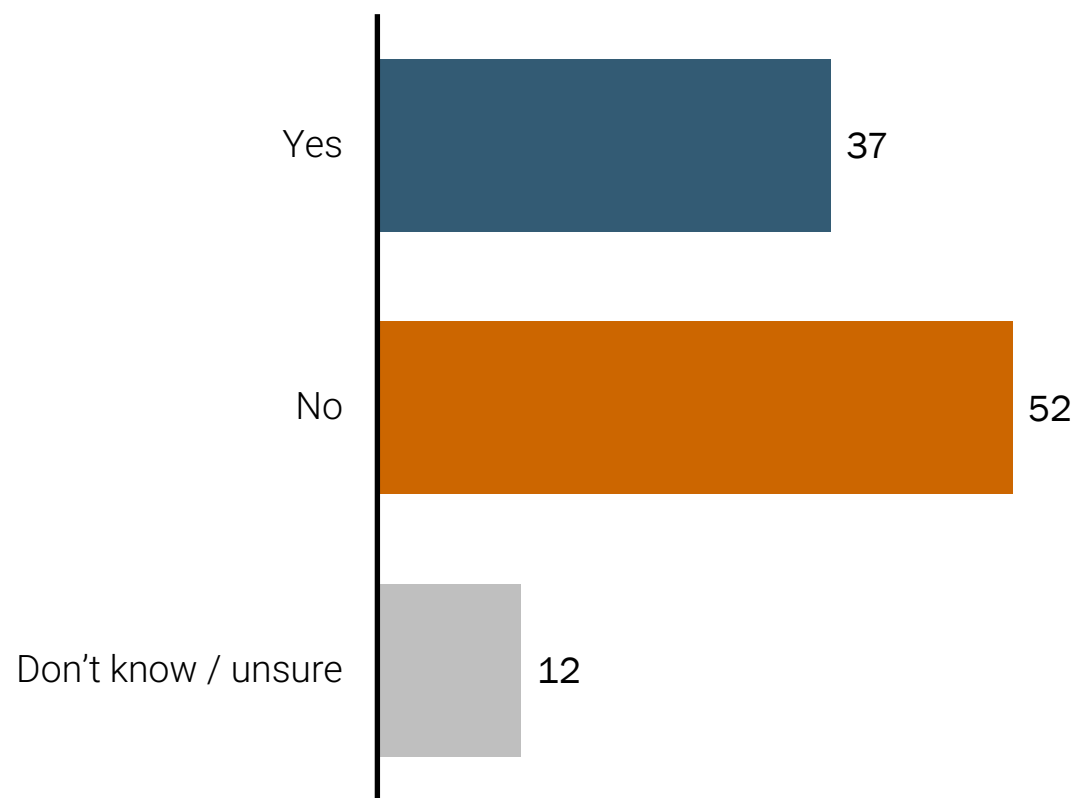
Those who are involved in choosing media for children were more likely to say the streaming service (37%).

Base: Those who have used a streaming service in the last 6 months and would make a complaint (n=398)

Just above a third (37%) claimed they were aware that members of the public can contact the Classification Office to make a complaint about the content on streaming services.



The Classification Office (also known as Te Mana Whakaatu or the Chief Censor's office) has an oversight role in how streaming services use age ratings and content warnings. This includes receiving complaints from members of the public about content on streaming services, and the suitability of age ratings and content warnings. Before today, were you aware that members of the public can contact the Classification Office to make a complaint about content on streaming services? (%)



Those with dependent children (41%), those who choose media for children (40%), men (43%) and Māori (54%) were more likely to say yes aware.

