



Research: Freedom of Expression and Harms Impacting Diverse Communities

Main Report

May 2024

Prepared for
Broadcasting Standards Authority

ak research & consulting



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Objectives and methodology

The BSA's Statement of Performance Expectations (SPE) requires that research is undertaken to 'explore community expectations and/or broadcasting standards requirements relevant to supporting a diverse media system'.

This research was commissioned as part of these requirements. Specific research objectives were to understand:

- the impacts of particular forms of expression on our diverse communities and
- how effectively the standards regime services these communities.

Prior qualitative research was conducted to inform the survey design. This comprised of five focus groups and is reported in a separate summary (see appendix).



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: $3 + 4 = 6$.

This quantitative report is based on an online survey of $n=493$ New Zealanders aged 18 years or older. Quotas were set to achieve minimum samples of people from a range of different ethnicities with the following samples achieved. Where people affiliated with multiple ethnicities, they were included in both groups.

- Māori, $n=155$
- Pacific Peoples', $n=151$
- Asian, $n=182$
 - South Asia (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka)
 - East Asia (China, Japan, Korea, Taiwan)
 - Southeast Asia (Cambodia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia)
- Muslims (identify as Muslim), $n=97$.

The margin of error for each sample size for a 50% figure at the 95% confidence level was:

- Māori $\pm 7.9\%$
- Pacific Peoples' $\pm 8.0\%$
- Asian $\pm 7.3\%$
- Muslims $\pm 10.0\%$.

Fieldwork was conducted between 2-16 May 2024.

Key Findings



Harm caused

- Clear majorities felt that exposure to offensive, discriminatory, or controversial views was a problem in New Zealand.
- Additionally, majorities also felt that voicing of particular viewpoints caused significant harm.
- Concern about these viewpoints being aired on public broadcasting was also high.
- These views are expressed during a time when people are holding a relatively negative view of life in New Zealand (many believing life in New Zealand was not going well, particularly Māori and Pacific Peoples').
- When thinking about how people expressed their views, around half felt that people had become less open and respectful.

Experiences

- Around a third of the Māori, Pacific Peoples' and Muslim groups reported reading, seeing or hearing offensive, discriminatory, or controversial views shared publicly in the past six months. Among Asian respondents it was 21%.
- Many of these views were expressed in forums which do not fall under the current BSA remit. These cover perceived racist comments, anti-Māori views, biased commentary on the Palestine/ Israel conflict, and references to people being labelled criminals/ terrorists.
- Most reacted emotionally towards the comments expressed, which engendered feelings of anger and hurt.
- Social media was the most cited channel for seeing this content, followed by free-to-air television and online news sites.
- In line with this, social media was considered the most harmful platform for sharing negative content.

Key Findings (cont)



Freedom of expression

- A majority felt that freedom of expression should be tempered by the need to respect the views of others.
- Across a range of different viewpoints, a majority felt that strong limits needed to be in place when these views are expressed.
- Only a minority felt New Zealand had the right balance between freedom of expression and potential harm to communities. The need for stronger limits to be in place was higher across Māori (56%) and Pacific Peoples' (60%), while 45% of Asian and 41% of Muslim respondents supported stronger limits.
- A majority felt that too many people were allowed to say harmful or misleading things. However, there was some polarisation of views – with similar proportions (just under half) saying the balance was in favour of freedom of expression but conversely, similar proportions saying that people should be able to say what they want as they can always turn off the programme or choose not to listen.
- Of concern, around a half felt powerless to do anything about this issue, and a similar number now chose to avoid watching public broadcasts.



Actions

- The most common action to take after viewing offensive viewpoints in the media was to talk to family and friends, followed by making a complaint to the broadcaster, comment online, and make a complaint to a Government body.
- Of those that would make a complaint to a Government body, the first port of call was the Human Rights Commission, followed by BSA.
- Prompted, awareness that people can complain to the BSA about offensive viewpoints publicly broadcast on radio, free-to-air television and pay television, ran at between 49% to 59%.
- Between 41% to 59% said they would be likely to complain to BSA if they viewed offensive content. Likelihood declined slightly after people had seen the BSA complaints process.
- Personal impacts (potential violence or harm to their families) were key motivators for making a complaint.
- There was no key barrier stopping them making a complaint, with a mix of factors in play. The long process, lack of knowledge, and lack of meaningful outcomes all featured.
- Suggested improvements to the complaints process were to simplify the process, increase the speed of processing time, and have easy to read examples. More visual information was also called for.
- Social media was generally considered the best way to disseminate information.

Key outtakes by ethnic background



Māori

Pacific Peoples'

Asian

Muslims

Harm caused

- Consensus on harm caused and concern
- **More negative** about life in NZ

- Consensus on harm caused and concern
- **More negative** about life in NZ

- Consensus on harm caused and concern
- **More optimistic** about life in NZ

- Consensus on harm caused and concern
- **Most positive** about life in NZ

Experiences

- Around third recalled offensive content
- **Mostly racist comments, anti-Māori views**
- Similar feelings of anger and hurt
- Social media most common channel, and considered most harmful

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- **Mostly racist comments, anti-Māori views**
- Similar feelings of anger and hurt
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- **Lower recall** of offensive content (21%)
- **Mostly anti-Māori views, comments on Palestine/ Israel conflict, references to people being labelled criminal/ terrorists**
- Similar feelings of anger and hurt
- Social media most common channel, and considered most harmful

- Around third recalled offensive content
- **Mostly comments on Palestine/ Israel conflict, being referred to as a criminal/ terrorist**
- Similar feelings of anger and hurt
- Social media most common channel, and considered most harmful

Freedom of expression

- Consensus that freedom of expression needed to have limits
- **Stronger limits** wanted by Māori
- Majority believe too many people are allowed to say harmful or misleading things – but polarisation on way to address this
- **Under half** felt powerless

- Consensus that freedom of expression needed to have limits
- **Stronger limits** wanted by Pacific Peoples'
- Majority believe too many people are allowed to say harmful or misleading things – but polarisation on way to address this
- **Just under** half felt powerless

- Consensus that freedom of expression needed to have limits
- **Less limits** wanted by Asians
- Majority believe too many people are allowed to say harmful or misleading things – but polarisation on way to address this
- **Just under** half felt powerless

- Consensus that freedom of expression needed to have limits
- **Lowest limits** wanted by Muslims
- Majority believe too many people are allowed to say harmful or misleading things – but polarisation on way to address this
- **Over half** felt powerless

Actions

- Actions: talk to family and friends, complain to broadcaster, comment online
- **Equal HRC and BSA**
- **Second highest** awareness of BSA complaint process
- **Lowest likelihood** to complain
- Motivators/barriers to complain similar
- Want simpler process, quicker processing, examples
- Best communication channels: social media, promote BSA website

- Actions: talk to family and friends, complain to broadcaster, comment online
- Cited HRC first, then BSA
- **Third highest** awareness of BSA complaint process
- **Second highest** likelihood to complain
- Motivators/barriers to complain similar
- Want simpler process, quicker processing, examples but **also videos**
- Best communication channels: social media, promote BSA website

- Actions: talk to family and friends, complain to broadcaster, **complain to Government body**
- Cited HRC first, then BSA
- **Lowest awareness** of BSA complaint process
- **Third highest** likelihood to complain
- Motivators/barriers to complain similar
- Want simpler process, quicker processing, examples but **also informal language, videos**
- Best communication channels: promote BSA website, social media

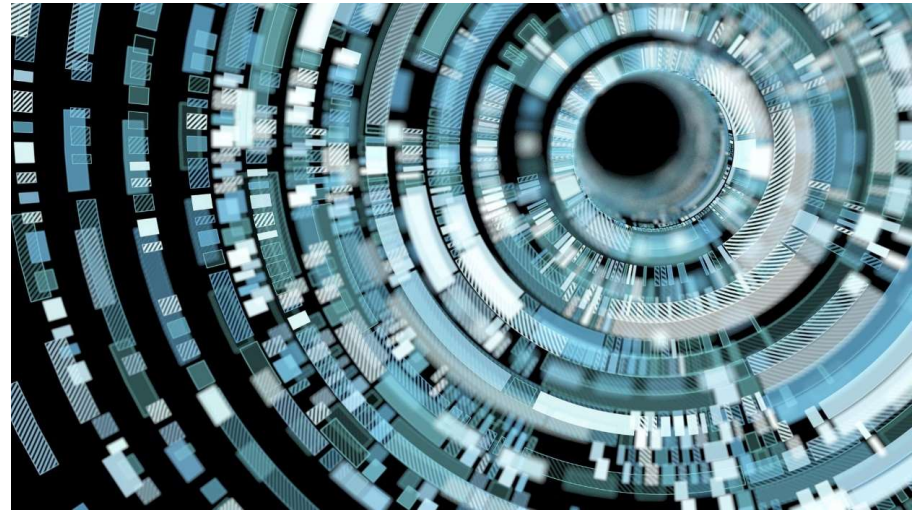
- Actions: talk to family and friends, complain to broadcaster, **complain to Government body**
- Cited HRC first, then BSA (much lower)
- **Highest awareness** of BSA complaint process
- **Highest declared** likelihood to complain
- Motivators/barriers to complain similar
- Want simpler process, quicker processing, examples but **also informal language, videos**
- Best communication channels: social media, **community groups**, promote BSA website

Report findings:
Harm caused by
offensive/
discriminatory/
controversial
viewpoints



Summary - harm caused by offensive/ discriminatory/ controversial viewpoints

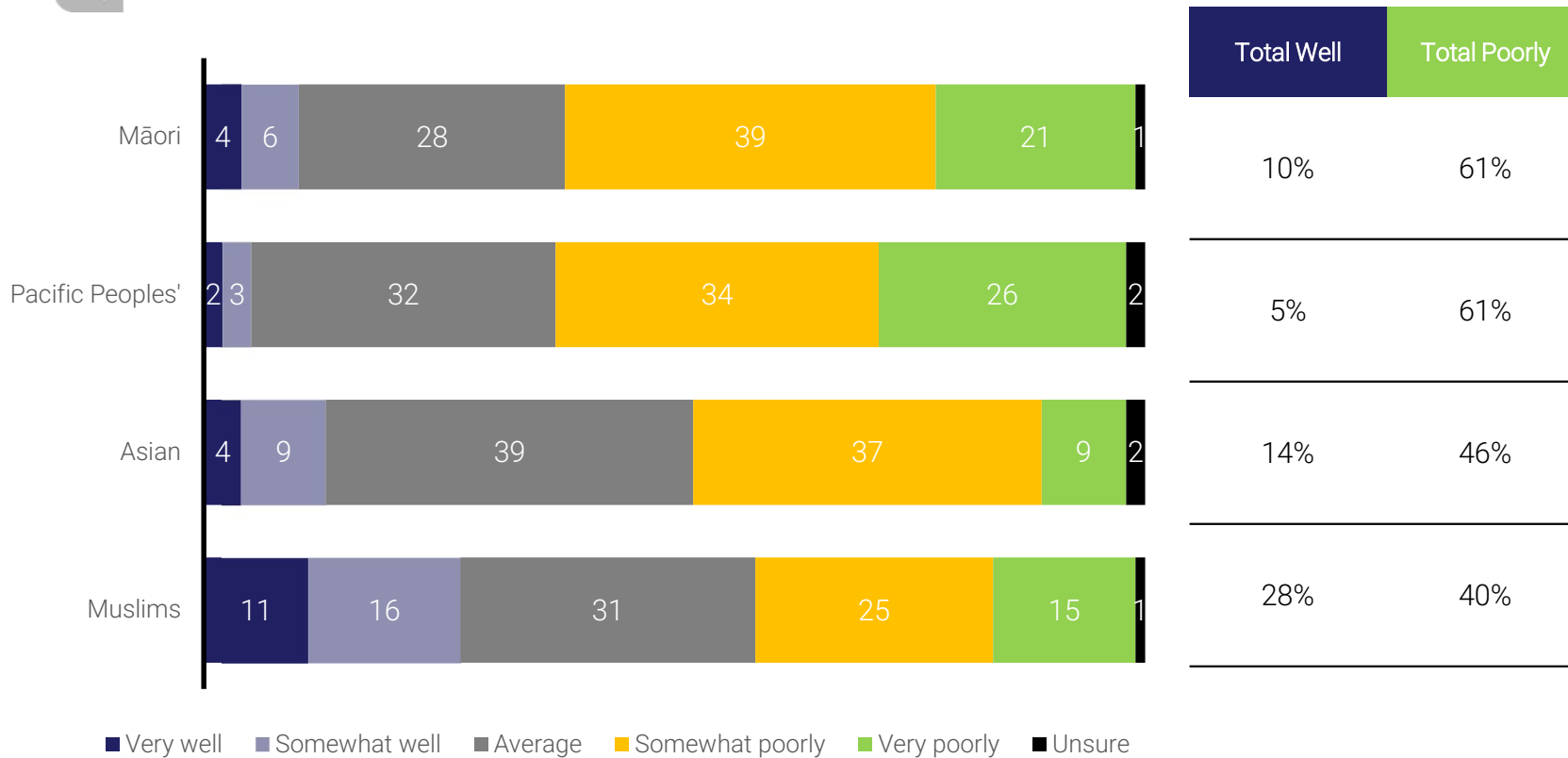
- Current views were set in a background of discontent, with a majority of Māori (61%) and Pacific Peoples' (61%) believing most people's lives are going poorly. Asian and Muslim respondents were slightly more optimistic but 46% and 40% respectively also held this view.
- When asked to think about how people express their views, around half of all groups felt that people had become less open and respectful.
- Large majorities across all groups felt exposure to offensive, discriminatory or controversial views was a problem in New Zealand.
- Testing the level of harm caused by a range of different views, a majority believed all were harmful with all scoring similarly on the level of harm caused.
- A majority across all groups were also concerned about offensive, discriminatory, or controversial viewpoints being aired on radio, free-to-air and pay television. The highest concern was voiced by those from a Pacific Peoples' and Muslim background.



