The World Internet Project in New Zealand

2025

NEW ZEALAND POLICY RESEARCH INSTITUTE
TE KĀHUI RANGAHAU MANA TAURITE

Authors

Serene Chua, Lisa Meehan, Alexandra Turcu

Acknowledgements

This project is funded by InternetNZ.

We owe a great debt of thanks to all the incredibly busy people who took the time to be a part of this year's survey.

We would like to thank Ciara Arnot and her team from InternetNZ for their feedback and support throughout the survey design stage, as well as on the report. A special thank you also to Mary Hedges for her help in setting up the survey and bringing thoughtful insights from her experience of working on previous iterations of this project.

We also acknowledge the World Internet Project international partners for their ongoing support and feedback.

Published

New Zealand Policy Research Institute, Auckland, New Zealand

ISBN (PDF): 978-1-99-101155-8

2025

Suggested citation: Chua, S., Meehan, L. & Turcu, A. (2025). *The World Internet Project 2025.* New Zealand Policy Research Institute, Auckland.

Contact Details

Serene Chua

serene.chua@aut.ac.nz

[This page has been left intentionally blank]

Executive Summary

This report presents the findings of the ninth iteration of the World Internet Project – New Zealand (WIP-NZ 2025), a nationally representative study that explores the evolving role of the internet and digital technologies in the lives of New Zealanders. The survey was conducted between March and May 2025 and collected responses from over 2,000 internet users. The report examines internet accessibility, artificial intelligence (AI) adoption, attitudes towards digital technologies, and awareness of their broader societal and environmental implications.

The report situates the internet within a global context, highlighting its proliferation and the increasing integration of AI tools, such as chatbots and virtual assistants, in everyday life. With more than 5.6 billion global users in 2025, the internet remains a transformative force in mass communication, commerce, and information access.

In New Zealand, findings reveal high levels of internet penetration and connectivity. Most people access the internet daily, primarily through home-based fibre connections. Satisfaction with internet quality is generally high, although disparities persist between those connecting from home and those relying on other locations. People use the internet for a wide range of activities, from communication and financial transactions to content sharing and e-commerce. However, concerns around online security are prevalent, especially among frequent users.

The study also investigates negative online experiences, finding relatively low incidence of online bullying, privacy breaches, and scams. Notably, younger users are more vulnerable to harassment, while most people are aware of privacy risks, even if they have not experienced a breach.

Attitudinal data paints a nuanced picture of digital life in New Zealand. Most people see the internet as beneficial, but views on social media are more ambivalent, with many expressing concerns about its societal impact. A strong majority support increased regulation of technology companies, favouring a mix of government oversight and industry self-regulation. Confidence in assessing online information varies, yet most users recognise misinformation as a serious issue. On political engagement, opinions are divided. While the internet is viewed as a valuable tool for understanding politics, fewer believe it enhances political influence or freedom of expression online.

This year's survey introduces a new module on AI familiarity and usage. While awareness is broad, most people have only a limited understanding. AI use is most prevalent among younger,

more educated, and employed individuals, who primarily use it for learning and productivity. Comfort with AI is strongly correlated with personal experience. Despite its benefits, many people remain apprehensive, particularly concerning surveillance, job displacement and the suitability of AI for children. Support for regulating AI is tempered by uncertainty, with many respondents questioning the feasibility of global coordination and regulation.

Finally, the study examines public awareness of the environmental impact of internet use. Although just over half of the respondents acknowledge digital technologies' ecological footprint, detailed understanding is scarce. Younger users are more likely to adopt environmentally conscious behaviours, such as minimising data footprints and prolonging device use. Nonetheless, nearly half of all users report taking no steps to mitigate environmental harm.

In summary, WIP-NZ 2025 highlights New Zealanders' deepening engagement with digital technologies, coupled with a growing awareness of their social, political, and environmental consequences. The findings underscore the need for digital literacy initiatives and inclusive strategies to ensure equitable access and responsible use of the internet and AI.

Contents

1 Introduction 1

2 WIP-NZ 2025 2

2.1 The World Internet Project 2

2.2 The World Internet Project in New Zealand 3

Sampling methodology 3

Descriptive statistics 3

3 Internet accessibility 6

3.1 Frequency of internet use 6

3.2 Connection type and quality 7

Access methods 7

Satisfaction with connection quality 8

3.3 Types of online activities 10

3.4 Negative online experiences 12

4 Attitudes and beliefs 14

4.1 Perceptions of the internet and social media 14

4.2 Reliability of online information 17

4.3 Political freedom online 18

4.4 Online privacy 20

5 Artificial intelligence 23

5.1 Knowledge of new digital technologies 23

5.2 Views on AI 26

AI usage 26

Perceptions about AI 29

6 Environmental impact of internet use 34

7 Conclusion 36

8 References 38

Appendix A..... 39

Appendix B..... 40

Appendix C..... 42

Appendix D 43

List of Tables

Table 1. Descriptive statistics 4
Table 2. Frequency of internet use by gender 6
Table 3. Problems with main internet connection 10
Table 4. Negative online experiences 13
Table 5. Should the content or size of technology companies be regulated? 16

List of Appendix Tables

Appendix Table 1. Demographic variables, target quotas and actual sample sizes 39
Appendix Table 2. Usage of digital technologies by age groups 40
Appendix Table 3. Usage of digital technologies by comfort levels 42
Appendix Table 4. Impact of AI on our lives by age groups 43
Appendix Table 5. Impact of AI on our lives by employment status 44

List of Figures

Figure 1. Frequency of internet use 7
Figure 2. In the LAST MONTH, how did you connect to the internet? 7
Figure 3. How do you connect to the internet from home? 8
Figure 4. Quality of internet connection 9
Figure 5. Quality of internet connection in different locations 9
Figure 6. How often do people engage in online activities 11
Figure 7. Security concerns about online activities 12
Figure 8. Do you feel that the use of the internet / social media is helpful or harmful? 14
Figure 9. Social media companies made the world... 15
Figure 10. Regulation of the internet and social media companies 15
Figure 11. Confidence in assessing reliability of information on the internet 18
Figure 12. Opinions about politics online 19
Figure 13. Opinions about political voice online 20
Figure 14. Beliefs about online privacy 21
Figure 15. Proportion of respondents who agreed with the statements about online privacy ... 21
Figure 16. Beliefs about who is likely to breach privacy online 22
Figure 17. Awareness of new digital technologies 23
Figure 18. Digital technology use 24
Figure 19. Comfort using digital technology 25
Figure 20. Do you feel that your job is potentially threatened to be eliminated because of technological advancements? 26
Figure 21. AI usage differences across demographics 27
Figure 22. Types of AI use 28
Figure 23. Reasons for not using AI 28
Figure 24. Perceived usefulness of AI 29
Figure 25. How likely is it that you will use AI in the next 6 months? 29
Figure 26. Beliefs about the impact of AI on our lives 30
Figure 27. Should children be allowed to use AI programs? 31
Figure 28. Reasons for allowing children the use of AI programs 31
Figure 29. Reasons for not allowing children the use of AI programs 32
Figure 30. Is it possible to regulate AI? 33
Figure 31. Reasons that AI cannot be regulated 33

Figure 32. Have you heard about the environmental impacts of digital technologies? 34
Figure 33. Have you changed any of your digital habits to limit environmental impact?..... 35
Figure 34. Actions taken to limit environmental impacts of digital technology use 35

1 Introduction

The word *internetted*, meaning *interconnected* or *interwoven*, was used as early as 1849 (Oxford English Dictionary). Today, the term *Internet* is most commonly used to refer to the global system of architecture which emerged in the 1970s but did not become visible to the general public until the early 1990s. It has revolutionised mass communication, media and commerce by enabling various computer networks around the world to interconnect (Kahn & Dennis, 2025). By 2025, over 5.6 billion people worldwide, about 68.7% of the global population, use the internet. Daily use of the internet has grown by more than 60% in the past decade, with the average internet user now spending more than six hours online each day. Smart technology like smartphones and tablets has made the online world more accessible, with global smartphone users surpassing 7 billion by 2025 (Internet Users by Country 2025, 2025).

Artificial intelligence (AI) technologies such as chatbots (e.g. ChatGPT), virtual assistants, and image generators are increasingly embedded in the lives of today's internet users. A recent global study by The University of Melbourne and KPMG found that 66% of people use AI regularly, and 83% believe the use of AI will result in a wide range of benefits. About half of the people globally (46%) are willing to trust AI systems and many rely on AI-generated output without evaluating its accuracy (66%) (Gillespie, Lockey, Ward, Macdade, & Hassed, 2025).

The World Internet Project (WIP) examines the evolution of information technology, with a particular focus on online privacy and security issues (dataveillance), AI, and the internet's influence on politics, freedom of speech and social interaction. This report summarises the findings of the ninth iteration of the WIP survey conducted in New Zealand (NZ).

This iteration, WIP-NZ 2025, investigates the quality and accessibility of internet connections in NZ, the adoption and trust in AI systems, and New Zealanders' awareness of the environmental impacts of internet use.

The remainder of this report is structured as follows: Section 2 provides an overview of WIP internationally and in NZ and outlines the WIP-NZ 2025 sampling methodology; Section 3 presents the findings on internet accessibility in NZ; Section 4 explores the attitudes and beliefs of NZ internet users; Section 5 focuses on AI adoption and perceptions; Section 6 examines environmental awareness related to internet use; and Section 7 concludes the report.

2 WIP-NZ 2025

This section outlines the WIP initiative internationally and its implementation in NZ, followed by details of the WIP-NZ 2025 survey methodology and sample characteristics.

2.1 The World Internet Project

The World Internet Project (WIP) is a global research initiative that focuses on studying the social, economic, and cultural impact of the internet and digital technologies on societies around the world. WIP was launched in 2000 by the Center for the Digital Future, at the University of Southern California, Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism, and is a collaborative effort involving researchers from various countries who conduct surveys and research to understand how people use the internet, their online behaviours, and the consequences of internet adoption.

Key objectives and areas of study within WIP include:

- Internet usage patterns: WIP collects data on how people access and use the internet, how often they go online, and what they use it for.
- Digital divides: WIP examine differences in internet connectivity and use across demographic groups, regions and socioeconomic backgrounds to understand digital inequalities.
- Social and cultural impact: WIP explores how the internet and AI influences social interactions, communication, and cultural practices.
- Information assessment and consumption: The project investigates how people engage with online and AI-generated information and their opinions on misinformation.
- Privacy and security: WIP examines user perceptions and behaviours related to online privacy and security concerns, including attitudes towards AI systems.
- Digital inclusion: WIP analyses policies and practices that could help bridge the digital divide and promote more equitable access to the benefits of the internet.
- Longitudinal studies: WIP often involves long-term, repeated surveys to track changes in internet usage and attitudes over time, providing valuable insights into internet trends and developments.

By conducting research across different countries and cultures, WIP provides a comprehensive understanding of the global impact of the internet, helping policymakers, businesses, and scholars make informed decisions and adapt to the evolving digital landscape.

2.2 The World Internet Project in New Zealand

This is the ninth iteration of the WIP survey conducted in NZ since 2007. WIP-NZ builds on the international framework while incorporating local priorities, such as access, connectivity quality, AI engagement, and environmental awareness. The 2025 iteration places additional focus on AI adoption and public perceptions.

Sampling methodology

The data presented in this report was collected from an online survey run via Qualtrics[1] between March and May of 2025. A nationally representative sample of 2,063 internet users in NZ aged 16 and over took part.

Participants were recruited from a range of online panel database providers through Qualtrics. The sample was targeted at specific quotas of ethnicity, age and region (with priority in that order) based on NZ Census 2023 data. The quotas and actual sample sizes are presented in Appendix A. Chi-square tests were conducted to identify statistically significant differences between demographic groups, and a selection of the more notable findings is presented in this report.

Descriptive statistics

Table 1 provides the descriptive statistics. To ensure the results reflect the New Zealand population, we applied statistical weights to align the sample with the ethnic distribution in the 2023 Census (see Appendix A). Weighted figures are shown in Table 1 alongside the unweighted sample. The demographic profile shows a fairly even gender split, with 48% male and 51% female respondents. Ethnic representation closely mirrors Census targets, with Europeans forming the majority, followed by Māori, Asian, and Pacific Peoples. Age groups are evenly distributed, with a slight weighting towards those aged 65+. Regionally, Auckland accounts for over one-third of the sample, with good coverage across other regions. Household structures

[1] Qualtrics is an American experience management company who specialise in survey software.

and income levels also reflect a broad cross-section of the population, ensuring balanced representation across socio-economic categories.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics

Variable	Sample	Weighted Sample
Gender	**N = 2,063**	
Male	47.6%	48.1%
Female	51.7%	51.2%
Non-Binary	0.7%	0.7%
Ethnicity	**N = 2,063**	
European	57.3%	59.1%
Māori	17.7%	15.6%
Pacific Peoples	8.8%	7.7%
Asian	13.7%	15.0%
Middle Eastern/Latin American / African	2.1%	1.6%
Other Ethnicity	0.4%	1.0%
Age	**N = 2,063**	
16-24	15.5%	15.3%
25-34	17.6%	17.2%
35-44	16.2%	16.3%
45-54	15.2%	15.1%
55-64	14.9%	14.9%
65+	20.5%	21.2%
Region	**N = 2,063**	
Auckland	35.8%	35.5%
Bay of Plenty/ Waikato	16.6%	16.6%
Canterbury	13.0%	13.2%
Gisborne/ Hawke's Bay	4.7%	4.6%
Northland	3.4%	3.4%
Otago/ Southland	5.8%	5.9%
Taranaki/ Manawatū-Whanganui	7.7%	7.7%
Top of South*/ West Coast	2.6%	2.6%
Wellington	10.5%	10.5%
Type of area living in	**N = 2,052**	
Large city	47.2%	47.0%
Small city	18.3%	18.6%
Large town	11.7%	11.6%
Small town	13.2%	13.1%
Village/ Rural	9.6%	9.7%
Highest qualification	**N = 2,019**	
Below high school	17.4%	17.3%
High school	31.2%	31.0%
Diploma/ Certificate	19.7%	19.6%
Bachelor's/ Honours	23.4%	23.7%
Postgraduate Degree	8.3%	8.4%
Household income	**N = 1,926**	
Up to $20,000	5.9%	5.9%
$20,001 - $30,000	9.6%	9.5%
$30,001 - $40,000	8.3%	8.2%
$40,001 - $50,000	10.8%	10.9%

Variable	Sample	Weighted Sample
$50,001 - $70,000	15.8%	15.8%
$70,001 - $100,000	17.5%	17.5%
$100,001 - $150,000	18.3%	18.3%
$150,001 - $200,000	9.2%	9.2%
$200,001 or more	4.6%	4.7%
Household type	**N = 2,046**	
Live alone	17.7%	18.1%
Live with partner	50.9%	51.2%
Live with family	23.2%	22.5%
Live with flatmates	8.2%	8.2%
Household size	**N = 2,056**	
1 person	16.9%	17.3%
2 people	31.3%	31.6%
3 – 5 people	43.5%	43.2%
6+ people	8.3%	7.9%
Main activity	**N = 2,058**	
One main job or activity	87.9%	88.0%
Two main jobs or activities	10.1%	10.0%
Three or more main jobs or activities	2.0%	1.9%
Type of job or activity**	**N = 1,809**	
Work in own business	8.3%	8.3%
Paid job	49.8%	49.8%
Unpaid family business	1.1%	1.1%
Volunteer	7.6%	7.6%
Caring for others	7.2%	7.2%
Unable to work/ retired	18.1%	18.1%
Studying	2.5%	2.5%
Unemployed	5.5%	5.5%

Notes: Sample sizes vary due to the removal of 'don't know/prefer not to answer' responses. The Weighted Sample uses population sample weights adjusted to align with the ethnic distribution of the 2023 Census provided in Appendix Table 1 of Appendix A. *Top of South includes the Marlborough, Nelson and Tasman regions. **Includes respondents who chose only one main job or activity. Those who chose more than one had a mixture of work in own business, paid job and unpaid work.

