

# Online hate speech

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Findings from Australia, New Zealand and Europe

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# Introduction

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Hate speech is recognised as a growing online issue which can negatively impact a person's mental health, general wellbeing and online engagement. It can also, in the most extreme cases, lead to harassment and violence offline. This research report is the result of collaboration between the eSafety Commissioner (eSafety) in Australia, Netsafe in New Zealand and UK Safer Internet Centre (as part of the European SELMA project) in the United Kingdom. It is part of an ongoing program of cross-agency online safety research which has resulted in joint reporting on research topics such as parenting and online pornography and young people and sexting.

Each agency has an interest in exploring the attitudes and experiences with online hate speech in their respective countries as it is directly relevant to their mandates to empower people to have safer, more positive experiences online.

This report summarises results from quantitative and qualitative research undertaken in each jurisdiction.

## Organisational overviews

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### eSafety Commissioner

The eSafety Commissioner (eSafety) is Australia's national independent regulator for online safety. eSafety leads and coordinates online safety efforts across Commonwealth departments, authorities and agencies, and we engage with key online safety stakeholders internationally, to amplify our impact across borders. The activities of the eSafety Commissioner are governed by the Enhancing Online Safety Act 2015. eSafety has a wide range of functions and powers including promoting online safety for Australians, administering a complaints system for cyber bullying material targeted at an Australian child, tackling image-based abuse, and administering the online content scheme under the Broadcasting Services Act 1992. eSafety also develops audience-specific content for parents, educators, young people, older Australians, women and other vulnerable citizens who are experiencing technology-facilitated abuse.

[www.esafety.gov.au](http://www.esafety.gov.au)

### Netsafe

Netsafe is New Zealand's independent, non-profit online safety organisation. Its purpose is to enable all New Zealand internet users to confidently access digital opportunities and prevent online harm. Netsafe achieves this by providing online safety help, support, expertise and education services. Netsafe has a statutory role as the agency to receive, assess and investigate complaints about online bullying, harassment and abuse under the Harmful Digital Communications Act 2015. Netsafe carries out research to provide New Zealand's online safety community with research-based insights about online behaviours and the impact of digital communications. It works with other organisations on projects such as this to extend the reach and depth of its research.

[www.netsafe.org.nz](http://www.netsafe.org.nz)

### UK Safer Internet Centre

The UK Safer Internet Centre is a partnership of three leading charities—Childnet International, South West Grid for Learning (SWGfL) and the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF)—with a shared mission to make the internet a better place for children and young people. The partnership was appointed by the European Commission as the Safer Internet Centre for the UK in January 2011 and is one of the 31 Safer Internet Centres of the Insafe network. The Centre exists to raise awareness, support children, parents and professionals as well as managing illegal online child sexual abuse images and videos, wherever they are found in the world.

[www.saferinternet.org.uk](http://www.saferinternet.org.uk)

# What we did

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## Australia

In Australia, findings on people's attitudes, awareness and responses to online hate speech come from a nationally representative survey of 3,737 adults aged 18 to 65 about online safety commissioned by eSafety in August 2019. The survey included a number of questions in common with the New Zealand survey to allow for cross country comparisons. The New Zealand and Australian surveys asked the following question about online hate speech experiences:

'In the last 12 months.....have you received a digital communication that offended, discriminated, denigrated, abused and/or disparaged you because of your personal identity/beliefs (e.g. race, ethnicity, gender, nationality, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, etc.)?'

The Australian survey followed a mixed methodology approach using a multi-panel online survey (n = 3287) of 20 minutes, alongside a computer assisted telephone interview (CATI, n=450) of 15 minutes. The maximum margin of error for the whole population was  $\pm 2\%$  at the 95% confidence level. Fieldwork was conducted from August to September 2019 with responses referring to activities that occurred in the 12 months to August 2019.

## New Zealand

In 2018 we conducted a study to explore adult New Zealanders' personal experiences of, and exposure to, online hate speech. The results from that research provided the first nationally representative measure of the extent and nature of online hate speech in New Zealand<sup>1</sup>. Following the devastating terrorist attack against the Al-Noor Mosque and the Linwood Islamic Centre Christchurch attacks on 15 March 2019, we decided to build on and extend last year's study.

To measure personal experiences of and exposure to online hate speech, we reapplied questions from the survey tool used in the 2018 study. In addition, for this year, we included a question that asked those people that told us they had received a hateful communication in the last 12 months when this incident occurred. We also added a question asking participants about statements regarding online hate-related issues. We did so to measure people's views about the role and/or approaches of government, social media platforms, and people themselves to deal with this sort of online content. The statements added in the survey reflected public discussion and interest at the time of developing the research instrument and following the Christchurch attacks. As part of this study we shared background information and our questionnaire with eSafety in Australia to enable comparison in this report between the experiences of the two countries' internet users. In this shared report we present the headline results from the 2019 study in a similar format to the data collected by eSafety to enable this comparison.

Netsafe has also published a report that examines trends in the online hate speech experiences of New Zealanders by comparing results from 2018 and 2019<sup>2</sup>.

Our working definition of online hate speech followed the conceptualisation developed for last year's study on the basis of international literature. Hence it is defined as: "any technology-mediated speech or digital communication that offends, discriminates, denigrates, abuses and/or disparages a person(s) on the basis of a group-defining characteristic such as race, ethnicity, gender, nationality, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, and others".

<sup>1</sup> Netsafe. (2018). Online hate speech: A survey on personal experiences and exposure among adult New Zealanders. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3272148>

We collected data from a sample (of 1,161 people) of New Zealand adults that is nationally representative in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, and religion<sup>3</sup>. Data was also collected regarding people with disabilities and non-heterosexual people. A note of caution is that results about these two groups should be considered as indicative rather than representative. The maximum margin of error for the whole population is  $\pm 3.1\%$  at the 95% confidence level. Data collection was conducted between 4 and 26 June 2019.

Due to the sensitive nature of the topic and the timing of the fieldwork, we put special care into managing ethics. For example, we did not include any reference to the Christchurch attacks to avoid unnecessary triggering of memories and emotions associated with the events. We also provided participants with information about the study's purpose, asked them for their consent to participate, and guaranteed that their responses were confidential, and their data protected. Netsafe acknowledges that any measure based on self-reported data is a limitation per se. Another challenge is that this survey-based research collected data from a specific point in time (June 2019). Thus, we acknowledge that public opinion about sensitive issues such as online hate might change over time.

Note that percentages may not total exactly 100% due to rounding or because survey participants were allowed to choose multiple answers to some questions.

## United Kingdom

The United Kingdom's SWGfL is a partner in the European SELMA project ([www.hackinghate.eu](http://www.hackinghate.eu)). SELMA (Social and Emotional Learning for Mutual Awareness) is a two-year project co-funded by the European Commission which aims to tackle the problem of online hate speech by promoting mutual awareness, tolerance, and respect. This project spans Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Greece, and the United Kingdom. In the literature review, an overview of what is empirically known about the risk of exposure to online hate, and the harm it might cause was provided. Unfortunately, there is only a limited amount of empirical data available on this topic across Europe, particularly with a focus on the perspective of children or young people. Therefore, a quantitative online survey was developed to better understand two key SELMA target audiences: teens and teachers. The online survey reached a large number of respondents, more specifically a total of 776 teens and 333 teachers across (in order of response numbers) Greece, Germany, Denmark, the UK and other EU countries and included a good mix of sociodemographic backgrounds.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.netsafe.org.nz/online-hate-speech-report-2019>

<sup>3</sup> Our methodology enabled us to collect data from a representative sample of New Zealand's four largest religious groups: Christian/Māori Christian, Buddhist, Hindu, and Islam/Muslim.

## International findings

Despite differences in the research methodologies adopted by each country, there are comparable research results across the studies.

Both New Zealand and Australia used a common definition of hate speech and this was reflected in similar exposure rates for their populations. In Australia, around 14% of the adult population was estimated to have been the target of online hate speech in the 12 months to August 2019. In New Zealand, this was around 15% in the 12 months to June 2019. In both countries, younger adults were also more likely to have experienced hate speech. This finding was also reflected in the 18% of young people in the European SELMA project who reported experiencing hate speech over a period of three months.

Religion, political views, race and gender were the most common reasons cited in both Australia and New Zealand for experiencing hate speech. Young people interviewed as part of the European SELMA project were instead more likely to be targeted because of their appearance and their sexuality.