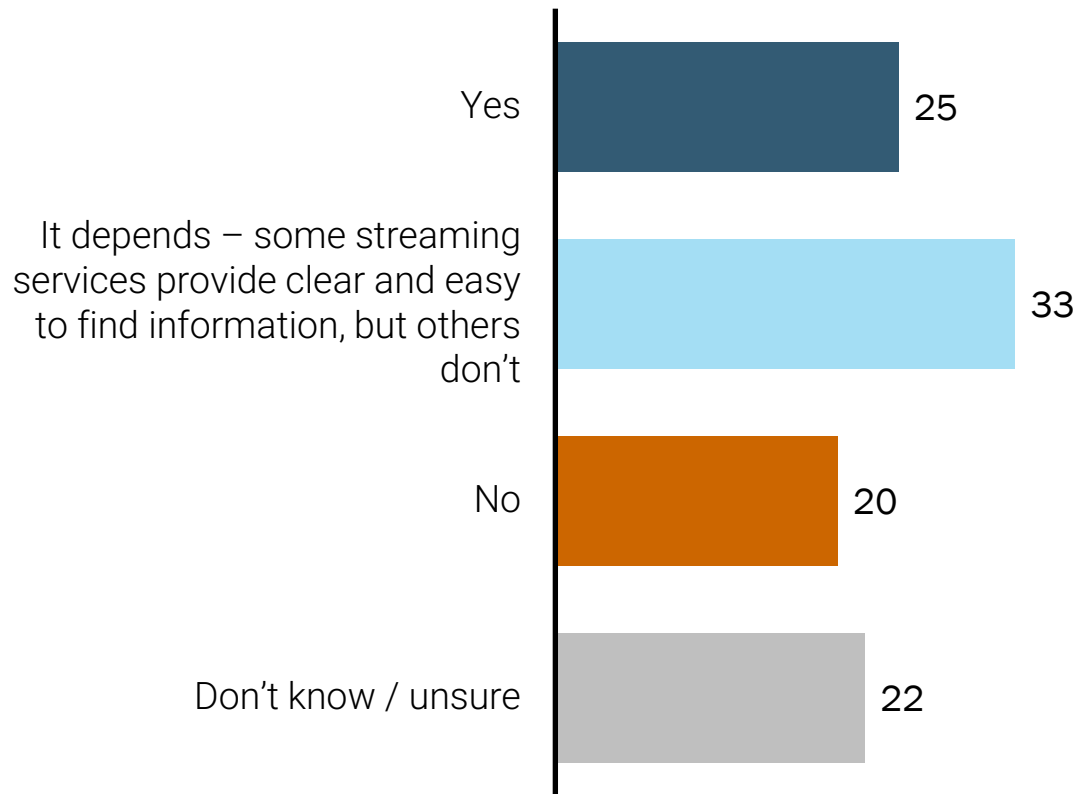
Those who use the services were just as likely as those who don't to say they were aware (37% each).

Base: All respondents (n=1000)

Among those who have used a streaming service in the past six months, 25% believed the streaming services they use provided clear and easy information on the complaint process, 33% that it depended on the specific streaming service, 20% said they did not, while 22% were unsure.



[Those that have used a streaming service in the last 6 months:] *Do streaming services you use provide clear and easy to find information about how to make a complaint? (%)*



Those with dependent children (33%) , those who choose media for children (30%) and men (30%) were more likely to say yes.

Those who use the services daily (32%) were more likely to say yes than those who use them weekly (21%) or less (20%).

Base: Those who have used a streaming service in the last 6 months (n=755)

Concerns about harmful content online

Key findings

This section highlights significant concerns regarding exposure to harmful content online, significant challenges in ensuring children's safety, and skepticism about the efficacy of social media platforms' protective measures.