3 Internet accessibility

In this section, we explore internet connectivity and usage habits among NZ internet users, including usage frequency, internet connection quality, and the types of online activities undertaken.

3.1 Frequency of internet use

Over 96% of the respondents in our sample have used the internet for more than a year. Table 2 outlines the gender-based differences in the frequency and volume of internet use. Caution is required when interpreting the non-binary group due to the small sample size. We therefore limit our discussion to the male, female and total groups in the subsequent sections.

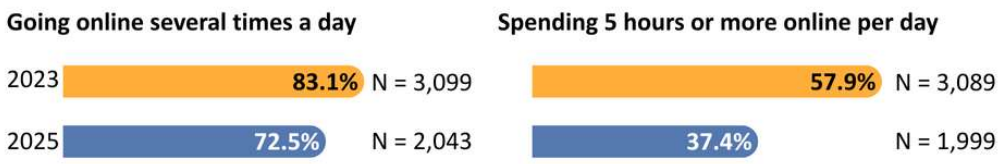
We observe that nearly one-quarter of the respondents in our sample (24.6%) use the internet daily, and a substantial proportion (72.5%), with slightly more females, use the internet several times a day. Just 2.9% of them report using it once a week or less. About half of the respondents (56.4%), with more males than females, spend between one and four hours online each day. Women tend to spend more time online, with consistently more females than males using the internet for more than five hours a day. Compared with the previous survey iteration in 2023, intensive internet use appears to have declined, with fewer people going online several times a day or spending over five hours per day on the internet (Figure 1).

Table 2. Frequency of internet use by gender

	Male	Female	Non-Binary	Total
How often do you use the internet				
Several times a day	69.0%	75.8%	69.2%	72.5%
Daily	26.9%	22.4%	30.8%	24.6%
Weekly or less	4.1%	1.8%	0.0%	2.9%
Sample size	972	1,058	13	2,043
On average, how many hours a day do you use the internet				
Less than 1 hour	7.5%	5.0%	0.0%	6.2%
1 to 2 hours	31.2%	20.2%	30.8%	25.5%
3 to 4 hours	32.2%	29.8%	23.1%	30.9%
5 to 6 hours	14.5%	18.9%	23.1%	16.8%
7 to 8 hours	6.6%	12.4%	7.7%	9.6%
9 to 10 hours	4.0%	6.3%	7.7%	5.2%
11 or more hours	4.1%	7.4%	7.7%	5.8%
Sample size	953	1,033	13	1,999

Notes: Sample sizes vary due to the removal of 'never/don't know/prefer not to answer' responses.

Figure 1. Frequency of internet use



Notes: Samples exclude 'never/don't know/prefer not to answer' responses.

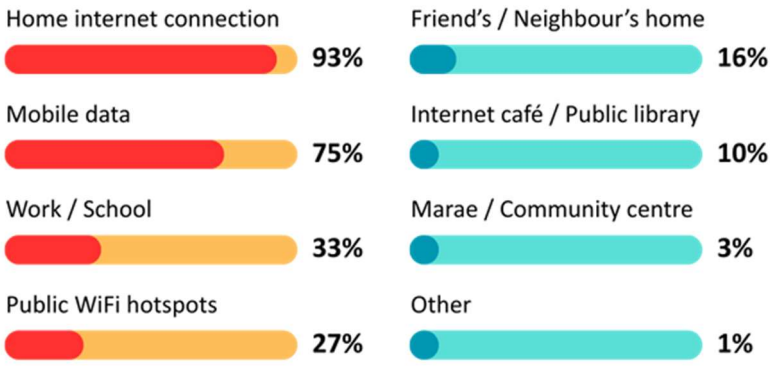
3.2 Connection type and quality

Given the amount of time users spend online, we recognise that internet connection quality plays a critical role in shaping online experiences. Respondents were asked about how they access the internet and their satisfaction with the speed and reliability of their internet connection.

Access methods

In the last month, a large proportion (93%) of the respondents reported that they connected to the internet from their homes. Three-quarters used mobile data from their service provider, and about one-third accessed the internet from their workplace or educational institution (Figure 2). This demonstrates New Zealand's reliance on home internet connections and mobile data networks.

Figure 2. In the LAST MONTH, how did you connect to the internet?

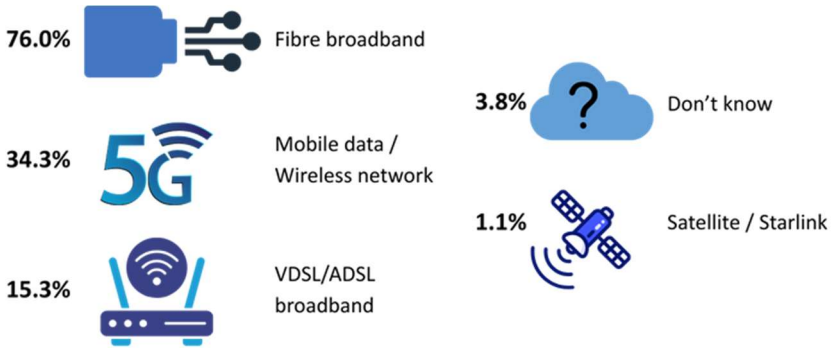


Notes: This figure excludes 'don't know/prefer not to answer' responses. Sample size = 2,063. These do not sum to 100% as respondents could select multiple options.

The types of internet connection respondents have at home fall mainly into three categories. From Figure 3, we see that the most common type of internet connection is fibre broadband (76%), followed by mobile data or wireless networks (34.3%) and lastly VDSL or ADSL broadband

(15.3%). A small proportion (3.8%) of respondents were unsure of their connection type. Satellite or Starlink use remains low, at just 1.1%.

Figure 3. How do you connect to the internet from home?



Notes: This figure excludes 'prefer not to answer' responses. Sample size = 1,919. These do not sum to 100% as respondents could select multiple options.

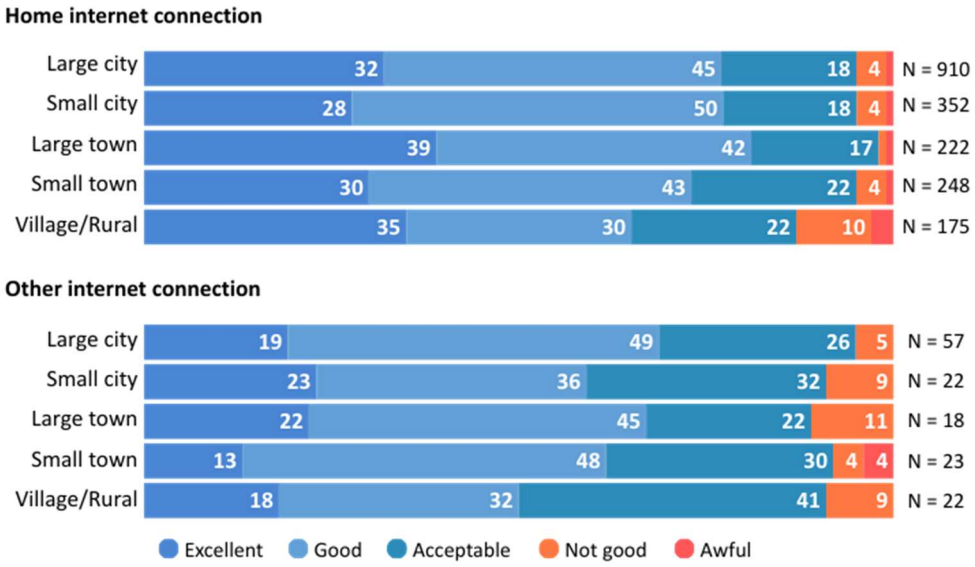
Satisfaction with connection quality

Respondents evaluated their internet connection quality, particularly the one they use most frequently. Figure 4 separates the results into those who mostly connect to the internet from home and those who more often connect from a different site. The vast majority of NZ internet users (over 90%) consider their internet connection to be acceptable or better, reflecting a positive experience with internet connection quality. A large proportion (76.2%) reported good or excellent home internet connection, about 14 percentage points higher than those who more often connect from other sites. The sentiment of good quality internet connection appears valid regardless of where respondents live, with almost 90% or more in all location categories rating their connection as acceptable or better, see Figure 5. However, it is notable that significantly more of those who connect from home in cities or towns report good or excellent connection quality compared to their counterparts in village or rural areas.

Figure 4. Quality of internet connection

Notes: This figure sum to 100% in each section. Samples exclude 'don't know/prefer not to answer' responses. Sample sizes as follows: Home internet connection = 1,917; Other internet connection = 143.

Figure 5. Quality of internet connection in different locations



Notes: Rows sum to 100%. Sample sizes vary due to the removal of 'don't know/prefer not to answer' responses. Interpret results for "Other internet connection" users cautiously, as each location has a small sample size, making it prone to variation.

Common issues varied by connection quality and location. Table 3 presents the results for two connection groups, those who primarily connect at home and those who more often connect from other sites, categorised by how respondents rated their internet connection. Among home users rating their connection as acceptable or better, over half (57.6%) reported no issues (i.e., they selected "none of the above"). In contrast, only 28% of users who primarily connected from other sites reported an absence of problems. For those who rated their internet connection as poor, the most common complaints were slow speeds (home: 79%; other: 45.5%) and unreliability (home: 68%; other: 54.5%).

Table 3. Problems with main internet connection

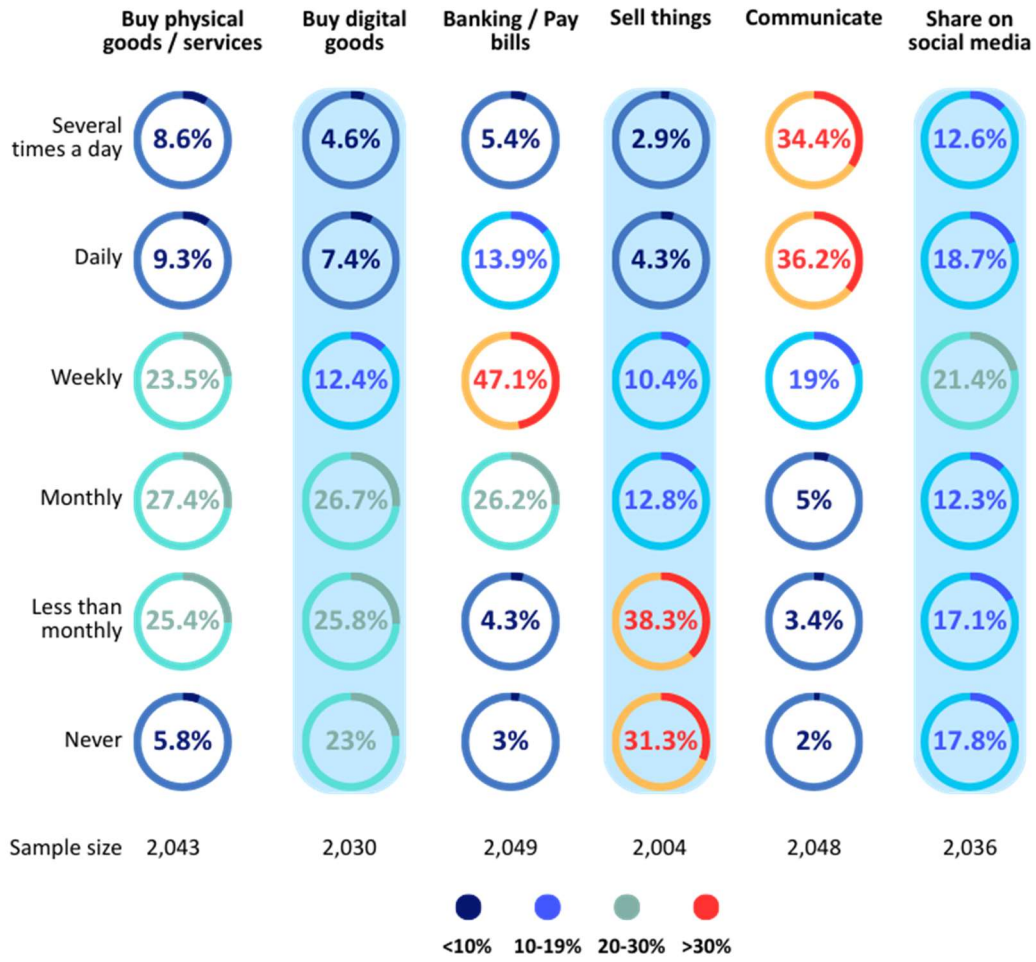
	Home			Other		
	All	Not good - Awful	Excellent - Acceptable	All	Not good - Awful	Excellent - Acceptable
Internet is too slow	19.6%	79.0%	16.3%	28.7%	45.5%	27.3%
I can only connect some of the time	6.7%	28.0%	5.6%	15.4%	9.1%	15.9%
My connection is unreliable	15.8%	68.0%	12.9%	20.3%	54.5%	17.4%
Internet is only available in certain areas	14.8%	31.0%	13.9%	11.2%	0.0%	12.1%
No wired connection	3.2%	8.0%	3.0%	10.5%	18.2%	9.8%
Device I use is too slow/old	5.6%	17.0%	5.0%	9.8%	9.1%	9.8%
Modem/hardware is too slow/old	4.5%	20.0%	3.7%	2.1%	0.0%	2.3%
Websites I want to use are blocked	3.1%	4.0%	3.0%	0.7%	0.0%	0.8%
Other	0.3%	3.0%	0.2%	0.7%	0.0%	0.8%
None of the above	54.6%	0.0%	57.6%	25.9%	0.0%	28.0%
Sample size	1,917	100	1,817	143	11	132

Notes: Sample excludes 'don't know/prefer not to answer' responses. Columns do not sum to 100% as respondents could select multiple options.