Hate speech was found to spread through several popular online channels. Adults and teens across all jurisdictions commonly cited social media sites like Facebook and Instagram as the ways in which they received hate online. A finding, that also helps to understand the larger proportions of people that reported either encountering or being a bystander to online hate speech across all three studies.

A similar proportion of participants in the Australian and New Zealand studies also reported visiting sites that target others or promote hate speech.

## Australian findings

### Key Australian findings:

- The overwhelming majority of people support action to check the spread of online hate speech including the introduction of legislation and getting social media companies to do more.
- When asked to define hate speech most respondents see it in the broadest of terms — anything negative which is directed to someone.
- Around 1 In 7 (14%) adults aged 18–65 are estimated to have been the target of online hate speech in the 12 months to August 2019.
- People identifying as LGBTQI or as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander experience online hate speech at more than double the national average.
- People experiencing online hate speech most often cite their political views, religion, gender, race, ethnicity and nationality as reasons for being targeted online. People identifying as LGBTQI overwhelmingly identify their sexuality as the reason for being targeted online.
- People perpetrating online hate speech are motivated by a desire to amuse, harass or embarrass their targets.
- Online hate speech is most likely to occur between strangers.
- Hate speech largely occurs via established social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram or in everyday applications such as email.
- Nearly 36% of people experiencing online hate speech took some form of action — generally blocked the contact, reporting it or speaking to a friend or family member.
- Despite 64% of people experiencing hate speech taking no action, 58% report a negative impact from their experience, typically mental or emotional stress, relationship problems or reputational damage.

## Australian adults' understanding of hate speech

Race, sexual orientation and religious affiliation were at the top of Australian adults' minds when asked to explain what they thought hate speech to be. The most common words used in their unprompted definition of hate speech are visually represented in Figure 1 which also highlights the broad understanding people have of this term. Hate speech was frequently noted as anything negative that was directed at another person. Therefore, it was seen as going beyond the incitement or spreading of hate to communication that is hurtful, or which simply causes offence.

**Figure 1: Most common words used to define hate speech**



Source: 2019 national eSafety adult online safety survey. Sample: 3,737 people aged 18–65.

## Attitudes to online hate speech

Seven in 10 adult Australians believe that online hate speech is spreading with the majority agreeing that more should be done to stop its growth either through the introduction of new laws (71%) or through social media companies doing more (78%) (see Table 1). Also, a sizeable minority of adult Australians (23%) believe that people should be free to say whatever they want online. This group was predominantly male and those aged 30–40. Moreover, they overwhelmingly identified as being heterosexual, from non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (Indigenous) and non-culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (CALD).

**Table 1: Attitudes to online hate speech, August 2019**

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Online hate is spreading in Australia and around the world	2%	4%	25%	44%	25%
Social media platforms should do more to stop the spread of hateful content online	2%	3%	17%	45%	33%
I will support the introduction of further specific legislation to stop the spread of hateful content online	3%	4%	23%	44%	27%
We will need to do more than introduce additional legislation to prevent the spread of hateful content online	3%	4%	26%	45%	23%
People should be free to say whatever they want online	12%	27%	38%	18%	5%
People should just ignore 'one off' hateful online content that is targeted at them	8%	18%	35%	30%	9%
Everyone has a role in tackling hateful content	1%	4%	25%	48%	22%
Sample	3,737	3,737	3,737	3,737	3,737

## Experience of online hate speech

In the survey, eSafety asked the following of respondents:

In the last 12 months, how many times, if ever, have you received a digital communication that offended, discriminated, denigrated, abused and/or disparaged you because of your personal identity/beliefs (e.g. race, ethnicity, gender, nationality, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, etc)?

As highlighted in Table 2, the response showed that an estimated 1 in 7 adult Australians aged 18–65 (14%) were the target of online hate speech in the 12 months to August 2019. This equates to around 2 million people. About half of these had experienced online hate speech in the past four months. People identifying as LGBTQI or as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders (Indigenous) experience online hate speech at double the national average.

**Table 2: Experience of online hate speech in the 12 months to August 2019**

	Total	Gender		Age					Cohort			
		M	F	18-24	25-29	30- 40	41-50	51-65	LGBTQI	Indigenous	CALD	Disability
<b>Never</b>	76%	76%	78%	66%	66%	72%	79%	84%	60%	58%	70%	73%
<b>Experienced</b>	14%	15%	13%	20%	24%	16%	11%	9%	30%	32%	18%	19%
<b>Once</b>	5%	5%	5%	8%	10%	6%	4%	2%	4%	14%	8%	7%
<b>2–4 times</b>	6%	6%	6%	10%	12%	8%	5%	4%	18%	11%	7%	7%
<b>5+ times</b>	3%	3%	2%	3%	2%	3%	2%	3%	8%	7%	2%	5%
<b>Don't know</b>	10%	10%	9%	14%	10%	11%	10%	7%	10%	10%	12%	8%
<b>Sample</b>	3,737	1,808	1,916	450	383	1,046	725	1,133	252	198	953	567

## Reason for online hate speech

In general, people experiencing online hate speech identify their political views (21%), religion (20%) and gender (20%), as the top three reasons for being targeted. However, terms like race, ethnicity and nationality can be interchangeable from a respondent's perspective. Taken together, these reasons account for 32% of people experiencing online hate speech. Sexual orientation is where the largest difference for a particular group is identified. As indicated by Table 3, for those that identify as LGBTQI, 61% report that their sexual orientation was the reason for being the target of online hate speech, compared to their gender (35%) or political views (30%).

**Table 3: Reasons for online hate speech in the 12 months to August 2019**

	Total	Gender		Age					Cohort			
		M	F	18-24	25-29	30-40	41-50	51-65	LGBTQI	Indigenous	CALD	Disability
<b>Political views</b>	21%	25%	18%	16%	26%	24%	18%	20%	30%	13%	19%	25%
<b>Religion</b>	20%	20%	21%	14%	27%	21%	23%	18%	6%	14%	26%	17%
<b>Gender</b>	20%	15%	24%	24%	25%	19%	16%	17%	35%	19%	19%	18%
<b>Race</b>	19%	19%	18%	25%	27%	19%	12%	12%	15%	35%	24%	20%
<b>Physical appearance</b>	18%	14%	21%	22%	27%	16%	18%	9%	23%	28%	16%	24%
<b>I don't know</b>	15%	16%	14%	15%	6%	16%	16%	20%	3%	11%	12%	17%
<b>Age</b>	14%	15%	14%	14%	20%	13%	15%	12%	18%	17%	16%	15%
<b>Ethnicity</b>	14%	18%	11%	15%	17%	17%	13%	7%	12%	28%	19%	15%
<b>Nationality</b>	13%	16%	9%	16%	18%	15%	7%	6%	12%	22%	18%	13%
<b>Sexual orientation</b>	12%	14%	10%	14%	19%	10%	11%	10%	61%	16%	9%	17%
<b>Disability</b>	8%	9%	7%	5%	13%	4%	13%	9%	21%	17%	5%	25%
<b>Other</b>	8%	7%	10%	4%	5%	7%	8%	16%	3%	0%	3%	10%
<b>Sample</b>	578	288	285	104	99	179	88	108	80	69	190	131

## Motivations behind online hate speech

Respondents cited the motivations for being targeted by hate speech as ‘fun/amusement,’ (29%), ‘to harass’ (25%) or ‘to cause embarrassment or shame’ (22%) (see Table 4).

**Table 4: Top 10 motivations behind online hate speech, August 2019**

	Total	Gender		Age					Cohort			
		M	F	18-24	25-29	30-40	41-50	51-65	LGBTQI	Indigenous	CALD	Disability
<b>Amusement</b>	29%	27%	31%	24%	32%	26%	30%	34%	44%	36%	26%	33%
<b>To harass</b>	25%	23%	26%	22%	26%	24%	27%	25%	30%	38%	20%	30%
<b>Embarrass</b>	22%	22%	23%	21%	22%	23%	19%	27%	36%	30%	26%	33%
<b>Don't know</b>	16%	15%	16%	10%	14%	22%	17%	11%	18%	8%	16%	11%
<b>To control</b>	15%	15%	14%	14%	20%	9%	13%	20%	18%	11%	15%	17%
<b>To boast</b>	11%	14%	9%	9%	14%	12%	15%	9%	15%	8%	10%	13%
<b>Revenge</b>	10%	8%	11%	12%	16%	4%	10%	11%	15%	17%	11%	14%
<b>Financial gain</b>	9%	12%	7%	7%	18%	5%	6%	12%	9%	11%	14%	12%
<b>No reason</b>	7%	8%	7%	7%	6%	8%	6%	9%	3%	5%	6%	6%
<b>Competitive advantage*</b>	7%	11%	4%	7%	20%	9%	0%	0%	0%	14%	17%	11%
<b>Sample</b>	578	288	285	104	99	179	88	108	80	69	190	131

\*In an online game.