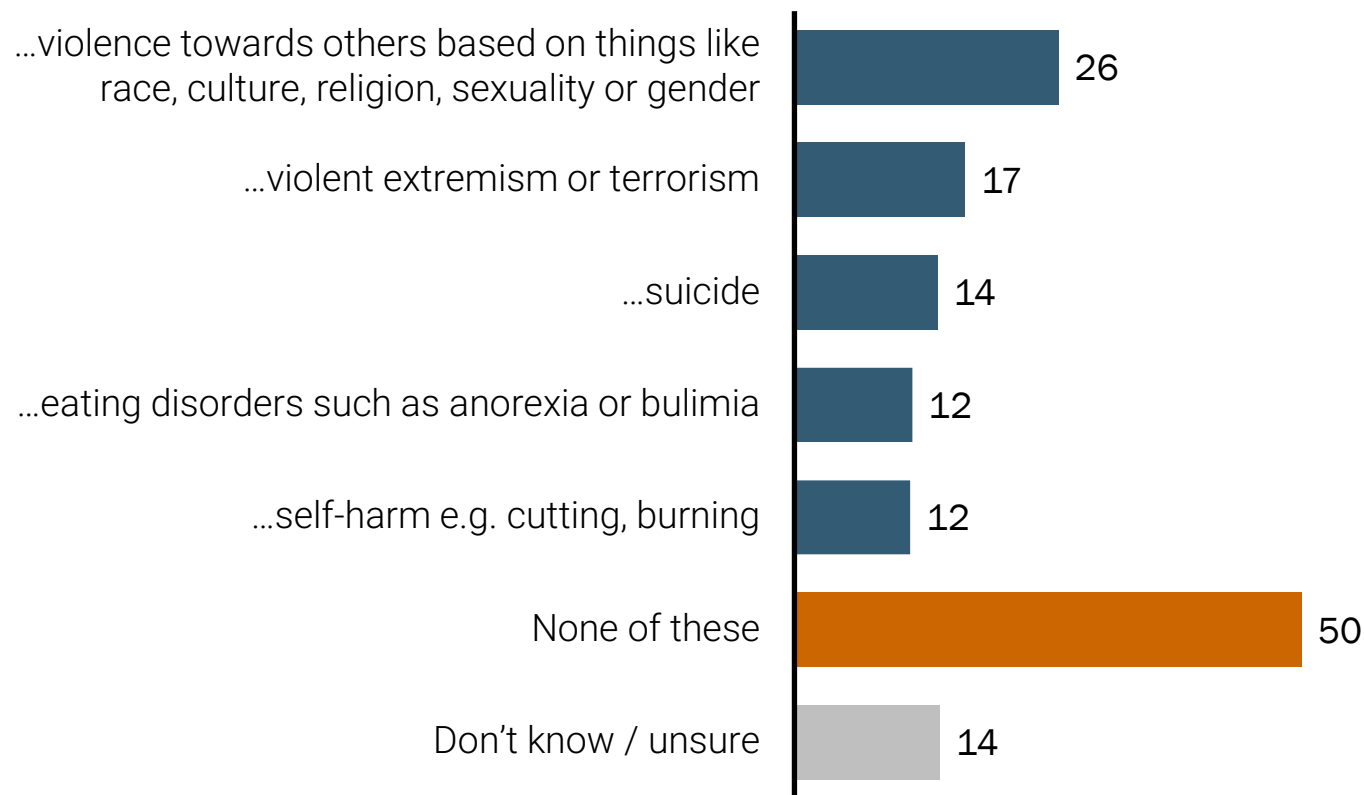
- **Exposure to Harmful Content:** Over the past 12 months, 35% of respondents reported seeing online content that promotes or encourages various harmful attitudes or behaviours. This includes violence based on race, culture, religion, sexuality or gender (26%), violent extremism/terrorism (17%), and suicide (14%). Younger respondents (under 30) and those with dependent children or involved in choosing media for children were more likely to have seen such content.
- **Perceptions on Protecting Children:** Many respondents expressed concerns about the challenges in protecting children from harmful online content and acknowledged a gap in their knowledge about staying safe online. A significant portion of people lacked trust in social media platforms to effectively remove harmful content or provide adequate safety tools. Tracking indicates that most concerns tested increased.
- **Guardianship Concerns:** Among those with dependent children three quarters agreed it was hard protecting children from inappropriate or harmful online content. A moderate proportion felt they lacked the knowledge to keep their family/ whānau stay safe online.



On a standalone basis, the most commonly viewed content promoted 'violence towards others based on things like race, culture, religion, sexuality or gender' (26%), 'violent extremism or terrorism' (17%), and 'suicide' (14%). Aggregating responses, 35% had seen at least one of the types of negative content tested



The following questions ask about other types of content that you might have come across **online**. These are things like images, videos, or other content you might have seen online – for example, posted on social media, on video sharing sites such as YouTube, or on other websites. In the last 12 months, have you seen any **content online** that promotes or encourages.... ? (%)



Base: All respondents (n=1000)

Aggregating responses, 35% had seen at least one type of the content tested.