Many were pessimistic about life in New Zealand – particularly Māori and Pacific Peoples', with those from a Muslim background most positive



Thinking about the way things are going in New Zealand, how well or poorly do you think most people's lives are going? (%)



• Overall, females were less positive (63% 'total poorly'), than males (41%)

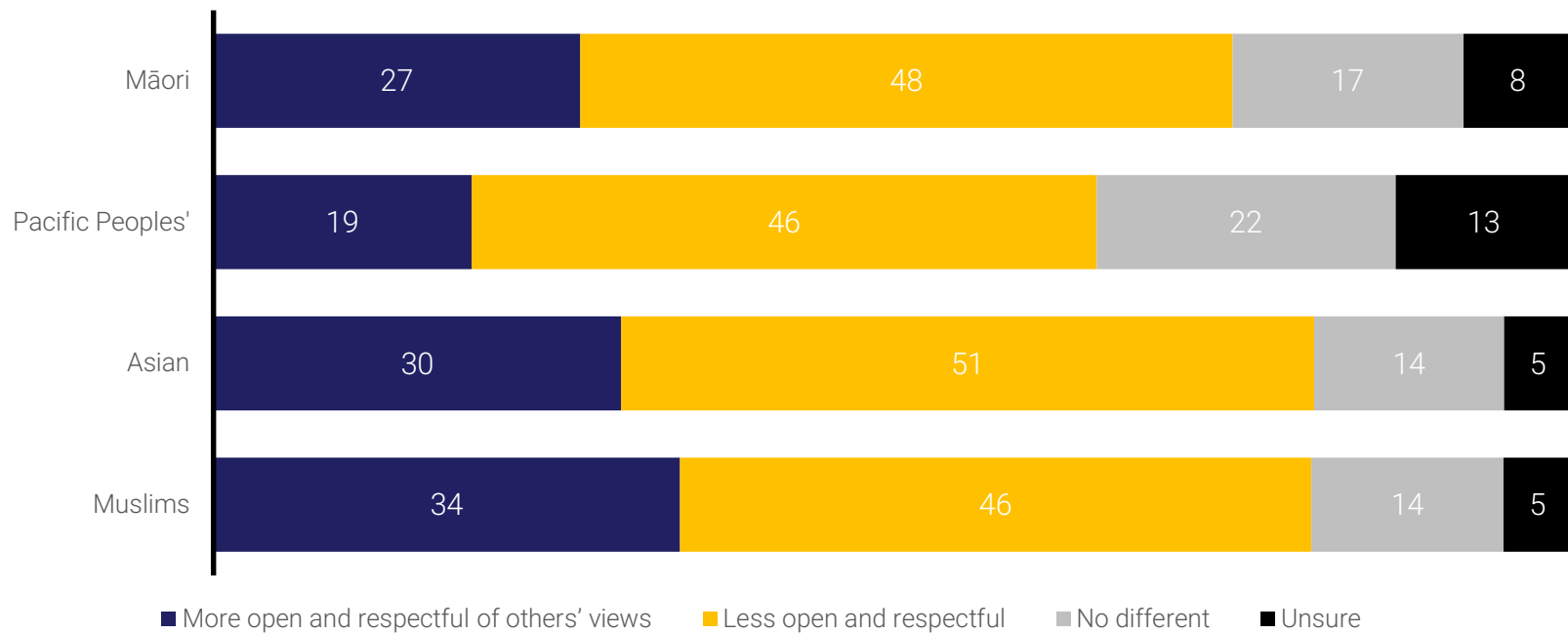
Base: Māori (n=155), Pacific Peoples' (n=151), Asian (n=182), Muslims (n=97)

Note: Total well=Very+Somewhat well; Total poorly=Somewhat+Very poorly

Across all ethnicities, around half felt that people had become less open and respectful about how people express their views



Thinking about how people express their views, do you feel that people are now ... (%)

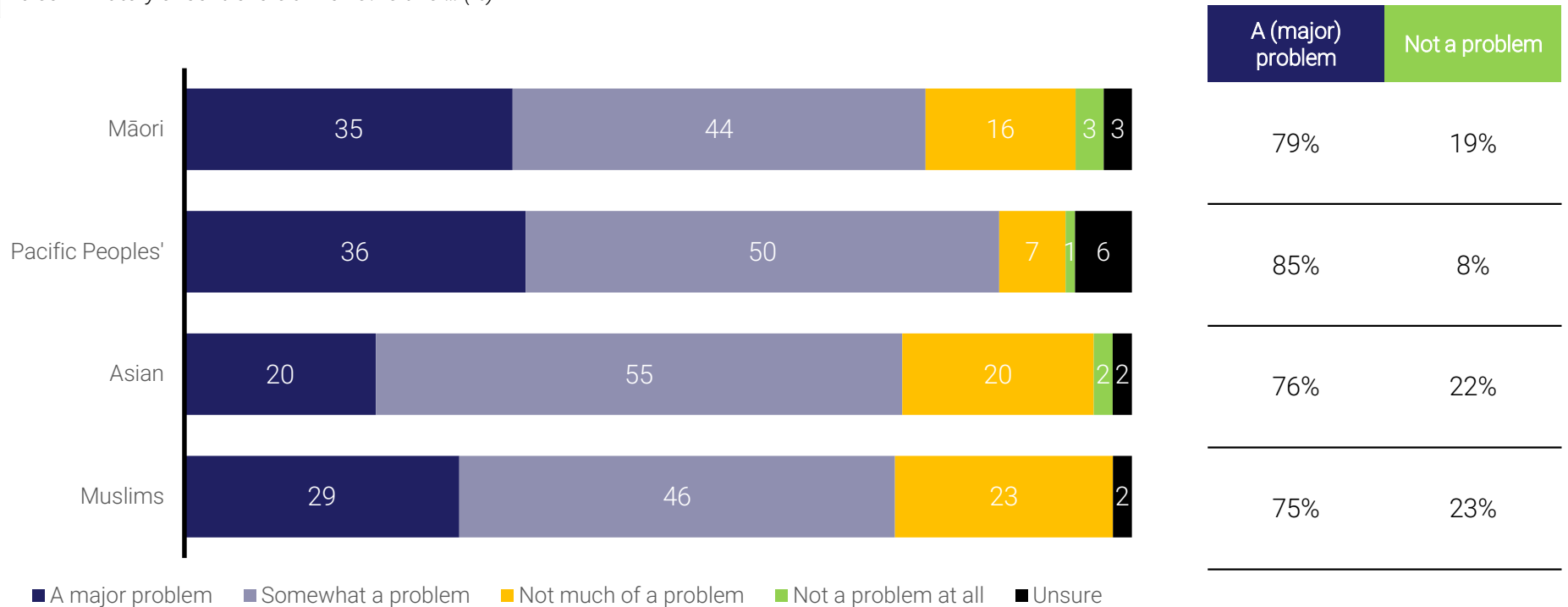


Base: Māori (n=155), Pacific Peoples' (n=151), Asian (n=182), Muslims (n=97)

Large majorities across people of all ethnicities felt that being exposed to offensive, discriminatory or controversial views was a problem in New Zealand



Generally speaking, how much of a problem do you think there is in New Zealand with people being exposed to offensive, discriminatory or controversial views? Is this ... (%)



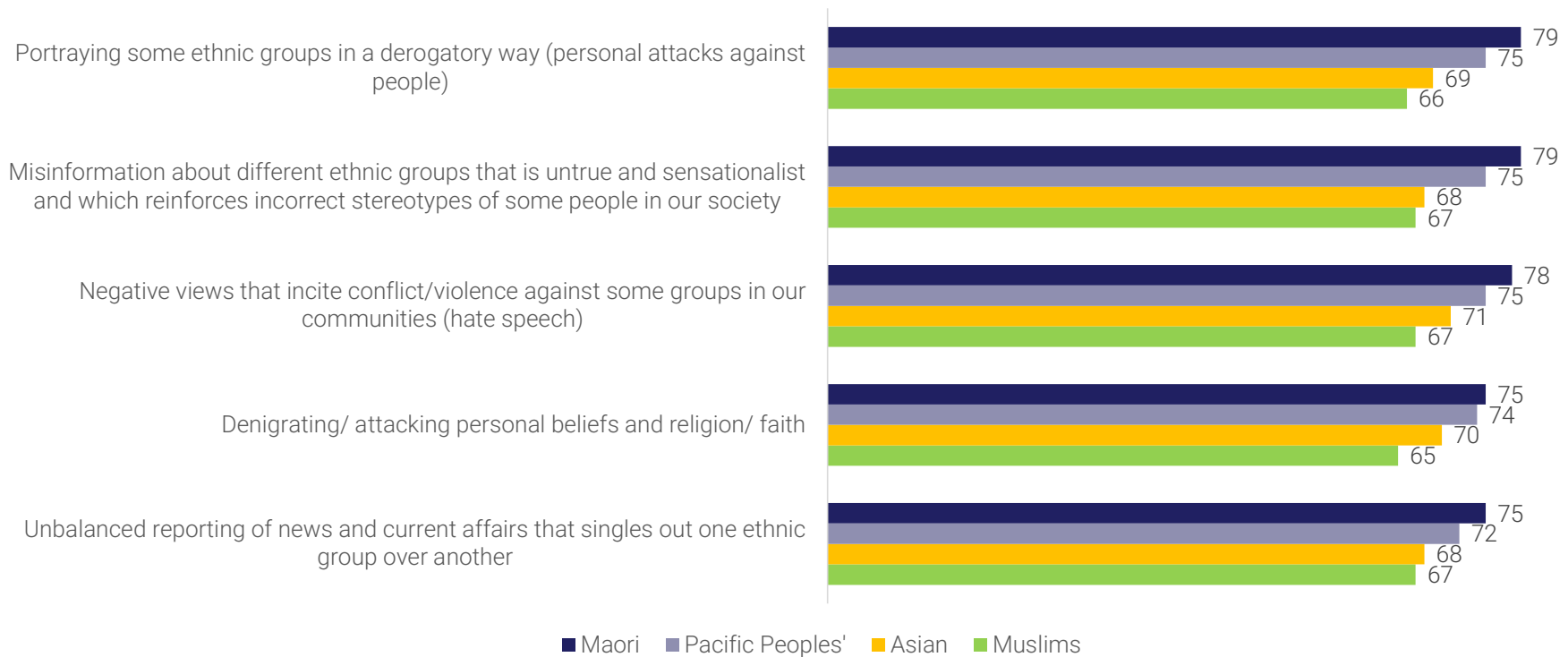
Base: Māori (n=155), Pacific Peoples' (n=151), Asian (n=182), Muslims (n=97)

Note: Total problem=A major+Somewhat a problem; Total not a problem=Not much of a problem+Not a problem at all

There was little differentiation between the level of harm caused by various types of offensive views, with a majority across all groups believing different offensive views were harmful. However, Māori and Pacific Peoples' were more emphatic about the harm these caused



Please rate how harmful you think the following views are? (Total 'Very harmful' + 'Moderately harmful' %)

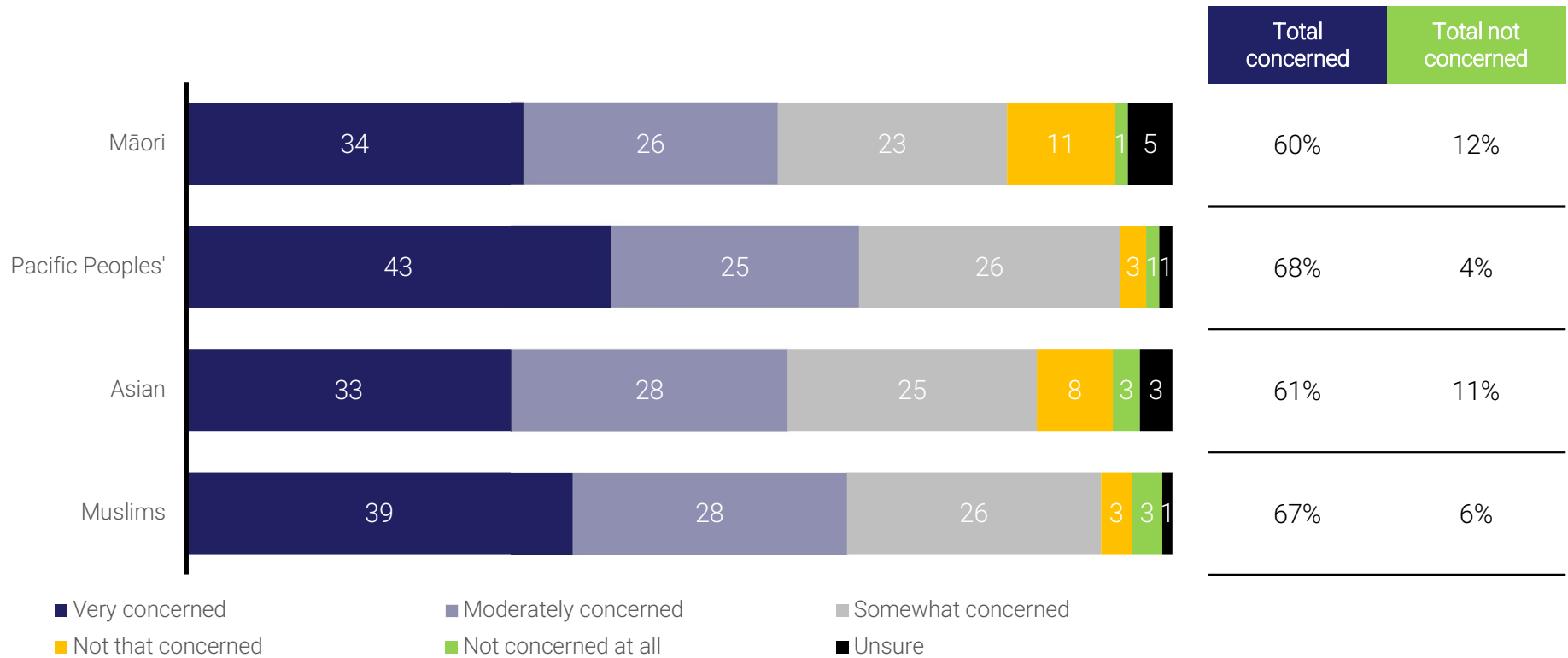


Base: Māori (n=155), Pacific Peoples' (n= 151), Asian (n=182), Muslims (n=97)

A majority across all groups, were concerned about offensive, discriminatory, or controversial viewpoints being aired on radio, free-to-air and pay television. Pacific Peoples' and Muslim were most concerned



How concerned are you about offensive, discriminatory, or controversial viewpoints being aired on radio, free-to-air and pay television? (%)



Base: Māori (n=155), Pacific Peoples' (n=151), Asian (n=182), Muslims (n=97)

Note: Total Concerned=Very +Moderately concerned; Total not concerned=Not that concerned +Not concerned at all

Report findings:
Experience of
offensive/
discriminatory/
controversial
viewpoints



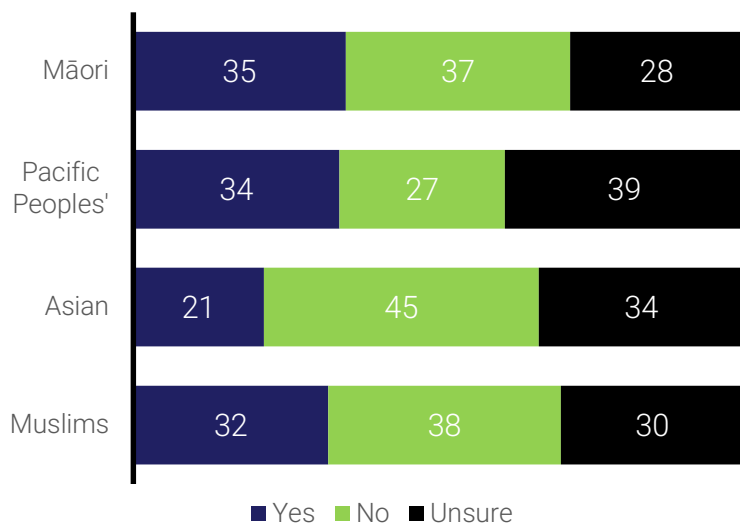
Summary - experience of offensive/ discriminatory/ controversial viewpoints

- Around a third of most groups (apart from Asian on one-fifth) reported reading, seeing, or hearing offensive, discriminatory, or controversial views shared publicly in the past six months.
 - Across Māori and Pacific Peoples' respondents the views most commonly recalled related to racist comments and anti-Māori views, actions or comments.
 - Across Asian respondents highest recall was for anti-Māori views, biased comments on the Palestine/ Israel conflict, and people being labelled criminals or terrorists.
 - Across Muslim respondents highest recall was for biased comments on the Palestine/ Israel conflict and people being labelled criminals or terrorists.
- Emotional harm was evident from hearing these offensive viewpoints, with Māori, Pacific Peoples', and Asian most likely to feel angry and hurt. Māori also had higher levels of feeling unsafe, disgusted and concerned.
 - Muslim respondents were much more likely to feel hurt, followed by angry, disgusted, and concerned.
- The key channel where these viewpoints were being observed was social media.
 - For Māori, Pacific Peoples' and Asian free-to-air television and online news sites were the next most cited.
 - For Muslim respondents, after social media, news sites featured strongly (online news sites, television, and newspapers).
- Social media was also viewed as the most harmful platform for sharing offensive content.