## Sources of hate speech

Most people are unable to attribute responsibility for their online hate speech experience to a specific person with 47% assigning blame to a stranger and 13% reporting that they don't know who was responsible (13%). People identifying as LGBTQI are considerably more likely (76%) to identify a stranger as the source of online hate speech than any other group (see Table 5).

**Table 5: Perceived responsibility for online hate speech received in the 12 months to August 2019**

	Net	Gender		Age					Cohort			
		M	F	18-24	25-29	30-40	41-50	51-65	LGBTQI	Indigenous	CALD	Disability
<b>Stranger</b>	47%	46%	47%	52%	45%	44%	47%	48%	76%	39%	45%	44%
<b>Friends*</b>	19%	19%	18%	12%	28%	15%	21%	19%	15%	14%	21%	26%
<b>Don't know</b>	13%	15%	12%	9%	13%	11%	13%	20%	6%	8%	14%	11%
<b>Acquaintance</b>	11%	11%	12%	10%	15%	13%	7%	10%	9%	16%	13%	16%
<b>Family member</b>	8%	6%	10%	5%	8%	8%	11%	8%	6%	19%	11%	13%
<b>Ex-partner</b>	7%	9%	6%	11%	16%	6%	8%	0%	6%	14%	10%	8%
<b>Work colleague**</b>	7%	11%	4%	1%	14%	8%	11%	3%	3%	11%	5%	9%
<b>Partner</b>	5%	7%	4%	1%	12%	6%	4%	2%	6%	11%	9%	10%
<b>Carer</b>	5%	7%	2%	1%	13%	5%	4%	1%	6%	11%	5%	6%
<b>Won't say</b>	4%	3%	4%	6%	2%	6%	2%	1%	0%	3%	2%	0%
<b>Other</b>	4%	4%	4%	1%	2%	4%	6%	7%	6%	3%	2%	6%
<b>Sample</b>	578	288	285	104	99	179	88	108	80	69	190	131

\*Including offline and online friends. \*\*Including ex-work colleague.

## Hate speech channels

According to respondents, hate speech occurs overwhelmingly on established social media platforms such as Facebook (58%) or everyday applications including as email (18%) or SMS/MMS (11%) (See Table 6). Online discussion forums, dating or gaming sites and other sites each account for 4% or less of cited channels.

**Table 6: Top 10 hate speech communication channels, August 2019**

	Total	Gender		Age					Cohort			
		M	F	18-24	25-29	30-40	41-50	51-65	LGBTQI	Indigenous	CALD	Disability
Facebook	58%	55%	60%	46%	58%	62%	65%	55%	68%	57%	53%	58%
Email	18%	21%	15%	4%	20%	16%	24%	25%	18%	11%	18%	18%
Instagram	14%	16%	12%	20%	24%	14%	13%	3%	12%	31%	21%	19%
SMS/ MMS	11%	14%	9%	6%	17%	9%	15%	11%	6%	22%	15%	17%
Snapchat	9%	10%	7%	11%	21%	7%	6%	1%	6%	17%	13%	10%
Twitter	8%	9%	6%	14%	12%	5%	8%	4%	18%	8%	11%	12%
IM*	6%	6%	6%	9%	9%	5%	2%	4%	6%	6%	8%	8%
Streaming**	5%	10%	2%	1%	6%	7%	4%	8%	3%	5%	6%	10%
Other websites	5%	6%	4%	5%	6%	4%	6%	6%	6%	6%	5%	6%
Forums	5%	5%	4%	2%	6%	5%	4%	5%	6%	3%	3%	6%
Sample	578	288	285	104	99	179	88	108	80	69	190	131

\*e.g. WhatsApp. \*\*e.g. sites such as YouTube.

## Reaction to online hate speech

A minority of those who have experienced online hate speech took some form of action (36%). This was highest for people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds (56%) and lowest for those aged 30–40 (25%).

For the majority of people who did not react to hate speech, 54% just ignored it, while 24% reported that they did not think anything would change and 23% felt that they did not consider the experience serious enough (See Table 7).

**Table 7: Top 5 reasons for not acting after experiencing hate speech, August 2019**

	Total	Gender		Age					Cohort			
		M	F	18-24	25-29	30-40	41-50	51-65	LGBTQI	Indigenous	CALD	Disability
Ignored it	54%	52%	56%	54%	52%	53%	46%	63%	53%	47%	60%	46%
Nothing would change	24%	21%	27%	21%	29%	19%	29%	29%	35%	19%	21%	30%
Not serious enough	23%	20%	25%	23%	27%	26%	18%	14%	22%	23%	23%	15%
I didn't know what to do	17%	19%	14%	12%	25%	10%	23%	20%	11%	12%	15%	18%
Too embarrassed	7%	8%	7%	15%	15%	3%	12%	0%	12%	19%	10%	6%
Sample	359	187	171	59	60	130	53	57	42	31	112	67

\*e.g. WhatsApp. \*\*e.g. sites such as YouTube.

As highlighted in Table 8, respondents' top three actions to address online hate speech were blocking the account of the person responsible (46%), reporting the hate speech to a website or social media company (45%) or speaking to a family member or friend (36%). About 1 in 5 people experiencing hate speech confronted the perpetrator online. Five per cent of people experiencing online hate speech report that someone else dealt with the issue for them.

**Table 8: Top 10 actions taken after experiencing online hate speech, August 2019**

	Total	Gender		Age					Cohort			
		M	F	18-24	25-29	30-40	41-50	51-65	LGBTQI	Indigenous	CALD	Disability
<b>Blocked the person</b>	46%	44%	48%	31%	48%	43%	43%	57%	47%	30%	36%	48%
<b>Reported it*</b>	45%	51%	41%	42%	64%	46%	61%	26%	56%	55%	50%	48%
<b>Spoke to someone**</b>	36%	32%	39%	44%	45%	31%	47%	24%	31%	40%	45%	47%
<b>Confronted the perpetrator online</b>	19%	17%	21%	19%	15%	19%	19%	21%	25%	10%	16%	22%
<b>Contacted the police</b>	15%	15%	14%	12%	21%	17%	19%	11%	13%	30%	22%	24%
<b>Changed privacy settings</b>	15%	16%	14%	9%	12%	17%	23%	13%	12%	10%	11%	17%
<b>Spent less time online</b>	11%	13%	9%	9%	22%	7%	10%	8%	12%	5%	14%	12%
<b>Changed username</b>	9%	9%	8%	3%	15%	7%	10%	8%	0%	5%	11%	12%
<b>Searched online for information</b>	9%	10%	9%	3%	15%	9%	7%	10%	0%	5%	11%	14%
<b>Reported it to an organisation</b>	9%	10%	9%	6%	18%	7%	3%	13%	6%	15%	11%	17%
<b>Sample</b>	219	101	114	45	39	49	35	51	38	38	78	64

\*Social media company or website. \*\*Family or friends.

## Resolution following hate speech incidents

Around 30% of those who had experienced online hate speech identified that the issue was not resolved to their satisfaction. This ranged from a low of 21% for people aged 51–65 to a comparative high of 35% for people aged 41–50. The main reasons for it not being resolved were that the issue was ongoing or that they had chosen to ignore it.

## Effects of hate speech

An estimated 58% of those who personally experienced online hate speech reported a negative impact from their experience. Thirty-seven per cent reported mental or emotional stress as a result, 14% relationship problems, while 10% reported damage to their reputation. People identifying as LGBTQI were more likely to report mental or emotional stress from online hate speech than other groups (see Table 9).