30% had seen content promoting some form of violence (i.e. violence towards others + violent extremism) and 22% had seen content promoting some form of self harm (i.e. suicide + an eating disorder + self harm.)

There were no differences by gender or ethnicity. Younger respondents were more likely to have seen at least one:

- Under 30: 53%
- 30-44: 37%
- 45-59: 30%
- 60+: 25%

Those with dependent children (43%) and those who choose media for children (43%) were more likely to say they have seen at least one.

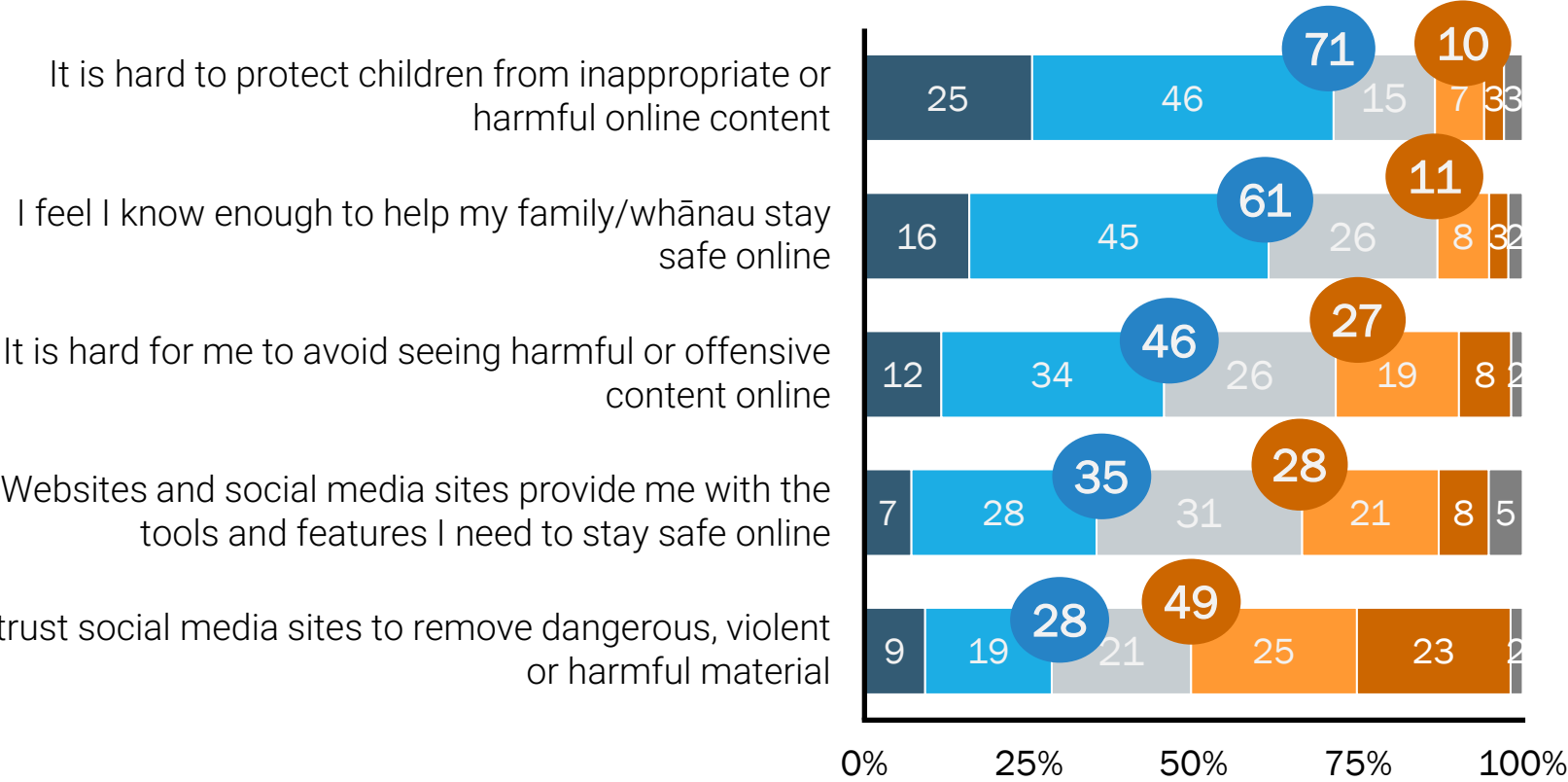
Note: This question also included the following information that preceded the question: This survey covers some sensitive topics. If you need to talk to someone, or want some more support, call 1737 (free call or text)

Opinions regarding protecting and viewing harmful or offensive content, highlighted that people see significant barriers to protecting children from harmful content, and a lack of knowledge about how to stay safe online. There was also a lack of trust in social media sites removing harmful material or providing viewers with the tools to stay safe.