3.3 Types of online activities

Delving into the online activities of NZ internet users, the survey explored how often individuals engage in various digital tasks. Figure 6 illustrates that online communication had the highest level of engagement, with approximately 70% of respondents using the internet for this purpose several times a day or daily. This was followed by online banking or bill payments, with around 66% engaging in these activities at least weekly, and sharing content on social media, which approximately 53% did at least weekly. By contrast, selling items online is far less common – nearly 70% say they do so less than monthly or never – and buying digital goods is similarly rare, with about 48% reporting the same low frequency. Notably, online shopping for physical goods and services is more popular than for digital goods, with about 42% of respondents engaging in the former and 24% in the latter.

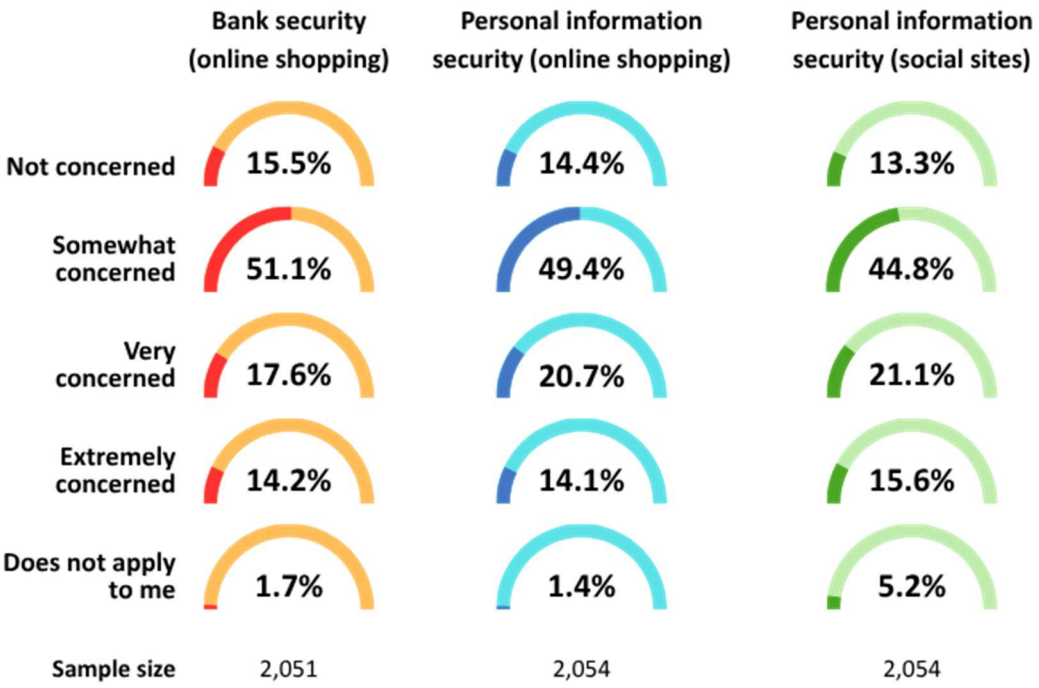
Figure 6. How often do people engage in online activities



Notes: Columns sum to 100%. Sample sizes vary due to the removal of 'don't know/prefer not to answer' responses.

In 2024, NZ consumers spent $6.1 billion online, completing more than 64.1 million transactions (NZ Post Business IQ, 2025). In the first quarter of 2025, online spending reached $1.5 billion, a 7% increase from the same period last year (NZ Post Business IQ, 2025). Given this high level of online activity, coupled with strong engagement on social platforms, where 53% of respondents shared content on social media and 90% communicated online at least weekly (Figure 6), it is unsurprising that concerns about online security are widespread. As shown in Figure 7, more than 80% of NZ internet users expressed some level of concern when shopping online or using social networking sites, suggesting that frequent online engagement may heighten users' awareness of digital risks.

Figure 7. Security concerns about online activities



Notes: Columns sum to 100%. Sample sizes vary due to the removal of 'prefer not to answer' responses.

3.4 Negative online experiences

Finally, we looked at the prevalence of negative online experiences including online bullying or harassment, privacy violation and scamming encountered by NZ internet users. We can see from Table 4 that most internet users have not experienced online bullying (80.6%) or privacy breaches (77%). Online bullying or harassment was more common among younger users (over 20% of those under 34), while less than 10% of those aged 65 and over reported such experiences. Most users who had been bullied or harassed online said it did not lead to serious problems. Although over three-quarters of respondents said that they had not encountered a privacy breach, it is unclear how many may have been unaware of being affected. In fact, 3.4% said they did not know if their privacy has been breached, highest among those unsure about experiencing bullying (1.4%) or scam attempts (3.0%). Among those who reported a privacy breach, most said it caused only minor problems. Notably, fewer than half of users, regardless of age, said they had not encountered online scams. Still, most who had come across such attempts said they did not result in serious consequences, reflecting that users generally avoid falling victim. While negative online experiences are not universal, a significant minority of users do encounter such risks. Proactive safety measures and user education remain critical to mitigate harm and enhance confidence in the digital environment.

Table 4. Negative online experiences

Age (years)	All	16-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+
Bullied or harassed online	N=2,050	N=315	N=362	N=332	N=312	N=308	N=260	N=161
No, haven't experienced this	80.6%	69.8%	73.5%	79.2%	79.2%	88.6%	90.8%	91.9%
Yes, wasn't really a problem	9.1%	11.8%	13.3%	10.5%	9.6%	5.5%	5.0%	4.4%
Yes, only a minor problem	5.7%	10.5%	7.7%	4.5%	4.8%	4.2%	3.9%	1.9%
Yes, considerable problems	2.2%	2.5%	2.8%	3.6%	3.5%	0.3%	0.0%	1.2%
Yes, serious problems	1.0%	3.2%	1.1%	0.3%	1.0%	0.3%	0.0%	0.6%
Don't know	1.4%	2.2%	1.7%	1.8%	1.9%	1.0%	0.4%	0.0%
Privacy breach	N=2,055	N=319	N=361	N=332	N=312	N=308	N=262	N=161
No, haven't experienced this	77.0%	78.4%	72.9%	69.9%	74.0%	79.2%	87.4%	82.6%
Yes, wasn't really a problem	7.7%	7.8%	7.8%	9.6%	9.3%	6.5%	5.3%	6.2%
Yes, only a minor problem	7.4%	7.2%	10.3%	10.2%	5.5%	6.8%	4.6%	5.0%
Yes, considerable problems	3.3%	1.9%	4.2%	3.3%	4.2%	4.9%	1.9%	1.9%
Yes, serious problems	1.2%	1.6%	0.8%	1.5%	2.6%	0.0%	0.8%	1.2%
Don't know	3.4%	3.1%	4.2%	5.4%	4.5%	2.6%	0.0%	3.1%
Scam attempt	N=2,058	N=320	N=363	N=334	N=310	N=308	N=262	N=161
No, haven't experienced this	40.2%	37.8%	39.7%	44.0%	44.5%	38.3%	39.3%	35.4%
Yes, wasn't really a problem	37.3%	41.9%	36.9%	31.7%	32.3%	35.7%	41.6%	46.6%
Yes, only a minor problem	12.9%	12.2%	12.7%	12.9%	11.3%	17.5%	13.7%	8.1%
Yes, considerable problems	4.8%	3.4%	6.6%	6.3%	3.9%	5.5%	2.3%	5.0%
Yes, serious problems	1.8%	1.6%	1.9%	0.9%	4.8%	0.7%	0.8%	1.2%
Don't know	3.0%	3.1%	2.2%	4.2%	3.2%	2.3%	2.3%	3.7%

Notes: Columns for each section sum to 100%. Sample sizes vary due to the removal of 'prefer not to answer' responses.

4 Attitudes and beliefs

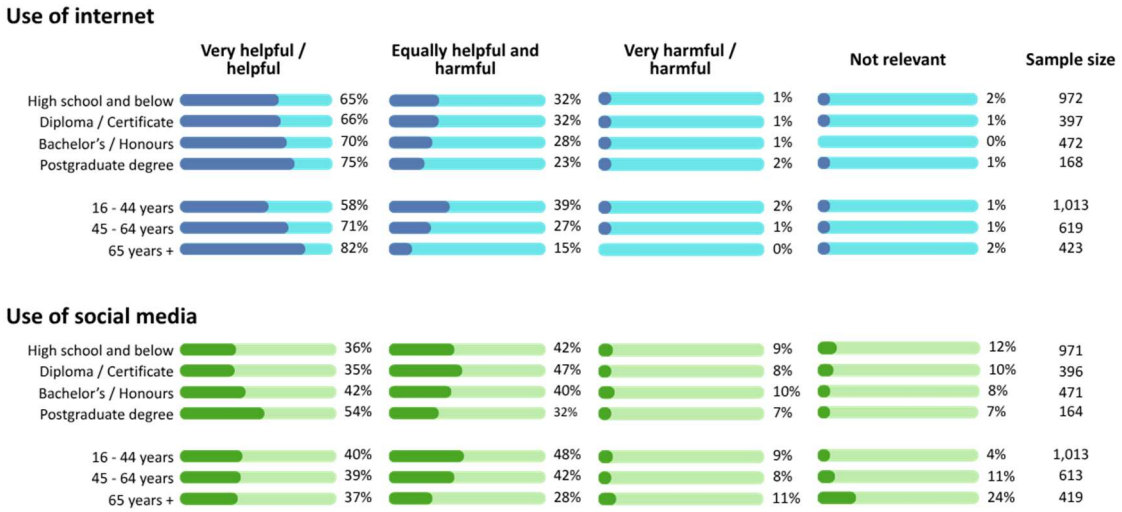
Turning from usage to perception, we examined how New Zealanders feel about the internet and its broader impact on society in this section. This includes their views on social media, trust in online information, freedom of expression, and online privacy.

4.1 Perceptions of the internet and social media

NZ internet users generally perceive the internet as more helpful than harmful, a view that is consistent across different education levels and age groups. As illustrated in Figure 8, the proportion of respondents who consider the internet to be either very helpful or helpful ranges from 65% to 75% across education levels and from 58% to 82% across age groups.

In comparison, views on social media use are more mixed. Many users, regardless of age or education, believe social media is both helpful and harmful, with responses ranging from 32% to 47% across education levels and 28% to 48% across age groups. Moreover, the share of respondents who view social media as unequivocally helpful is markedly lower than that for the internet, indicating a more cautious or critical stance towards social media platforms.

Figure 8. Do you feel that the use of the internet / social media is helpful or harmful?

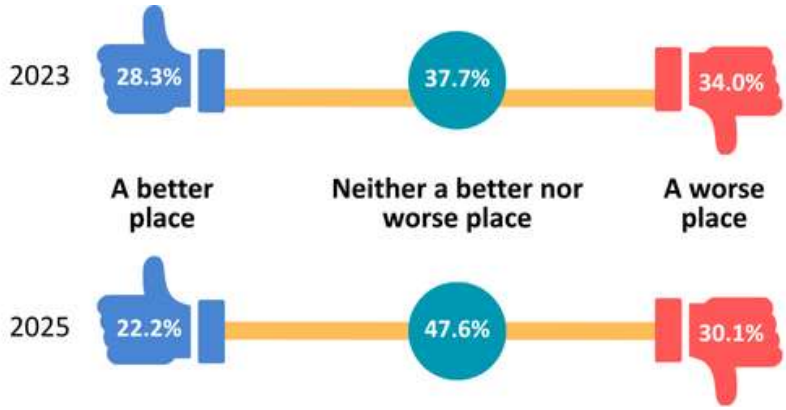


Notes: Rows sum to 100%. Sample sizes vary due to the removal of 'prefer not to answer' responses.

In line with this, Figure 9 shows that when asked how social media companies have impacted the world, more respondents said they believe social media has made the world a worse place (30.1%) than a better place (22.2%), while almost half think it has made neither better nor worse impact. Compared with 2023, the current findings indicate fewer respondents believe

social media companies have made the world either a “better” or a “worse” place, while a greater proportion now take a neutral view.

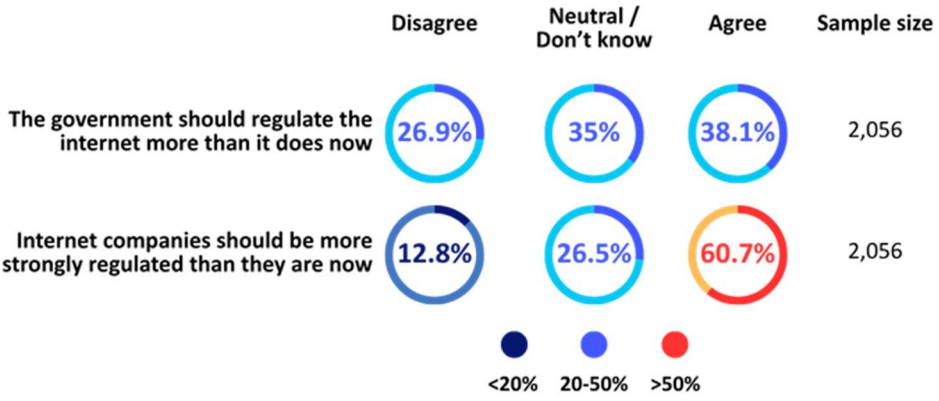
Figure 9. Social media companies made the world...



Notes: This figure sum to 100% for each year. Sample (2025) excludes ‘don’t know (N = 398)/prefer not to answer (N = 55)’ responses. Sample size: N = 1,610 (2025); N = 2,355 (2023).

When it comes to regulation, Figure 10 indicates that public sentiment strongly favours increased oversight of internet companies, with 60.7% supporting stronger regulation, compared to 38.1% who believe the government should regulate the internet more than it currently does.

Figure 10. Regulation of the internet and social media companies



Notes: Rows sum to 100%. Samples exclude ‘prefer not to answer’ responses.

Respondents were also asked whether the content or size of technology companies should be regulated. Table 5 reveals a consistent pattern. Among those who believe that social media has made the world a worse place, the largest proportion support increased regulation, particularly a combination of both government and self-regulation. Across all platforms, more than 50% of these respondents favour this dual approach, with the highest support for Meta (52.0%), Twitter/X (52.9%), and TikTok (51.7%).

Even among those who think social media has made neither a better nor worse impact, a group that represents nearly half of respondents according to Figure 9, support for increased regulation remain high. Between 60% and 70% of this group support either more self-regulation or a combination of government and self-regulation, depending on the platform. For example, among this group, 32.2% to 38.7% support more self-regulation, while a further 27.5% to 33.4% support both forms of regulation. This suggests that regardless of perceived societal impact, a large majority of internet users, ranging from 85% to 90%, believe that social media companies should be subject to greater regulatory oversight. The data indicates a low appetite for deregulation, with fewer than 15% across all groups saying these companies should not be regulated.