**Table 9: Top 5 negative effects of online hate speech, August 2019**

	Total	Gender		Age					Cohort			
		M	F	18–24	25–29	30–40	41–50	51–65	LGBTQI	Indigenous	CALD	Disability
<b>None</b>	42%	42%	42%	41%	36%	44%	38%	47%	33%	22%	38%	32%
<b>Mental or emotional stress</b>	37%	34%	39%	29%	36%	34%	43%	41%	50%	43%	31%	45%
<b>Relationship problems*</b>	14%	13%	15%	15%	23%	13%	15%	7%	18%	22%	19%	22%
<b>Reputational damage</b>	10%	11%	9%	10%	13%	8%	15%	6%	12%	17%	14%	14%
<b>Work problems</b>	7%	10%	5%	7%	13%	8%	5%	4%	6%	17%	11%	13%
<b>Financial loss</b>	7%	9%	4%	9%	13%	5%	4%	6%	6%	17%	10%	9%
<b>Sample</b>	578	288	285	104	99	179	88	108	80	69	190	131

\*Including relationships with family /friends and romantic relationships.

## Bystander experience of hate speech

Approximately 25% of adult Australians aged 18–65 had witnessed online hate speech in the 12 months to August 2019. Those identifying as LGBTQI (33%) or Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander peoples (18%) reported witnessing online hate speech ‘many times’ that is, 5 or more times, compared with the national average of 10% (See Table 10).

In line with people’s personal experiences, bystanders identified religion, race and political views as reasons for hate speech online. More bystanders highlighted someone’s sexual orientation as a reason for the hate speech compared to those personally experiencing hate speech (Table 11).

**Table 10: Bystander experiences of online hate speech in the 12 months to August 2019**

	Total	Gender		Age					Cohort			
		M	F	18–24	25–29	30–40	41–50	51– 65	LGBTQI	Indigenous	CALD	Disability
<b>Never</b>	62%	64%	60%	54%	52%	59%	65%	69%	37%	46%	62%	61%
<b>Once</b>	4%	4%	4%	6%	9%	4%	3%	2%	7%	12%	6%	3%
<b>2–4 times</b>	11%	10%	12%	12%	13%	12%	10%	10%	12%	12%	11%	10%
<b>5+ times</b>	10%	9%	12%	13%	14%	11%	9%	9%	33%	18%	6%	13%
<b>I don’t know</b>	13%	13%	12%	16%	12%	14%	13%	10%	10%	12%	14%	13%
<b>Sample</b>	3,737	1,808	1,916	450	383	1,046	725	1,133	252	198	953	567

**Table 11: Bystander perception of reasons for online hate speech occurring, August 2019**

	Total	Gender		Age					Cohort			
		M	F	18-24	25-29	30-40	41-50	51-65	LGBTQI	Indigenous	CALD	Disability
<b>Religion</b>	54%	51%	57%	48%	54%	56%	58%	53%	56%	44%	50%	51%
<b>Race</b>	52%	50%	52%	58%	52%	48%	55%	50%	70%	52%	58%	51%
<b>Sexual orientation</b>	46%	43%	48%	55%	56%	38%	52%	52%	78%	48%	37%	45%
<b>Political views</b>	44%	41%	46%	40%	42%	42%	44%	47%	58%	40%	36%	45%
<b>Ethnicity</b>	43%	41%	43%	37%	45%	43%	42%	44%	59%	40%	36%	46%
<b>Nationality</b>	37%	36%	38%	36%	46%	36%	38%	37%	47%	43%	33%	39%
<b>Gender</b>	36%	35%	36%	37%	45%	34%	37%	32%	66%	33%	34%	39%
<b>Appearance</b>	28%	24%	31%	36%	35%	25%	37%	19%	49%	37%	23%	31%
<b>Disability</b>	20%	18%	20%	16%	24%	21%	25%	16%	36%	30%	15%	31%
<b>Age</b>	15%	13%	16%	12%	23%	13%	16%	13%	24%	23%	17%	20%
<b>I don't know</b>	4%	5%	3%	5%	7%	4%	2%	1%	2%	6%	4%	3%
<b>Other</b>	3%	2%	4%	3%	1%	4%	3%	3%	3%	4%	1%	4%
<b>Sample</b>	1,006	440	564	147	145	296	175	243	135	90	242	172

Those witnessing online hate speech are less likely to take some form of action (27%) than those personally experiencing online hate speech (36%). Bystanders acting was highest for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (43%) and those identifying as LGBTQI (37%). The lowest was for those aged 51–65 (23%) or males (24%).

Regardless of background, the main reasons for bystanders taking no action after witnessing online hate speech include that they just ignored it (31%), they didn't see it as their place to act (27%) or they didn't think anything would change by acting (18%) (See Table 12). Just over 10% of bystanders also reported that they took no action because someone else did something.

**Table 12: Bystanders, top 5 reasons for not acting after witnessing online hate speech, August 2019**

	Total	Gender		Age					Cohort			
		M	F	18-24	25-29	30-40	41-50	51-65	LGBTQI	Indigenous	CALD	Disability
<b>Ignored it</b>	31%	35%	30%	18%	26%	39%	29%	34%	30%	18%	28%	27%
<b>Not my place to act</b>	27%	27%	27%	46%	27%	29%	15%	23%	30%	21%	26%	23%
<b>Nothing would change</b>	18%	18%	18%	25%	22%	19%	13%	15%	29%	14%	21%	20%
<b>I didn't know what to do</b>	15%	12%	17%	25%	21%	12%	14%	13%	22%	15%	14%	20%
<b>They handled it themselves</b>	15%	14%	15%	16%	13%	17%	14%	13%	8%	22%	14%	17%
<b>Sample</b>	720	327	392	102	99	208	126	185	83	52	164	106

Those people witnessing and acting to address online hate speech took a range of actions including: reporting it to a website or social media company (54%), speaking to family or friends (34%) or blocking the account of the person responsible (25%). Nearly 1 in 4 of bystanders who took some form of action confronted the perpetrator responsible for the hate speech online (See Table 13).

**Table 13: Top 10 actions taken by bystanders witnessing online hate speech, August 2019**

	Total	Gender		Age					Cohort			
		M	F	18-24	25-29	30-40	41-50	51-65	LGBTQI	Indigenous	CALD	Disability
<b>Reported it*</b>	54%	44%	60%	56%	71%	46%	67%	41%	82%	75%	48%	60%
<b>Spoke to someone**</b>	34%	37%	33%	27%	47%	34%	26%	38%	41%	35%	36%	47%
<b>Blocked the person</b>	25%	29%	23%	18%	21%	22%	23%	37%	24%	25%	24%	29%
<b>Confronted the person online</b>	23%	24%	21%	26%	18%	22%	34%	17%	32%	15%	18%	24%
<b>Ignored it</b>	16%	18%	15%	6%	24%	19%	19%	10%	23%	5%	19%	14%
<b>Deleted posts</b>	13%	9%	16%	6%	16%	9%	18%	18%	14%	5%	12%	17%
<b>Less time online</b>	12%	8%	14%	6%	16%	14%	14%	10%	18%	15%	12%	19%
<b>Contacted the police</b>	9%	16%	6%	6%	24%	12%	4%	3%	9%	15%	24%	19%
<b>Changed privacy settings</b>	9%	13%	6%	6%	16%	8%	7%	8%	0%	10%	12%	10%
<b>Reflected on what I do online</b>	8%	4%	9%	9%	10%	2%	19%	5%	14%	9%	7%	7%
<b>Sample</b>	286	113	172	45	46	88	49	58	52	38	78	66

\*To a social media company or web site. \*\*Family or friends.

## Intentionally visiting sites

In the 12 months to August 2019, an estimated 5% of the adult population in Australia (just over 738,000 people) intentionally visited an online site or forum hosting material targeting people.

## New Zealand findings

### Key New Zealand findings:

- 15% of adults said they have experienced online hate speech in person at least once in the last 12 months to June 2019.
- Personal experiences of online hate speech were more common for those living with a disability, non-heterosexual participants and males participating in the study.
- Religion, political views and race were the most common reasons cited by respondents for receiving hate speech communications.
- About 3 in 10 survey participants had seen online hate speech targeting others.
- Bystanders identified religion, political views and ethnicity as the most common motives behind the content.
- In the 12 months to June 2019, 6% of participants had deliberately visited online sites that promote hate speech against others.

## Attitudes to online hate speech

We explored survey participants' level of agreement with seven statements related to online hate speech issues. In general, a majority (68%) agreed with the idea that hateful online content is growing in New Zealand and around the world. They also thought that social media platforms should do more to stop the spread of hateful online content (83%) and would support the introduction of specific legislation (78%) to stop the spread of hateful online content. However, a majority, over 7 in 10, also agreed that more is required to prevent the spread of hateful online content than just introducing new legislation.