How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (%)

Strongly agree Somewhat agree Neither agree nor disagree Somewhat disagree Strongly disagree Unsure



Men were more likely to agree they feel they know enough to help family/ whānau stay safe online (69%) than women (53%)

Those aged 60+ were less likely to say it is hard for me to avoid harmful content (35%).

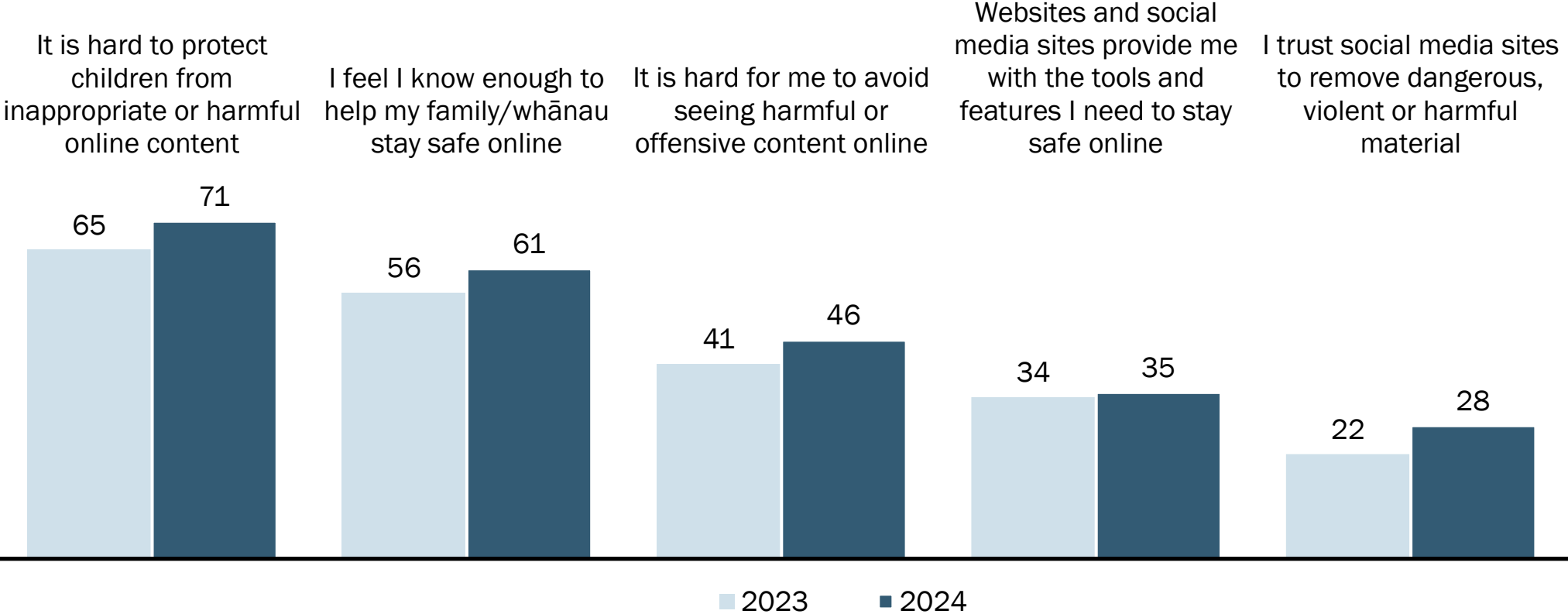
Those with children were more likely to agree:

- Hard to avoid seeing harmful content (56%)
- Tools are provided to keep safe (43%)
- Trust social media sites to remove harmful content (36%)

Base: All respondents (n=1000)

Public concern has increased regarding protecting children and avoiding harmful online content, with higher agreement (total agree) that it is difficult to protect children and avoid such material personally. However, alongside this, there was moderate growth in trust that social media platforms remove dangerous content (albeit still low) and declared knowledge of how to help family stay safe online.

