

Research on Privacy Concerns and Use of Personal Information

March 2025

Prepared for the Office of the
Privacy Commissioner

ak research & consulting

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Introduction

Background

- The Office of the Privacy Commissioner (OPC) conducts regular research among the general public to measure awareness, knowledge and levels of concern regarding privacy and the protection of personal information.
 - The 2025 research builds on the research conducted in 2024 as the OPC moves to an annual research tracking programme.
- Some tracking measures are retained to provide insight into any changes in privacy sentiment and additional questions are included to measure specific privacy issues of the day and priority focus areas for the OPC. This year questions were included to reflect concerns around the use of surveillance technology.
- A Māori booster sample was also included to provide more depth to findings among Māori. This brought the total Māori sub-sample to n=344.

Objectives

- The overall objectives of the 2025 survey were to:
 1. Provide some consistency with prior years (to allow for benchmarking comparisons on specific areas of interest to the OPC)
 2. Monitor progress towards OPC outcomes
 3. To assist in prioritisation of specific issues, and
 4. To support efforts to help government agencies and business improve their privacy maturity.

Methodology

- Results in this report are based upon questions asked in the nationally representative AK Research online omnibus survey of adults in New Zealand.
 - The total sample of $n=1256$ is made up of a nationally representative survey of $n=1000$ respondents (as part of the regularly omnibus survey) and an additional booster sample of 220 Māori respondents to achieve a **Māori total sub-sample of $n=344$** .
 - The sample size for the online survey was $n=1256$, with the margin of error for a 50% figure at the 95% confidence level being $\pm 2.9\%$.
 - For a sample size of $n=344$ the margin of error for a 50% figure at the 95% confidence level is $\pm 5.5\%$.
 - The fieldwork was conducted from the 11th to 18th of March 2025.
- The analysis and commentary provides reporting for the general public (ALL) and comparison with Māori. Where there are significant demographic differences these have been included in the commentary.
- We have also included non-Māori data points to provide comparison with the Māori sub-sample.

Note on rounding:

- *All numbers are shown rounded to zero decimal places. Hence specified totals are not always exactly equal to the sum of the specified sub-totals. The differences are seldom more than 1%.*
- *For example: $2.7 + 3.5 = 6.2$ would appear: $3 + 4 = 6$*

Key findings



Overview

- Public concern about privacy remains high, with particular unease around children's online safety, social media data use, and AI decision-making. A slight decline in reported general concern may reflect question changes rather than real shifts.
- Māori respondents consistently showed higher concern, especially about facial recognition and data use by public institutions.
- Reports of personal privacy breaches have increased, particularly among Māori.
- Views on personal data remained consistent in 2025, with strong support for increased control over their personal data.
- Two-thirds would consider changing providers over poor privacy practices, similar to 2024.
- Awareness of the Privacy Act is gradually improving, and there is strong support for expanding the Privacy Commissioner's powers, including the ability to apply penalties. However, Māori respondents were less supportive of formal audits.
- There was low declared contact with the OPC, with 6% of the general population and 10% of Māori saying they had been in contact in the past 12 months.



General issues and concerns

- Overall concern about individual privacy and protection of their personal information has slightly declined, with 47% (down 4%) of respondents reporting concern, while 20% (up 6%) reported not being concerned. However, this drop is only indicative, due to a slight change in question wording. Māori respondents showed higher levels of concern than the general population, with 53% expressing concern.
- Despite the decline in concern, nearly half (both the general population and Māori respondents) still say they have become more concerned about issues of individual privacy and personal information over the past few years, highlighting ongoing sensitivity.
- Across specific privacy issues, concern remains high, especially regarding children's online privacy (67%), social media companies managing personal data (63%), and government or business use of AI to make decisions (62%).
- Concern about facial recognition technology declined, though Māori consistently showed higher concern—particularly over potential bias (57% Māori vs 48% All), use in law enforcement (52% Māori vs 41% All, and retail settings (49% Māori vs 41% All).
- Two-thirds of respondents said they would consider changing service providers due to poor privacy practices, with Māori were more likely to say they were 'very likely' to switch (55% Māori vs 43% All).

Key findings



Use of personal information

- Views on personal information were consistent between 2024 and 2025. Strong support for increased control over personal data remains, with 82% of all respondents (and 86% of Māori) agreeing they want more say in how their data is collected and used.
- Additionally, two-thirds see protecting personal information as a major life concern (66% All, rising to 79% among Māori). While nearly half feel that none of their information is private anymore (48%), 45% feel in control, and 44% say protecting data privacy is too much effort—these figures are largely consistent across both the general population and Māori respondents.
- When it comes to surveillance technologies, around two-thirds supported their use for reducing theft and enhancing safety. This support was similar among Māori and the general population, indicating relatively broad acceptance of surveillance when used for crime prevention or security-related purposes.
- Thirteen percent of respondents reported experiencing a privacy breach, up 6% from 2022. Among Māori, this figure was even higher at 19% (up 7%).
- When asked who they would contact following a breach, most pointed to the New Zealand Police (42%) and the Office of the Privacy Commissioner (41%), with Māori more likely to contact the Citizens Advice Bureau (29% Māori vs 21% All) and less likely to contact the Privacy Commissioner (33% Māori vs 41% All) compared to the general population.

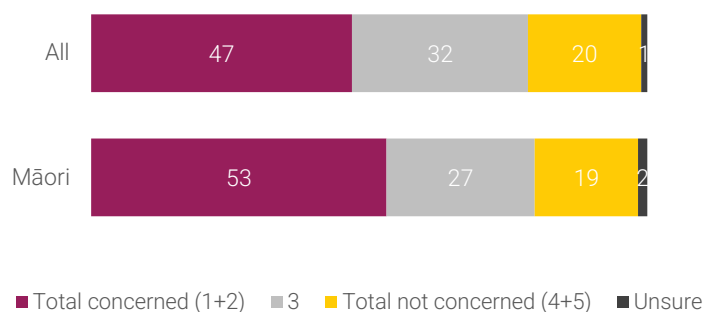
Privacy Act and the Commissioner

- Awareness of the Privacy Act continues to grow slowly, with 53% saying they know the Act gives them the right to request their personal information (up 3%). Māori awareness is slightly lower, at 51%, down 3% from the previous year.
- There was strong support for strengthening the Privacy Commissioner's powers under the Act. Around three-quarters of all respondents (and a similar proportion of Māori) support penalties for privacy breaches, including large fines and small infringements. However, Māori were significantly less likely to support audits of business or government privacy practices.

Privacy issues and concerns– summary snapshot

TOTAL CONCERN FOR OWN INDIVIDUAL PRIVACY AND PROTECTION OF PERSONAL INFORMATION

Small fall in concern, higher among Māori

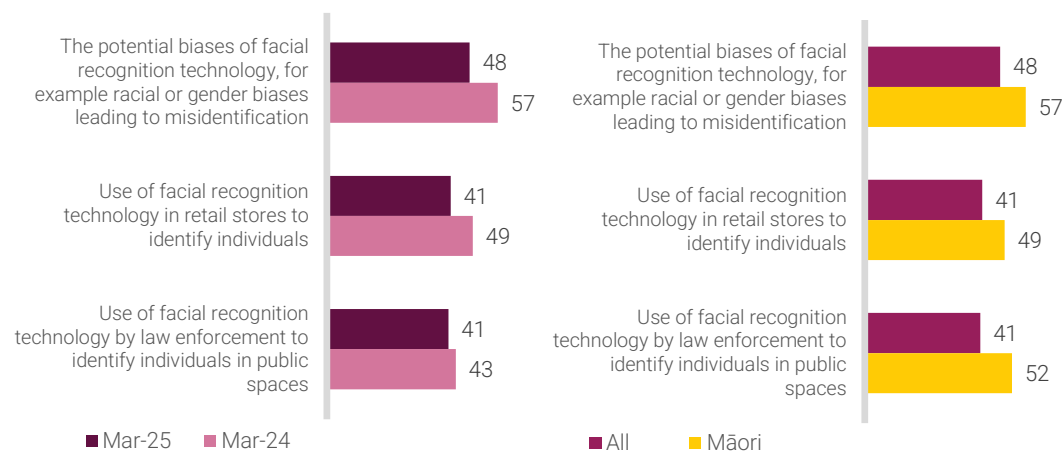


STRONG SUPPORT FOR PRIVACY COMMISSIONER TO HAVE THE FOLLOWING POWERS

- ⚖ Ask a Court to issue a large fine for a serious privacy breach... (77% All; 77% Māori)
- ⚖ Audit the privacy practices of a business of government agency (77% All; 70% Māori)
- ⚖ Issue a small infringement to a business or government agency for a privacy breach (75% All; 73% Māori)

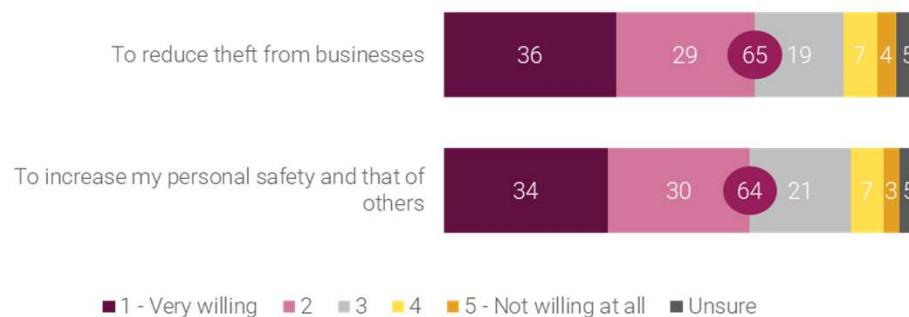
TOTAL CONCERN FOR USE OF FACIAL RECOGNITION TECHNOLOGY

Decline in concern about use of facial recognition technology, higher concern among Māori