We also wanted to find out whether people thought that it was just the responsibility of government and industry to address the issue. In this regard, nearly three quarters of New Zealanders agreed that everyone had a role in addressing hateful online content. However, there was less consensus in relation to questions we asked about people's individual responsibility in tackling hateful online content. When asked whether people should just ignore hateful online content targeted at them 39% disagreed/strongly disagreed and 34% agreed/strongly agreed. While in relation to people's right to say whatever they wanted online a slight majority (55%) disagreed/strongly disagreed.

**Table 14: Attitudes to hateful online content, June 2019**

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Unsure
I think hateful online content is growing in New Zealand and around the world	1%	3%	16%	40%	28%	12%
I believe social media platforms should do more to stop the spread of hateful online content	2%	2%	8%	34%	49%	6%
I would support the introduction of specific legislation to stop the spread of hateful online content	2%	3%	9%	38%	40%	7%
I think we need to do more than introduce new legislation to prevent the spread of hateful online content	2%	6%	10%	38%	36%	9%
I think that people should be entitled to say whatever they want online	19%	36%	25%	11%	5%	5%
I think that people should just ignore any hateful online content that is targeted at them	13%	26%	21%	24%	10%	6%
I believe that everyone has a role in addressing hateful online content	2%	2%	9%	47%	32%	7%
Sample <sup>4</sup>	1,161	1,161	1,161	1,161	1,161	1,161

## Experience of online hate speech

Survey participants were asked whether they have personally received in the last 12 months a digital communication that offended, discriminated against, denigrated, abused and/or disparaged them because of their race, ethnicity, gender, nationality, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, and/or other characteristics.

While a large majority (80%) answered negatively, 15% said they have experienced online hate speech in person one or more times in the last 12 months. Of those participants who answered positively, over half experienced online hate speech at least 2 times. In terms of gender, it was more common for males to be the target of online hate speech (17%) compared to females (12%). Respondents with a disability also indicated that they experienced online hate at a higher rate compared to non-disabled participants. Personal experiences of online hate speech were more common among people identifying with the Hindu and Islamic/Muslim religious faiths. Also, the rate for non-heterosexual participants (e.g. gay, lesbian) was higher than for those who identified themselves as heterosexual.

<sup>4</sup> Unweighted sample sizes are provided for New Zealand data.

**Table 15: Experience of online hate speech in the 12 months to June 2019**

Total		Frequency						Sample
		Never	Experienced	Once	2-4 times	5+	Don't know	
		80%	15%	6%	7%	2%	6%	
Gender	Male	77%	17%	6%	8%	3%	6%	556
	Female	82%	12%	5%	6%	1%	5%	601
	Gender diverse	69%	14%	-	14%	-	16%	4
Age	18-29	75%	15%	8%	5%	2%	10%	266
	30-39	69%	19%	4%	11%	3%	13%	287
	40-49	85%	9%	6%	3%	-	7%	173
	50-59	83%	16%	2%	11%	3%	2%	176
	60-69	84%	16%	5%	8%	2%	-	154
	70+	86%	13%	8%	6%	-	1%	105
Sexuality	Heterosexual	81%	15%	6%	7%	2%	4%	966
	Non-heterosexual	65%	23%	1%	16%	6%	12%	64
Ethnicity	NZ European/ Pākehā	82%	13%	5%	7%	2%	4%	366
	Māori	77%	14%	5%	6%	3%	9%	179
	Pacific	65%	16%	9%	7%	1%	19%	159
	Asian	77%	11%	5%	6%	1%	11%	585
	Other	72%	22%	10%	8%	3%	6%	79
Disability	Long term disability	73%	25%	7%	14%	4%	2%	131
	No long term disability	81%	13%	5%	6%	1%	6%	1,030
Religious affiliation	Christian/ Māori Christian	81%	13%	4%	8%	1%	6%	479
	Buddhist	89%	3%	-	2%	1%	8%	61
	Hindu	58%	32%	7%	24%	1%	9%	98
	Islam/Muslim	28%	52%	16%	36%	-	20%	59

## Reason for experience of online hate speech

Reasons for being targeted by hate speech are wide ranging but most commonly include religion, political views, and race. 'Religion' was the reason given most frequently by Muslims<sup>^</sup> (69%), Asian New Zealanders (33%), Christians (29%). Muslim New Zealanders also mentioned ethnicity, appearance and sexual orientation more often, while Hindus<sup>^</sup> (67%), under 40 years old (34%), and Asian New Zealanders (25%) were more likely to mention 'race' as the motivation.

<sup>^</sup>Caution sample sizes are <30.

Table 16: Perceived reasons for receiving online hate speech in the 12 months to June 2019

		Reason						
		Religion	Political views	Race	Gender	Ethnicity	Nationality	Sample
Total		23%	23%	18%	16%	14%	13%	168
Gender	Male	27%	16%	19%	15%	10%	11%	95
	Female	18%	32%	17%	16%	18%	16%	73
Age	18-29	27%	15%	27%	12%	28%	34%	37
	30-39	22%	23%	42%	15%	18%	10%	36
	40-49	8%	15%	-	48%	5%	-	20
	50-59	28%	10%	4%	2%	4%	16%	32
	60-69	34%	19%	19%	-	3%	3%	25
	70+	13%	70%	-	34%	17%	-	20
Sexuality	Heterosexual	23%	24%	20%	16%	14%	13%	150
	Non-heterosexual	27%	10%	1%	14%	15%	11%	15
Ethnicity	NZ European/Pākehā	13%	23%	24%	19%	8%	16%	108
	Māori	23%	22%	1%	11%	14%	8%	19
	Pacific	10%	28%	12%	24%	32%	13%	10
	Asian	33%	10%	25%	8%	22%	14%	15
	Other	53%	32%	*	4%	25%	4%	33
Disability	Long term disability	21%	31%	17%	1%	4%	8%	35
	No long term disability	24%%	21%	19%	19%	16%	14%	133
Religious affiliation	Christian/ Māori Christian	29%	12%	13%	4%	9%	16%	68
	Buddhist	-	-	22%	36%	22%	-	4
	Hindu	21%	5%	67%	-	4%	7%	8
	Islam/Muslim	69%	22%	6%	25%	49%	25%	7
			Appearance	Age	Don't know	Sexual orientation	Disability	Sample
Total			12%	11%	7%	4%	3%	168
Gender	Male		15%	10%	8%	5%	3%	95
	Female		8%	10%	5%	2%	1%	73
Age	18-29		17%	17%	5%	7%	6%	37
	30-39		11%	-	2%	8%	2%	36
	40-49		6%	5%	3%	2%	3%	20
	50-59		17%	-	18%	1%	-	32
	60-69		2%	9%	9%	-	4%	25
	70+		17%	44%	-	-	2%	20
Sexuality	Heterosexual		13%	12%	4%	2%	3%	150
	Non-heterosexual		9%	4%	32%	20%	4%	15
Ethnicity	NZ European/ Pākehā		8%	13%	8%	3%	3%	108
	Māori		30%	15%	-	15%	8%	19
	Pacific		25%	11%	5%	7%	12%	10
	Asian		8%	8%	11%	4%	2%	15
	Other		19%	4%	-	4%	-	33
Disability	Long term disability		8%	5%%	6%	4%	3%	35
	No long term disability		13%	12%	7%	3%	3%	133
Religious affiliation	Christian/ Māori Christian		18%	4%	9%	2%	5%	68
	Buddhist		36%	-	24%	54%	-	4
	Hindu		-	-	-	1%	6%	8
	Islam/Muslim		28%	4%	-	25%	3%	7

## Bystander experience of hate speech

About 3 in 10 of participants in the study had seen or been exposed to online hate speech targeting someone else. Religion, political views, ethnicity, and race are the most commonly perceived reasons others are targeted. Exposure to online hate speech is more common among those aged under 30 years (39%) and Muslims (67%).