Around a third of Māori, Pacific Peoples' and Muslims recalled views they considered offensive, discriminatory or controversial being shared publicly, with Asians on one-fifth. Key themes for Māori and Pacific Peoples' were perceived racist comments and anti-Māori views/ actions, for Muslims was the biased coverage of the Palestine/ Israel war and being referred to as criminals/ terrorists. Asians tended to voice issues on behalf of other groups

Have you, read, seen or heard any offensive, discriminatory or controversial views shared publicly (e.g. on television, radio or online) in the past six months? (%)



Base: Māori (n=155), Pacific Peoples' (n=151), Asian (n=182), Muslims (n=97)

- Overall, those in the North Island were less likely to recall offensive content (28%), compared to those in the South Island (47%).
- Younger respondents also had lower recall compared to older respondents.

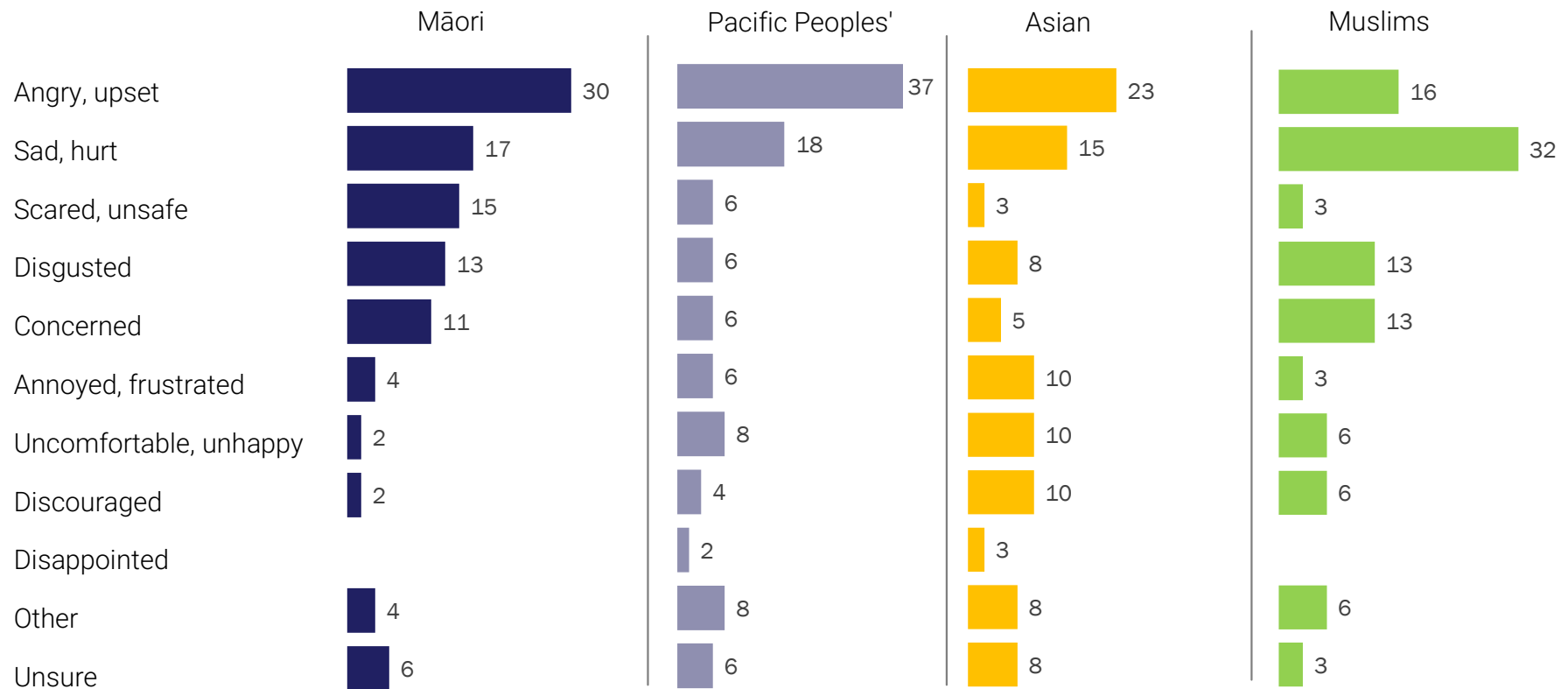
[If recalled offensive views:] What offensive, discriminatory, or controversial views can you recall? (%)

Column %	Māori	Pacific Peoples'	Asian	Muslims
Racist comments (on social media and TV)	28	20	14	11
Anti-Māori views, actions and comments (by government leaders)	20	20	17	7
Biased or offensive comments on Palestine & Israel war	10	12	17	29
People being labelled as a criminal or terrorist	2	10	17	14
Sexism, anti-LGBTQ+	12	8	3	4
Offensive interviews on News reporting	2	8	3	7
People being called by discriminatory words	2	6	0	4
Negative views towards migrants	2	2	3	4
Other	2	2	6	4
Unsure	20	10	23	18

Base: (if recalled offensive views) Māori (n=50), Pacific Peoples' (n=49), Asian (n=35), Muslims (n=28)

Offensive content was most likely to make Māori and Pacific Peoples' feel angry and hurt. For Māori it had wider impacts, including making them feel unsafe, **disgusted** and concerned. Muslims were more likely to feel hurt, followed by angry, disgusted and concerned. Asians said they felt angry and hurt

Q [If recalled offensive views:] How did it make you feel? (%)

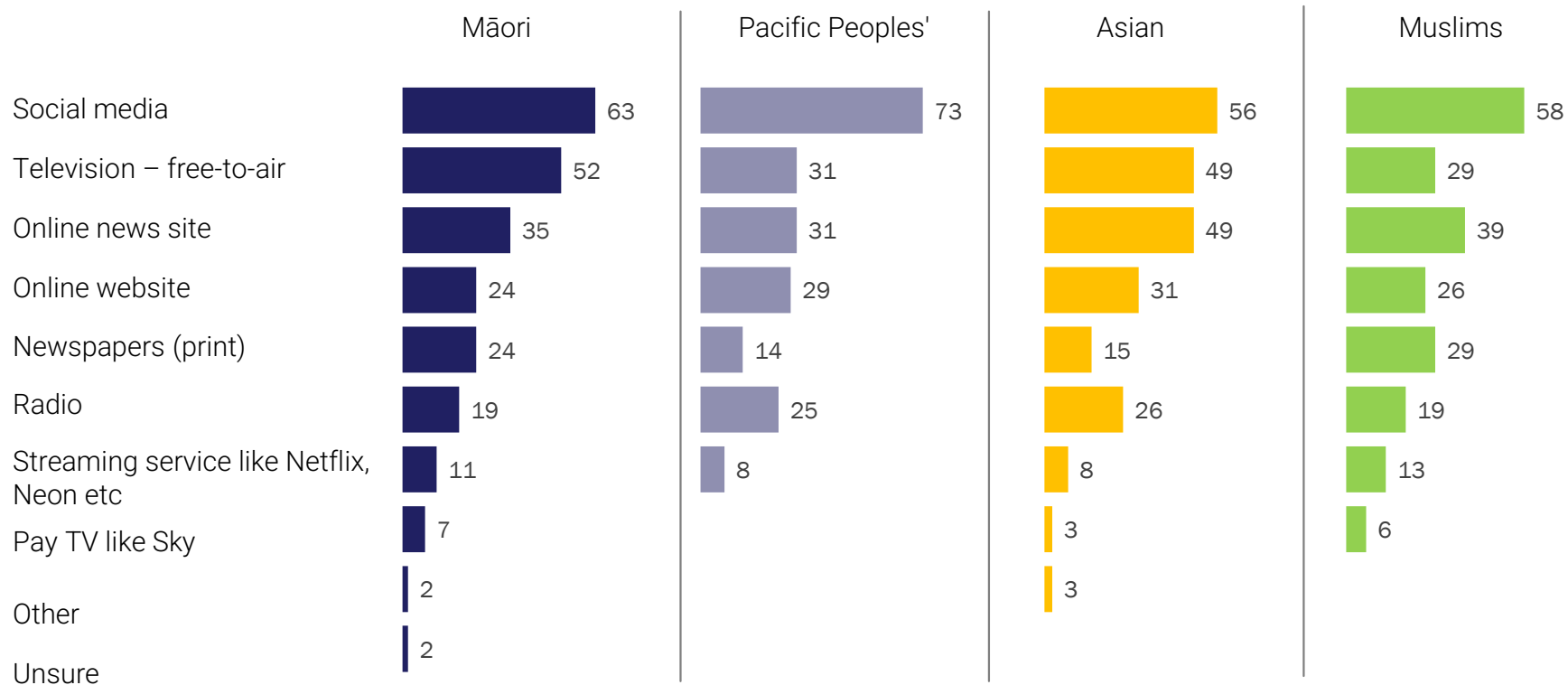


Base (if recalled offensive news): Māori (n=53), Pacific Peoples' (n=51), Asian (n=39), Muslims (n=31)

Social media was the key channel for dissemination of offensive content, followed by television, online news sites



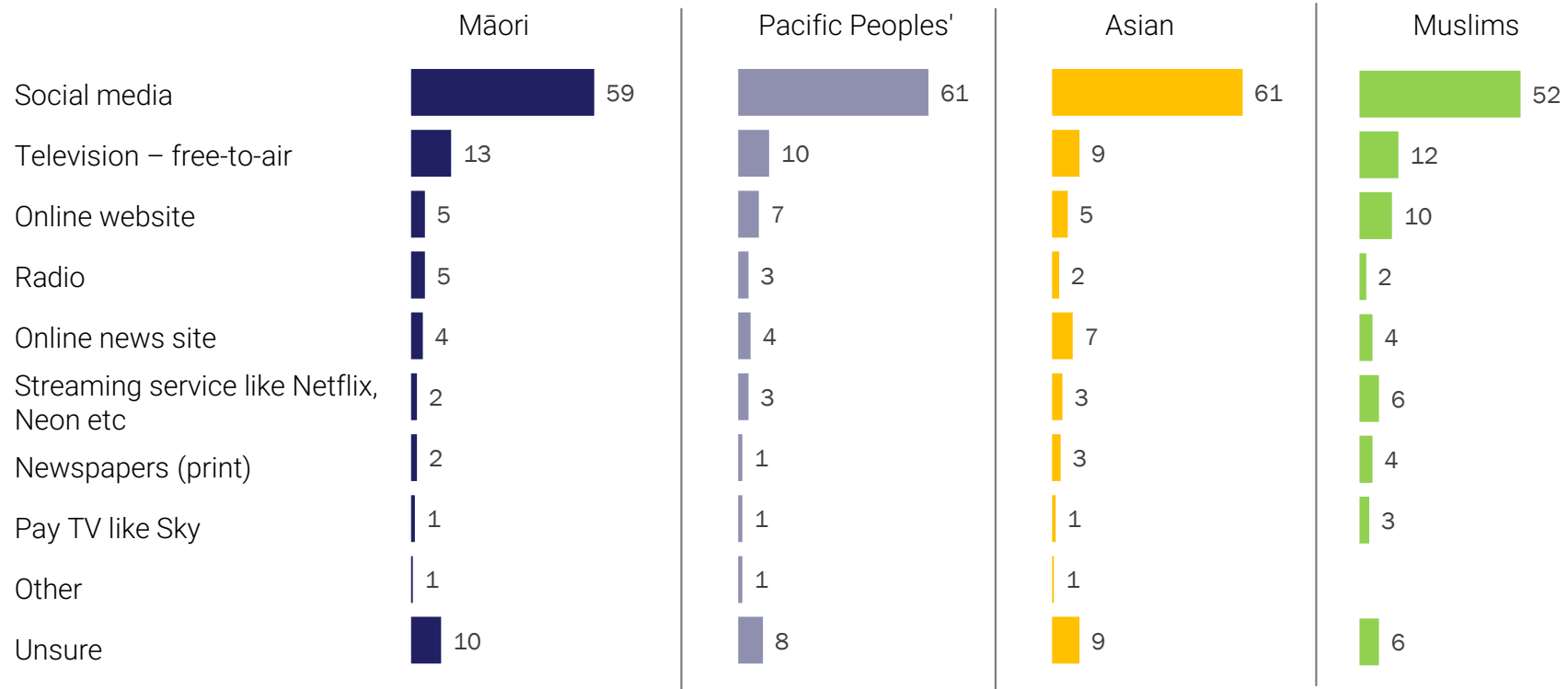
[If recalled offensive views:] Where did you read, see or hear the offensive, discriminatory, or controversial views? (%)



Base (if recalled offensive news): Māori (n=53), Pacific Peoples' (n=51), Asian (n=39), Muslims (n=31)

Consistent with being the most prolific channel for offensive content, social media was also viewed as the most harmful media platform

Q Which media platform is the MOST harmful in terms of sharing more offensive, discriminatory, or controversial viewpoints? CHOOSE ONE (%)



Base: Māori (n= 155), Pacific Peoples' (n=151), Asian (n=182), Muslims (n=97)