SUPPORT FOR INTRUSIVE TECHNOLOGY FOR REDUCTION OF THEFT/PERSONAL SAFETY

Similar among Māori



Report findings:
Issues and
concerns
regarding
individual
privacy



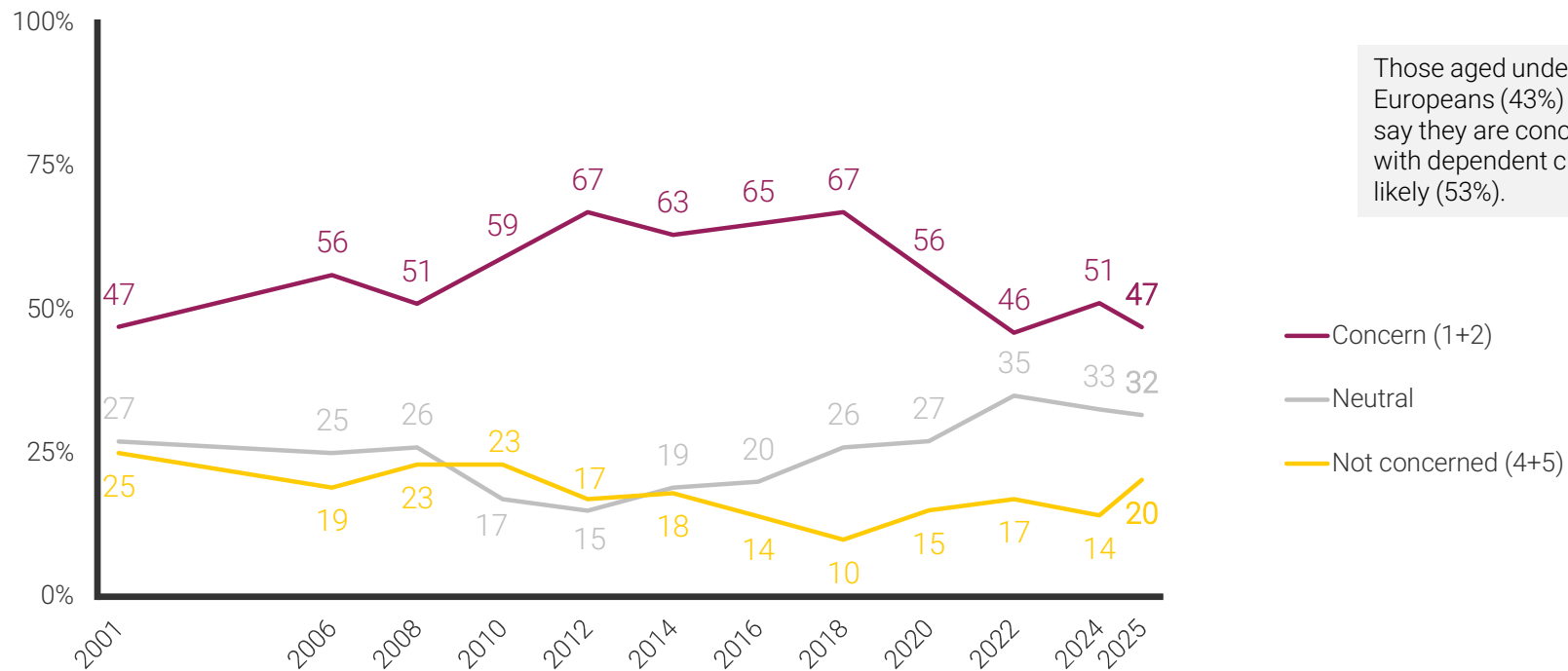
Key findings – General issues and concerns

- Just under half (47%, down 4%) were concerned about their individual privacy and protection of personal information (1+2 on the 5-point scale where 1 means very concerned and 5 means not concerned at all). A fifth were not concerned (up 6%).
 - However, while there was a drop in concern, this should be treated as indicative due to a slight question change this year.
 - Māori had higher levels of concern regarding their individual privacy with 53% 'total' concerned.
- Around half of all respondents stated they became more concerned about privacy issues in the last few years (now 49%, down 6%). While a drop, this still suggests ongoing sensitivity to issues around privacy and personal information.
 - Māori had similar levels of concern regarding privacy issues as the general population.
- Across nine specific privacy issues, at least four in ten respondents were concerned (1+2 on the 5-point scale) about all privacy issues tested. While respondents were most concerned about the following privacy issues:
 - Privacy of children, including when they use social media (67%)
 - Management of your personal information by social media companies (63%), and
 - Government agencies or businesses using artificial intelligence to make decisions about you, using your personal information (62%).
- Overall concern about many aspects of facial recognition technology declined from 2024. However, while concern levels among Māori respondents also declined slightly, they continued to express greater sensitivity to privacy risks associated with facial recognition, along with the combining of government data.
 - Government organisations combining data* (59% Māori:49% All)
 - Biases of facial recognition technology* (57% Māori:48% All)
 - Law enforcement using facial recognition* (52% Māori:41% All)
 - Use of facial recognition in retail stores* (49% Māori:41% All).
- These findings suggest that while public concern may be softening, Māori communities in particular continue to view facial recognition technologies—especially their potential for bias and misuse—with caution.
- Similar to previous years, two thirds (67%, down 3%) of respondents would consider changing service providers in light of poor privacy and security practices.
- Māori were only slightly more likely (70%) to consider changing service providers in light of poor privacy and security practices.
 - However, compared to the general population, Māori recorded a significantly higher proportion that were 'very likely ' (point 1 on the 5 point scale) to change providers (55% Māori versus 43% All).

*Note: abbreviated statements

Concern about an individual's privacy remains high, despite slight drop* - trendline

Q Using a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 means you are very concerned and 5 not concerned at all, how concerned are you about your individual privacy and the protection of your personal information? (%)



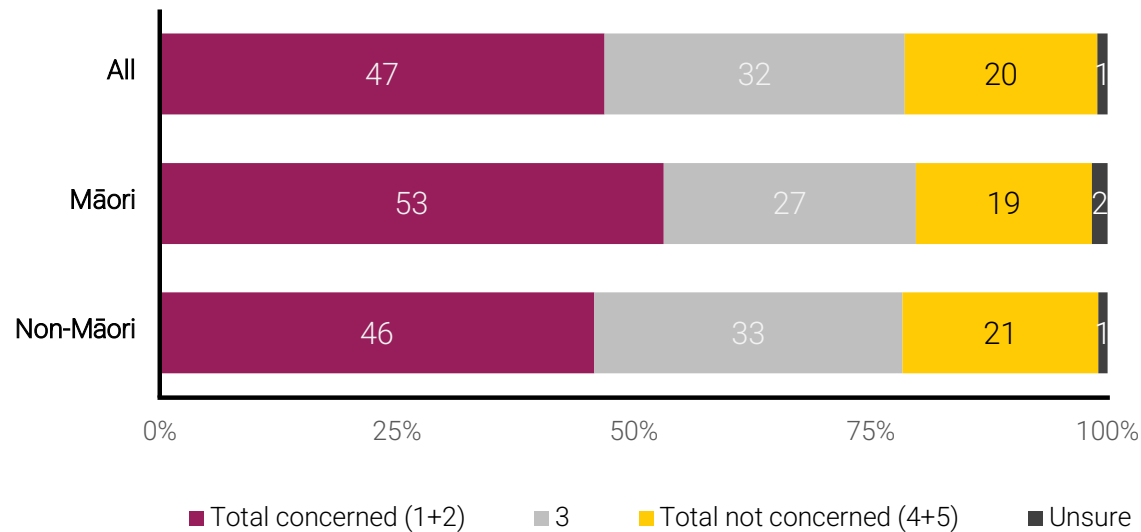
*Although there was a small drop in concern this year this is indicative only due to change in question wording.

Note: Prior to 2025 question read how concerned are you about an individual's privacy and the protection of personal information?

Base: All respondents (n=1,256)

Māori more concerned for their own individual privacy - Māori comparison


Q Using a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 means you are very concerned and 5 not concerned at all, how concerned are you about your individual privacy and the protection of your personal information? (%)