Table 5. Should the content or size of technology companies be regulated?

	A better place	Neither a better nor worse place	A worse place
Meta	N = 298	N = 612	N = 421
Should not be regulated	15.8%	10.3%	6.7%
More self-regulation	36.6%	32.2%	18.5%
More government regulation	21.1%	26.6%	22.8%
More government and self-regulation	26.5%	30.9%	52.0%
Twitter/X	N = 291	N = 587	N = 420
Should not be regulated	12.7%	9.9%	6.9%
More self-regulation	36.1%	31.5%	16.7%
More government regulation	26.5%	26.6%	23.6%
More government and self-regulation	24.7%	32.0%	52.9%
TikTok	N = 307	N = 623	N = 424
Should not be regulated	12.1%	10.8%	6.6%
More self-regulation	37.1%	33.9%	17.7%
More government regulation	25.1%	22.0%	24.1%
More government and self-regulation	25.7%	33.4%	51.7%
Alphabet	N = 276	N = 572	N = 383
Should not be regulated	15.6%	14.7%	11.2%
More self-regulation	41.3%	34.8%	19.8%
More government regulation	23.6%	22.4%	26.4%
More government and self-regulation	19.6%	28.1%	42.6%
Snapchat	N = 287	N = 584	N = 384
Should not be regulated	15.0%	12.7%	9.6%
More self-regulation	42.5%	37.2%	19.0%
More government regulation	19.5%	18.3%	22.9%
More government and self-regulation	23.0%	31.8%	48.4%
Amazon	N = 281	N = 550	N = 382
Should not be regulated	14.2%	12.2%	7.9%
More self-regulation	38.4%	38.7%	22.3%
More government regulation	23.8%	21.5%	23.3%
More government and self-regulation	23.5%	27.6%	46.6%
Microsoft	N = 289	N = 579	N = 393
Should not be regulated	18.3%	13.6%	9.9%

	A better place	Neither a better nor worse place	A worse place
More self-regulation	36.7%	38.2%	28.0%
More government regulation	21.5%	20.7%	20.4%
More government and self-regulation	23.5%	27.5%	41.7%

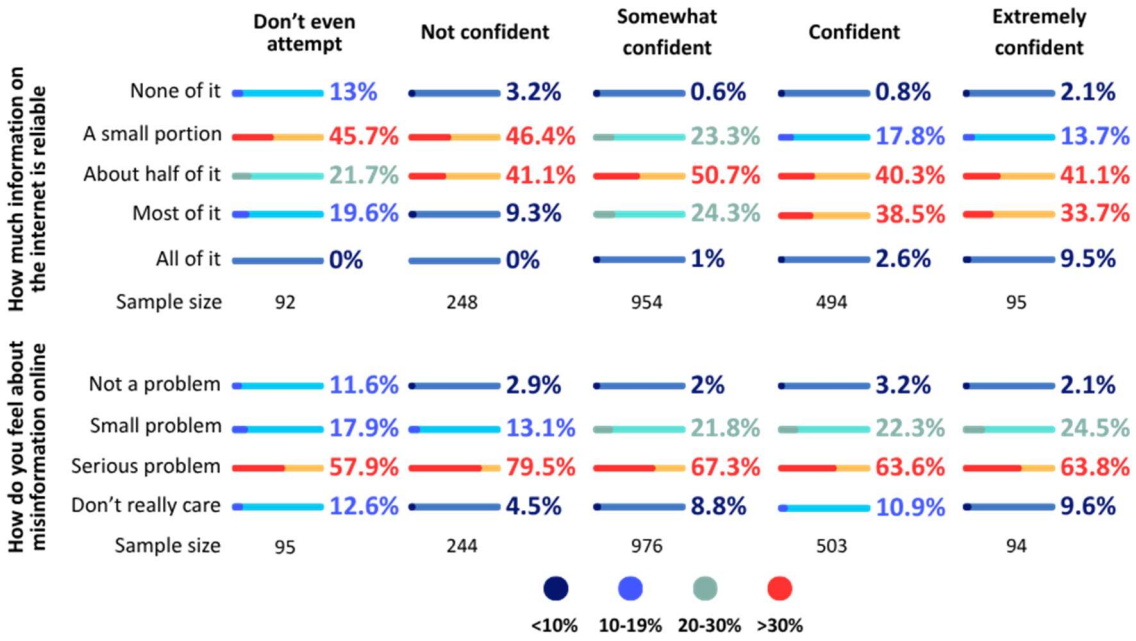
Notes: Columns for each section sum to 100%. Sample sizes vary due to the removal of 'don't know/prefer not to answer' responses.

4.2 Reliability of online information

We asked NZ internet users about confidence in their ability to accurately evaluate the information on the internet, and how much of this information they believe is reliable. Figure 11 shows a clear trend: as an individual's perception of the reliability of internet information increases, so does their confidence in assessing it. Among those who believe about half or most of the information online is reliable, more than 70% report feeling confident or extremely confident in their ability to evaluate it. Conversely, nearly half of those who believe only a small portion is reliable lack confidence (46.4%) or avoid attempting assessment altogether (45.7%).

Interestingly, across all levels of confidence, the highest proportions of respondents are those who believe misinformation online is a serious problem. This group makes up 57.9% of those who don't attempt to assess information, 79.5% of those who are not confident, and over 60% of those who are confident or extremely confident. This suggests that concern about misinformation is widespread, regardless of individuals' confidence in their ability to assess it, indicating that both highly confident and less confident users recognise its seriousness.

Figure 11. Confidence in assessing reliability of information on the internet

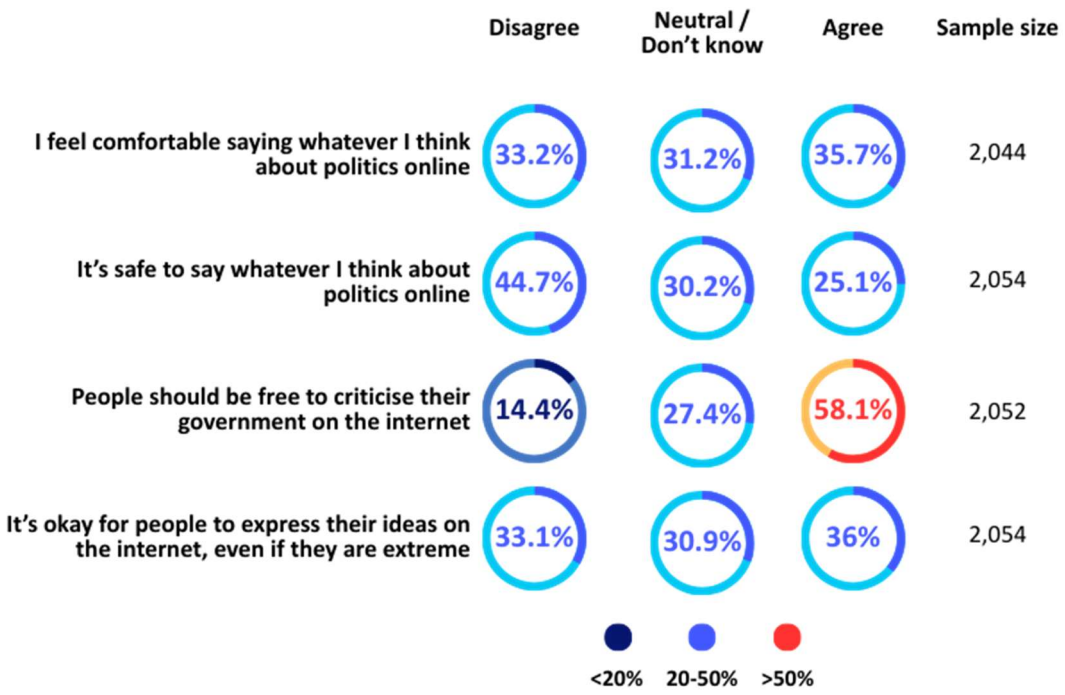


Notes: Columns sum to 100% for each section. Sample sizes vary due to the removal of 'don't know/prefer not to answer' responses.

4.3 Political freedom online

We next explored public attitudes toward political expression online. Figure 12 presents the responses related to beliefs about freedom of speech. NZ internet users appear divided on issues related to online freedom of speech. Roughly one-third agree, disagree, or remain neutral on whether people should feel comfortable or safe expressing political views online, or whether it is acceptable to share extreme opinions. Notably, there was stronger consensus (58.1%) in favour of the right to criticise the government online.

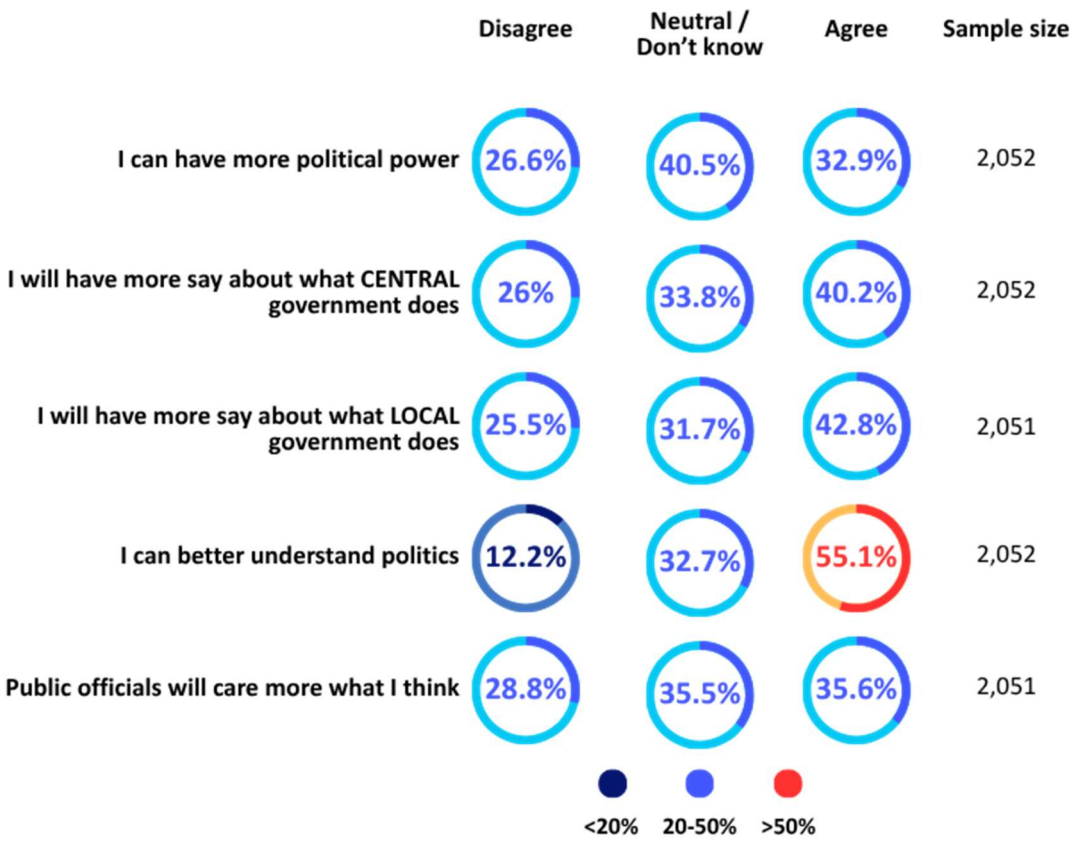
Figure 12. Opinions about politics online



Notes: Rows sum to 100%. Sample sizes vary due to the removal of 'prefer not to answer' responses.

When we asked respondents about their beliefs regarding political empowerment with internet use, we noticed that the trend is similar to their opinions about online freedom of speech. Figure 13 shows that NZ internet users are again divided on whether the internet increases their political influence, whether by giving them more political power (32.9% agree, 40.5% neutral/don't know, 26.6% disagree), a greater say in central (40.2% agree) or local (42.8% agree) government decisions, or whether public officials care more about what they think (35.6% agree, 35.5% neutral/don't know, 28.8% disagree). The only area where a clear majority agree is in using the internet to better understand politics, with 55.1% expressing agreement.

Figure 13. Opinions about political voice online



Notes: Rows sum to 100%. Sample sizes vary due to the removal of 'prefer not to answer' responses.

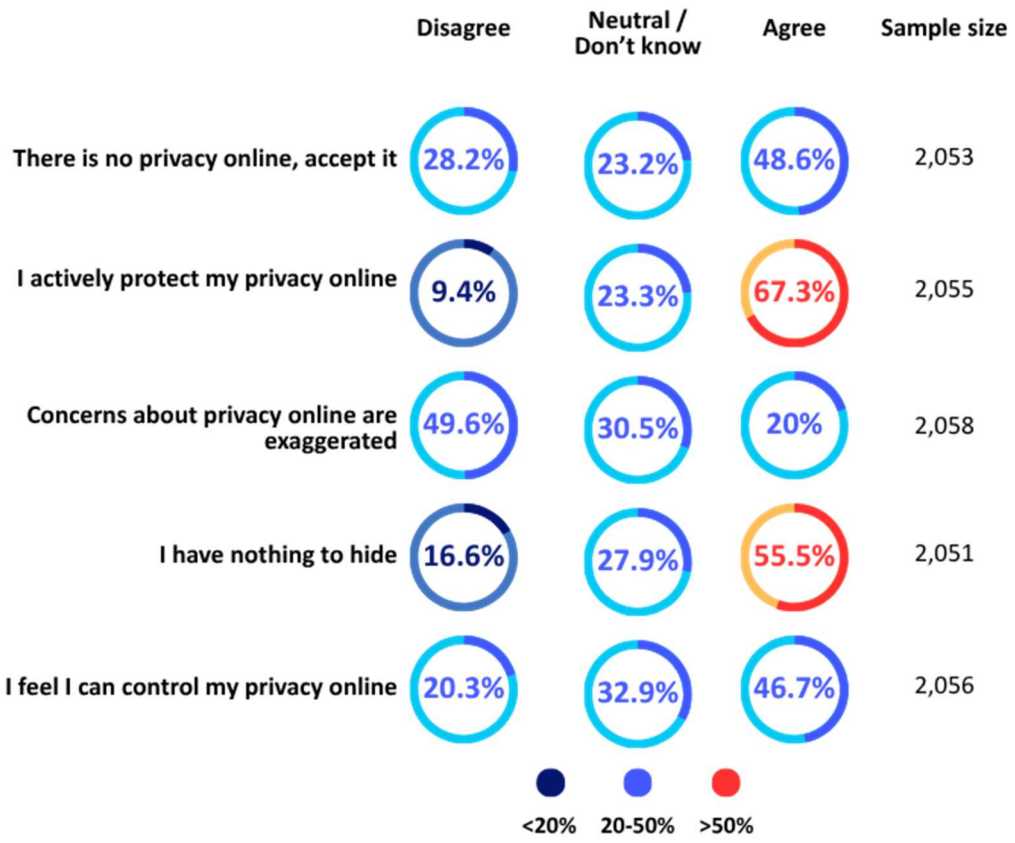
4.4 Online privacy

Lastly, we asked respondents about their beliefs regarding privacy in the digital environment. We can see from Figure 14 that nearly half of NZ internet users (48.6%) believe there is little to no privacy online. While a majority (55.5%) feel they have nothing to hide, most (67.3%) still take active steps to protect their online privacy, and nearly half (46.7%) feel they have some control over it. Only a small proportion (20%) think concerns about online privacy are exaggerated, suggesting that privacy is widely recognised as a legitimate issue. When viewed alongside the 2023 findings, public attitudes toward online privacy appear largely unchanged, with similar levels of awareness and caution in managing their digital presence (Figure 15).