Report findings: Freedom of expression



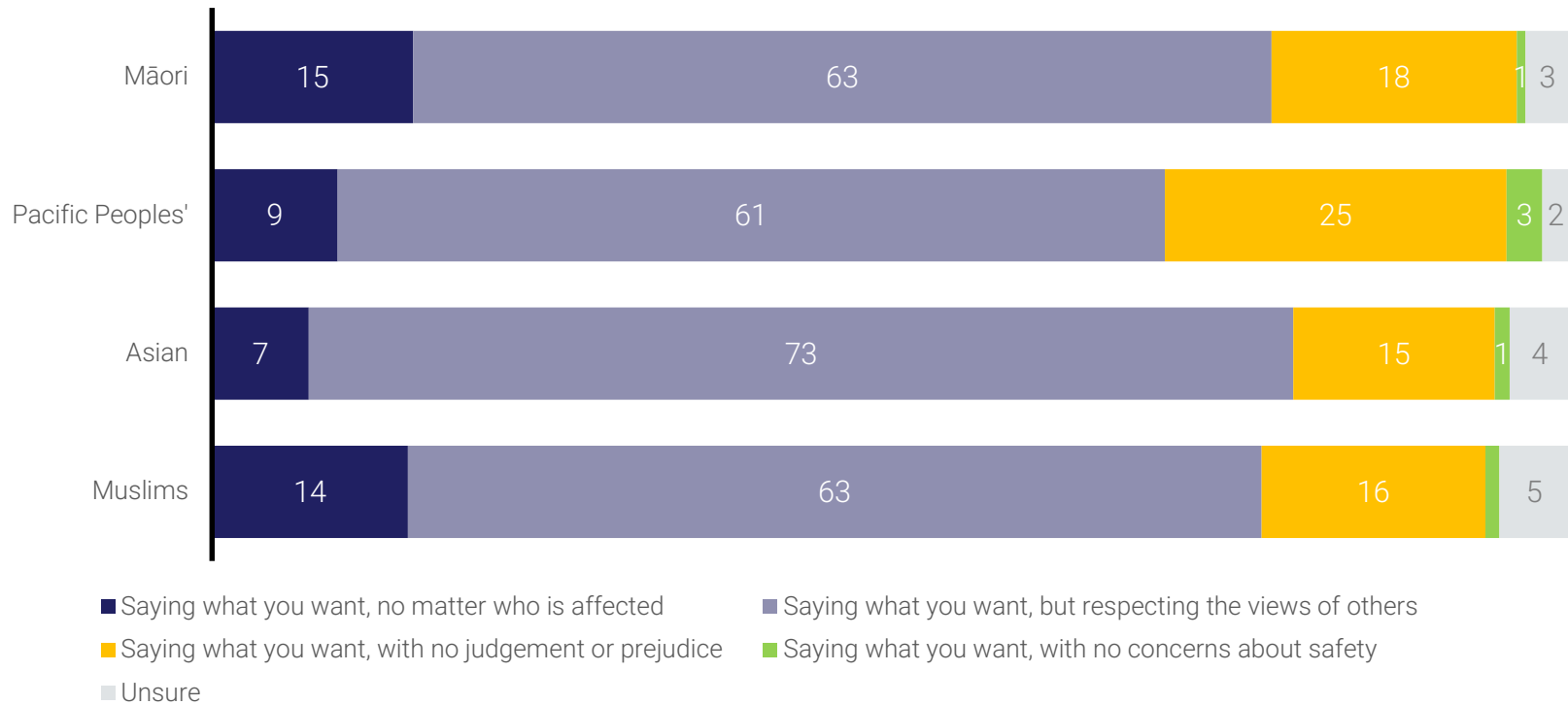
Summary – freedom of expression

- Freedom of expression was not seen as a 'pass' to say anything regardless of who may be affected. A majority across all groups felt that it was about saying what you want but respecting the views of others.
- A majority across all groups also felt that limits ('strong' or 'moderate' limits) should be in place when specific viewpoints are expressed. Stronger majorities were evident across Pacific Peoples' audiences on this point. The viewpoints tested were:
 - Portraying some ethnic groups in a derogatory way (personal attacks against people) – Māori 75%, Pacific Peoples' 80%, Asian 74%, Muslims 71%
 - Misinformation about different ethnic groups that is untrue and sensationalist and which reinforces incorrect stereotypes of some people in our society – 74%, 74%, 72%, 69%
 - Negative views that incite conflict/violence against some groups in our communities (hate speech) – 74%, 77%, 73%, 73%
 - Unbalanced reporting of news and current affairs that singles out one ethnic group over another – 74%, 75%, 69%, 72%
 - Denigrating/ attacking personal beliefs and religion/ faith – 71%, 77%, 68%, 73%
- A minority felt that we had the right balance between freedom of expression and potential harm to communities, with the larger proportion believing that stronger limits needed to be in place ('somewhat stronger' or 'much stronger' limits), with 56% of Māori believing this, 60% Pacific Peoples', 45% Asian, and 41% of those from Muslims.
- There were differing opinions on limiting freedom of expression. While a majority felt that too many people were allowed to say harmful or misleading things (Māori 64%, Pacific Peoples' 66%, Asian 57%, Muslims 60%) and many felt that the balance was too much in favour of freedom of expression and was hurting many communities (43%, 45%, 46%, 48%) – a good number also felt that people should be able to say what they want, as you can always turn off the programme or choose not to listen (43%, 44%, 42%, 47%).
- A number also felt powerless to do anything about the issue (43%, 46%, 46%, 53%) or had tuned out and hardly watched public broadcasts as there is too much misinformation and inappropriate content (55%, 50%, 52%, 52%).
- Around half of all groups felt that media is influenced too much by Government, and should be left alone (46%, 47%, 47%, 49%).
- However, smaller proportions believed that New Zealand is too woke, people should be able to say what they want, its only words (34%, 25%, 29%, 31%).

A majority across all groups did not see 'freedom of expression' as the right to say whatever you want, there was a clear caveat in the form of needing to respect the views of others



How would you best describe freedom of expression? CHOOSE ONE (%)

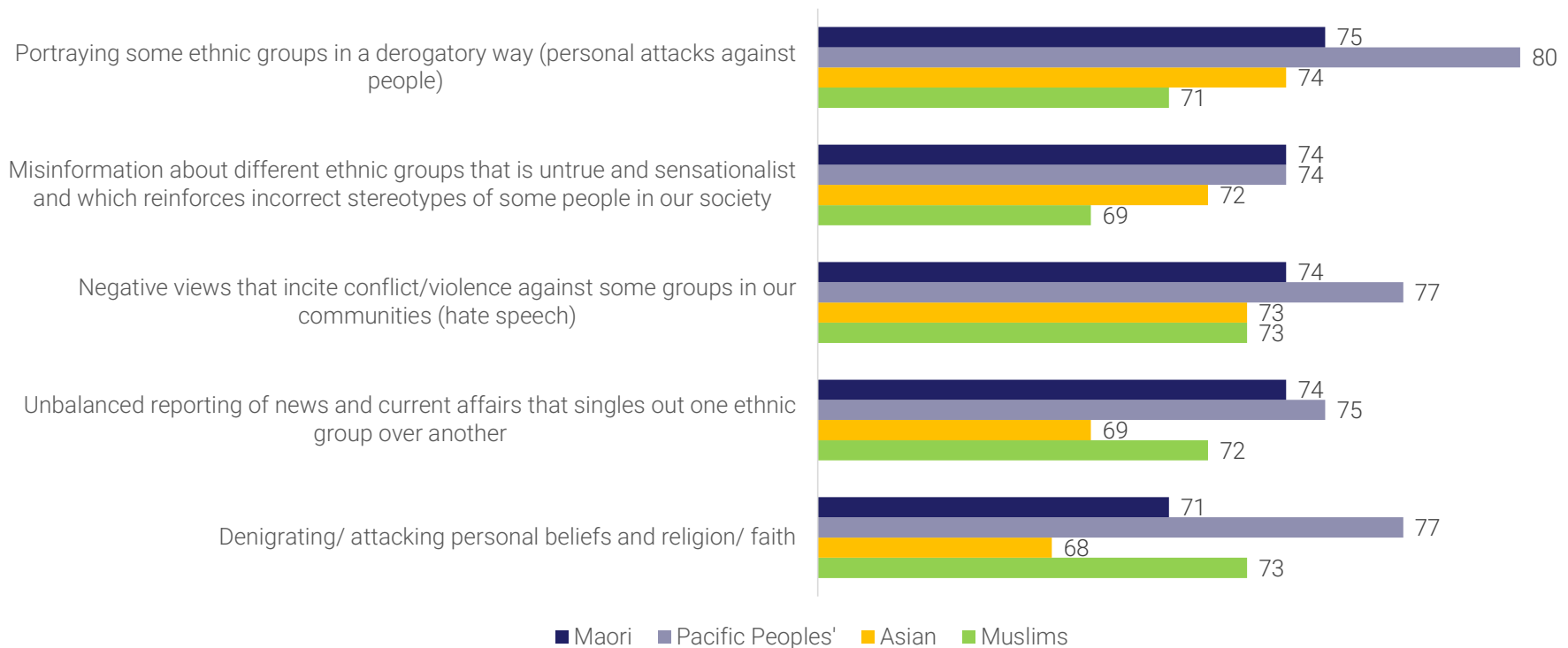


Base: Māori (n=155), Pacific Peoples' (n=151), Asian (n=182), Muslims (n=97)

Amongst the following types of views, a majority felt strong limits needed to be in place when expressing these views. 74% or more Pacific Peoples' were in favour of strong/moderate limits when expressing these views. Both Māori and Pacific Peoples' considered all views similarly while Muslims showed more differentiation by type of view, seeing more limits needed on hate speech, unbalanced reporting, and denigrating based on beliefs/ faith

Q Freedom of expression is enshrined in the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990 and is highly valued in New Zealand. But at times freedom of expression needs to be balanced against the harm that it may cause to some people in our communities.

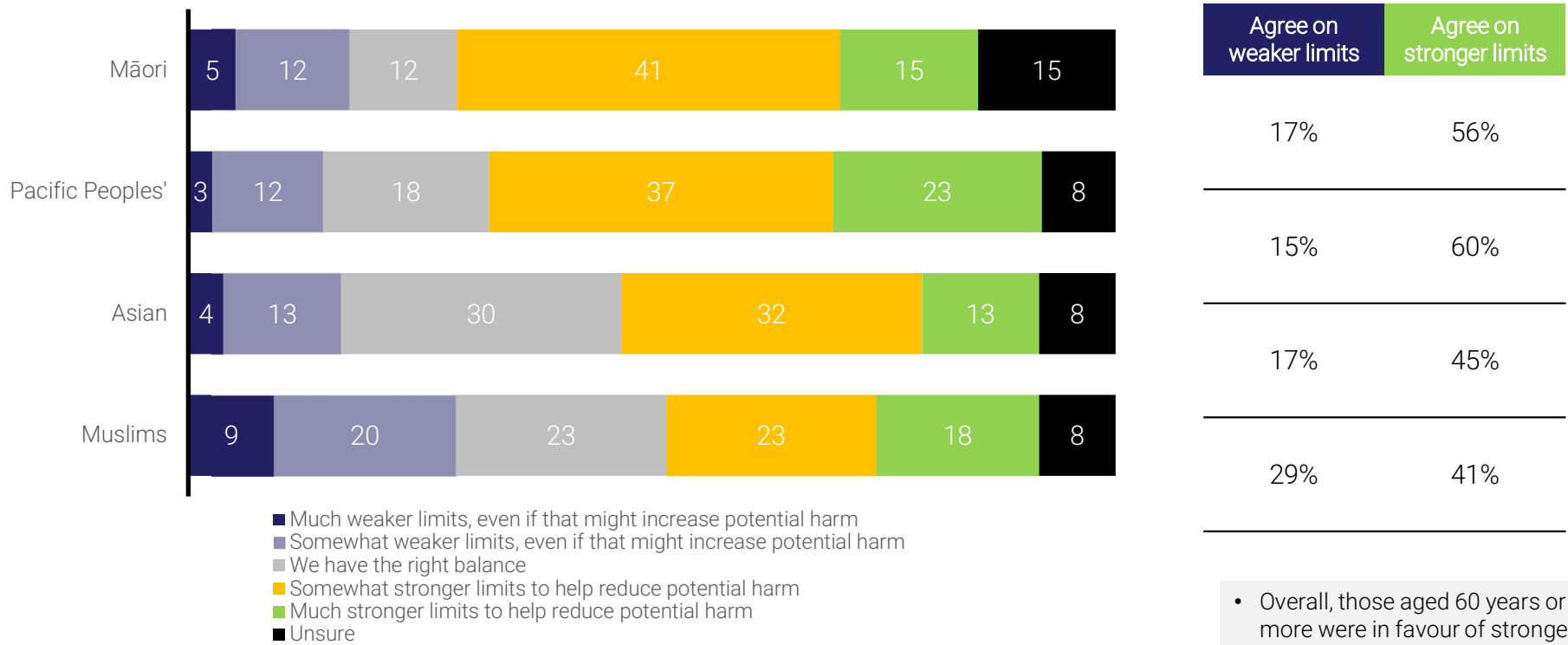
The following are types of views that might be expressed. What sort of limits, if any, should be put on the right to freedom of expression when expressing these types of views? (Total 'Strong' + 'Moderate limits' %)



Base: Māori (n=155), Pacific Peoples' (n=151), Asian (n=182), Muslims (n=97)

All groups were more likely to believe the balance between freedom of expression and harm to communities was not right, with a greater need for stronger limits to reduce potential harm

Q Do you think that New Zealand has the right balance between freedom of expression and potential harm to communities?
Thinking about the balance between freedom of expression and potential harm to communities how do you think NZ should strike that balance? (%)



Base: Māori (n=155), Pacific Peoples' (n=151), Asian (n=182), Muslims (n=97)

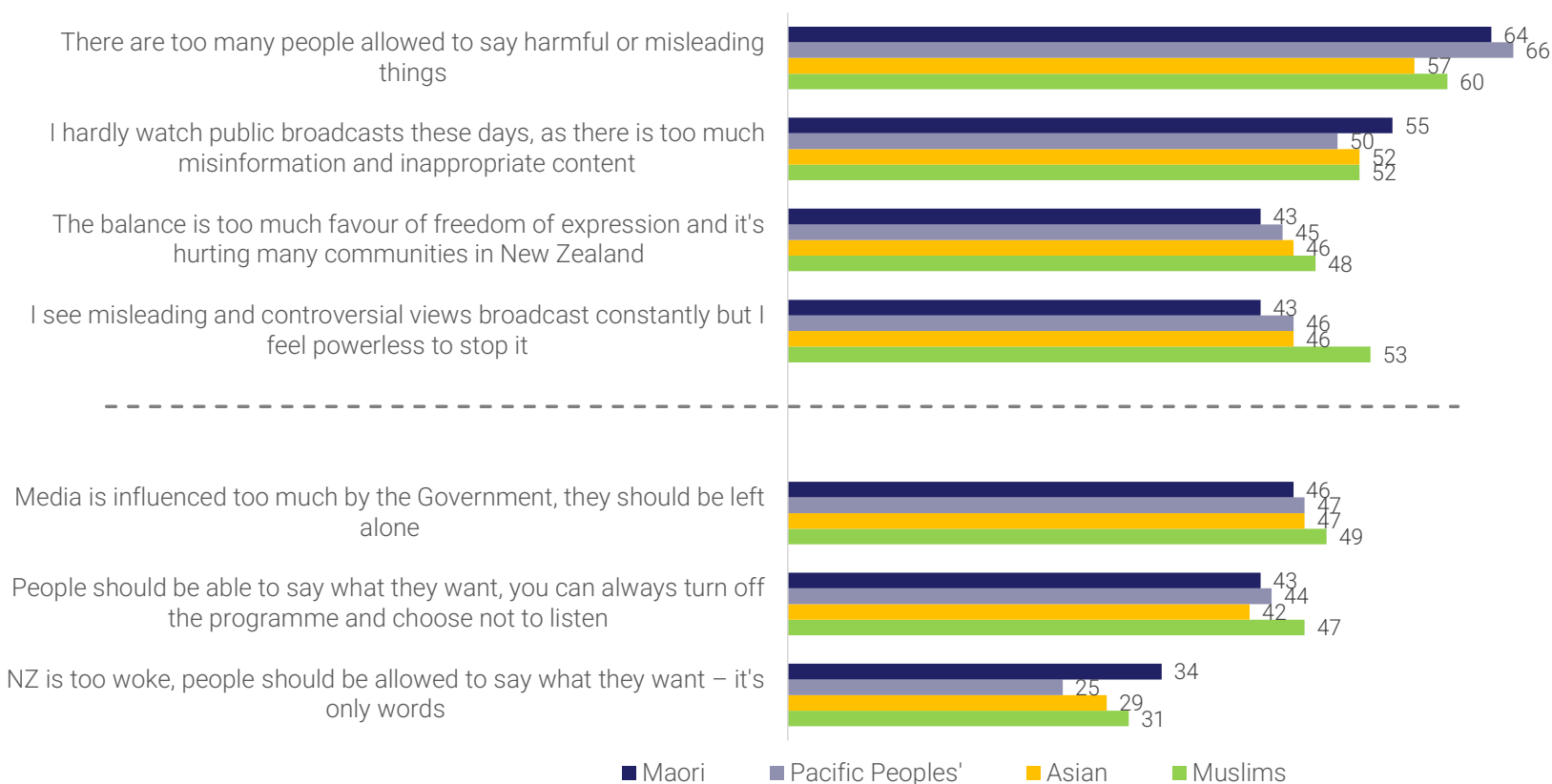
Note: Agree weaker limits=Much +Somewhat weaker limits; Total stronger limits=Somewhat+Much stronger limits