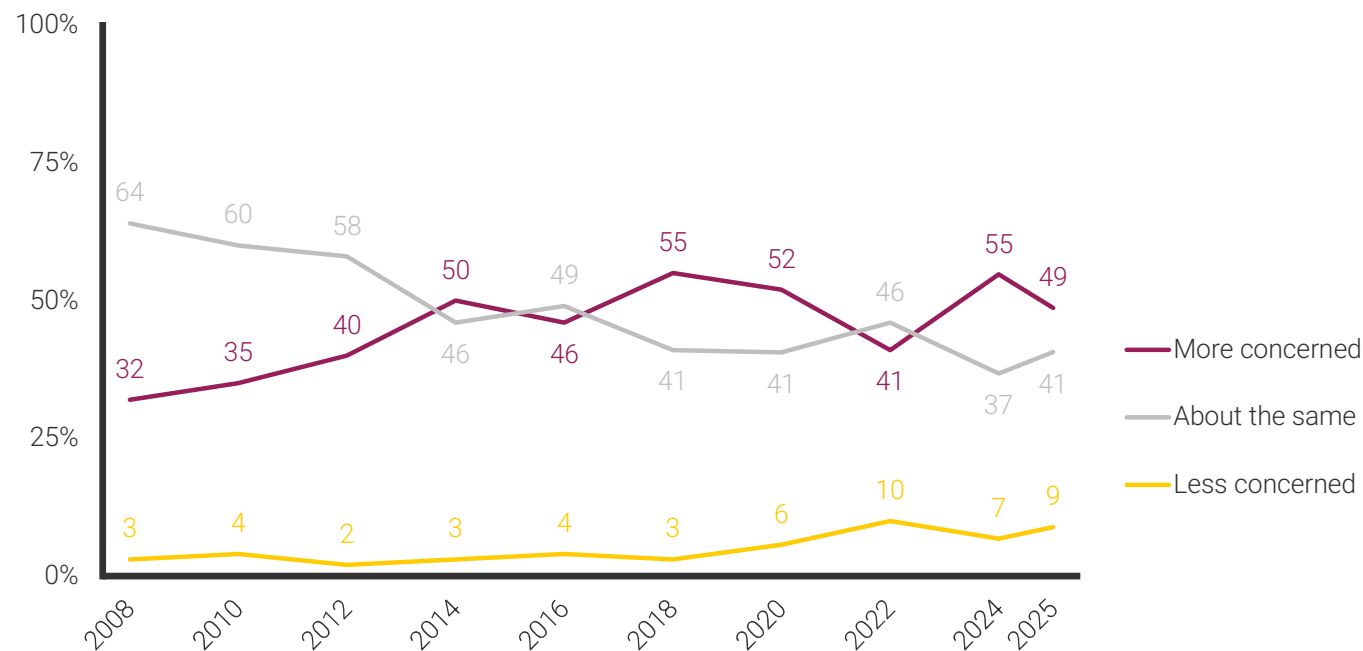


The levels of “very concerned” (‘1’ on the 5-point scale) were significantly higher for Māori and Asian respondents:

- Māori: 37%
- Asian: 32%
- Pasifika: 29%
- NZ European: 22%.

Concern about privacy issues has fallen since 2024, although around half remain more concerned - trendline

 Looking back over the last few years, have you got more concerned about issues of individual privacy and personal information, less concerned or has your level of concern stayed about the same? (%)



Groups that are less concerned about issues of individual privacy and personal information:


- Under 30 (17% are more likely to be "less concerned")
- Men (13% are more likely to be "less concerned")
- Pasifika (22% are more likely to be "less concerned").

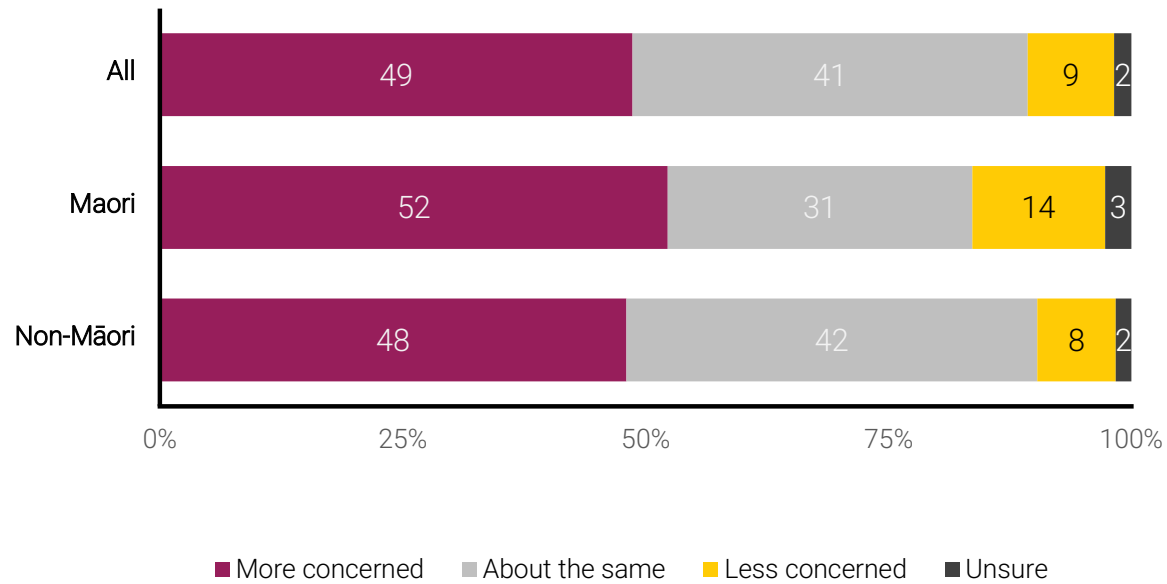
Those more concerned about issues of individual privacy and personal information:

- Those living with dependent children under 18 years old (56% are more likely to be "more concerned")
- Those living in the South Island (55% are more likely to be "more concerned").

Base: All respondents (n=1,256)

Māori level of increased concern similar to general population, higher proportion more likely to be less concerned - Māori comparison

 Looking back over the last few years, have you got more concerned about issues of individual privacy and personal information, less concerned or has your level of concern stayed about the same? (%)



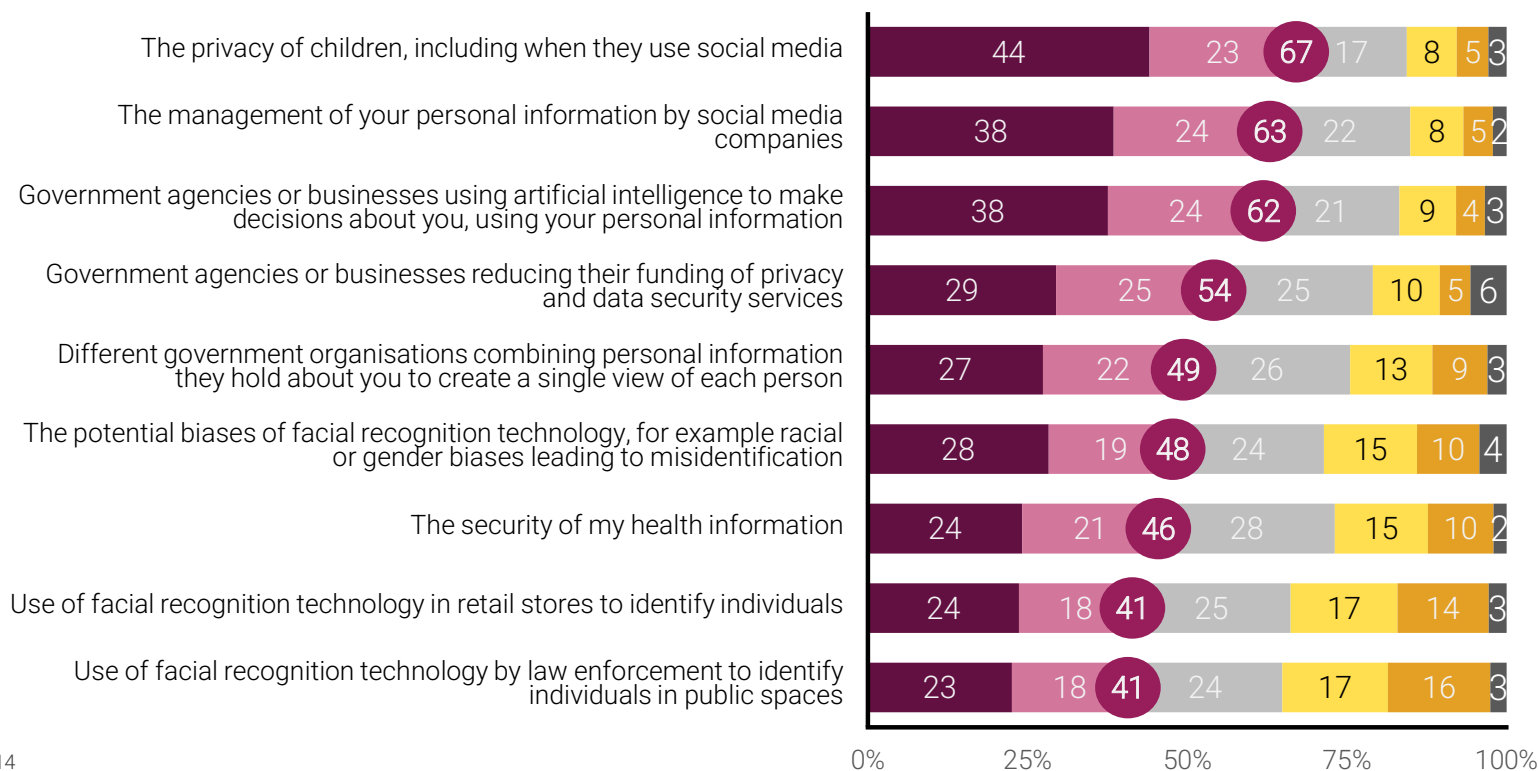
Base: All respondents (n=1,256), Māori (n=344)

Children's privacy, social media companies and AI are the top 3 privacy concerns among New Zealanders



How concerned are you about the following privacy issues in New Zealand today? (%)

1 - Very concerned 2 3 4 5 - Not concerned at all Unsure



Women were more likely to say they were concerned for all the issues tested.

Those aged 60+ were more likely to express concern regarding:

- Privacy of children (73%)
- Social media companies management of personal data (74%)
- Government/ business using AI to make decisions (69%)
- Government/business reducing privacy funding (61%).

Conversely those under 30 were less likely to be concerned about the above issues:

- Privacy of children (57%)
- Social media companies management of personal data (49%)
- Government/ business using AI to make decisions (52%)
- Government/business reducing privacy funding (41%).

Base: All respondents (n=1,256)

Māori continue to be more likely to be concerned regarding facial recognition and government sharing data - Māori comparison (total concerned 1+2)



How concerned are you about the following privacy issues in New Zealand today? (% Total concern: 1+2)



Māori more likely to be concerned regarding:

- Government organisations combining personal information they hold to create a single view of each person (59%)
- Potential biases of facial recognition (57%)
- Use of facial recognition in retail stores to identify individuals (49%)
- Use of facial recognition in law enforcement to identify individuals in public spaces (52%).