**Table 17: Bystander experiences of online hate speech in the 12 months to June 2019**

Total		Frequency						
		Never	Experienced	Once	2-4 times	5+	Don't know	Sample
		62%	28%	6%	17%	5%	10%	1161
Gender	Male	64%	26%	7%	15%	4%	9%	556
	Female	60%	30%	5%	18%	7%	11%	601
Age	18-29	51%	39%	10%	19%	9%	11%	243
	30-39	58%	32%	11%	13%	9%	10%	190
	40-49	64%	20%	2%	16%	2%	17%	219
	50-59	58%	34%	5%	23%	6%	8%	203
	60-69	65%	22%	5%	15%	2%	13%	158
	70+	83%	15%	3%	10%	2%	2%	147
Sexuality	Heterosexual	63%	28%	6%	17%	5%	9%	1002
	Non-heterosexual	50%	47%	14%	20%	13%	4%	65
Ethnicity	NZ European/ Pākehā	62%	27%	5%	18%	4%	11%	823
	Māori	57%	35%	9%	14%	11%	8%	131
	Pacific	48%	35%	12%	13%	10%	17%	63
	Asian	63%	26%	6%	12%	7%	11%	130
	Other	58%	37%	8%	21%	9%	5%	151
Disability	Long term disability	62%	34%	11%	14%	9%	4%	140
	No long term disability	62%	27%	5%	17%	5%	11%	1021
Religious Affiliation	Christian/ Māori Christian	67%	25%	5%	14%	5%	9%	534
	Buddhist	74%	20%	12%	3%	5%	6%	16
	Hindu	52%	37%	27%	8%	3%	11%	24
	Islam/Muslim	29%	67%	4%	41%	21%	4%	14

Survey participants who were exposed to online hate in the prior year reported that religion, political views, and ethnicity were the most common motives behind the content – see Table 18 below.

Table 18: Bystander perception of reason for online hate speech occurring against others in the 12 months to June 2019

		Reason						
		Religion	Political views	Ethnicity	Race	Sexual orientation	Nationality	Sample
Total		57%	38%	34%	33%	28%	26%	326
Gender	Male	47%	34%	24%	35%	23%	18%	146
	Female	65%	41%	42%	31%	32%	33%	179
Age	18-29	60%	36%	42%	37%	33%	32%	94
	30-39	44%	28%	33%	35%	30%	35%	62
	40-49	67%	55%	51%	34%	37%	40%	43
	50-59	63%	48%	18%	30%	27%	16%	69
	60-69	30%	33%	21%	30%	13%	7%	35
	70+	81%	19%	40%	17%	10%	17%	22
Sexuality	Heterosexual	58%	36%	34%	33%	24%	26%	284
	Non-heterosexual	55%	45%	33%	34%	64%	37%	30
Ethnicity	NZ European/ Pākehā	57%	39%	33%	30%	28%	25%	223
	Māori	62%	40%	44%	42%	46%	31%	45
	Pacific	64%	34%	54%	49%	30%	35%	22
	Asian	59%	27%	45%	41%	20%	21%	33
	Other	53%	36%	22%	29%	25%	27%	56
Disability	Long term disability	38%	40%	25%	34%	33%	15%	48
	No long term disability	60%	37%	36%	32%	27%	28%	278
Religious Affiliation	Christian/ Māori Christian	51%	41%	25%	32%	27%	27%	132
	Buddhist	82%	32%	85%	67%	24%	55%	3
	Hindu	32%	9%	30%	21%	1%	11%	9
	Islam/Muslim	77%	16%	48%	34%	11%	34%	9
			Appearance	Disability	Gender	Age	Don't know	Sample
Total			26%	22%	10%	6%	2%	326
Gender	Male		20%	11%	12%	7%	4%	146
	Female		32%	30%	9%	5%	1%	179
Age	18-29		32%	32%	21%	9%	4%	94
	30-39		21%	22%	10%	7%	3%	62
	40-49		28%	32%	13%	1%	-	43
	50-59		28%	9%	2%	1%	1%	69
	60-69		16%	16%	-	10%	2%	35
	70+		24%	4%	2%	2%	-	22
Sexuality	Heterosexual		25%	21%	11%	5%	2%	284
	Non-heterosexual		41%	29%	7%	17%	1%	30
Ethnicity	NZ European/ Pākehā		29%	23%	13%	6%	2%	223
	Māori		21%	25%	11%	8%	4%	45
	Pacific		25%	26%	9%	11%	2%	22
	Asian		15%	17%	7%	6%	2%	33
	Other		21%	14%	1%	2%	-	56
Disability	Long term disability		29%	22%	15%	9%	6%	48
	No long term disability		26%	21%	9%	5%	1%	278
Religious affiliation	Christian/ Māori Christian		35%	18%	11%	4%	2%	132
	Buddhist		24%	21%	10%	6%	-	3
	Hindu		6%	4%	49%	-	1%	9
	Islam/Muslim		2%	11%	-	-	1%	9

## Intentionally visiting sites

In the 12 months to June 2019, 6% of participants had deliberately visited online sites that promote hate speech against others. Engagement with sites promoting online hate speech more common among Pacific peoples (12%) and Muslims (25%).

**Table 19: Visiting online sites promoting/distributing online hate speech in the 12 months to June 2019**

		Frequency						Sample
		Never	Net ever	Once	2-4 times	5+	Don't know	
<b>Total</b>		86%	6%	2%	3%	1%	8%	1,161
<b>Gender</b>	Male	85%	7%	3%	3%	1%	9%	243
	Female	78%	8%	5%	3%	-	14%	190
<b>Age</b>	18-29	84%	1%	1%	1%	-	15%	219
	30-39	89%	7%	3%	1%	2%	3%	203
	40-49	93%	7%	*	4%	2%	1%	158
	50-59	93%	6%	-	4%	1%	1%	147
	60-69	81%	8%	2%	4%	2%	12%	556
	70+	92%	4%	2%	2%	*	4%	601
<b>Sexuality</b>	Heterosexual	88%	6%	2%	3%	1%	6%	1,002
	Non-heterosexual	86%	7%	4%	3%	*	7%	65
<b>Ethnicity</b>	NZ European/ Pākehā	88%	4%	1%	2%	1%	8%	823
	Māori	91%	3%	2%	1%	*	6%	131
	Pacific	74%	12%	7%	3%	1%	14%	63
	Asian	84%	7%	2%	5%	*	8%	130
	Other	82%	13%	7%	6%	-	5%	151
<b>Disability</b>	Long term disability	92%	4%	2%	1%	*	4%	280
	No long term disability	86%	6%	2%	3%	1%	8%	881
<b>Religious Affiliation</b>	Christian/ Māori Christian	91%	5%	1%	2%	1%	4%	534
	Buddhist	92%	2%	-	2%	-	6%	16
	Hindu	89%	7%	3%	3%	*	4%	24
	Islam/Muslim	70%	25%	6%	20%	*	4%	14

# European SELMA project findings

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## Key SELMA project findings for:

### - Young people

- 57% of teens encountered hate speech online, once or several times in the three months to October 2018.
- Where respondents had encountered hate speech online, it most often happened on mainstream social media platforms, websites or apps such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram.
- A majority of youth respondents encountered hate speech online accidentally.
- Thirty per cent of young people in the study encountering online hate speech reported it to the social media platform, website or app, while 29% chose to ignore it because they didn't care and 21% chose to ignore it because they did not know what to do.
- Twenty four per cent of young people encountering online hate speech told a friend, while 22% supported the victim by saying something positive.
- Regardless of the circumstances, most young people in the study rejected the notion that it was acceptable to send hateful or degrading messages against someone.

### - Teachers

- Teachers in the study reported that nearly 25% of their students were involved in online hate speech (either as a target or as someone expressing or circulating comments).
- The majority of teachers took some form of action in relation to their students being involved in hate speech incidents – mostly discussing with a colleague, their school principal or someone whose job it was to help young people; such as a counsellor.

## Teen survey results

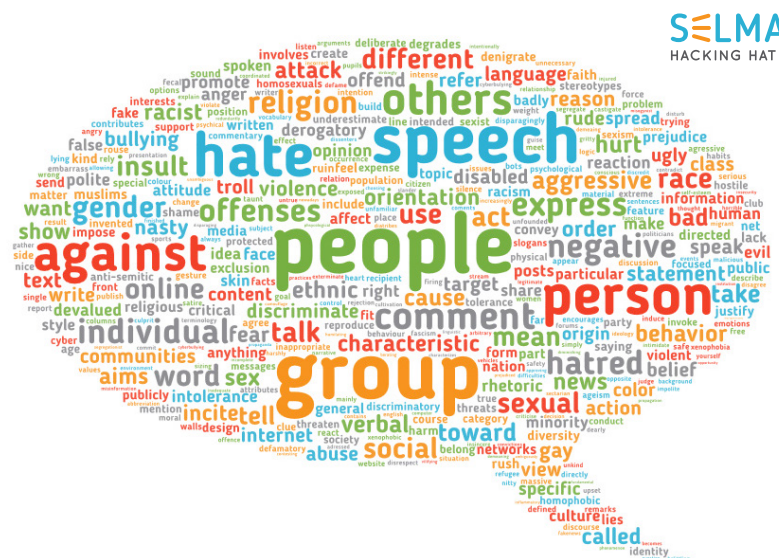
Respondents to our teen survey reported their hate speech experiences as follows:

- In the three months to October 2018, 57% of teens who had encountered hate speech situations in person (i.e. offline/face to face).
- When asked, if in the three months to October 2018, they had been treated in a hurtful or nasty way online, 18% of respondents said yes, which is substantially less than the 30% of respondents who indicated that they have been treated this way in person.