• Overall, those aged 60 years or more were in favour of stronger limits (72%)

Some conflicting opinions over level of harmful content and level of action needed to curb this. However, significant number feel powerless to stop it or have chosen to tune out of public broadcasts to minimise exposure



How much do you agree or disagree with the following? (Total 'Agree' %)



- Overall, females were more likely to agree that too many people are allowed to say harmful or misleading things (68%), than males (53%)
- Those aged 60 years or more were less likely to have stopped watching public broadcasts (31%) or feel powerless (28%)
- Those earning less than \$50k were more likely to agree that people should be able to say what they want, as you can always turn off the programme and choose not to listen

Base: Māori (n=155), Pacific Peoples' (n=151), Asian (n=182), Muslims (n=97)

Report findings:
Actions to address
offensive/
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viewpoints



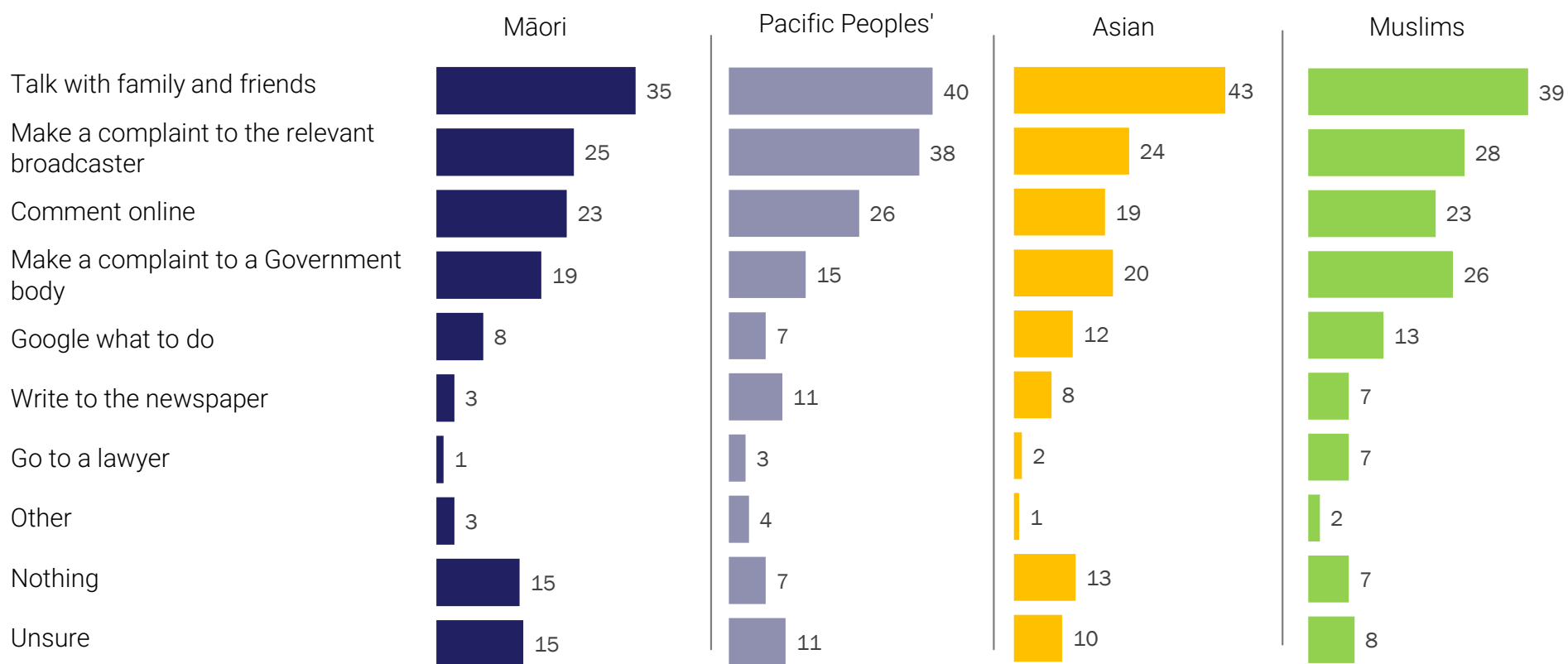
Summary - Actions to address offensive/ discriminatory/ controversial viewpoints

- After seeing or hearing offensive or hurtful viewpoints in the media, most would talk to family and friends, followed by making a complaint to the relevant broadcaster, comment online, and making a complaint to a Government body.
- Across those that would make a complaint to a Government body, they would most likely contact the Human Rights Commission (Māori 38%, Pacific Peoples' 65%, Asian 43%, Muslims 52%) with the Broadcasting Standards Authority coming second (38%, 22%, 32%, 16%).
- On a prompted basis, between 49% to 59% reported being aware that people can go to the Broadcasting Standards Authority to complain about offensive views broadcast publicly on radio, free-to-air and pay television.
- Similar proportions (between 41% to 59%) said they would be likely to make a complaint about offensive viewpoints they heard or saw publicly broadcast, with Muslims (59%) the most likely and Māori (42%) the least likely.
- Once the BSA complaints process was outlined, the likelihood of making a complaint dropped slightly. For Māori (from 41% to 38%), Pacific Peoples' (from 52% to 44%), Asian (from 48% to 44%) and Muslims (from 59% to 54%).
- Key motivators for making a complaint tended to be based on personal impacts rather than wider community impacts. The strongest being if they felt the viewpoints were seen as personal attacks or threats that may lead to violence against others. Followed by if they felt their family felt hurt or denigrated by the views, and then hurt to the wider community.
 - Asian and Muslim respondents were more concerned about whether their beliefs or religion were being attacked.
- Nominated barriers were widely spread, and lack of knowledge was only one factor in play. The long process and lack of a meaningful outcome resulting from the complaint also featured strongly.
- Key suggested improvements to the complaints process were to simplify the process, speed up the processing time, and have easy to read examples of past complaints. Visual content featured more strongly for Pacific Peoples', Asian and Muslim respondents.
- Social media was nominated the best channel to promote the complaints process and their rights across all groups, apart from Asians who favoured promoting the BSA website.

All were mostly likely to respond to seeing offensive views by talking to family and friends. Pacific Peoples' claimed to be the most likely to make a complaint to the broadcaster or comment online, while Muslims were more likely to make a complaint to a government body



If you considered what you had read, seen or heard in the media was offensive and hurtful, what would you do? (%)

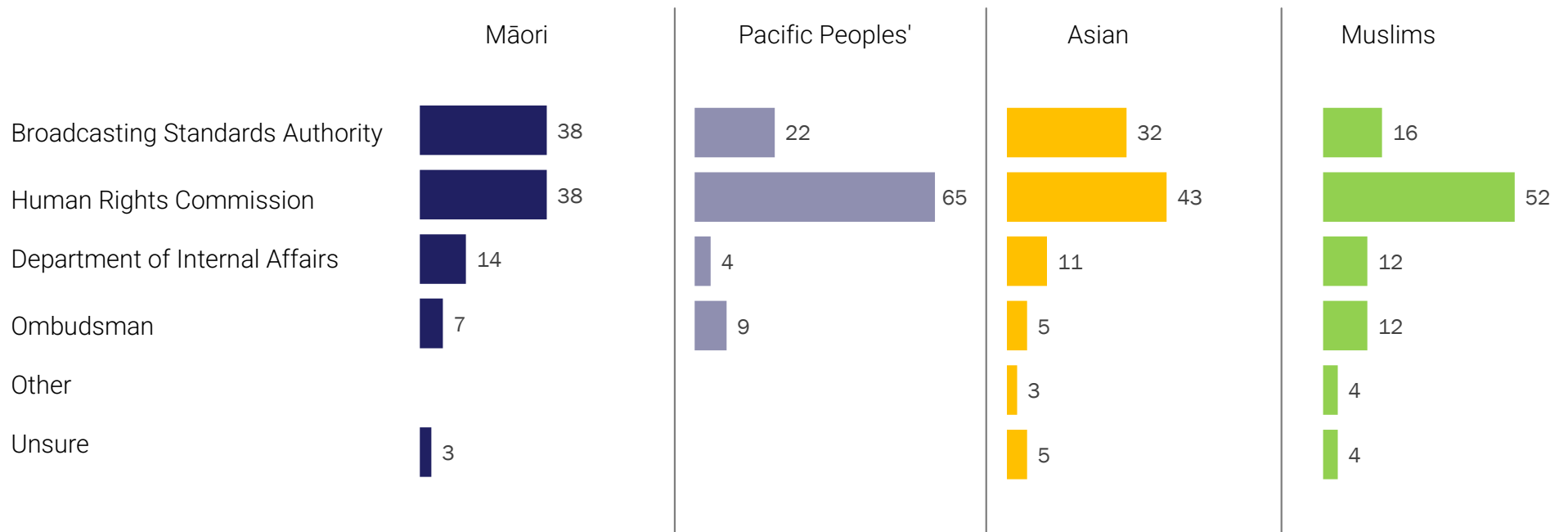


Base: Māori (n=155), Pacific Peoples' (n=151), Asian (n=182), Muslims (n=97)

For those that would make a complaint to a Government body, the most commonly cited agency was the Human Rights Commission, followed by the Broadcasting Standards Authority. The choice to go to BSA was particularly low across Muslim respondents



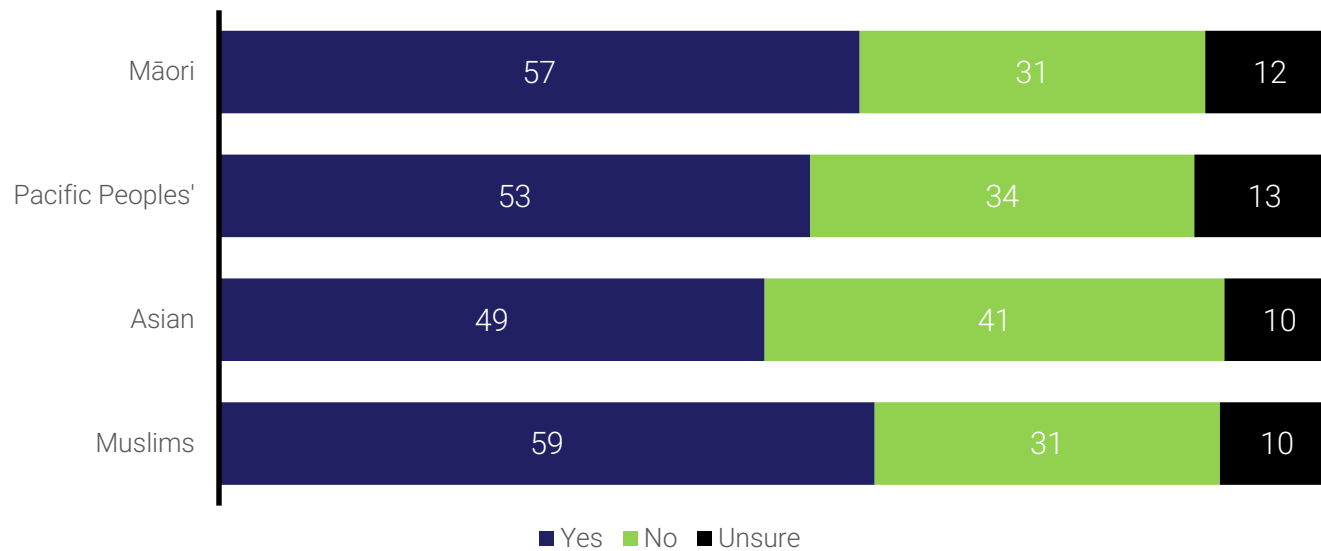
[If would make a complaint to a Government body] Which government body would you make a complaint to? (%)



Base: (if would make a complaint) Māori (n=29), Pacific Peoples' (n=23), Asian (n=37), Muslims (n=25)

Relatively low awareness of the BSA complaints process, with lowest awareness across Asian respondents

Q Were you aware that you can go to the Broadcasting Standards Authority to complain about offensive views broadcast publicly on radio, free-to-air and pay television? (%)



- Overall, males were more aware (61%), than females (47%)
- Older respondents were more aware than younger respondents