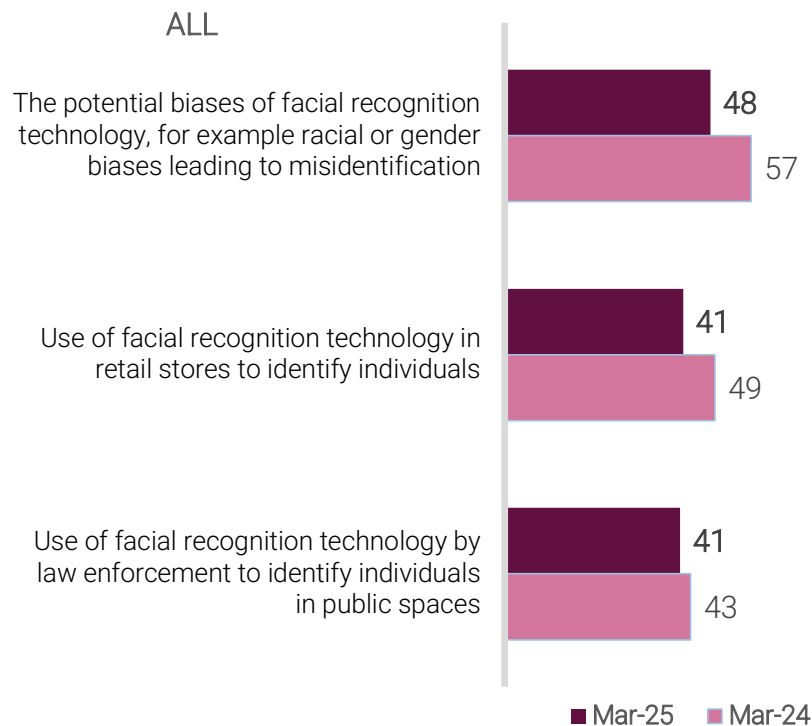
■ All
■ Māori
■ Non-Māori

Base: All respondents (n=1,256), Māori (n=344)

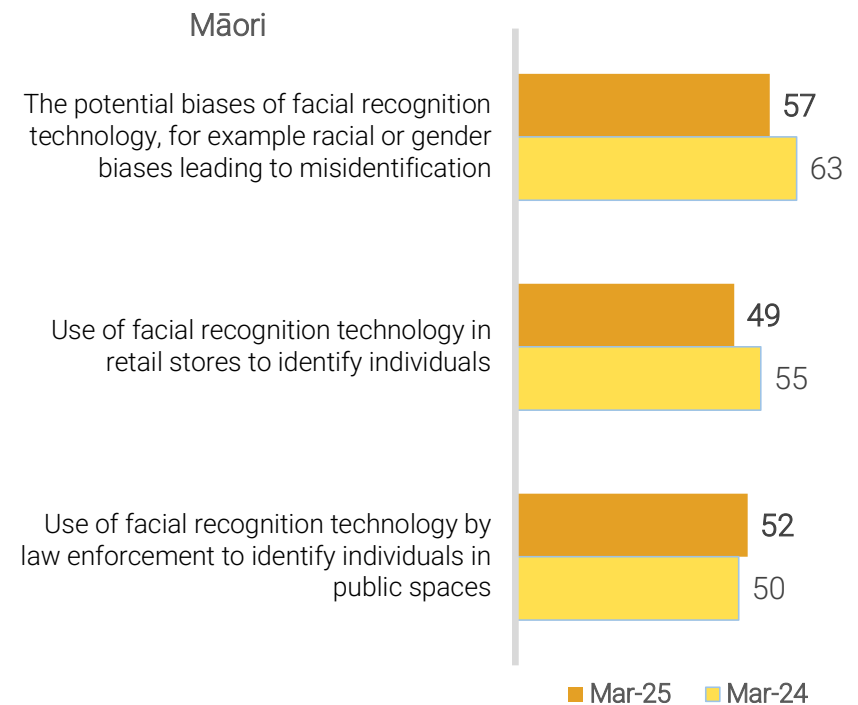
Reduced concern across some aspects of facial recognition in 2025 but Māori continue to express higher concern – trendline (total concern 1+2)



How concerned are you about the following privacy issues in New Zealand today? (% Total concern: 1+2)



Base: All respondents (n=1,256), 2024 (n=1,184)

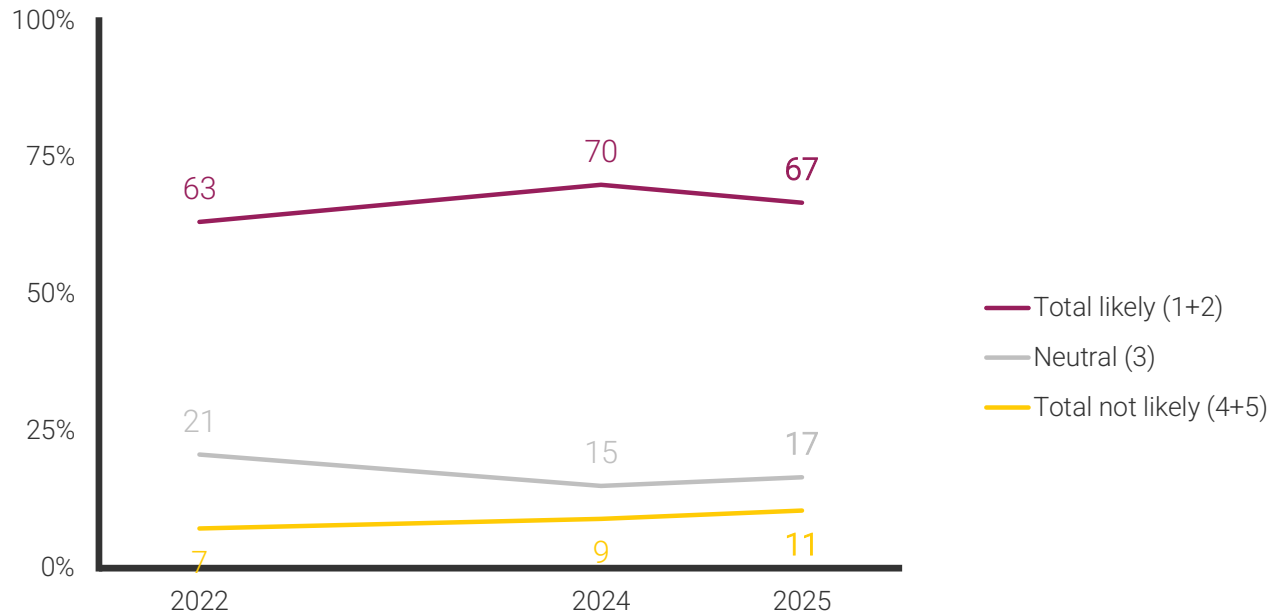


Base: All respondents (Māori n=344), 2024 (n=327)

Changing service providers if they heard they had poor privacy and security practices remained relatively steady, with two thirds likely to consider changing - trendline



How likely would you be to consider changing service providers if you heard they had poor privacy and security practices? (%)

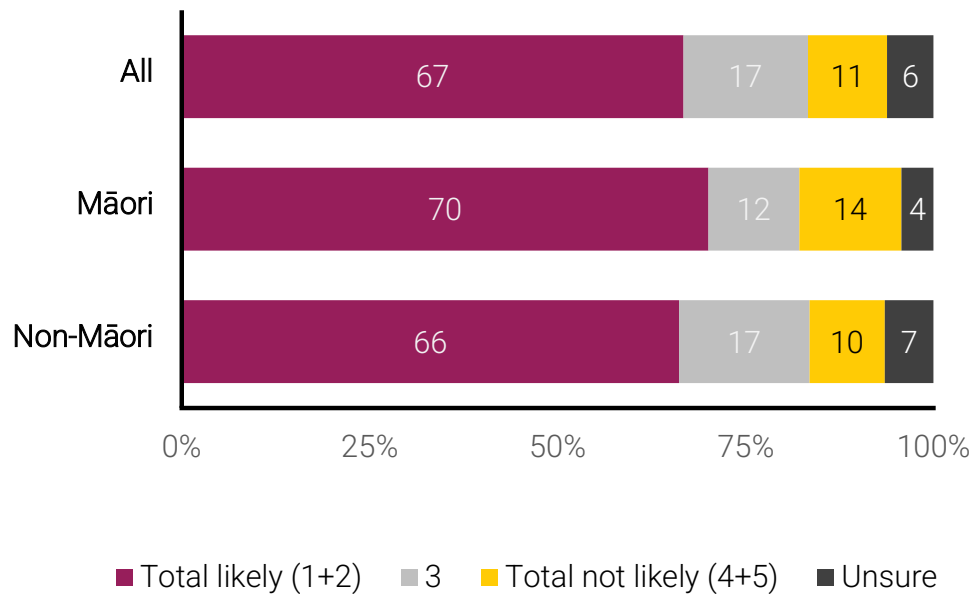


Base: All respondents (n=1,256)

Māori slightly more likely to change service providers over poor privacy and security practices - Māori comparison



How likely would you be to consider changing service providers if you heard they had poor privacy and security practices? (%)