When asked to think about the reasons why someone was hurtful or nasty to others online, respondents indicated this was due to:

- “Physical appearance, for example your weight, height, etc.” (58%)
- “Sexual orientation, for example being gay, bi-sexual, etc.” (56%)
- “Ethnicity or nationality, for example being Roma, Refugee, Immigrant, etc.” (44%)
- “Sex/gender, for being a woman, transgender, etc.” (43%) (with multiple answers per respondent being possible).
- In comparison, the instances of offline hate speech respondents encountered were mostly confined to physical appearance (60%), with far fewer respondents making a link with sexual orientation (41%), ethnicity (33%) or sex/gender (25%). This may point to an important difference between the nature of offline and online hate young people witness.
- If respondents had encountered hate speech online, it most often happened on a social media website or app (such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, etc.) (74%), in the comment sections (for instance next to online videos, news articles, etc.) (43%), and (to a lesser extent) in a chatroom (17%), by instant messaging (17%) or while playing video games (16%). When asked specifically about social media websites or apps, YouTube (56%), Instagram (54%) and Facebook (40%) were mentioned most often.
- A majority of respondents (62%) said that when they encountered hate speech online they accidentally came across it. Forty six per cent of respondents said it was posted/shared by a person they don’t know. Twenty per cent indicated it was posted/shared by a friend/person they know, which is lower, but still a substantial proportion. Only 8% of respondents said they were actively looking for it.

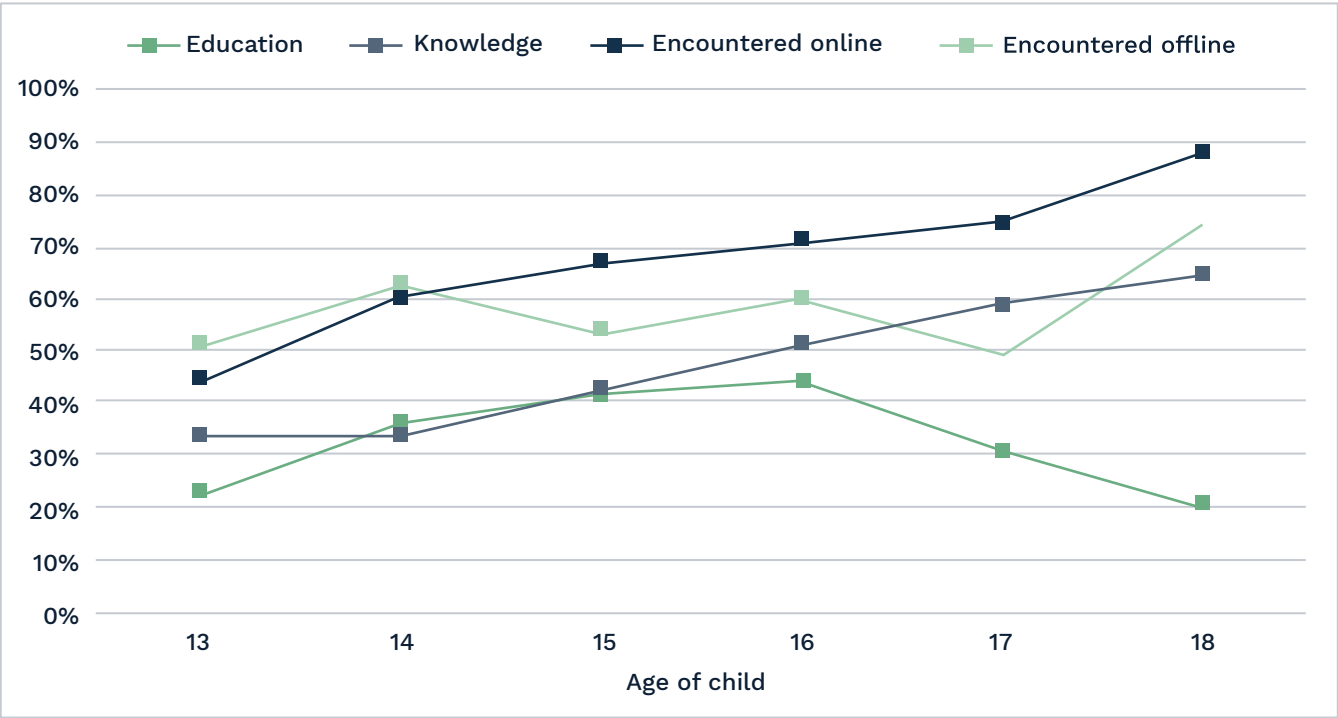
**Figure 2: In their own words...What do teens think hate speech is?**



- If asked how they responded, 30 % reported it to the website or app, for example Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, WhatsApp, etc. Yet, many respondents also indicated they rather decided to ignore it, because they didn't care (29%) or because they didn't know what to do (21%). Interestingly, while telling a friend of their age (24%) or supporting the victim by saying something positive (22%) seemed a viable option for a substantial number of teenagers, very few respondents indicated they would tell a parent/guardian/teacher (6%). More positively, only 5% said they responded in the same way, with a similar hate speech message.

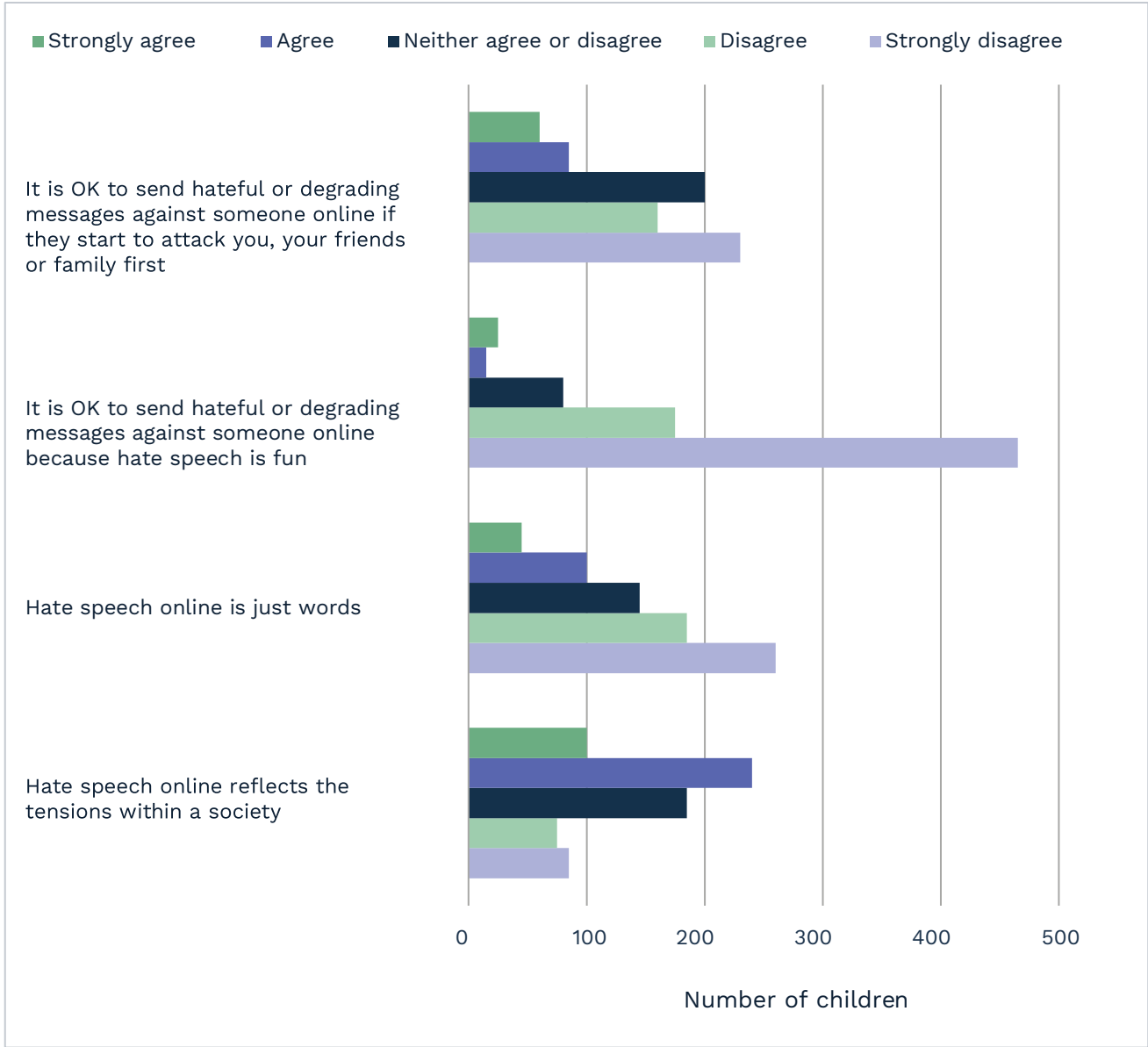
Figure 3 shows how online hate speech knowledge and experience pan out as teenagers become older. On average, older students are more likely to have heard about the (online) hate speech phenomenon and have encountered it more often. By contrast, the percentage of students who reported experience of teachers (or any other educator) addressing the topic in an education setting is low across all age groups.