Although over three-quarters of respondents reported never experiencing a privacy breach (Table 4), concerns about online privacy remain high. The high level of proactive behaviour, despite the absence of direct negative experiences, suggests that users are acting cautiously and pre-emptively. The finding that nearly half feel a sense of control over their privacy further

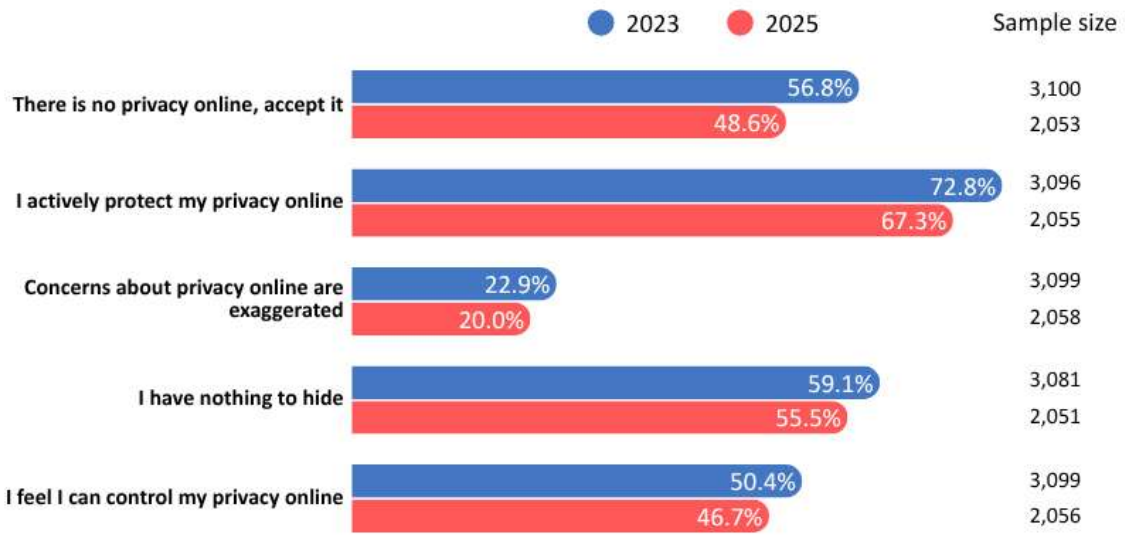
indicates that users are not passive but instead are actively navigating an environment they perceive as inherently insecure.

Figure 14. Beliefs about online privacy



Notes: Rows sum to 100%. Sample sizes vary due to the removal of 'prefer not to answer' responses.

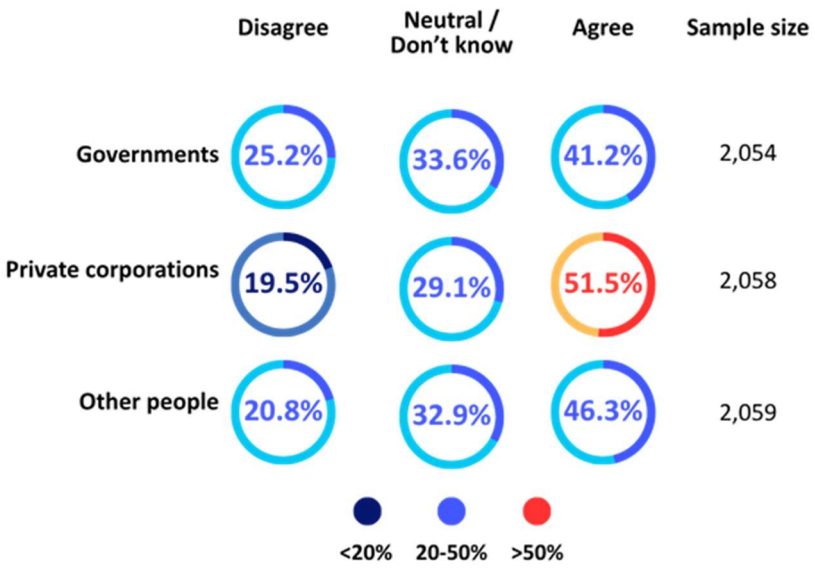
Figure 15. Proportion of respondents who agreed with the statements about online privacy



Notes: Samples exclude 'prefer not to answer' responses.

Figure 16 illustrates that NZ internet users are most concerned about private corporations violating their privacy online, with 51.5% agreeing with this view. Concerns about privacy violations by the government (41.2%) and other people (46.3%) are also present but less pronounced. Notably, about a third of respondents remain uncertain or neutral about the likelihood of privacy violations by these groups, suggesting a degree of ambiguity or lack of clarity in how users perceive the sources of online privacy risks.

Figure 16. Beliefs about who is likely to breach privacy online



Notes: Rows sum to 100%. Sample sizes vary due to the removal of 'prefer not to answer' responses.

5 Artificial intelligence

As artificial intelligence (AI) becomes increasingly integrated into everyday life, we explore how New Zealanders engage with AI and what they believe about its impact on work, learning, and society. This year's survey introduced a new AI module, reflecting growing public interest and policy debate about the opportunities and risks of AI adoption.

5.1 Knowledge of new digital technologies

We asked respondents how much they knew about a selection of emerging digital technologies. Figure 17 shows that awareness among NZ internet users is broad but shallow. Most say they know at least a little ("know a bit" or "know a lot"), yet few claim in-depth understanding. Only AI (21.1%) and voice assistants (20.3%) are recognised by more than one in five as technologies they knew well. The best-known overall are voice assistants (70.9% know at least a bit), 5G (61.9%), the cloud (61.1%) and AI (60.6%).

At the other end, unfamiliarity clusters around blockchain (44.3% have never heard of it), the Metaverse/Web3 (35.5%) and NFTs (32.9%). Technologies such as cryptocurrencies (47.1% know at least a bit) and virtual or augmented reality (44.6%) fall in the middle range, widely recognised but with limited depth of knowledge. Overall, pattern points to high surface awareness, but substantive literacy remains the exception rather than the rule.

Figure 17. Awareness of new digital technologies

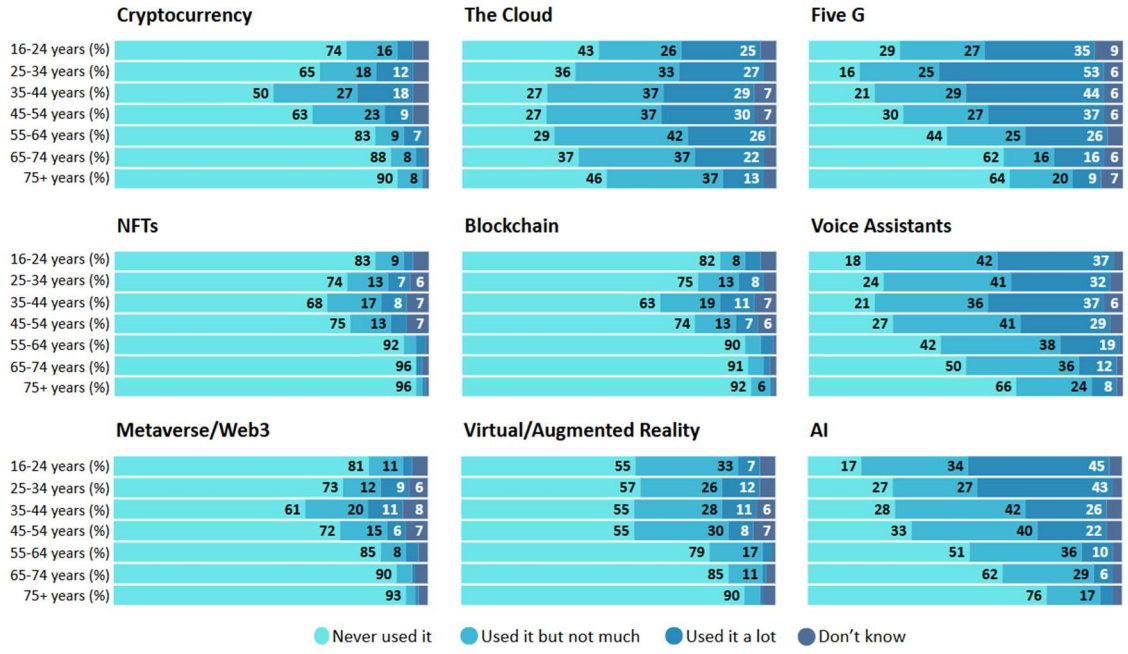
Notes: Rows sum to 100%. Sample sizes vary due to the removal of 'prefer not to answer' responses.

When examining digital technology use among NZ internet users, Figure 18 shows that use of technology declines sharply with age. Under-35s are the heaviest users, while engagement drops from the mid-50s and is minimal among those over 65 years, who predominantly report "never used it". AI and 5G stand out among younger adults: 45% of those in the 16-24 years and

43% of those in the 25-34 years groups say they use AI a lot, and 53% of those in the 25-34 years group report heavy 5G use. Voice assistants and cloud services show broader but still age-skewed uptake. Around 25% to 37% of those aged between 26 and 54 years use them a lot, compared to 13% or less among those 75+.

In contrast, blockchain, NFTs and the Metaverse/Web3 are niche across all age groups and almost absent among the older adults. For example, over 80% of those in the 16-24 years group and over 90% of those over 65 years have never used them. Virtual and augmented reality follows a similar pattern, with only around one in ten under-45s using it a lot. Overall, substantial use of digital technologies is concentrated among those under 45, with older New Zealanders largely sitting out new platforms.

Figure 18. Digital technology use

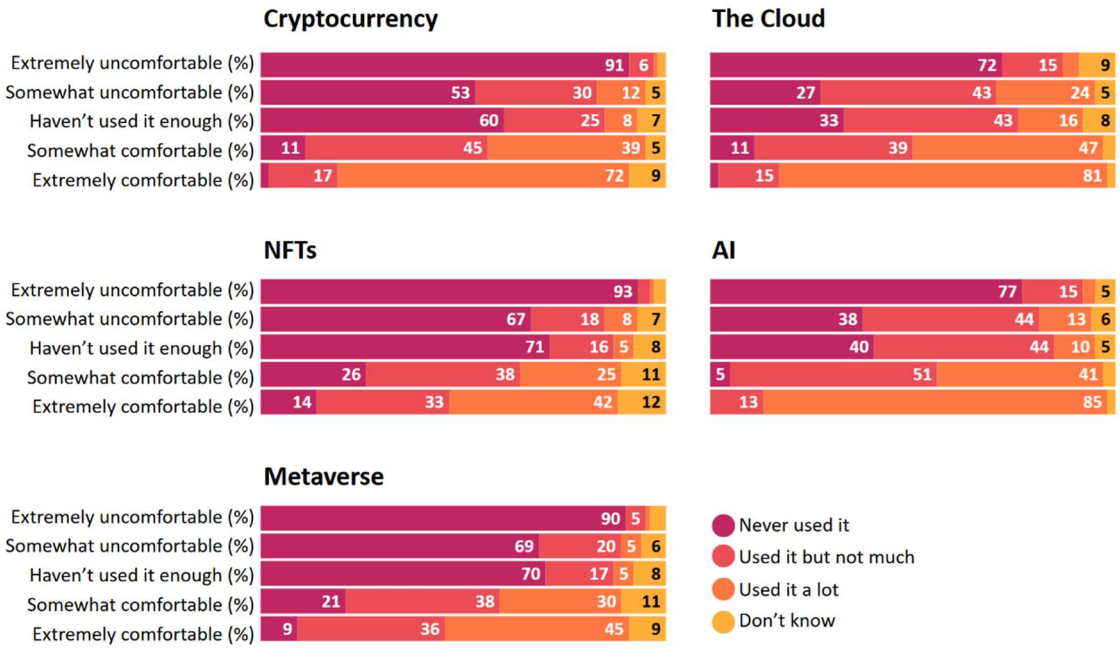


Notes: Rows sum to 100% for each section. Sample sizes vary due to the removal of 'prefer not to answer' responses and can be found in Appendix Table 2 of Appendix B.

Figure 19 highlights a strong correlation between experience and comfort with digital technologies. Individuals who have never engaged with a particular technology are significantly more likely to report being "extremely uncomfortable", with 91% of cryptocurrency non-users, 93% of NFT non-users, and 77% of non-AI users falling into this category. In contrast, comfort levels increase markedly with usage. Among those who use AI extensively, 85% report feeling "extremely comfortable", and 81% of heavy cloud storage users express comfort. Even for more risk-coloured tools like cryptocurrency and NFTs, the pattern holds. For example, 84% of those who use cryptocurrency to some extent report feeling somewhat comfortable (45% who use it

infrequently, 39% of those who used heavily), and 89% describe themselves as extremely comfortable (17% of light users, 72% of heavy users). This suggests that direct engagement, even at modest level, significantly enhances users' confidence with emerging technologies.

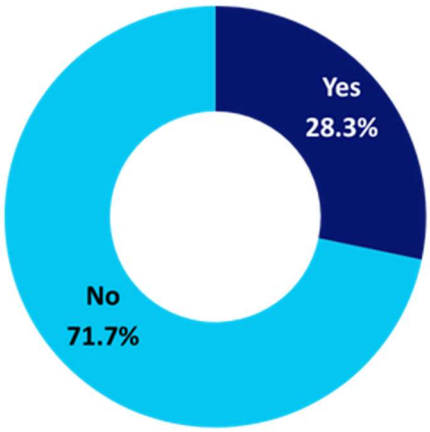
Figure 19. Comfort using digital technology



Notes: Rows sum to 100% for each section. Samples exclude respondents who have never heard of the listed technologies. Sample sizes vary due to the removal of 'prefer not to answer' responses and can be found in Appendix Table 3 of Appendix C.

Concerns about job displacement have come into sharp focus in recent times, as corporations increasingly adopt AI in their operations. One notable example occurred in May this year, when Microsoft laid off 3% of its workforce in response to AI-driven initiatives (Forbes Media LLC, 2025). Considering the rapid pace of innovation, we asked respondents whether they feel that developments like automation and AI could potentially eliminate their jobs. As shown in Figure 20, just over seven in ten (71.7%) NZ internet users do not believe their jobs are at risk, while 28.3% expressed concern, indicating general optimism or a sense of security despite ongoing public debate around automation-driven disruption.