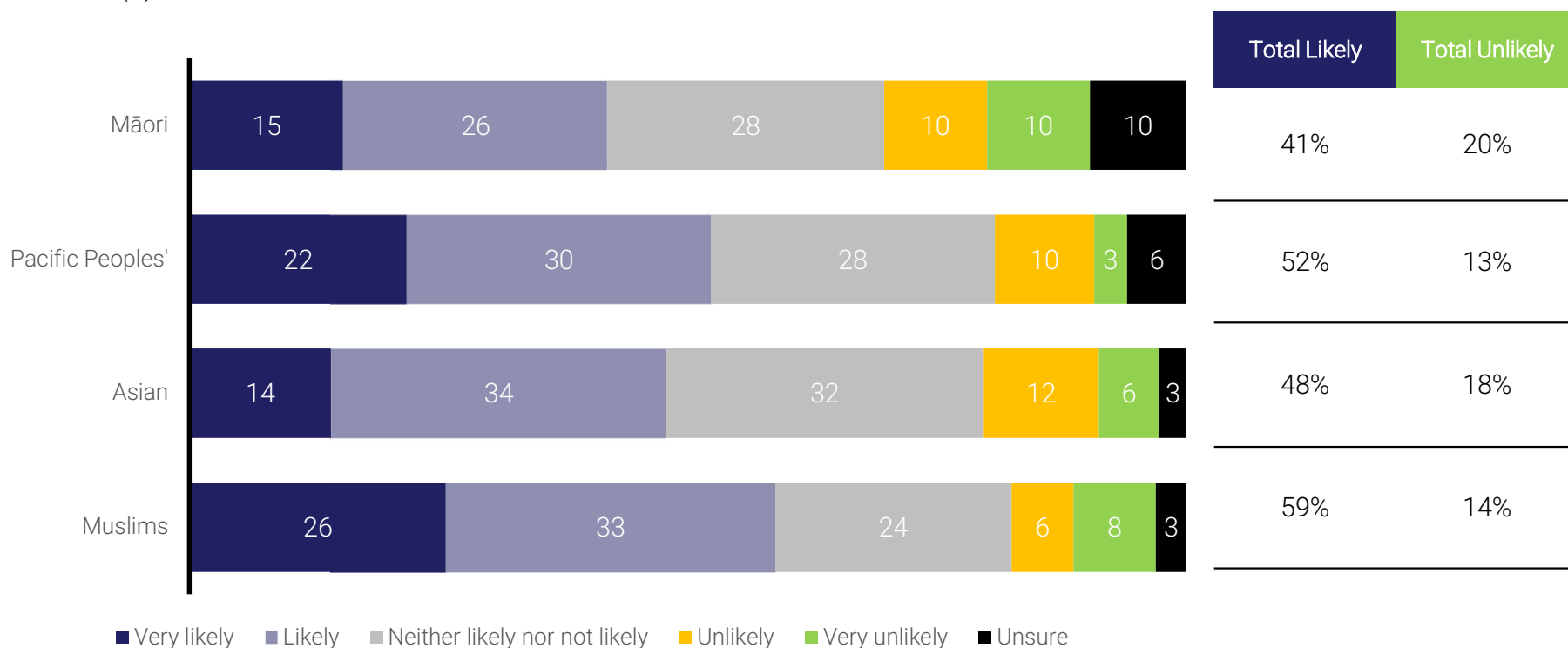
Base: Māori (n=155), Pacific Peoples' (n=151), Asian (n=182), Muslims (n=97)

Varying likelihood of making a complaint to BSA, highest being for Muslim respondents, followed by Pacific Peoples', Asian and Māori. However, the 'very likely' rating probably highest indicator of likelihood which ran at between 14% to 26% likelihood



As you maybe aware, the Broadcasting Standards Authority oversees the broadcasting standards regime which public broadcasters must comply with. It provides a free and independent complaints service regarding what is seen or heard on public platforms (e.g. free-to-air TV, Sky TV, and radio).

How likely is it that you would make a complaint about offensive, discriminatory, or controversial viewpoints being aired on radio, free-to-air and pay television? (%)



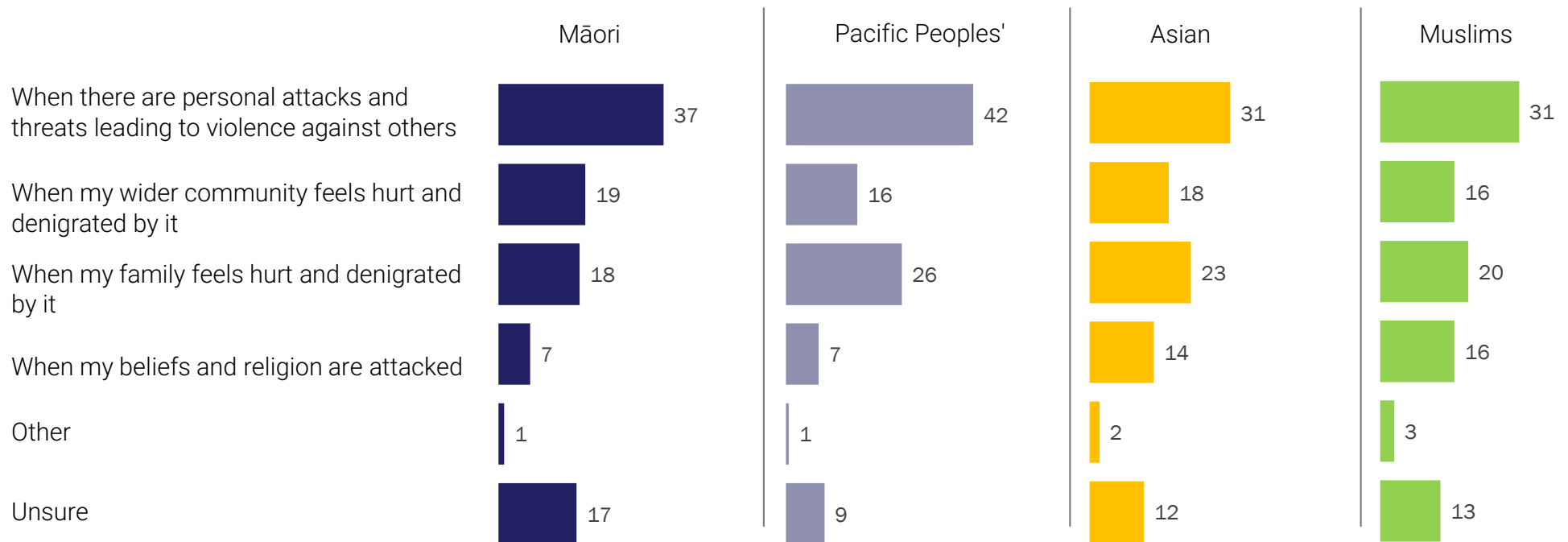
Base: Māori (n=155), Pacific Peoples' (n=151), Asian (n=182), Muslims (n=97)

Note: Total Likely=Very +likely; Total Unlikely=Unlikely+Very unlikely

The strongest motivators had a generally more personal connection – either if the offensive viewpoints were seen to lead to personal attacks/ threats leading to violence or if their family felt hurt or denigrated. Muslim and Asian respondents were more concerned about attacks based on beliefs and religion




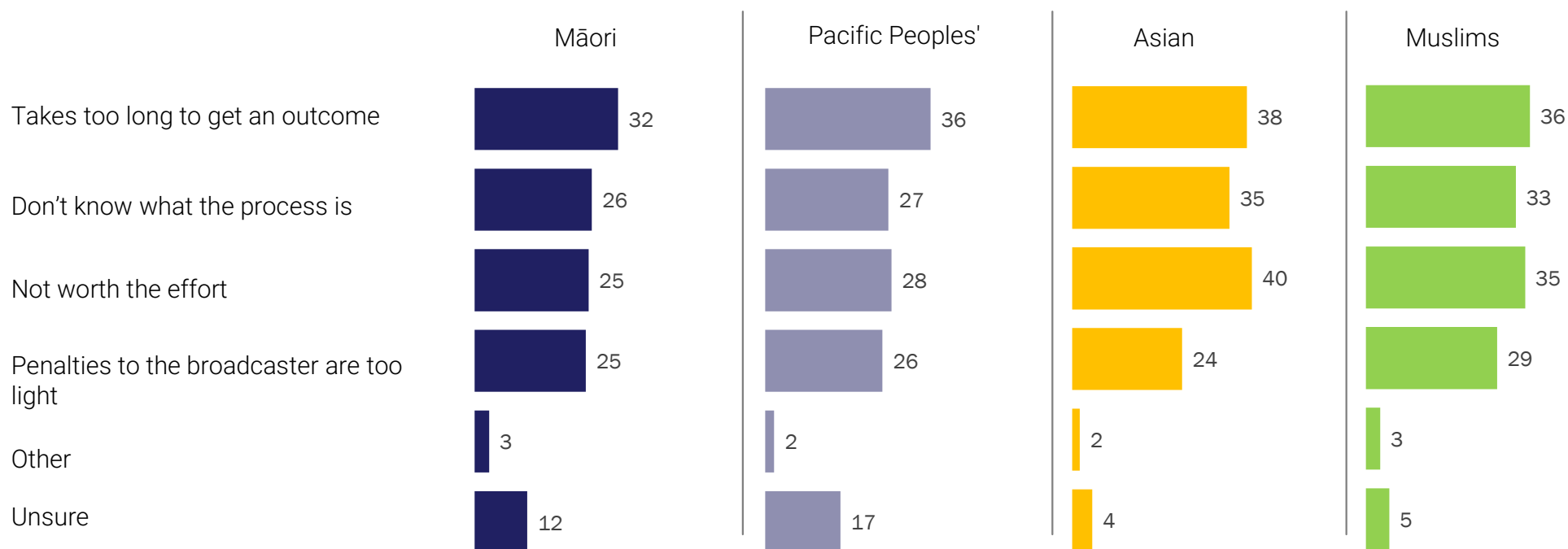
At what point would you make a complaint about offensive, discriminatory, or controversial viewpoints being aired? (%)



Base: Māori (n= 155), Pacific Peoples' (n=151), Asian (n=182), Muslims (n=97)

No standout barriers, clearly a mix of issues in play. However, lack of knowledge (somewhat rectifiable) only seen as a barrier by 26% to 35%, there was also a need to address time to process complaints and perceptions about meaningful outcomes

 What would stop you from making a complaint? (%)



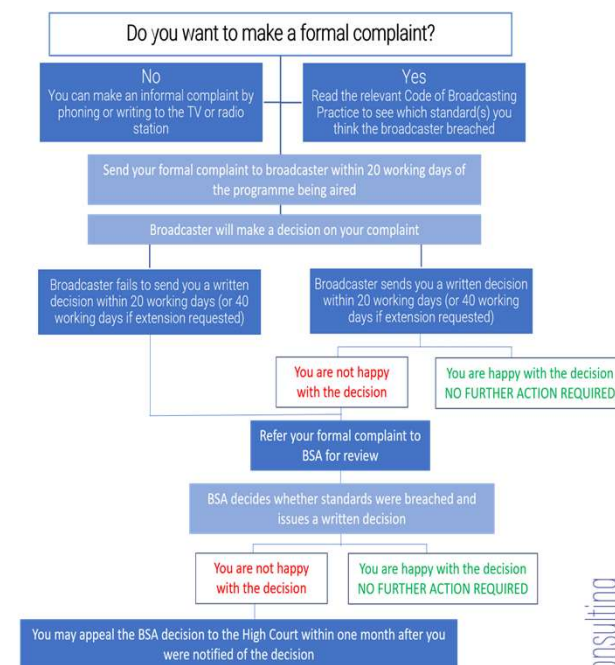
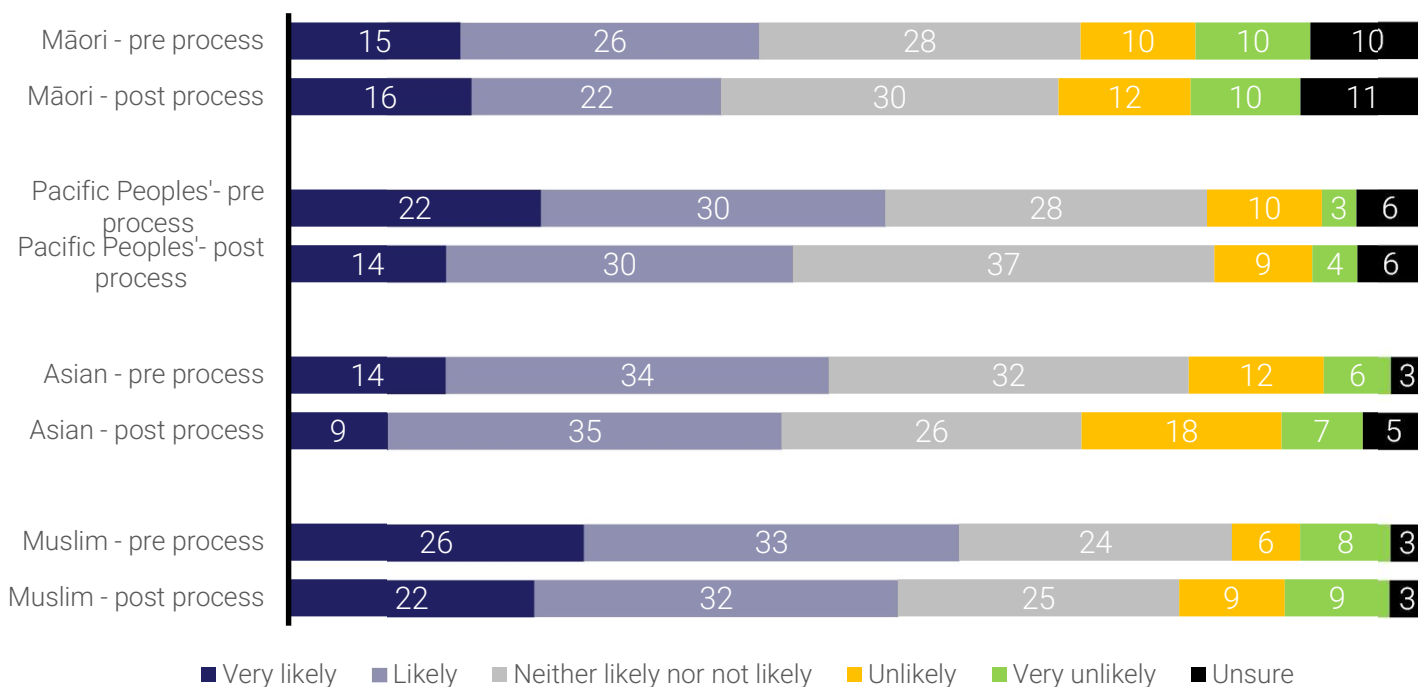
Base: Māori (n=155), Pacific Peoples' (n=151), Asian (n=182), Muslims (n=97)

Likelihood to make a complaint to BSA, generally declined after viewing the complaints process, the biggest declines were seen across Pacific Peoples' and Asian respondents



The complaints process involves taking your complaint to the broadcaster first and if you are not satisfied with the broadcaster's response you can then make a formal complaint to the Broadcasting Standards Authority.