**Figure 3: Age breakdown of respondents with knowledge of hate speech where educators have discussed this with them**



As illustrated in Figure 4, we also asked respondents to indicate to what extent they agreed or disagreed with a number of statements. Most respondents rejected the idea that 'it is OK to send hateful or degrading messages against someone online if they start to attack you, your friends or family first', that it is 'OK to send hateful or degrading messages against someone online because hate speech is fun', or that 'hate speech online is just words'.

**Figure 4: Thinking of hateful or nasty message and comments on the internet, please tell us how much you agree or disagree with each of these phrases**



## Teacher survey results

Teachers were then asked to indicate if any of their students had been involved in hate speech incidents or situations, both in person and online. A student might, for example, have been the target of hate speech or have been the one expressing (or spreading) these kind of messages. Table 20 provides an overview of figures for both offline and online incidents. At first sight, these figures suggest that hate speech incidents more often takes place offline. However, in our view, the data reveals that teachers have less knowledge of the hate speech experiences their students have in an online environment. Because, as we have previously seen, students are not likely at all to report this kind of online incident to their teachers.

**Figure 5: In their own words...What do teachers think hate speech is?**



**Table 20: The percentage of students involved in hate speech, as reported by their teachers**

Students involved in hate speech	In person (%)	Online (%)
Yes	38.1	24.9
No	44.1	33.9
I don't know/prefer to not answer	17.7	41.1

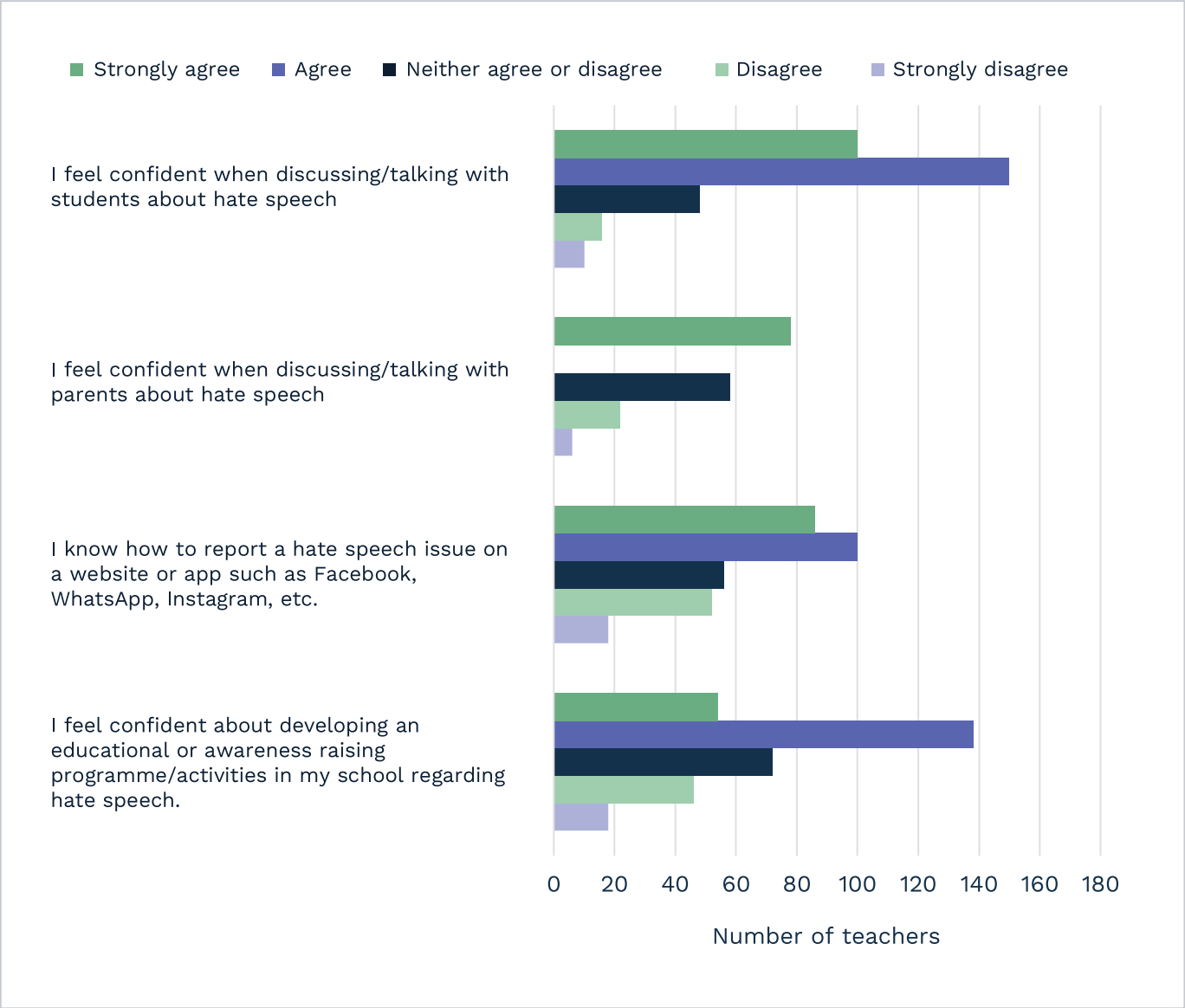
When asked how they responded the last time they became aware of an online hate speech situation involving one or several of their students, most teachers indicate that they supported the victim by saying something positive (61%). Many teachers also discussed it with another colleague, the school principal, or another person whose job it is to help children. Far fewer respondents thought about reporting the incident to the website or app, as illustrated in Table 21 below.

**Table 21: The last time you became aware of a hate speech situation involving one or several of your students, what did you do? (more than one option)**

Response to online hate speech	Number	%
I ignored it because I didn't care	2	2.4
I ignored it, because I didn't know what to do	3	3.6
I discussed with another colleague	40	48.2
I discussed it with the school principal	34	41.0
I discussed it with another person whose job it is to help children	34	41.0
I reported it to the website or app, for example Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, WhatsApp, etc.	17	20.5
I reported it to the police	5	6.0
I supported the victim by saying something positive	51	61.4
I don't know/I prefer not to answer	1	1.2
Other	23	26.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>100.0</b>

To develop a more in-depth understanding of teachers’ expertise and confidence in dealing with their student’s hate speech issues, a number of education-oriented questions were included. First of all, teachers were asked to evaluate a number of statements, as illustrated in Figure 6. Teachers are, on average, quite confident to discuss hate speech with both students and parents. However, they have less knowledge about how to report a hate speech issue on a website or app, and they feel less confident developing educational or awareness-raising programmes or activities in their school.

**Figure 6: For each of the following statements, please tell us how much you agree with them’. A correct version of the graph is in the document ‘corrected tables for online hate speech report’.**



## Related research

While this report presents top-levels findings and comparisons, each jurisdiction has or will publish more detailed results from their respective research programs in coming months. eSafety will publish a range of reports about adults’ attitudes, behaviours and experiences of online safety in the first half of 2020. NetSafe has also recently updated its hate speech research in relation to 2019. The SELMA report was published in February 2019; the research comprises three interrelated components enriching each other: a literature review, a series of qualitative focus groups and an online quantitative survey.