Figure 20. Do you feel that your job is potentially threatened to be eliminated because of technological advancements?



Notes: This figure sum to 100%. Sample includes respondents who are employed and excludes 'don't know/prefer not to answer' responses. Sample size = 1,111.

5.2 Views on AI

AI usage

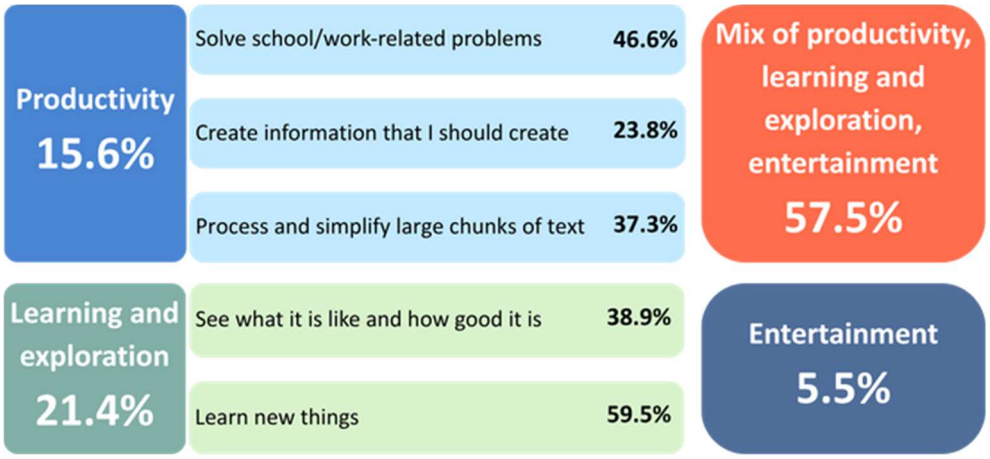
While AI uptake is similar between men and women, usage among NZ internet users varies significantly across other demographic groups, revealing distinct patterns in adoption and familiarity. Younger individuals are the most active users, with 45% of those aged 16-24 reporting they use AI frequently, compared to just 4% of those aged 75 and over (Figure 18). Educational attainment also plays a major role, with 39% of respondents holding a postgraduate degree reporting frequent use, compared to only 18% of those with a high school education or below, as seen in Figure 21. Employment status shows a similar trend, with employed individuals (32%) more than twice as likely to be frequent users than the unemployed (13%). Exposure to education, access technology and participation in the workforce are key factors influencing AI usage patterns.

Figure 21. AI usage differences across demographics

Notes: Rows sum to 100% for each section. Sample sizes vary due to the removal of 'prefer not to answer' responses.

AI users typically engage with the technology for a range of purposes. Figure 22 shows that 57.5% of respondents report using AI across a mix of productivity, learning and entertainment activities. Learning is the most common use, with 59.5% using AI to learn new things and 38.9% exploring what AI is capable of. 46.6% use AI to help them solve school or work-related problems, and 37.3% rely on it to process and simplify large chunks of information. In contrast, people who do not use AI cite a combination of motivational barriers, perceived lack of relevance and concerns about trust and reliability. As illustrated in Figure 23, 52.9% feel AI has little to do with their daily lives, 35.3% believe it offers them little benefit, and 32.9% express concern about how their personal information might be used. Overall, 38.2% of non-users cite multiple overlapping reasons for not engaging with AI.

Figure 22. Types of AI use



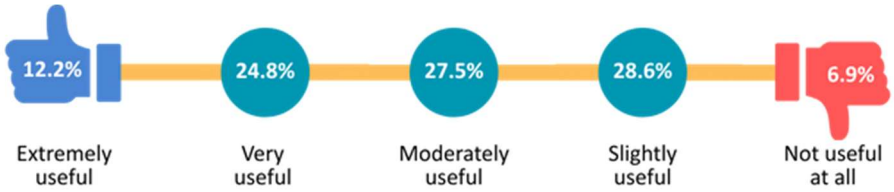
Notes: Large blocks in this figure sum to 100%. Sample includes respondents who have used AI programs and excludes 'prefer not to answer' responses. Sample size = 1,132. The list of AI use does not sum to 100% as respondents could select multiple options.

Figure 23. Reasons for not using AI

Notes: Large blocks in this figure sum to 100%. Sample includes respondents who have never used AI programs and excludes 'prefer not to answer' responses. Sample size = 764. The list of reasons for not using AI does not sum to 100% as respondents could select multiple options.

Despite varied engagement levels, most users perceive AI as at least somewhat beneficial. Figure 24 reveals that 93.1% of respondents find AI to be useful to some degree, ranging from slightly to extremely useful. Nearly 1 in 4 (24.8%) consider it to be very useful, and a further 12.2% rate it as extremely useful. Only a small minority (6.9%) report that AI is not useful at all. These perceptions of usefulness likely reinforce continued use among current AI users and may reflect the broader adoption of AI technologies over time.

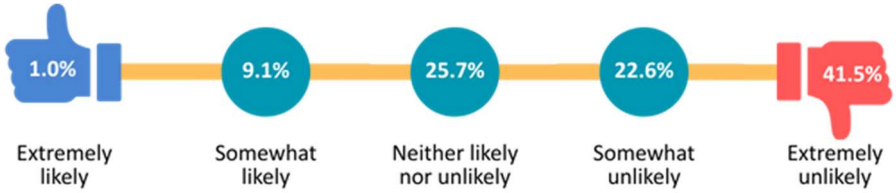
Figure 24. Perceived usefulness of AI



Notes: This figure sum to 100%. Sample includes respondents who have used AI programs and excludes 'prefer not to answer' responses. Sample size = 1,152.

Interestingly, many of those who said they have never used AI are not optimistic about engaging with it in the near future. As seen in Figure 25, 64.1% of non-users say they are either somewhat or extremely unlikely to use AI going forward, while only 10.1% consider themselves likely to do so. A further 25.7% remain undecided. For many non-users, barriers such as lack of interest, perceived irrelevance or concerns about trust and reliability may persist even as AI becomes more mainstream.

Figure 25. How likely is it that you will use AI in the next 6 months?



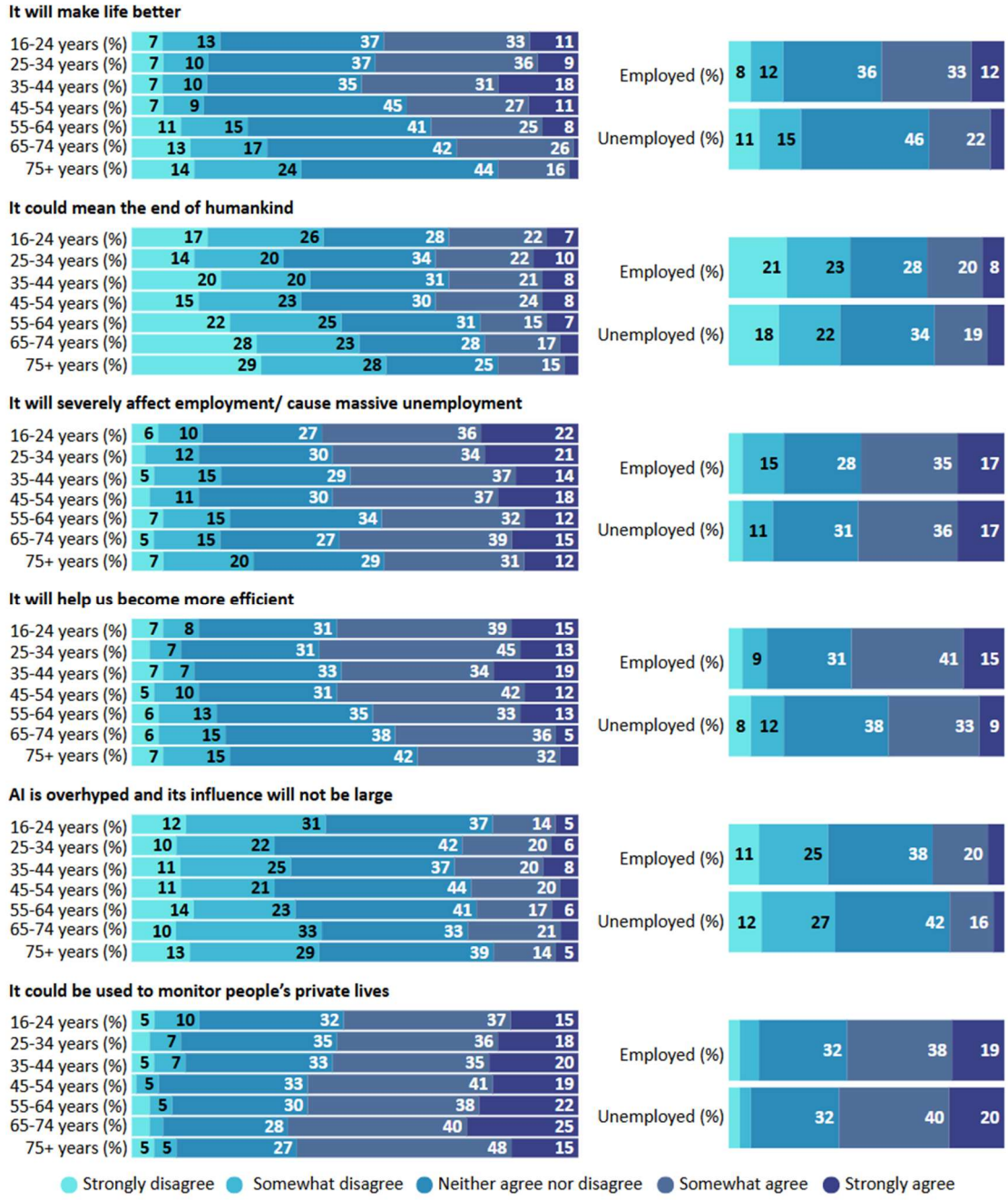
Notes: This figure sum to 100%. Sample includes respondents who have never used AI programs and excludes 'prefer not to answer' responses. Sample size = 773.

Perceptions about AI

Several clear patterns emerge regarding perceptions of AI's impact on life. Figure 26 shows that a substantial portion of respondents express uncertainty about AI, with "neither agree nor disagree" being a common response to the question "Will it make life better?" across all age groups and employment statuses. Between 25% and 46% of respondents reported this neutral stance when asked about AI's effects on life. Despite this ambivalence, optimism is more common among younger and employed individuals. Among those in the younger, working age group, around 44% (aged 16-24) to 49% (aged 35-44) either somewhat or strongly agreed that AI will improve life, compared to those in the older, retired age groups (27% for those aged 65-74 and 18% for those aged 75 and over). Likewise, 45% of employed respondents agreed that AI will make life better, compared to just 27% of the unemployed.

Concern over AI's impact on employment rates is also pronounced, with over half of both the employed (52%) and unemployed (53%) anticipating that AI will cause massive unemployment, even though over 70% report that they are not worried about technological advances threatening their own jobs (Figure 20). Finally, apprehension about surveillance over private lives is high and tend to increase with age. 52% of those in the youngest age group (16-24) believe that AI can be used to monitor private lives, rising to 63% of those in the oldest age group (75 and over).

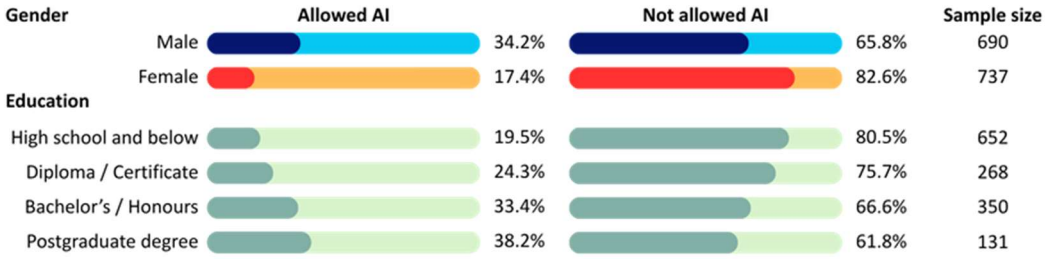
Figure 26. Beliefs about the impact of AI on our lives



Notes: Rows sum to 100% for each section. Sample excludes respondents who have never heard of AI. Sample sizes vary due to the removal of 'prefer not to answer' responses and can be found in Appendix Tables 4 & 5 of Appendix D.

When asked whether children under the age of 18 should be allowed to use AI programs, Figure 27 shows that the majority of respondents expressed opposition. Women (82.6%) were more likely than men (65.8%) to disallow AI use by children. Notably, opposition to children using AI decreases as education level increases. While 80.5% of respondents with a high school education or lower were opposed, this figure declined progressively to 61.8% among those with a postgraduate degree.

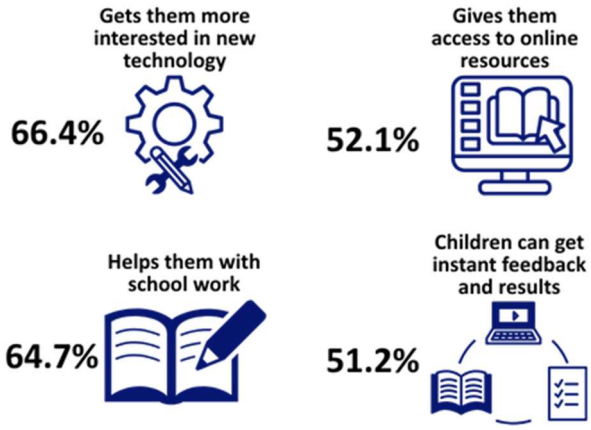
Figure 27. Should children be allowed to use AI programs?



Notes: Rows sum to 100%. Samples exclude respondents who have never heard of AI, as well as 'don't know/prefer not to answer' responses.

The most commonly cited reasons for allowing children to use AI programs include heightening their interest in new technology (66.4%) and helping them with schoolwork (64.7%), as seen in Figure 28. Additionally, more than half of the respondents who said children should be allowed the use of AI programs supported AI use for providing children with instant feedback and results (51.2%) and offering them easy access to online learning resources (52.1%).