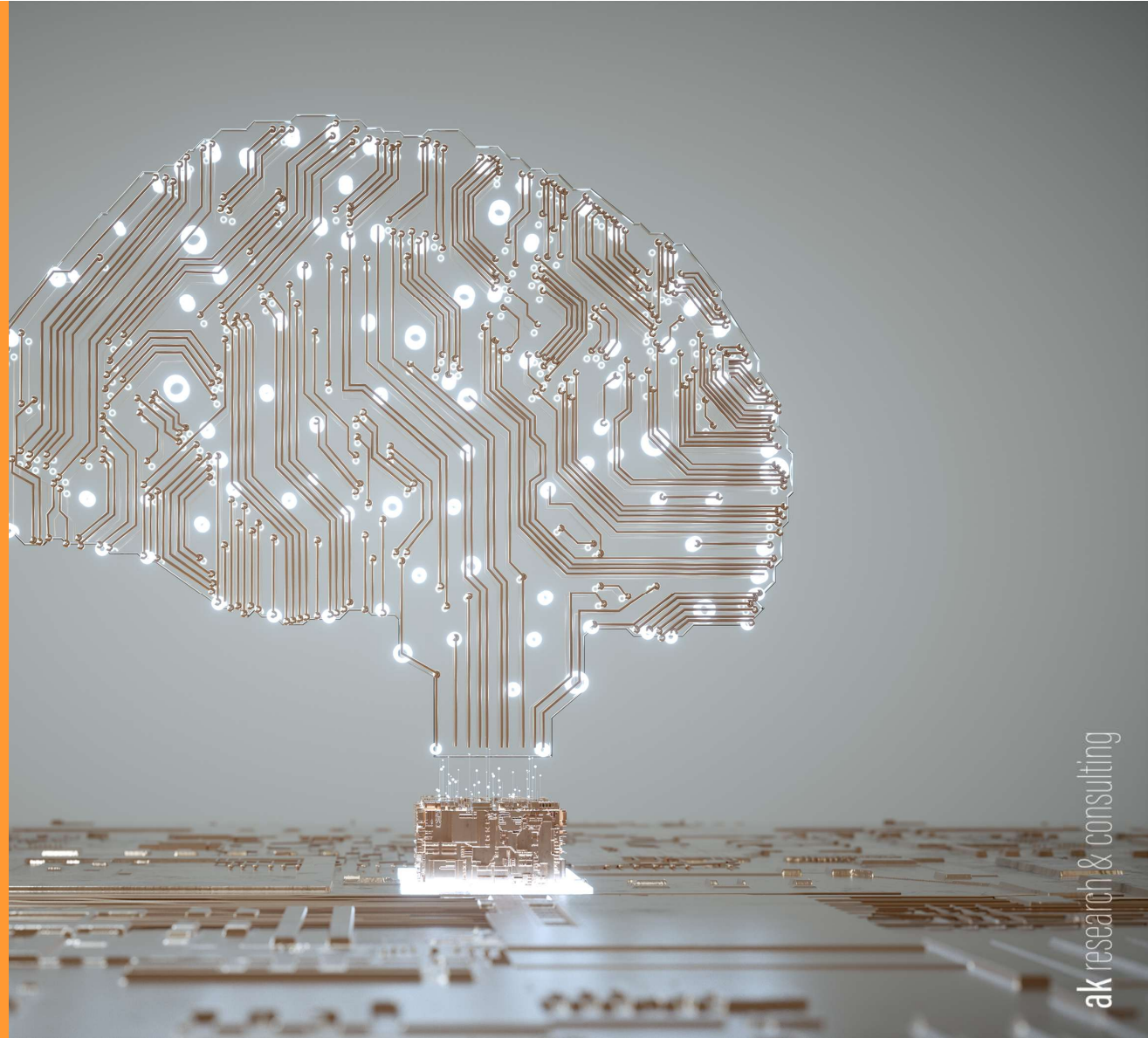


Older respondents were more likely to consider changing providers:

- Under 30: 58%
- 30-44: 66%
- 45-59: 74%
- 60+: 68%.

The level of "very likely" ('1' on the 5-point scale) was significantly higher for Māori (55%) compared to All (43%).

Report findings: Use of personal information



Key findings – use of personal information

Use of personal information

- A large majority agreed they want more control over the collection and use of their personal information (82%, up 2%).
 - This was higher across Māori respondents (on 86%).
- Two thirds (66%, up 3%) of respondents agreed that protecting personal information is a major concern in their life.
 - This was significantly higher across Māori respondents (on 79%).
- Of the remaining three statements relating to data privacy, just under half agreed that:
 - None of our personal information is private anymore* (48%, down 1%)
 - I feel in control of my data privacy (45%, up 2%)
 - It is too much effort to protect the privacy of my data (44%, down 1%)
 - Māori recorded similar ratings to the general population.

Use of surveillance technologies or similar

- Nearly two-thirds of respondents supported the increased use of surveillance technologies in the following situations:
 - To reduce theft from business (65%)
 - To increase my personal safety and that of others (64%)
 - Māori were similar to the general population.

Privacy breaches

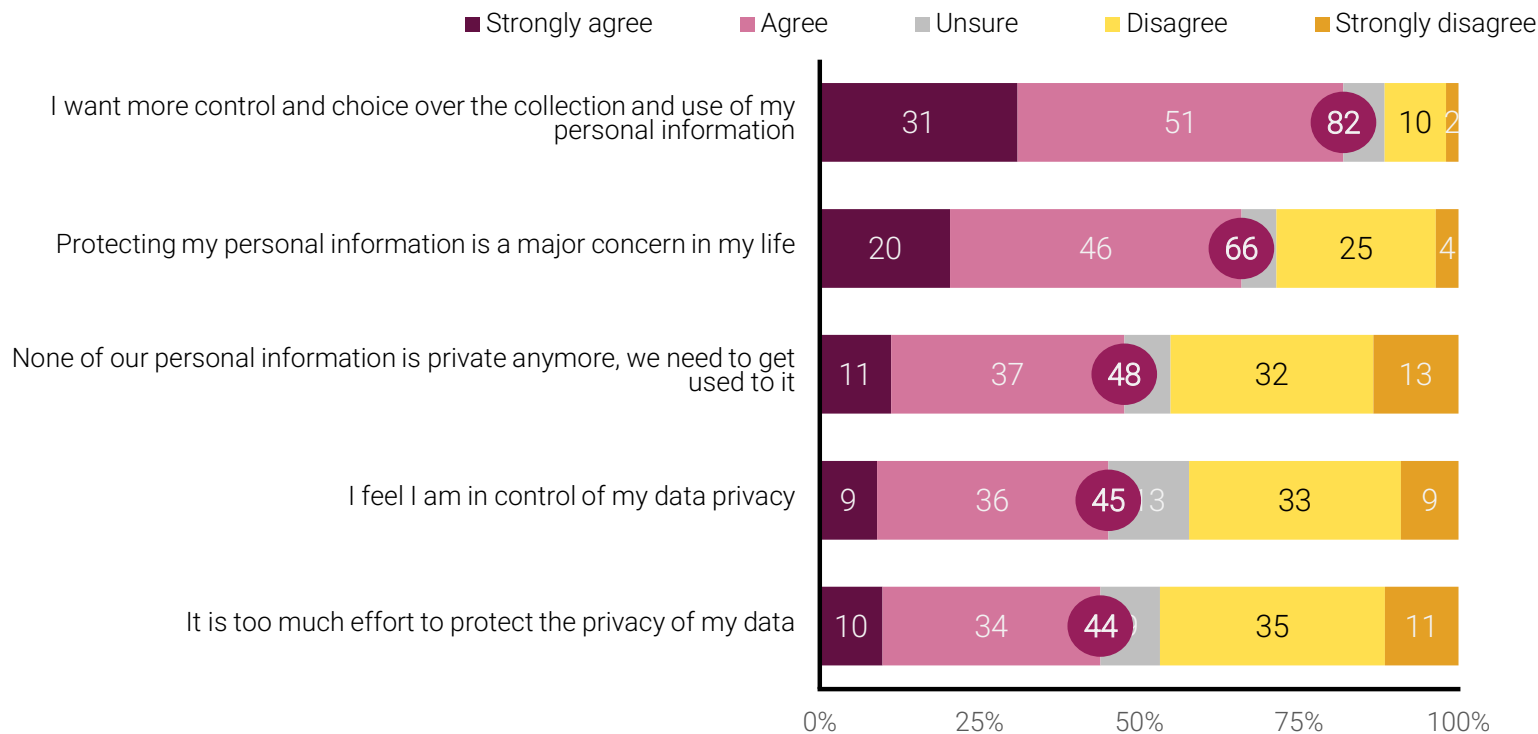
- Thirteen percent of respondents had experienced a privacy breach, up 6% compared to 2022 when this was previously asked.
 - 19% of Māori, up 7% had experienced a privacy breach.
- New Zealand Police (42%, up 9%) and the Office of the Privacy Commissioner (41%, up 4%) were considered the organisations to contact if a privacy breach was experienced.
 - Police were significantly higher than in 2022.
 - 41% of Māori, up 12% said they would contact the Police and 33% said they would contact the Office of the Privacy Commissioner (no change).
 - Māori were less likely to contact the Office of the Privacy Commissioner and more likely to contact the Citizens Advice Bureau compared to the general population.

*Note: abbreviated statement

Strong agreement for more control and choice over use of personal information, two thirds agree that protecting personal information is a major concern for them



Thinking about the privacy of your personal information, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following? (%)



Women were more likely to want more control over collection and use of personal information (85% agree) compared to men (79%).

While men were more likely to consider it is too much effort to protect their data (49%) compared to women (40%).

Under 30s were more likely to agree to all statements tested.

Those renting were more likely to agree protecting personal information is a major concern in their life (73%).

Aucklanders were more likely to agree personal information is not private anymore (53%) and its too much effort to protect (51%).