Having looked at the complaints process, how likely are you now to make a complaint about offensive, discriminatory, or controversial viewpoints being aired on radio, free-to-air and pay television? (%)

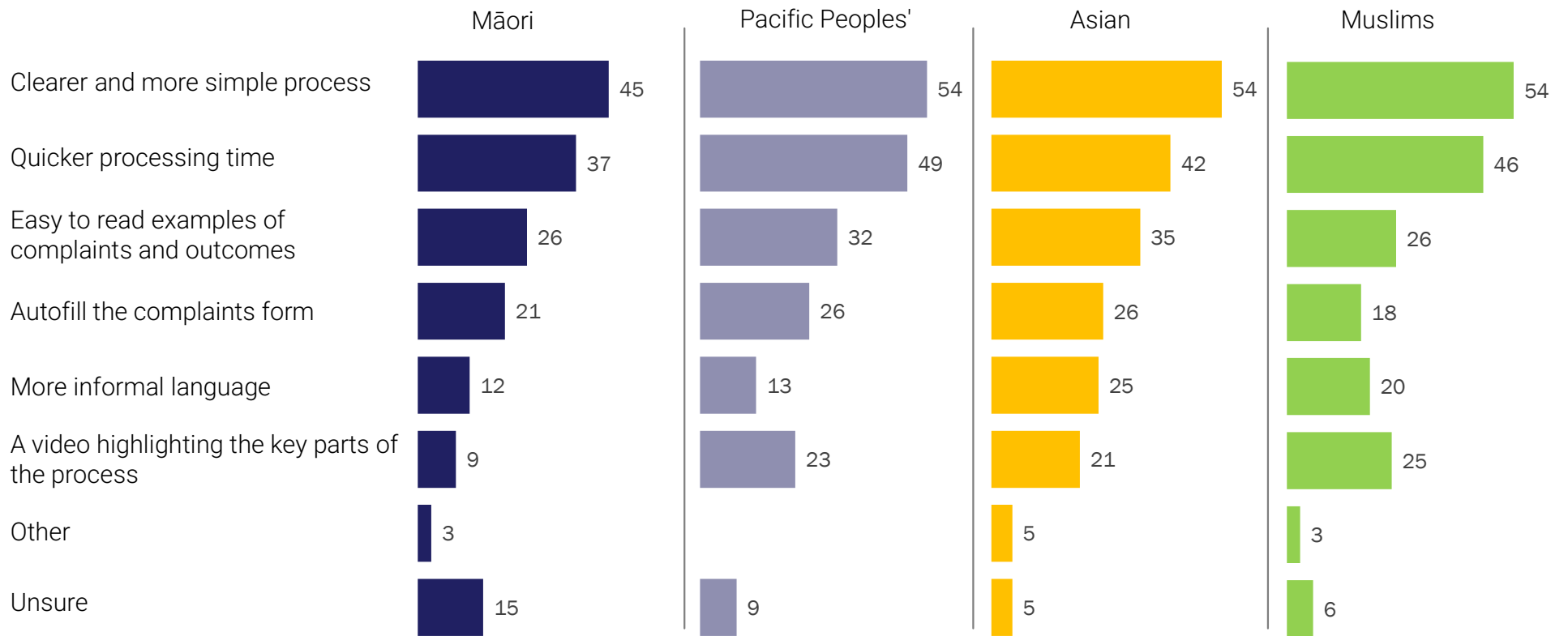


Base: Māori (n= 155), Pacific Peoples' (n=151), Asian (n=182), Muslims (n=97)

The key suggested improvements to the process were to make it simpler, have a quicker processing time and have examples of previous complaints



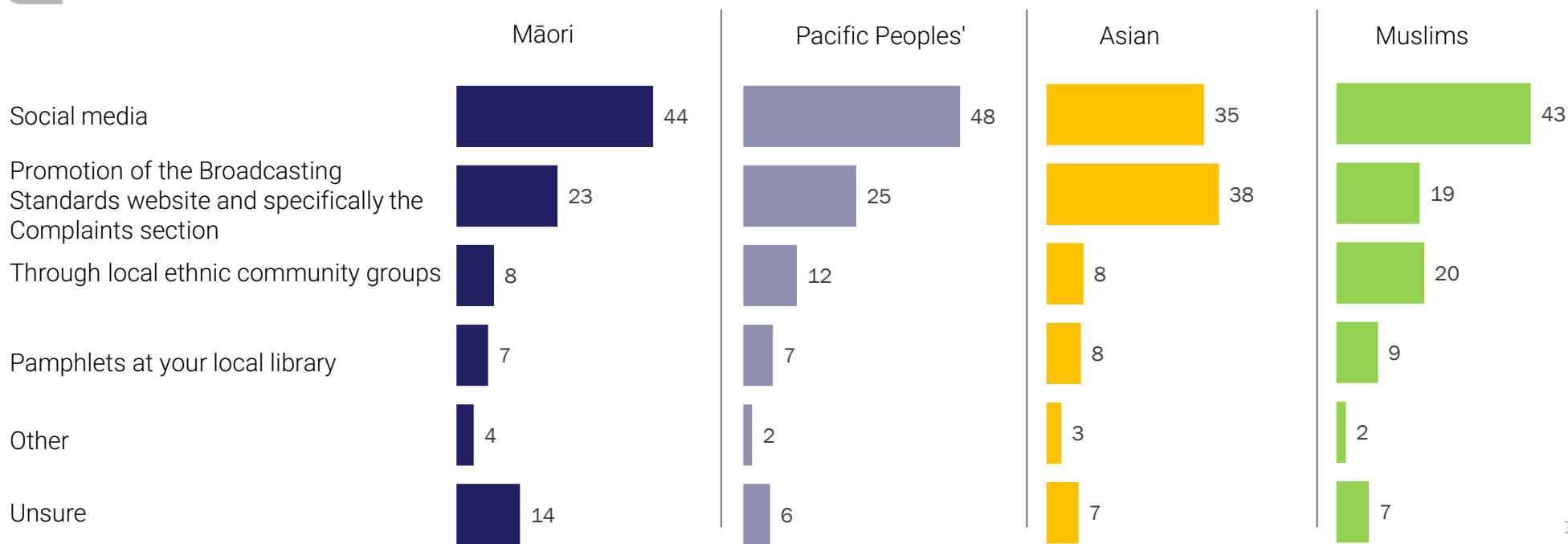
What would help make the complaint process easier? (%)



Base: Māori (n=155), Pacific Peoples' (n=151), Asian (n=182), Muslims (n=97)

Social media was considered the best communication channel to promote the complaints process by all, except Asian respondents, who equally preferred promotion of the website

Q And what would be the BEST way to get information about the complaints process and your rights under it to you and your community? (%)



- Younger were more in favour of social media, while older preferred the BSA website
- Tertiary educated preferred the BSA website, as did those that owned their own home

Base: Māori (n=155), Pacific Peoples' (n= 51), Asian (n=182), Muslims (n=97)

Appendix: Qualitative Research Report



Research: Freedom of Expression and Harms Impacting Diverse Communities

Qualitative Summary

April 2024

Prepared for
Broadcasting Standards Authority

ak research & consulting



Contents

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Objectives and methodology

The BSA's Statement of Performance Expectations (SPE) requires that research is undertaken to 'explore community expectations and/or broadcasting standards requirements relevant to supporting a diverse media system'.

This research was commissioned as part of these requirements. Specific research objectives were to:

- Understand the impacts of particular forms of expression on our diverse communities and
- How effectively the standards regime services these communities.



This summary outlines the qualitative stage of the research and comprised of the following five focus groups.

- 1x focus group Māori, (mix of age, income)
- 1x focus group Pacific Peoples (mix of age, income)
- 1x focus group, Asian (mix of South Asia, East Asia, Southeast Asia)
- 2 x mini groups, Muslims (mix of Middle East/ Africa), one male/ one female group.

Fieldwork was conducted between 8 and 15 April 2024.

The qualitative stage will be followed by an online survey.



Some care must be taken when interpreting qualitative findings, results should be taken as indicative and quantitative research undertaken to determine the extent to which views are held across the wider population.

Key findings



Freedom of expression

- 'Freedom of expression' was generally seen to be the right to freely express their opinions and feelings. How views were received was also an important component, with people needing to feel respect and no judgement (prejudice, shame) or fear when sharing their views.
- All felt there were boundaries on what can be said under the guise of 'freedom of expression'.
- Five key areas of potential harm were identified with three seen to tip 'freedom of expression' into seriously harmful territory – hate speech, clear measurable harm, and targeting on the basis of certain characteristics.



Experience of offensive viewpoints

- All could recall instances of what they viewed as offensive, discriminatory or controversial views. Acknowledging some may seem minor, they felt the constant onslaught, potentially built into something more significant.
- The impact on individuals and communities was seen as substantial. On a community level, it was seen to normalise bad behaviours, potentially impact on aspirations, and perpetuate negative stereotypes.
- On a personal level, many noted that coverage can make them feel unsafe, and impact on mental health and self-esteem.
- On recounting their experiences, it was acknowledged that some would not meet the threshold for BSA to uphold a complaint.
- Seeing these views on mainstream media was viewed as worse as it helped legitimise these viewpoints.
- Talkback radio and social media were seen as the worst channels due to their relative anonymity which encouraged more extreme views to be voiced.



Actions to address offensive viewpoints

- Only a small number had taken any action in the past. Key motivators would be if broadcasts cannot be turned off, involved hate speech, impacted children, or was directed personally at them.
- Barriers were significant, including, that complaining went against cultural norms, a lack of time, that it would not make any difference, the process was intimidating, and safety concerns.
- Participants were critical of both the overview of standards and the complaints process. They were seen as overly wordy and complex, and the process too slow. The current process was seen to be set up to deliberately deter complaints.
- Suggested improvements focused on ways to simplify the process and provide surety the complaint was appropriate to lodge.

Report findings: Freedom of expression



Living in New Zealand

- Most were very positive about their experience living in New Zealand. Positives tended to be more intensely voiced, while negatives were relatively muted.
- The key positives were the natural beauty of New Zealand, the friendly people, relative safety (often compared to countries they had migrated from), a less competitive culture, and sense of connection (the latter mostly voiced by Māori participants).
- The negatives were dominated by the current cost-of-living crisis, followed by references to the job market, political climate and crime.
- Most struggled to identify changes in the way people talk about themselves and others – apart from acknowledging that social media provided a medium to lob personal attacks and be particularly negative, due to the anonymity of the platform.

Positives



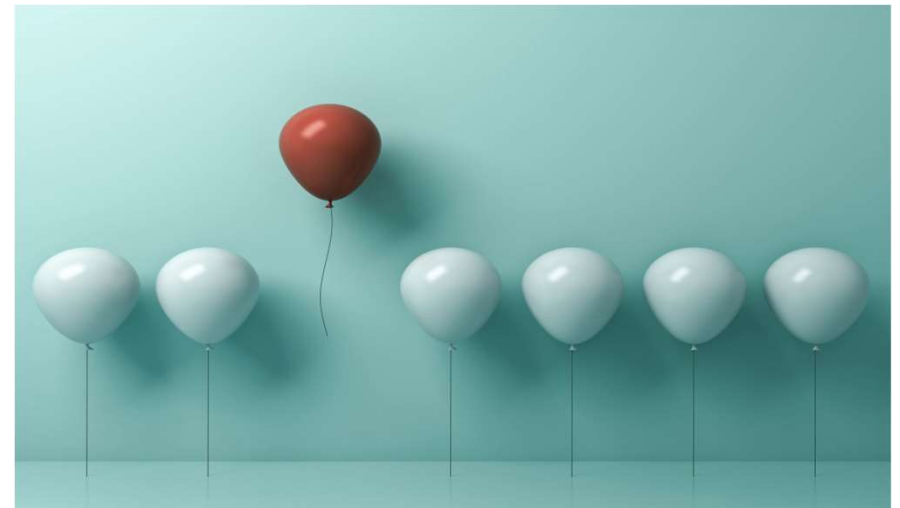
Negatives



Freedom of expression

- 'Freedom of expression' was generally seen as being able to freely express your opinions and feelings. However, the way opinions were received was sometimes seen as being just as important as being able to voice them.
- There was seen to be the need to listen and accept views being voiced with:
 - No negative response
 - No fear or shame
 - No concerns for safety
 - No judgement or prejudice
 - Respect
 - Freedom from consequences.

- A few saw an overlap between 'freedom of expression' and 'freedom of choice' with Covid mandates sometimes given as examples where 'freedom of expression' had been stifled.
- While 'freedom of expression' was seen as an important right in any democratic country, nearly all felt that there were boundaries, and that people could not say anything they liked.



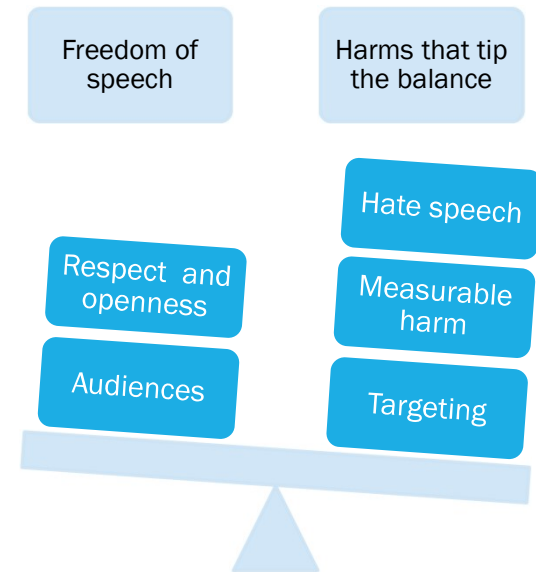
Boundaries

- Participants identified five key areas where care was required not to cross the line.

Audiences	Respect and openness	Targeting	Measurable harm	Hate speech
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensuring messages are censored or restricted, particularly, when they might harm children.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Being respectful of others.• Being open to listen to other people's views.• Not joke or make fun of others.• Use inoffensive language, no bullying.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No attacking of specific groups of people or individuals on the basis of:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Culture, race• Religion• Sexuality• Appearance• Disability• Age, gender.• No propagating of damaging stereotypes.• Unbalanced reporting by not showing different perspectives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Where it may lead to mental harm.• Not be derogatory or discriminatory.• No threats or personal attacks.• No spreading of misinformation.• If there is an intention to hurt or harm someone.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Motivate others to do harm, incite conflict and hatred.• Cause division, lack of tolerance.• Where it may lead to physical harm or threats.

Getting the balance right

- Generally, managing whether content is appropriate for particular audiences and receiving/ giving mutual respect and openness – did not tip the balance towards harm. The former was seen to be managed by censorship, limiting viewing times, and to a certain extent the ability to switch off. The latter, was seen as more subjective and harder to determine when it crossed the line.
- The other harms were viewed as unacceptable and causing real harm to communities and individuals.



Report findings:
Experience of
offensive/
discriminatory/
controversial
viewpoints



Experience of offensive/ discriminatory/ controversial views

- All recalled instances of offensive, discriminatory or controversial views, however, many could not recall the specific source of the content. There was a feeling they were bombarded with negative and incorrect reporting constantly. Some in the Muslim groups had stopped viewing the news regularly as a result.
- It was acknowledged that many instances may appear minor, however, the prevalence was seen to potentially build into something that was significantly more harmful.
- It was acknowledged that some would not meet the threshold for BSA to uphold a complaint.

Experiences

Inciting conflict:

- Destiny Church encouraging negative actions.

Reinforcing stereotypes:

- Māori/ Pacific Peoples' ('20 in a car', 'all on a benefit', 'not academic, low IQ', 'simple people').
- Asians ('bad drivers', 'eat cats and dogs').

Misinformation:

- Media over sensationalising portrayal of diverse groups .
- Migrants taking all the jobs.
- Reporting of Māori/ Pacific Peoples' only areas at the university.
- Chinese to blame for pandemic/ buying all the houses.

Unbalanced reporting:

- Israeli/ Palestinian conflict.
- Initial assumption that violent events are terror attacks by Muslims.

Jokes at people's expense:

- Mimicking accents (Asian)/ mannerisms (Indian)/ 'You have a bomb in your backpack?' (Muslim).

Mental harm:

- Making fun of Islam.
- Attacking those that look different.

Impact of offensive/ discriminatory/ controversial views

- There were serious impacts seen to result from offensive views being expressed publicly. On a community level, it was seen to normalise bad behaviour, potentially impact on the aspirations of particular communities, and perpetuate negative stereotypes.

These were seen as impacts that could be far reaching, crossing generations both past and present.