Figure 28. Reasons for allowing children the use of AI programs

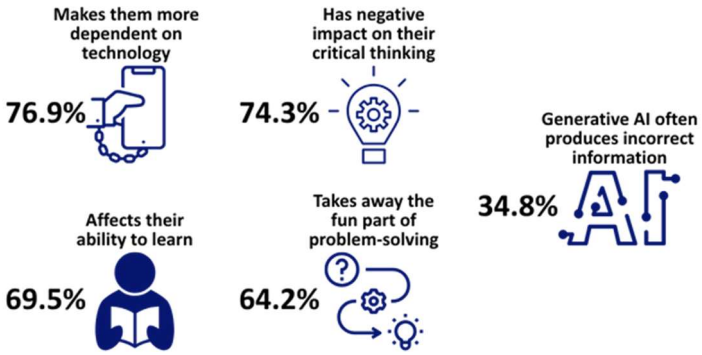


Notes: This figure excludes 'prefer not to answer' responses. Sample includes respondents who have heard of AI and think that children should be allowed to use it. Sample size = 363. These do not sum to 100% as respondents could select multiple options.

The most frequently cited reasons for disallowing children from using AI programs centre around concerns about cognitive development. Figure 29 illustrates that over three-quarters (76.9%) of respondents who said children should not be allowed the use of AI programs believe

it increases children's dependence on technology, while 74.3% feel it negatively impacts critical thinking skills. Additionally, 69.5% say it affects learning, and 64.2% feel it removes the enjoyment of problem-solving, whereas fewer respondents (34.8%) were concerned about generative AI producing incorrect information.

Figure 29. Reasons for not allowing children the use of AI programs



Notes: This figure excludes 'prefer not to answer' responses. Sample includes respondents who have never heard of AI and think that children should not be allowed to use it. Sample size = 1,059. These do not sum to 100% as respondents could select multiple options.

Finally, respondents were asked whether they believe it is possible to regulate AI. As shown in Figure 30, the prevailing sentiment among NZ internet users is that it is still too early to know, with 33% to 45% of respondents across all age groups selecting this option. Between 16% and 32% believe that AI regulation is possible, with the highest agreement observed among those aged 35 to 44 years. Confidence in the ability to regulate AI appears to increase with education level, with only 16.8% of those with a high school education or lower believing regulation is possible, rising progressively to 38.5% among those with a postgraduate degree. A substantial proportion of respondents, particularly older adults and those with lower levels of education, indicated uncertainty, with 'don't know' responses peaking at 38.7% among those aged 75 and over, and 33.1% among respondents with a high school education or lower.

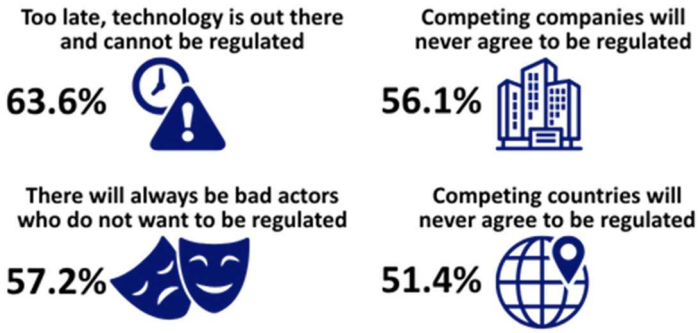
Figure 30. Is it possible to regulate AI?

Age	Yes	No	Too early to know	Don't care	Don't know	Sample size
16-24 years (%)	19.2%	7.1%	44.8%	3%	25.9%	297
25-34 years (%)	21.4%	11.4%	42.5%	2.6%	22%	341
35-44 years (%)	32.4%	5.6%	37.3%	4.9%	19.9%	306
45-54 years (%)	26.3%	11.9%	37.5%	1.4%	22.9%	293
55-64 years (%)	19%	13.9%	35%	2.5%	29.6%	274
65-74 years (%)	25.2%	8%	33.6%	1.3%	31.9%	226
75+ years (%)	16.1%	8.1%	34.7%	2.4%	38.7%	124
Education						
High school and below (%)	16.8%	10.4%	36.5%	3.2%	33.1%	849
Diploma / Certificate (%)	19.9%	11.5%	40.7%	4.2%	23.6%	356
Bachelor's / Honours (%)	34.1%	5.5%	39.4%	1.5%	19.4%	454
Postgraduate degree (%)	38.5%	11.8%	40.4%	0%	9.3%	161

Notes: Rows sum to 100%. Samples exclude respondents who have never heard of AI, as well as 'prefer not to answer' responses.

The most commonly agreed-upon reason for believing that AI cannot be regulated is the perception that it is already too late, with 63.6% of respondents stating that the technology is already widely available and beyond control (Figure 31). A lack of willingness to cooperate was also a prominent concern, with over half of respondents believing that companies (56.1%) and countries (51.4%) will never agree to regulation. Additionally, 57.2% felt that the persistent presence of bad actors who refuse to follow rules makes effective regulation unlikely.

Figure 31. Reasons that AI cannot be regulated

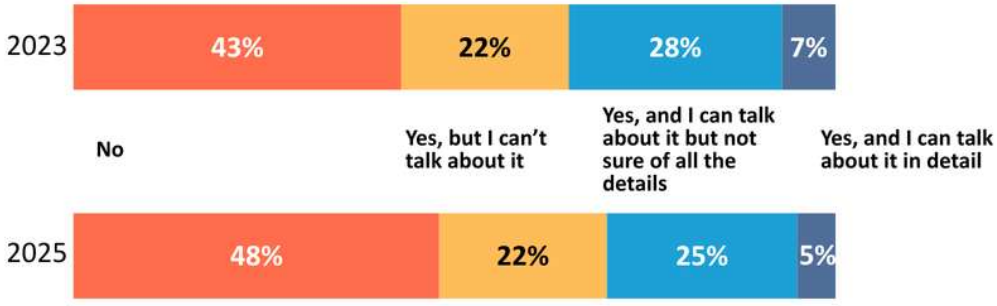


Notes: This figure excludes 'prefer not to answer' responses. Sample includes respondents who have heard of AI and think that it is not possible to regulate AI. Sample size = 173. These do not sum to 100% as respondents could select multiple options.

6 Environmental impact of internet use

In this final section, we examine NZ internet users' awareness and understanding of the environmental impacts of internet use. Figure 32 shows the proportion of respondents who have heard about the environmental effects of digital technologies. Just over half of the respondents (52%) are aware that digital technology use has some impact on the environment. However, only a small proportion (5%) feel confident discussing the topic in detail, while nearly half (48%) remain unaware of any environmental impact associated with digital technology use. These figures are largely unchanged from 2023, suggesting that public awareness of the environmental consequences of digital technologies has stagnated. This may indicate a need for stronger public education initiatives to improve understanding of the issue.

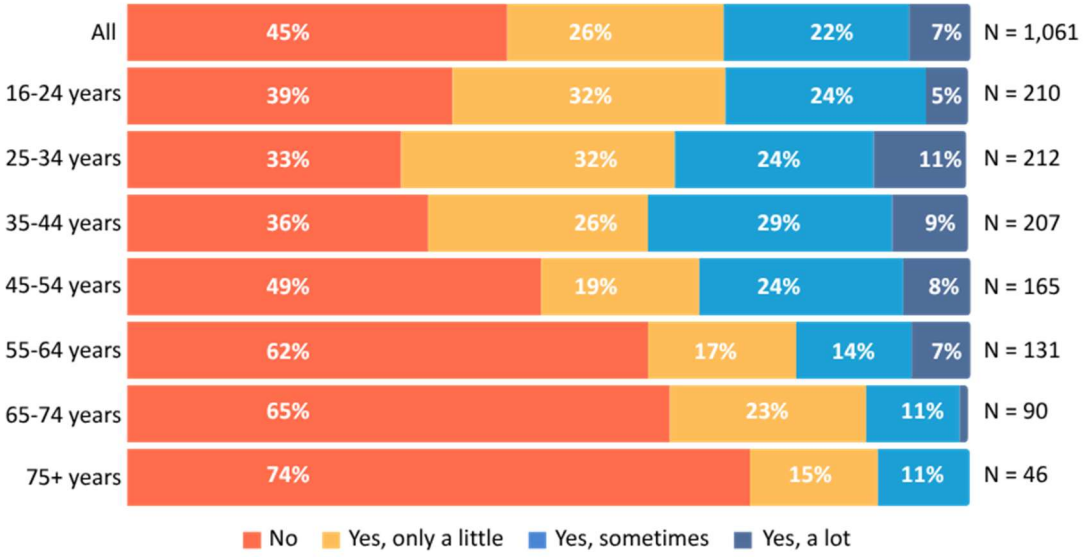
Figure 32. Have you heard about the environmental impacts of digital technologies?



Notes: This figure sums to 100% for each year. Sample excludes 'prefer not to answer' responses. Sample size: N = 1,996 (2025); N = 3,038 (2023).

In line with the finding that nearly half of respondents remain unaware of the environmental effects of digital technology use, Figure 33 reveals that 45% report making no changes to their habits to reduce environmental impact. Younger respondents are significantly more likely to take some form of action. Over 60% of those aged 44 and under reported changing their habits, either a lot, sometimes or a little, compared to less than 40% of those aged 65 and older. This indicates that awareness and willingness to act on the environmental impact of internet use declines with age.

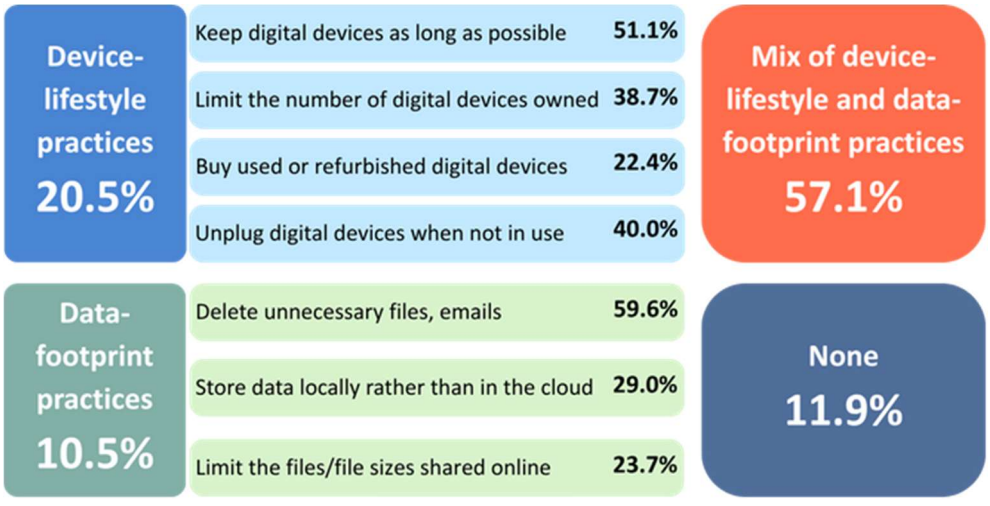
Figure 33. Have you changed any of your digital habits to limit environmental impact?



Notes: Bars sum to 100%. Sample excludes respondents who have never heard about the environmental impacts of digital technology use. Sample sizes vary due to the removal of 'prefer not to answer' responses.

NZ internet users appear to adopt a dual approach in their efforts to reduce the environmental impact of digital technology use, with 57.1% reporting a combination of both device-lifestyle and data-footprint practices (Figure 34). Among those who engage in device-lifestyle actions, the most common is keeping digital devices for as long as possible (51.1%), followed by unplugging devices when not in use (40%). For data-footprint practices, the most widely adopted action is deleting unnecessary files and emails, reported by 59.6% of respondents. Notably, only 11.9% said they did not engage in any of the listed practices.

Figure 34. Actions taken to limit environmental impacts of digital technology use



Notes: Large blocks in this figure sum to 100%. Sample excludes 'prefer not to answer' responses. Sample size = 2,031. The list of actions does not sum to 100% as respondents could select multiple options.

7 Conclusion

The findings of WIP-NZ 2025 underscore the centrality of the internet in contemporary New Zealand life, highlighting a digital landscape that is increasingly accessible, diverse in use, and infused with emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence. Across demographic groups, New Zealanders exhibit high levels of internet engagement, with the majority accessing the internet daily and relying heavily on fibre and mobile networks for connectivity. Despite widespread satisfaction with the quality of internet service, disparities in experience persist based on connection type and location.

Patterns of digital engagement reveal a population that is both enthusiastic and cautious. While communication, banking and shopping dominate daily online activities, users express persistent concern about digital security, privacy, and the credibility of online information. Negative online experiences, although not pervasive, remain a concern for certain demographics, particularly younger individuals who are more likely to report incidents of harassment or bullying.

Attitudinally, New Zealanders appear to navigate digital life with a blend of optimism, scepticism, and pragmatism. The internet is largely regarded as beneficial, yet social media platforms draw a more critical gaze. A strong consensus emerges in favour of increased regulation, both governmental and self-imposed, particularly concerning social media companies and AI technologies. This regulatory sentiment transcends differences in age, education, and perception of harm, reflecting a broader public desire for accountability in the digital realm.

Artificial intelligence, though widely recognised, is not yet deeply understood. Its adoption is uneven, shaped by age, education, and employment status. Those who engage with AI report a high degree of comfort and usefulness, while non-users frequently cite mistrust, lack of relevance, or apprehension about data privacy. Views on AI's societal impact are divided, with optimism tempered by concerns around surveillance, children's cognitive development, and the potential for job displacement. A majority of respondents believe it is either too early or too difficult to effectively regulate AI, pointing to both the urgency and complexity of crafting informed policy responses.

Finally, awareness of the environmental impacts of digital technology remains limited, particularly among older users. While some individuals, particularly younger respondents, have begun to adopt environmentally mindful behaviours, many remain unaware or unengaged. This

finding suggests a pressing need for education and policy interventions to bridge the gap between digital consumption and ecological responsibility.

In conclusion, WIP-NZ 2025 presents a comprehensive portrait of an increasingly digital society, one that is connected yet cautious. As the digital environment continues to evolve, New Zealand faces a pivotal opportunity to strengthen digital inclusion, foster responsible innovation, and build public trust through transparent governance and education.