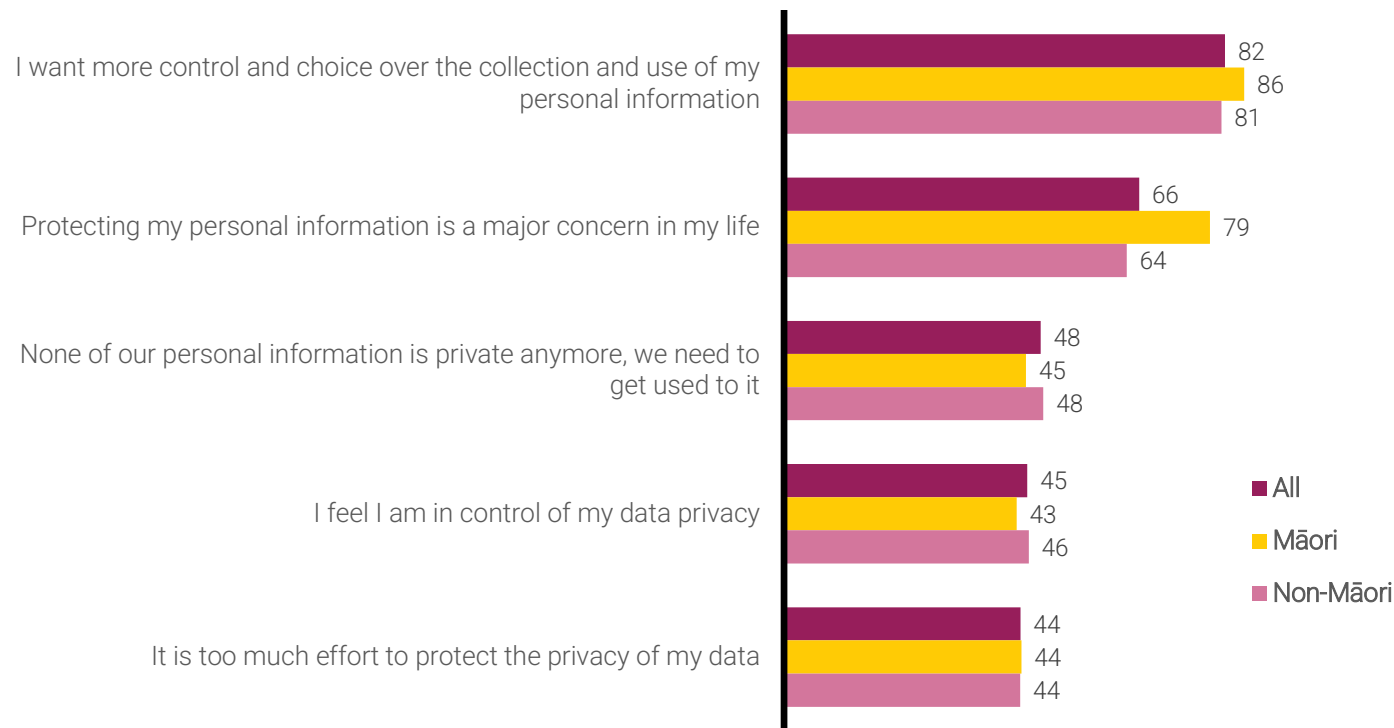
Those with dependent children were more likely to agree that it is too much effort to protect the privacy of their data (51%).

Base: All respondents (n=1,256)

Māori were more likely to agree protecting their personal information is a major concern – Māori comparison (total agree)



Thinking about the privacy of your personal information, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following? (% total agree)

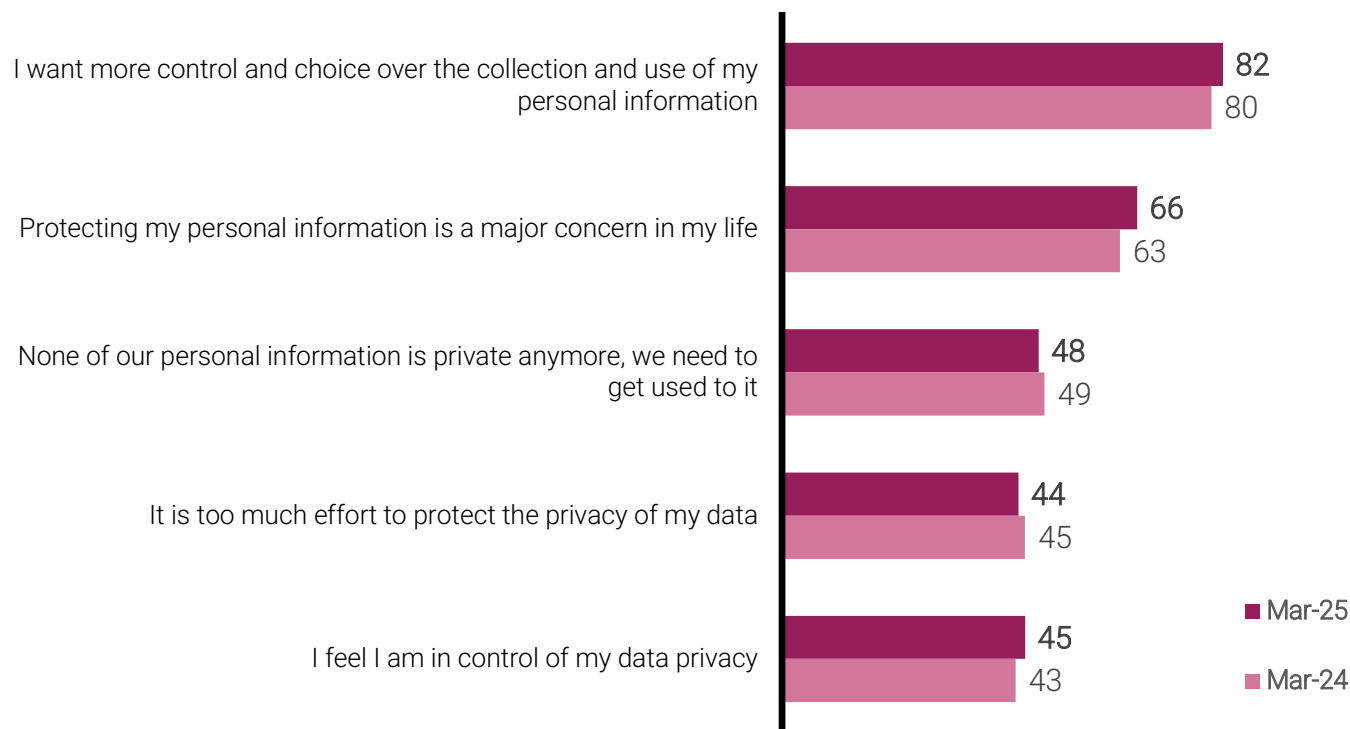


Base: All respondents (n=1,256), Māori (n=344)

Levels of agreement remain high for wanting more control and protecting personal information is a major concern – trendline (total agree)



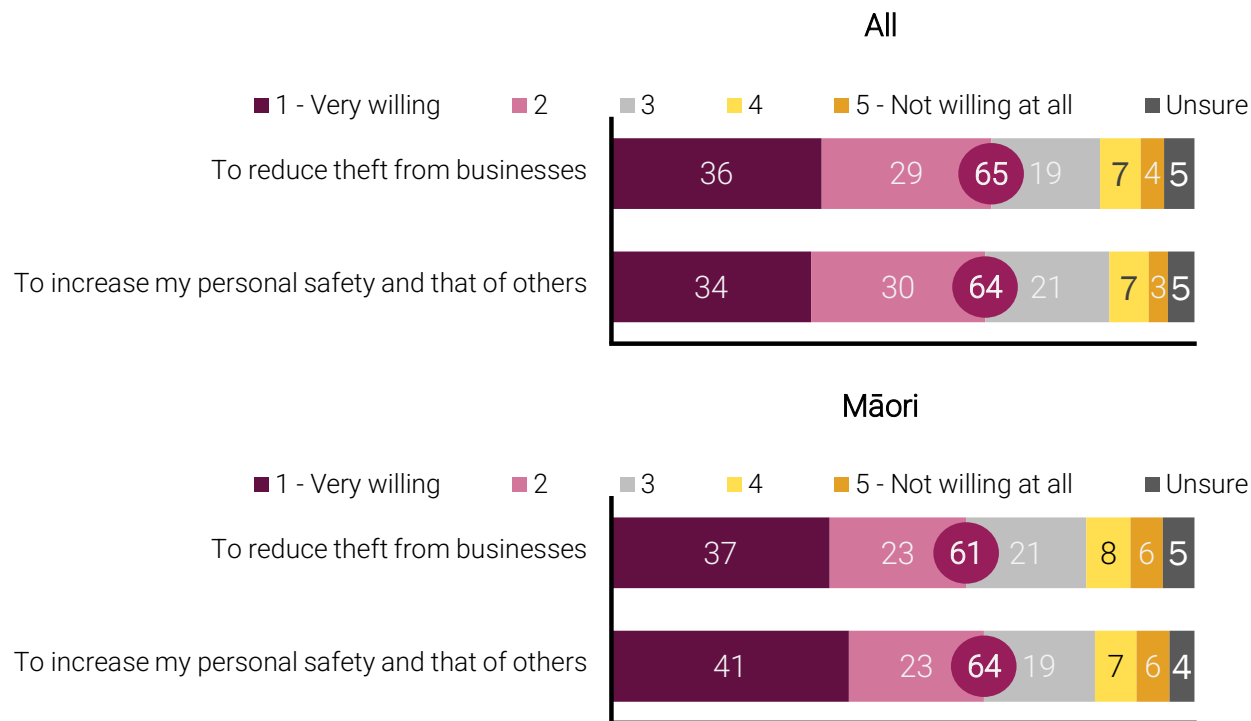
Thinking about the privacy of your personal information, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following? (% total agree)