 How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (% TOTAL AGREE)



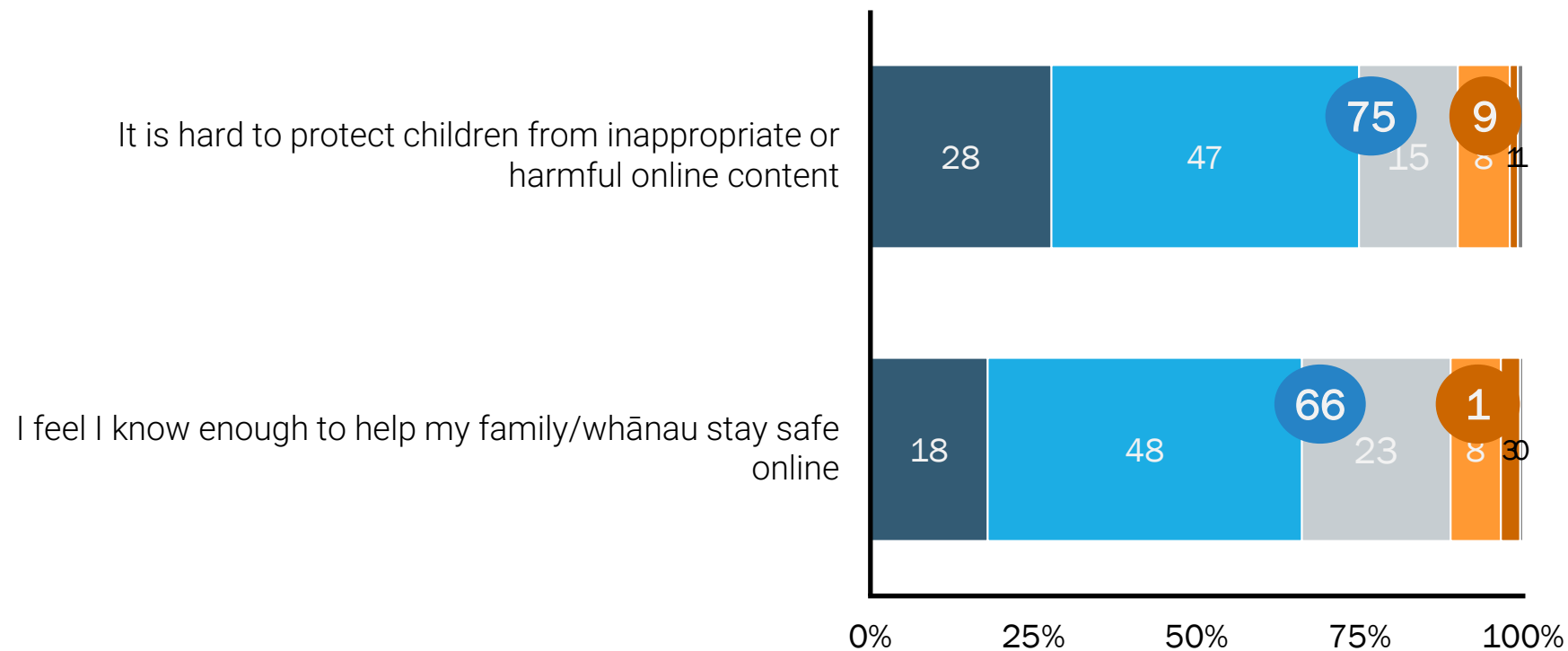
Base: All respondents (n=1000)

Amongst those with dependent children there was strong agreement it was hard protecting children from inappropriate or harmful online content while two thirds felt they knew enough to help keep family/ whānau stay safe online



[Those with dependent children:] How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (%)

■ Strongly agree ■ Somewhat agree ■ Neither agree nor disagree ■ Somewhat disagree ■ Strongly disagree ■ Unsure



Base: Those with dependent children(n=345)