8 References

Forbes Media LLC. (2025, May 13). Retrieved from Microsoft Lays Off About 3% of Workers As Company Adjusts for AI Business: https://www.forbes.com/sites/chriswestfall/2025/05/13/microsoft-lays-off-about-3-of-workers-as-company-adjusts-for-ai-business/

Gillespie, N., Lockey, S., Ward, T., Macdade, A., & Hassed, G. (2025). *The University of Melbourne and KPMG*. Retrieved from Trust, attitudes and use of artificial intelligence: A global study 2025: https://kpmg.com/xx/en/our-insights/ai-and-technology/trust-attitudes-and-use-of-ai.html

Internet Users by Country 2025. (2025). Retrieved from World Population Review: https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/internet-users-by-country

Kahn, R., & Dennis, M. A. (2025, 7 12). *Internet*. Retrieved from Encyclopaedia Britannica: https://www.britannica.com/technology/Internet

NZ Post Business IQ. (2025, May 7). Retrieved from Is strong growth signalling better times?: https://www.nzpostbusinessiq.co.nz/latest-ecommerce-insights/strong-growth-signalling-better-times

NZ Post Business IQ. (2025, February 20). Retrieved from Record transaction levels drive 2024's online growth: https://www.nzpostbusinessiq.co.nz/latest-ecommerce-insights/record-transaction-levels-drive-2024s-online-growth

Oxford English Dictionary. (n.d.). Retrieved from Oxford University Press: https://www.oed.com/search/dictionary/?q=Internetted&tl=true

Appendix A

Appendix Table 1. Demographic variables, target quotas and actual sample sizes

Variable	Quota	Actual
Ethnicity		
European	67.8%	57.3%
Māori	17.8%	17.7%
Pacific Peoples	8.9%	8.8%
Asian	17.3%	13.7%
Middle Eastern/Latin American / African	1.9%	2.1%
Other Ethnicity	1.1%	0.4%
Age		
16-24	15.6%	15.5%
25-34	17.5%	17.6%
35-44	16.3%	16.2%
45-54	15.4%	15.2%
55-64	14.8%	14.9%
65+	20.4%	20.5%
Region		
Auckland	33.2%	35.8%
Bay of Plenty/ Waikato	16.7%	16.6%
Canterbury	13.0%	13.0%
Gisborne/ Hawke's Bay	4.5%	4.7%
Northland	3.9%	3.4%
Otago/ Southland	6.8%	5.8%
Taranaki/ Manawatū-Whanganui	7.6%	7.7%
Top of South*/ West Coast	3.9%	2.6%
Wellington	10.4%	10.5%

Notes: N = 2,063, *Top of South includes the Marlborough, Nelson and Tasman regions.

Appendix B

Appendix Table 2. Usage of digital technologies by age groups

Age (years)	16-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+
Cryptocurrency	N = 311	N = 355	N = 327	N = 306	N = 299	N = 260	N = 160
Never used it	73.0%	65.6%	50.8%	63.1%	82.6%	87.3%	90.0%
Used it but not much	16.1%	17.8%	26.6%	23.2%	8.7%	8.5%	8.1%
Used it a lot	5.5%	12.1%	17.7%	8.5%	7.4%	3.5%	1.3%
Don't know	5.5%	4.5%	4.9%	5.2%	1.3%	0.8%	0.6%
NFTs	N = 309	N = 357	N = 327	N = 306	N = 299	N = 260	N = 159
Never used it	82.9%	73.7%	67.0%	74.8%	92.3%	96.2%	96.2%
Used it but not much	9.4%	13.2%	17.4%	13.4%	4.0%	0.4%	1.9%
Used it a lot	2.9%	7.3%	8.3%	4.9%	3.0%	1.5%	0.6%
Don't know	4.9%	5.9%	7.3%	6.9%	0.7%	1.9%	1.3%
Metaverse/Web3	N = 309	N = 356	N = 328	N = 306	N = 299	N = 260	N = 160
Never used it	81.6%	73.0%	61.3%	72.2%	84.6%	90.0%	93.8%
Used it but not much	10.7%	12.1%	20.4%	15.0%	8.0%	5.4%	2.5%
Used it a lot	3.2%	9.3%	10.7%	5.9%	4.0%	0.8%	1.3%
Don't know	4.5%	5.6%	7.6%	6.9%	3.3%	3.9%	2.5%
The Cloud	N = 310	N = 358	N = 328	N = 304	N = 299	N = 259	N = 160
Never used it	42.9%	35.8%	27.1%	27.3%	29.4%	37.5%	46.3%
Used it but not much	26.5%	33.2%	36.9%	36.5%	41.8%	36.7%	36.9%
Used it a lot	25.5%	26.5%	29.3%	29.6%	26.4%	22.0%	12.5%
Don't know	5.2%	4.5%	6.7%	6.6%	2.3%	3.9%	4.4%
Blockchain	N = 310	N = 357	N = 328	N = 306	N = 299	N = 260	N = 160
Never used it	81.6%	75.1%	62.8%	74.2%	89.6%	90.8%	91.3%
Used it but not much	8.4%	12.9%	18.9%	13.4%	5.0%	5.0%	6.3%
Used it a lot	4.5%	7.6%	11.0%	6.5%	4.4%	2.3%	1.3%
Don't know	5.5%	4.5%	7.3%	5.9%	1.0%	1.9%	1.3%
Virtual /Augmented Reality	N = 308	N = 358	N = 327	N = 307	N = 299	N = 259	N = 160
Never used it	55.5%	56.7%	55.1%	55.4%	78.9%	85.3%	90.6%
Used it but not much	33.1%	26.0%	27.5%	29.6%	17.1%	10.8%	5.0%
Used it a lot	6.8%	12.0%	11.0%	8.5%	3.3%	1.2%	0.6%
Don't know	4.6%	5.3%	6.4%	6.5%	0.7%	2.7%	3.8%
5G	N = 310	N = 358	N = 328	N = 308	N = 299	N = 260	N = 160
Never used it	29.0%	16.5%	21.3%	29.6%	44.2%	61.9%	64.4%
Used it but not much	26.8%	25.4%	28.7%	27.3%	25.4%	16.2%	20.0%
Used it a lot	34.8%	52.0%	43.9%	36.7%	25.8%	15.8%	8.8%
Don't know	9.4%	6.2%	6.1%	6.5%	4.7%	6.2%	6.9%
Voice Assistants	N = 309	N = 357	N = 328	N = 308	N = 299	N = 259	N = 160
Never used it	18.1%	23.5%	21.3%	26.6%	42.1%	50.2%	66.3%
Used it but not much	42.4%	40.6%	36.0%	40.6%	38.1%	36.3%	23.8%
Used it a lot	36.6%	32.2%	36.9%	28.6%	18.7%	12.0%	8.1%
Don't know	2.9%	3.6%	5.8%	4.2%	1.0%	1.5%	1.9%

Age (years)	16-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+
AI e.g. ChatGPT, Bard	N = 310	N = 358	N = 327	N = 307	N = 299	N = 259	N = 160
Never used it	16.8%	26.5%	27.8%	33.2%	51.5%	62.2%	75.6%
Used it but not much	33.9%	27.1%	41.6%	40.1%	36.1%	28.6%	16.9%
Used it a lot	45.2%	43.0%	25.7%	21.5%	9.7%	6.2%	4.4%
Don't know	4.2%	3.4%	4.9%	5.2%	2.7%	3.1%	3.1%

Notes: Columns sum to 100% for each section. Sample sizes vary due to the removal of 'prefer not to answer' responses.

Appendix C

Appendix Table 3. Usage of digital technologies by comfort levels

Comfort level	Extremely uncomfortable	Somewhat uncomfortable	Haven't used it enough	Somewhat comfortable	Extremely comfortable
Buying/Selling cryptocurrency	**N = 355**	**N = 169**	**N = 388**	**N = 167**	**N = 47**
Never used it	91.0%	52.7%	59.8%	11.4%	2.1%
Used it but not much	5.9%	30.2%	25.0%	44.9%	17.0%
Used it a lot	0.9%	11.8%	8.0%	38.9%	72.3%
Don't know	2.3%	5.3%	7.2%	4.8%	8.5%
Buying/Selling NFTs	**N = 395**	**N = 142**	**N = 430**	**N = 105**	**N = 43**
Never used it	94.2%	66.2%	71.6%	25.7%	14.0%
Used it but not much	2.5%	18.3%	16.1%	38.1%	32.6%
Used it a lot	0.5%	8.5%	4.7%	24.8%	41.9%
Don't know	2.8%	7.0%	7.7%	11.4%	11.6%
Being in the Metaverse	**N = 285**	**N = 202**	**N = 451**	**N = 141**	**N = 33**
Never used it	89.8%	67.8%	70.5%	21.3%	9.1%
Used it but not much	4.9%	20.3%	16.6%	38.3%	36.4%
Used it a lot	1.1%	5.5%	5.1%	29.8%	45.5%
Don't know	4.2%	6.4%	7.8%	10.6%	9.1%
Storing information in the Cloud	**N = 123**	**N = 183**	**N = 298**	**N = 402**	**N = 122**
Never used it	72.4%	27.3%	33.2%	11.4%	2.5%
Used it but not much	14.6%	43.2%	43.0%	38.8%	14.8%
Used it a lot	4.1%	24.0%	16.1%	46.5%	81.2%
Don't know	8.9%	5.5%	7.7%	3.2%	1.6%
Getting useful information from AI	**N = 144**	**N = 124**	**N = 320**	**N = 380**	**N = 167**
Never used it	77.1%	37.9%	40.3%	5.3%	0.0%
Used it but not much	14.6%	43.6%	44.4%	51.1%	13.2%
Used it a lot	3.5%	12.9%	10.0%	40.5%	84.4%
Don't know	4.9%	5.7%	5.3%	3.2%	2.4%

Notes: Columns sum to 100% for each section. Samples exclude respondents who have never heard of the listed technologies. Sample sizes vary due to the removal of 'prefer not to answer' responses.

Appendix D

Appendix Table 4. Impact of AI on our lives by age groups

Age groups (years)	16-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+
Will make life better	N = 292	N = 339	N = 306	N = 288	N = 272	N = 223	N = 123
Strongly disagree	7.2%	7.4%	6.5%	6.9%	11.0%	12.6%	13.8%
Somewhat disagree	12.7%	10.0%	10.1%	9.0%	15.1%	17.5%	23.6%
Neither	37.0%	36.9%	35.0%	45.5%	40.8%	42.2%	43.9%
Somewhat agree	32.5%	36.3%	30.7%	27.4%	25.4%	26.5%	16.3%
Strongly agree	10.6%	9.4%	17.7%	11.1%	7.7%	1.4%	2.4%
Could mean the end of humankind	N = 290	N = 338	N = 305	N = 286	N = 272	N = 225	N = 122
Strongly disagree	16.6%	13.9%	20.3%	15.4%	22.4%	28.4%	28.7%
Somewhat disagree	26.2%	20.4%	19.7%	23.4%	24.6%	23.1%	27.9%
Neither	28.3%	33.7%	31.2%	29.7%	30.5%	27.6%	25.4%
Somewhat agree	22.4%	21.9%	21.3%	23.8%	15.4%	16.9%	14.8%
Strongly agree	6.6%	10.1%	7.5%	7.7%	7.0%	4.0%	3.3%
Will affect employment/Cause unemployment	N = 293	N = 338	N = 306	N = 291	N = 273	N = 223	N = 123
Strongly disagree	5.8%	3.0%	4.6%	3.8%	7.0%	4.9%	7.3%
Somewhat disagree	9.6%	12.4%	15.4%	11.0%	15.4%	14.8%	20.3%
Neither	26.6%	29.6%	29.1%	30.2%	33.7%	26.9%	29.3%
Somewhat agree	36.2%	33.7%	36.9%	37.1%	31.9%	38.6%	30.9%
Strongly agree	21.8%	21.3%	14.1%	17.9%	12.1%	14.8%	12.2%
Will help us become more efficient	N = 292	N = 341	N = 306	N = 290	N = 272	N = 224	N = 123
Strongly disagree	6.5%	4.1%	6.5%	5.2%	6.3%	6.3%	6.5%
Somewhat disagree	8.2%	7.0%	7.2%	10.0%	12.9%	15.2%	15.5%
Neither	30.8%	30.5%	32.7%	31.0%	35.3%	38.0%	42.3%
Somewhat agree	39.0%	44.9%	34.3%	42.1%	32.7%	35.7%	31.7%
Strongly agree	15.4%	13.5%	19.3%	11.7%	12.9%	4.9%	4.1%
Is overhyped and influence will not be large	N = 292	N = 337	N = 306	N = 288	N = 272	N = 224	N = 123
Strongly disagree	12.3%	10.1%	10.8%	10.8%	13.6%	10.3%	13.0%
Somewhat disagree	30.8%	22.0%	24.5%	21.2%	23.2%	32.6%	29.3%
Neither	37.3%	42.4%	36.9%	43.8%	40.8%	33.0%	39.0%
Somewhat agree	14.0%	19.6%	19.9%	20.1%	16.5%	20.5%	13.8%
Strongly agree	5.5%	5.9%	7.8%	4.2%	5.9%	3.6%	4.9%
Could be used to monitor people's private lives	N = 291	N = 338	N = 306	N = 288	N = 273	N = 226	N = 123
Strongly disagree	5.2%	4.1%	4.9%	1.0%	4.4%	4.0%	4.9%
Somewhat disagree	10.3%	6.8%	6.5%	4.9%	5.5%	2.7%	4.9%
Neither	32.3%	35.2%	33.3%	33.3%	30.0%	28.3%	26.8%
Somewhat agree	37.1%	35.5%	35.0%	41.3%	38.1%	40.3%	48.0%
Strongly agree	15.1%	18.3%	20.3%	19.4%	22.0%	24.8%	15.5%

Notes: Columns sum to 100% for each section. Sample excludes respondents who have never heard of AI. Sample sizes vary due to the removal of 'prefer not to answer' responses.

Appendix Table 5. Impact of AI on our lives by employment status

Employment status	Employed	Unemployed
Will make life better	N = 1207	N = 624
Strongly disagree	7.5%	10.9%
Somewhat disagree	11.7%	15.1%
Neither	36.0%	46.3%
Somewhat agree	32.9%	22.4%
Strongly agree	11.9%	5.3%
Could mean the end of humankind	N = 1202	N = 623
Strongly disagree	20.8%	17.8%
Somewhat disagree	23.5%	22.5%
Neither	27.7%	34.2%
Somewhat agree	20.4%	19.4%
Strongly agree	7.7%	6.1%
Will affect employment/Cause unemployment	N = 1206	N = 629
Strongly disagree	4.9%	4.9%
Somewhat disagree	14.7%	11.3%
Neither	28.4%	31.2%
Somewhat agree	35.3%	35.8%
Strongly agree	16.7%	16.9%
Will help us become more efficient	N = 1209	N = 627
Strongly disagree	4.8%	7.8%
Somewhat disagree	8.9%	12.4%
Neither	30.8%	38.1%
Somewhat agree	40.5%	33.0%
Strongly agree	15.0%	8.6%
Is overhyped and influence will not be large	N = 1203	N = 626
Strongly disagree	11.4%	11.7%
Somewhat disagree	24.9%	26.5%
Neither	38.0%	42.0%
Somewhat agree	19.5%	15.5%
Strongly agree	6.2%	4.3%
Could be used to monitor people's private lives	N = 1206	N = 627
Strongly disagree	3.9%	4.3%
Somewhat disagree	7.5%	3.7%
Neither	31.8%	32.1%
Somewhat agree	37.9%	39.9%
Strongly agree	19.0%	20.1%

Notes: Columns sum to 100% for each section. Sample excludes respondents who have never heard of AI. Sample sizes vary due to the removal of 'prefer not to answer' responses.

NEW ZEALAND
WORK RESEARCH INSTITUTE

Auckland University of Technology, Auckland, New Zealand

policy.research@aut.ac.nz | **www.nzpri.aut.ac.nz**