Base: All respondents (n=1,256)

Around two thirds of respondents were willing to see an increase in intrusive technology if it reduces theft or increases personal safety

Q Thinking about technologies that intrude on privacy (e.g. surveillance technologies), how willing would you be to see an increased use of these for the following reasons: (%)



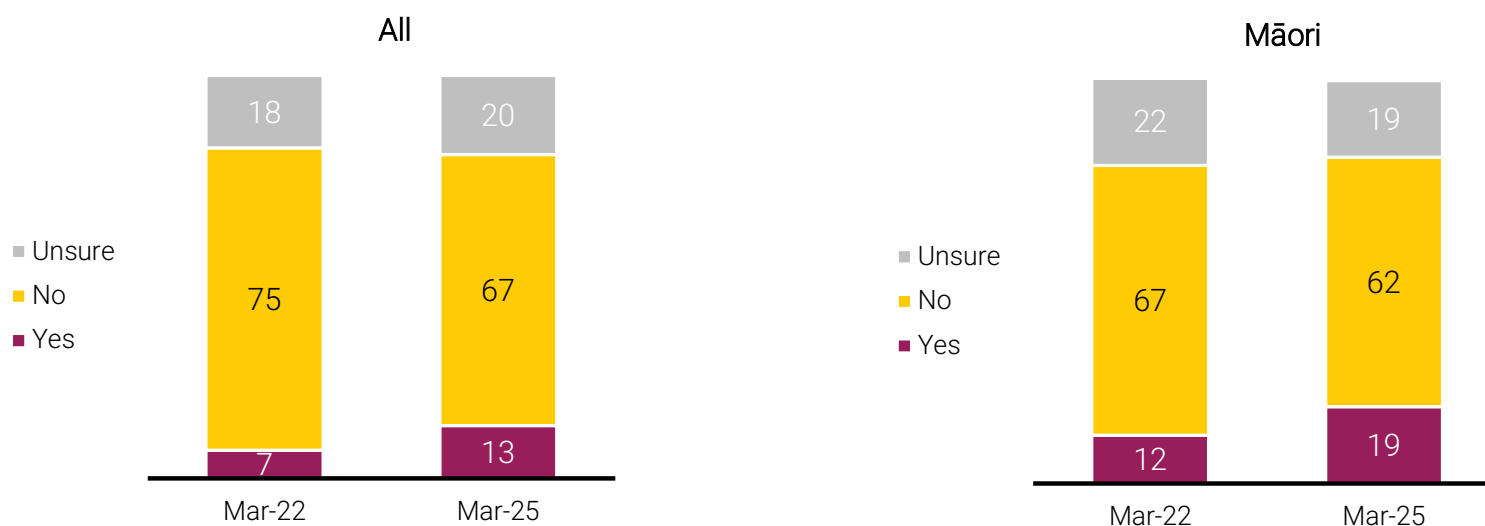
Those aged 60+ were more willing if it increases personal safety (69%) or for reducing theft (74%).

Base: All respondents (n=1,256), Māori (n=344)

There has been an increase in those saying they have experienced a privacy breach, higher across Māori respondents – Māori comparison



In the past year have you had any of your information lost or taken from an organisation in a privacy breach? (%)



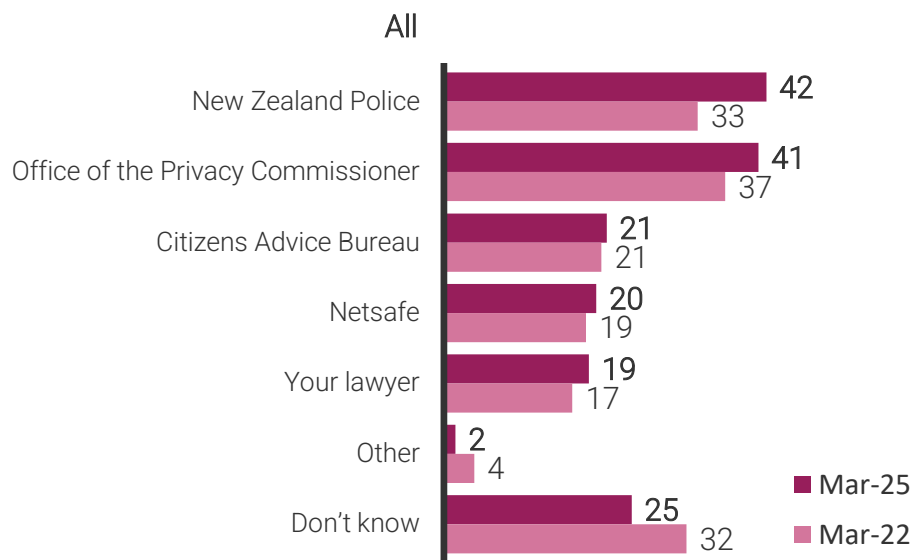
More likely to say they had information lost or taken in a privacy breach.

- Māori (19%)
- Those aged under 30 (23%)
- Those with dependent children (20%)
- Those renting (19%)
- Those in full time work (17%)

Base: All respondents (n=1,256), Māori (n=344)

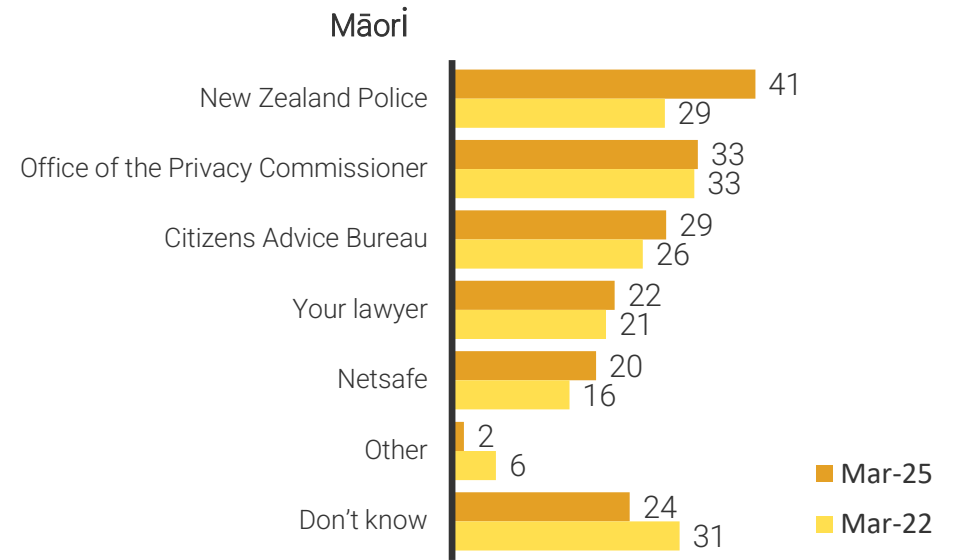
The Police and the Office of the Privacy Commissioner were again the top organisations to contact in event of a privacy breach, with the Police scoring higher than in 2022 – trendline

Q If an organisation told you they had a privacy breach and personal information about you had been lost, stolen or misused, which of the following organisations would you consider contacting? (%)



Older respondents were more likely to say they would contact the Office of the Privacy Commissioner.

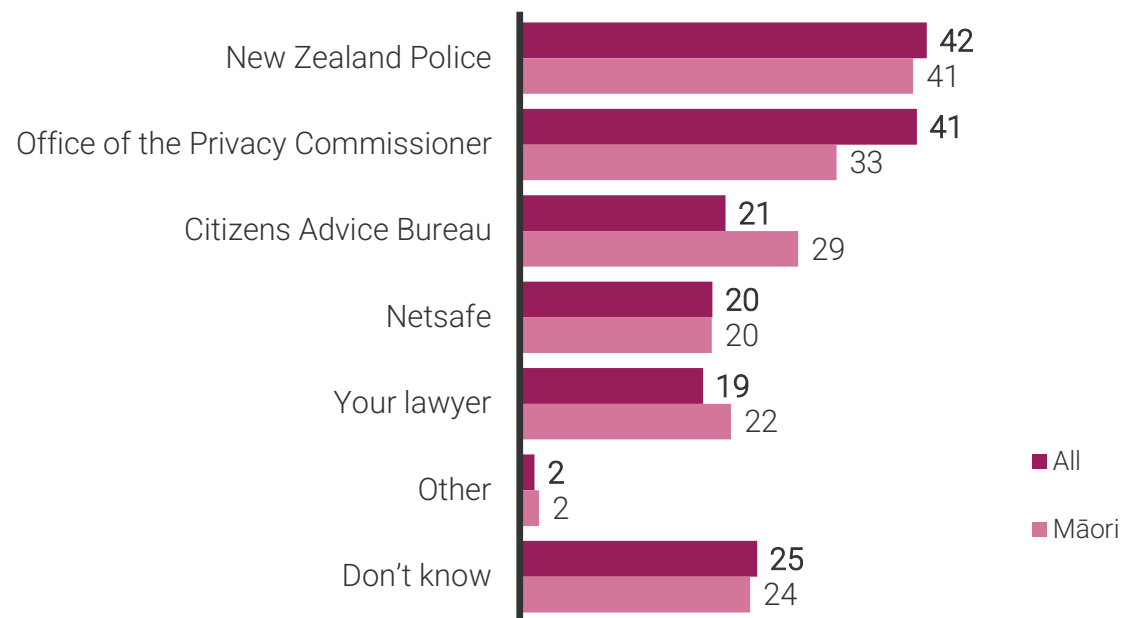
- Under 30: 24%
- 30-44: 36%
- 45-59: 41%
- 60+: 59%



Base: All respondents (n=1,256), Māori (n=344)

Police and the Office of the Privacy Commissioner were the top contacts, however, Māori more likely to contact the Citizens Advice Bureau than others– Māori comparison

Q If an organisation told you they had a privacy breach and personal information about you had been lost, stolen or misused, which of the following organisations would you consider contacting? (%)



Base: All respondents (n=1,256), Māori (n=344)

Report findings: Privacy Act and the Commissioner



Key findings – Privacy Act and the Commissioner

Privacy Act

- Small but steady increase in awareness of the Privacy Act with 53% (up 3%) stating they were aware of the Privacy Act giving them the right to a copy of any personal information held by an organisation.
 - Māori awareness was slightly down on 51% (down 3%).
- There was strong support among the general population for the Privacy Commissioner to have the following powers under the Privacy Act:
 - to ask a Court to issue a large fine for a serious privacy breach that a business or government agency has caused* (77% All: 77% Māori)
 - to audit the privacy practices of a business or government agency (77% All; 70% Māori)
 - to issue a small infringement to a business or government agency for a privacy breach (75% All: 73% Māori)
 - Māori were significantly less likely to support the Privacy Commissioner having the power to audit the privacy practices of a business or government agency compared to the general population.