- On a personal level, many noted that coverage can make them feel unsafe, as some people treat them differently when certain views are outlined continually in public. It was also seen to impact on people's mental health and self-esteem.
- Feelings of fear and judgement were voiced, which was seen to erode confidence and make them take a defensive stance. For recent migrants it exacerbated the feeling that they didn't fit in and were not accepted.

While many parents felt they could cope with these feelings, knowing that these views were not held by all New Zealanders, they were concerned about the impact on their children and wider family members.

Community impacts

Normalises bad behaviour: acceptance of offensive views was seen to normalise bad behaviour, encouraging more widespread occurrences and potential escalation of bad behaviour.

Aspirations: some felt that comments had the potential to impact on the aims and aspirations of targeted groups.

Perpetuating stereotypes: Stereotypes were seen as dangerous, as they can make people treat groups differently, make assumptions, and create barriers for these groups to achieve their potential. Negative views of groups, can also impact on perceptions of a community and aspects like house values.

Personal impacts

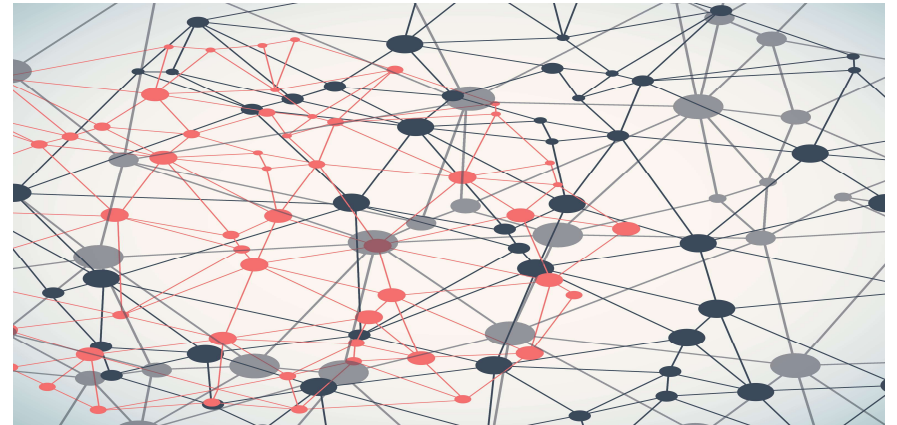
Feeling unsafe: a number felt that offensive views can foster negative perceptions that can make them feel unsafe, with concerns it could encourage violence against them. This view was mainly held across Muslim and Asian participants.

Mental health: comments can lead to increasing anxiety and a sense of isolation. For recent migrants it made them feel "far from home".

Self-esteem: it was seen to potentially erode self-esteem and make them feel inferior.

Channels with offensive and controversial views

- Most felt it was worse if these views were expressed on mainstream broadcasting platforms. It was seen to normalise and legitimise the views expressed and more likely to be viewed as the truth.
- Talkback radio and social media were considered the worst channels, as both were seen to have more extreme views voiced and fewer boundaries in place.
 - This was mainly attributed to the fact that both can be anonymous forums which made people feel safe to express more extreme views.
 - They were also individuals outlining personal views, often without the full picture and a perceived lack of knowledge to articulate a balanced and informed view.
 - Social media was also seen as worse, due to the algorithm that monitors content, tending to spread these views across like-minded people, which reinforced incorrect viewpoints.
- The main places where people were seeing negative content were:
 - Social media (Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, Twitter).
 - Talkback radio.
 - Television (mainly on the news).
 - Online generally.
- There were also mentions of newspapers, movies, Council, and political billboards.



Report findings:
Actions to address
offensive/
discriminatory/
controversial
viewpoints



Taking action

- Only a few had taken action when they had heard offensive views in public broadcasting. Action taken was:
 - On social media, by sending a complaint and response in the comments section.
 - Online, by responding in comment section.
 - Writing a letter to the newspaper.
 - Complaining to TVNZ.
 - Emailing BSA.
 - Turning off/ stopping watching the programme.
- It was easier to take action online, being easy to post a comment or find someone to complain to. They also liked the immediacy of posting comments, rather than going through a drawn-out process.
- Informally, many talked within their communities which helped them feel supported and provided an opportunity to try and educate those close to and within their communities.
- If they were very offended and moved to take action, they felt they would do a Google search to find out how and to whom they should complain. If personally defamed, they would call a lawyer.
- Motivators to take action were if the broadcast could not be turned off, if it involved hate speech, incited violence, impacted children, or was directed personally against them.

The threshold to take action was high and needed to overcome significant barriers.

Key barriers to taking action:

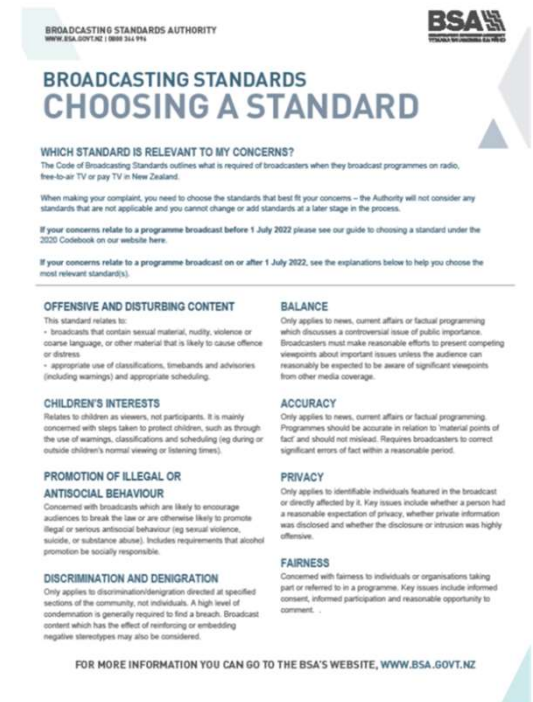
- Culture: mainly voiced in the Pacific Peoples' and Muslim groups, a number noted that their culture did not encourage complaining and "causing trouble". Muslim participants said that you should go with the views of the majority, while Pacific Peoples' participants said they were brought up to be respectful and keep quiet.
- Lack of time: most noted they were busy and finding the time to complain was difficult.
- Lack of outcome: there was seen to be little likelihood that anything would change as a result of their complaint. Additionally, once the viewpoint has been broadcast, there seems to be little that can be done that would make any difference since those views had already been widely disseminated.

Change was needed at a community level, rather than through piecemeal complaints.

- Process was intimidating/ overkill: some felt that complaining to an official entity like BSA was too excessive and formal. They worried about getting involved in a formal process and what that might entail.
- Safety: a few felt that it may be unsafe to complain, unless the complaint was totally anonymous.

New Zealand broadcasting standards

- Awareness of BSA was low, but on prompting, more could recall some advertising on either TV or radio about what to do if they wanted to complain (without recall of BSA specifically).
- On reviewing the broadcasting standards they could complain under, most could see where a complaint might fit. The most chosen categories were 'fairness', 'accuracy', 'discrimination', and 'offensive and disturbing content'.
- However, the information sheet was generally a turn-off for participants. It was seen as too wordy and made the complaints process appear intimidating, drawn out and hard work.
- Key improvements noted were to:
 - Make the language less dense and wordy.
 - Use more graphics and colour (particularly for Pacific Peoples').
 - Make it an interactive form, that helps you find the right standard.
 - Have a contact page, where you type in your complaint, which is checked on whether it is appropriate and which standard it would come under.
 - Add a new category about offending on the basis of religion (Muslim participants).
 - Provide in different languages.



The complaints process



The flow chart of the complaints process was viewed similarly to the outline of the standards, being viewed as too complicated, the language being too formal, and having too many steps.



A number felt BSA were deliberately making the process complex and difficult to put people off complaining.



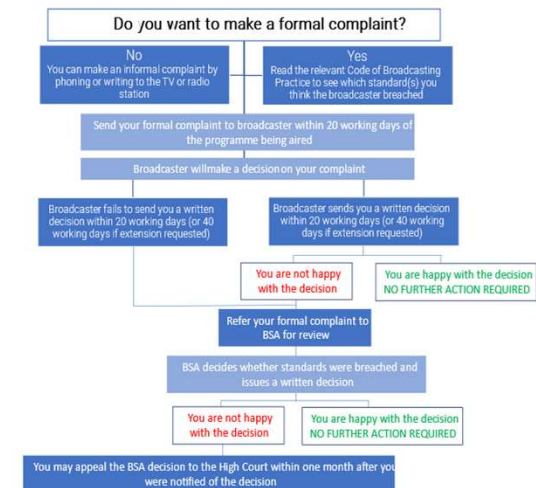
Also contributing to putting people off, was the timeframe for a complaint to be resolved. The 40-day timeframe, meant that most felt it would be pointless to complain, as even if the complaint was upheld, people would not recall the specifics of the original broadcast.



They would also like to get an idea of the criteria used so they could assess if their complaint would meet the threshold, rather than wasting their time.

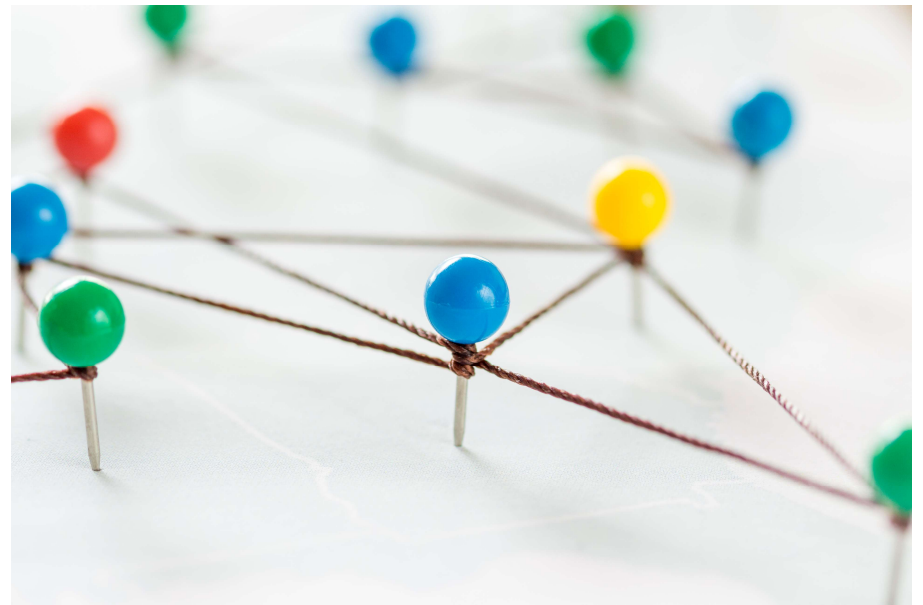
- Key suggested improvements to the complaints process were:
 - Simplify the process and make it quicker.
 - Have a video explaining the process (Pacific Peoples' noted that they prefer more visual information).
 - Have an autofill complaints form, that helps assess if the complaint meets the threshold.
 - Provide information on BSA – who they are, what they do and the repercussions if a complaint is upheld.
 - Have an app to make the process easier.
 - Have more personal ways to complain such as an 0800 number.

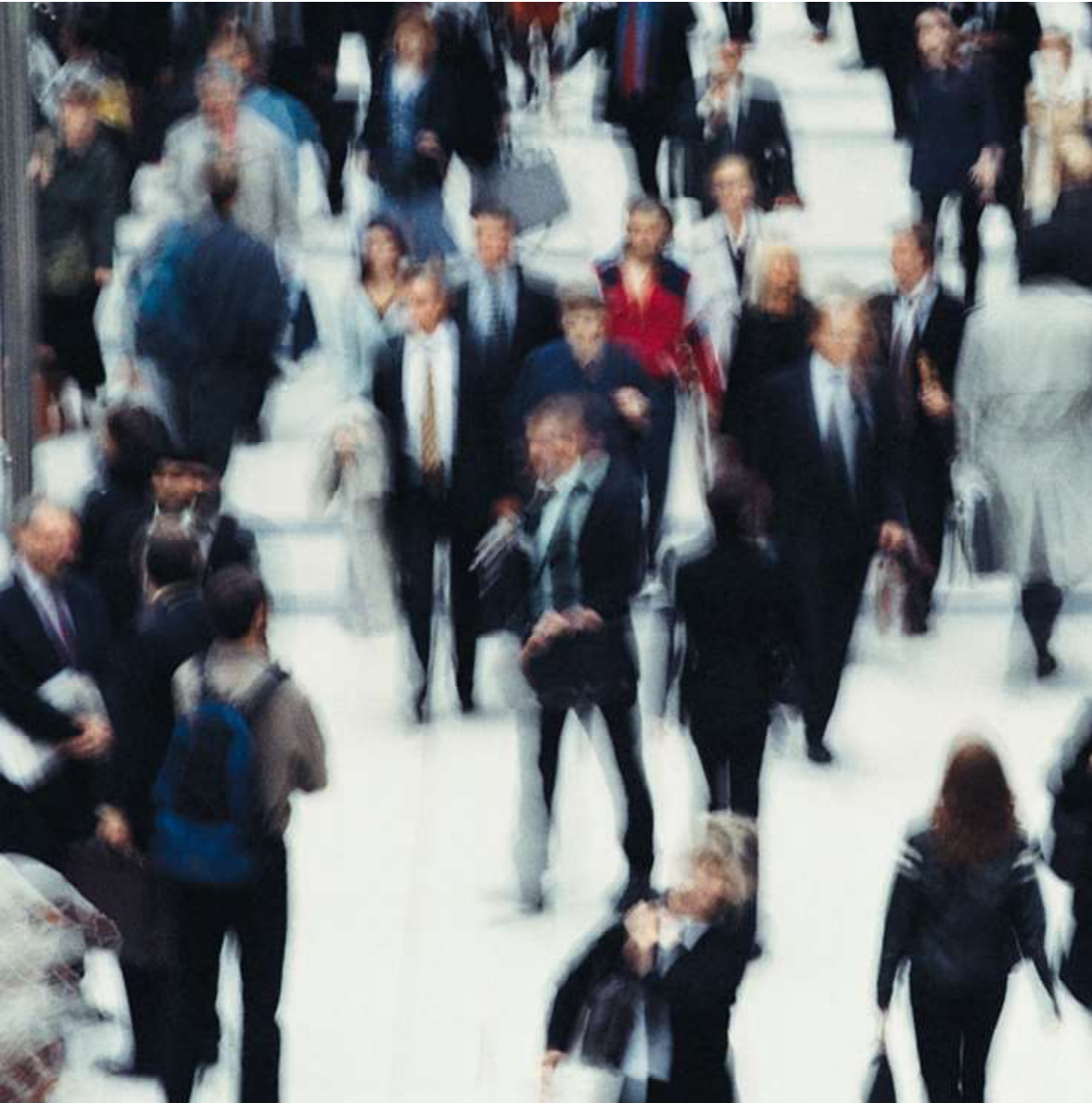
Prompt 3: BSA Complaints Process Step by Step



Improving communication

- The main suggested ways to communicate with these communities about the complaints process were:
 - Have more encouraging ads, the current ads were seen to make it an intimidating process.
 - Build a connection with these communities, with some examples being; use well known community figures to educate, have information booths at community gatherings.
 - Have ads online and on social media.
 - Provide examples where complaints have been upheld and where they have made a difference.





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