*Note: abbreviated statement

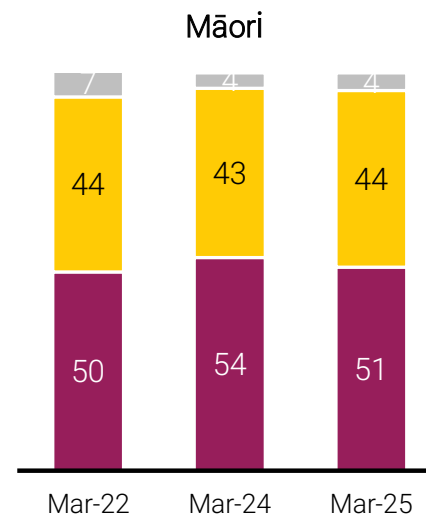
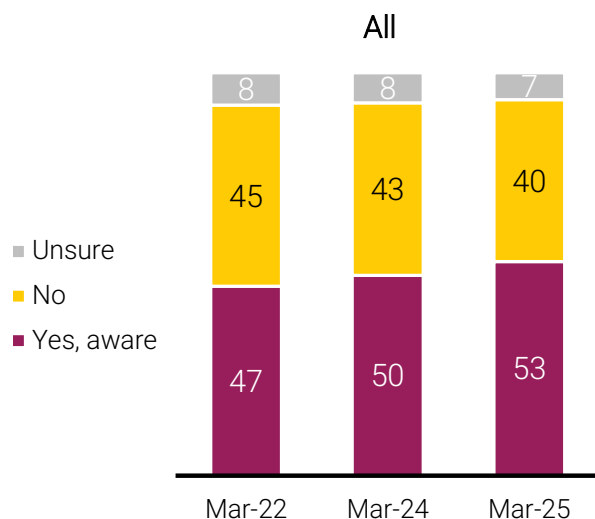
Contacting the OPC

- Only six percent have made contact with the Office of the Privacy Commissioner in the past 12 months.
 - Māori were more likely to make contact when compared to the general population with 10% stating to have done so.

Small majority aware the Privacy Act gives them rights to their personal information, small but steady increase across general population; similar small majority aware across Māori respondents



Are you aware that the Privacy Act gives you the right to a copy of any personal information an organisation holds about you? (%)



Males more likely to be aware (59%) than females (47%).

Pasifika more likely to be aware (71%) than other ethnicities:

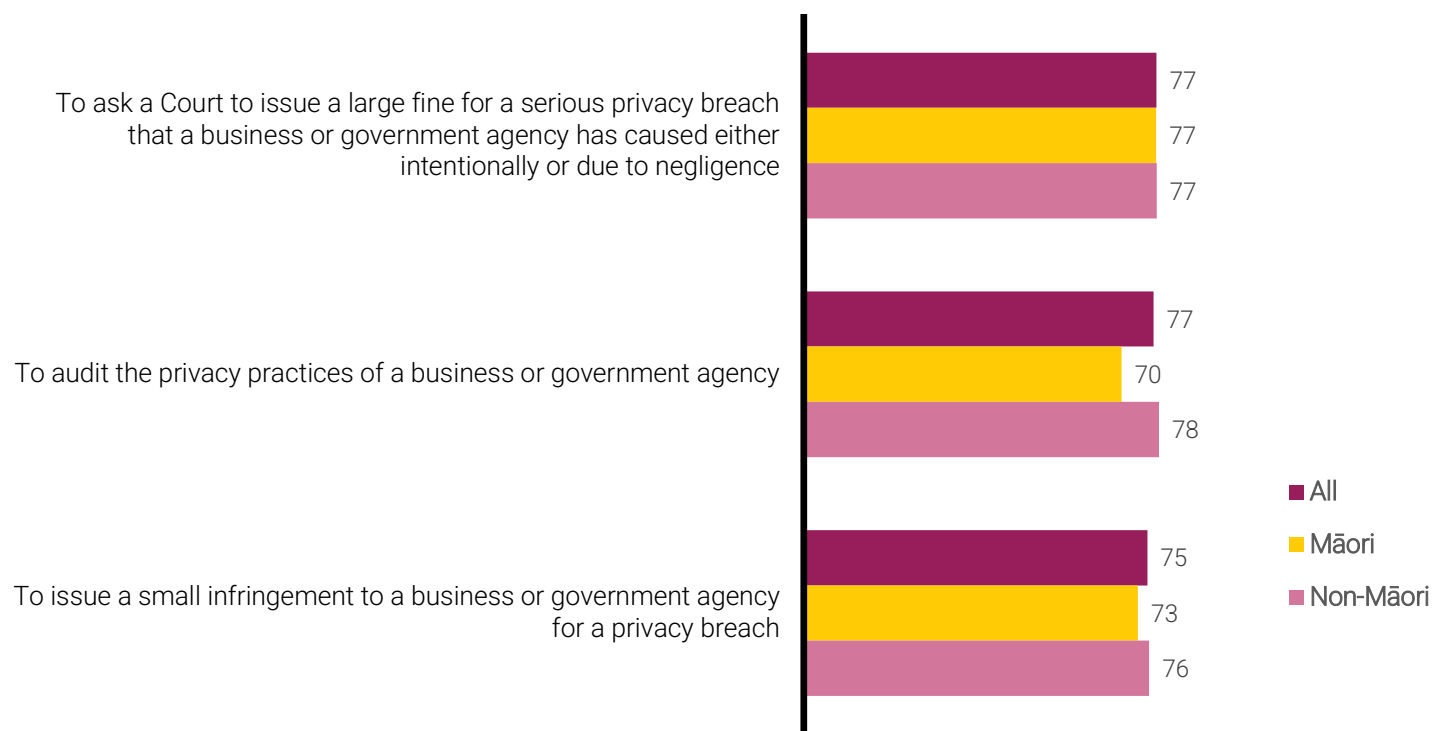
- NZ European (53%)
- NZ Māori (51%)
- Asian (51%).

Base: All respondents (n=1,256), Māori (n=344)

Strong support for greater enforcement powers for the Privacy Commissioner - Māori comparison (yes)



Do you believe the Privacy Commissioner should have the following powers under the New Zealand Privacy Act? (% Yes)



Older respondents (aged 60+) were more likely to say they should have each power:

- Issue a fine for serious data breach... (85%)
- Audit privacy practices of organisations (86%)
- Issue small infringement for privacy breach (80%).

Māori were less likely to say they should have the power to audit the privacy practices of a business or government agency (70%).

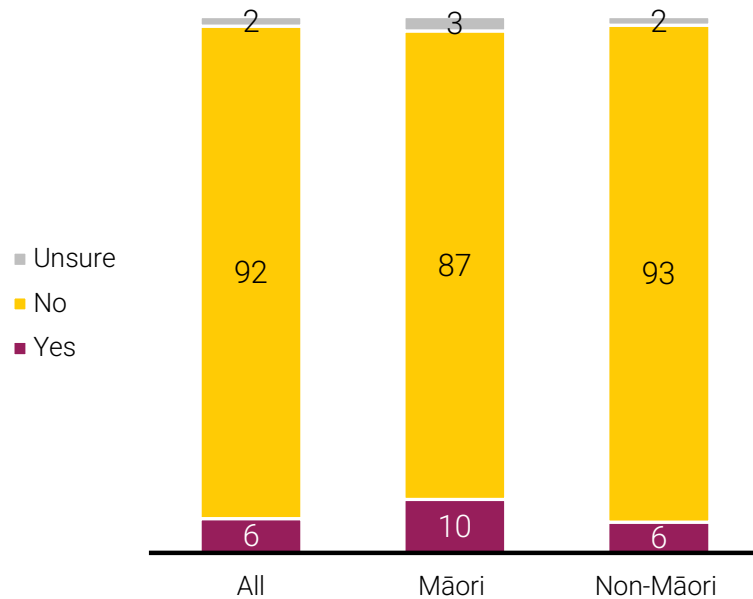
■ All
■ Māori
■ Non-Māori

Base: All respondents (n=1,256), Māori (n=344)

Less than ten percent stated they have contacted the Office of the Privacy Commissioner in the past 12 months



In the past 12 months, have you contacted the Office of the Privacy Commissioner (for any reason)? (%)



More likely to **say they have made contact:**

- Māori (10%)
- Pasifika (19%)
- Those aged under 30 (13%)
- Men (8%)
- Renters (11%)
- Those with dependent children (11%)
- Those in full time employment (11%).



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