

Language that may offend in broadcasting (2025)

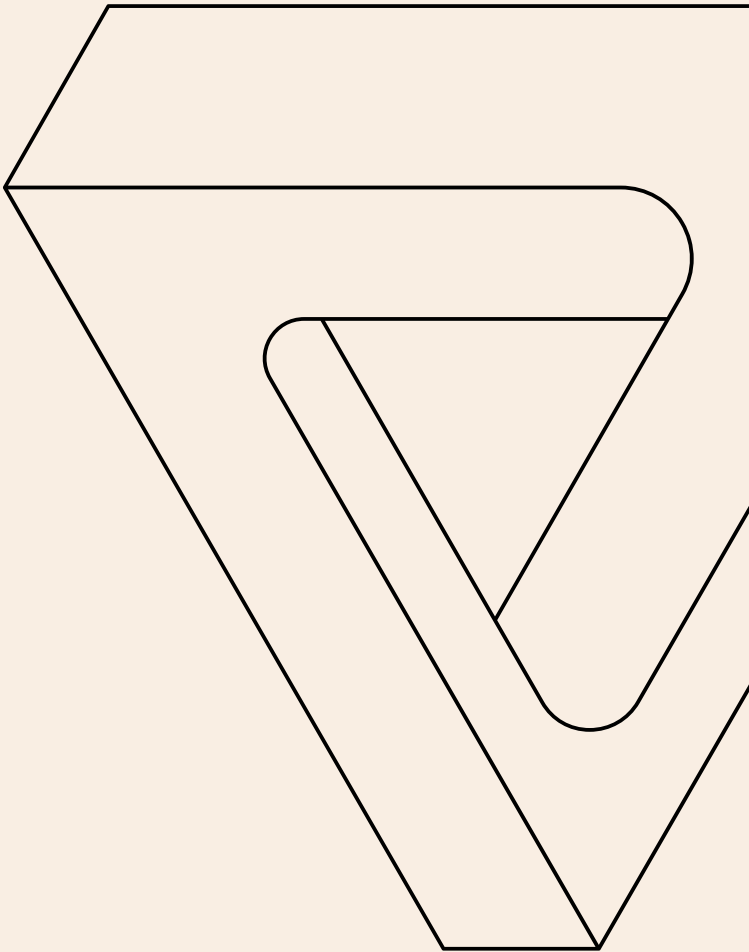
Broadcasting Standards Authority
Te Mana Whanonga Kaipāho

17 November 2025



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01

Research purpose and method

The task at hand

The Broadcasting Act 1989 imposes a responsibility on all broadcasters to maintain standards, including the observance of good taste and decency, the maintenance of law and order, the privacy of the individual, the protection of children, the requirement for broadcasts to be accurate, fair and balanced, and safeguards against programmes which encourage denigration or discrimination against sections of the community.

BSA's research into community attitudes is one of the ways of determining community norms, which in turn helps to guide its deliberative processes to enhance the integrity of decision making. The BSA has used research to monitor perceptions of offensive language since 1999.

There have been various social, cultural, and technological shifts over the last five years. These may have impacted community attitudes to swear words, blasphemies and other derogatory language in broadcasting.

Specific research objectives

The aim of this research is to assess how much:

1. New Zealanders find the use of specific words and phrases in broadcasting acceptable or unacceptable
2. Acceptability varies according to context, platform, and different parts of our diverse community
3. New Zealanders attitudes to offensive language are changing over time (either in relation to specific language or categories of language).

Methodology



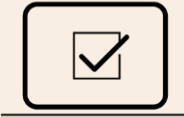
Target audience

New Zealanders aged 18 years and over.



Interview dates

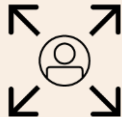
3-29 September 2025.



Method

Online panel survey, with demographic quotas on age by gender, region, and ethnicity.

18-minute questionnaire. See next page for detail on questioning approach used.



Sample size & weighting

Total sample size of 1,501. This carries a maximum margin of error of +/-2.5% (at the 95% confidence level and assuming simple random sampling). See next page for more detail on significance testing.

Data were weighted on age by gender, region, and ethnicity to match 2023 Census population characteristics.

Notes to the reader

Significance testing

All statistical tests have been calculated at the 95% confidence level.

↕ Statistically significant increases and decreases since 2021 are denoted with arrows.

▲▼ Subgroups in 2025 that are statistically significantly higher or lower than the total sample are denoted either with triangles (on page 21) or coloured shading (on pages 21–23).

Changes to the questionnaire

Key changes made to the 2025 questionnaire included:

- Updated example programmes in Q1 (TV programmes regularly watched) and updated response categories in Q2 (radio stations regularly listened to).
- 5 words were removed and 5 new words were added to the list of potentially offensive language (see the next page for details).
- Removal of example programmes in the list of broadcast scenarios.

Survey limitations

All surveys have limitations, and those relating to this one are outlined below.

This survey represents a *sample* of the target population – New Zealanders aged 18 years and over. As with all sample surveys, there are inherent limitations related to coverage and non-response that cannot be fully corrected. These factors mean that, unlike a Census, the findings may not perfectly reflect the true attitudes or behaviours of the target population.

Weighting the data to align with known population characteristics (as described on the previous page) helps to reduce these biases, but only in relation to the variables used for weighting.

Quality and privacy standards

This research has been carried out in accordance with the Research Association of New Zealand Code of Practice and Privacy 2023, the ESOMAR code of conduct, and ISO 20252 standards. All survey responses were collected and stored in accordance with data privacy standards. Respondent identities remain anonymous and no personally identifiable information is reported.



31 words were tested in 12 broadcast scenarios.

Race & ethnicity

Nigger
Nigga*
Curry muncher
Chink
Gook
Wog*
Nappy head
Coconut
Hori
Gypped*
Gypsy*

Misogynistic/ sexist

Bitch
Slut
Whore
Pussy
Cunt

Sexual orientation & gender identity

Faggot
Dyke
Tranny
Homo
Cocksucker

Disability & mental health

Cripple*
Spastic
Retard
Mental

General profanity

Fuck
Mother fucker
Get fucked
Cock
Arsehole

Religious

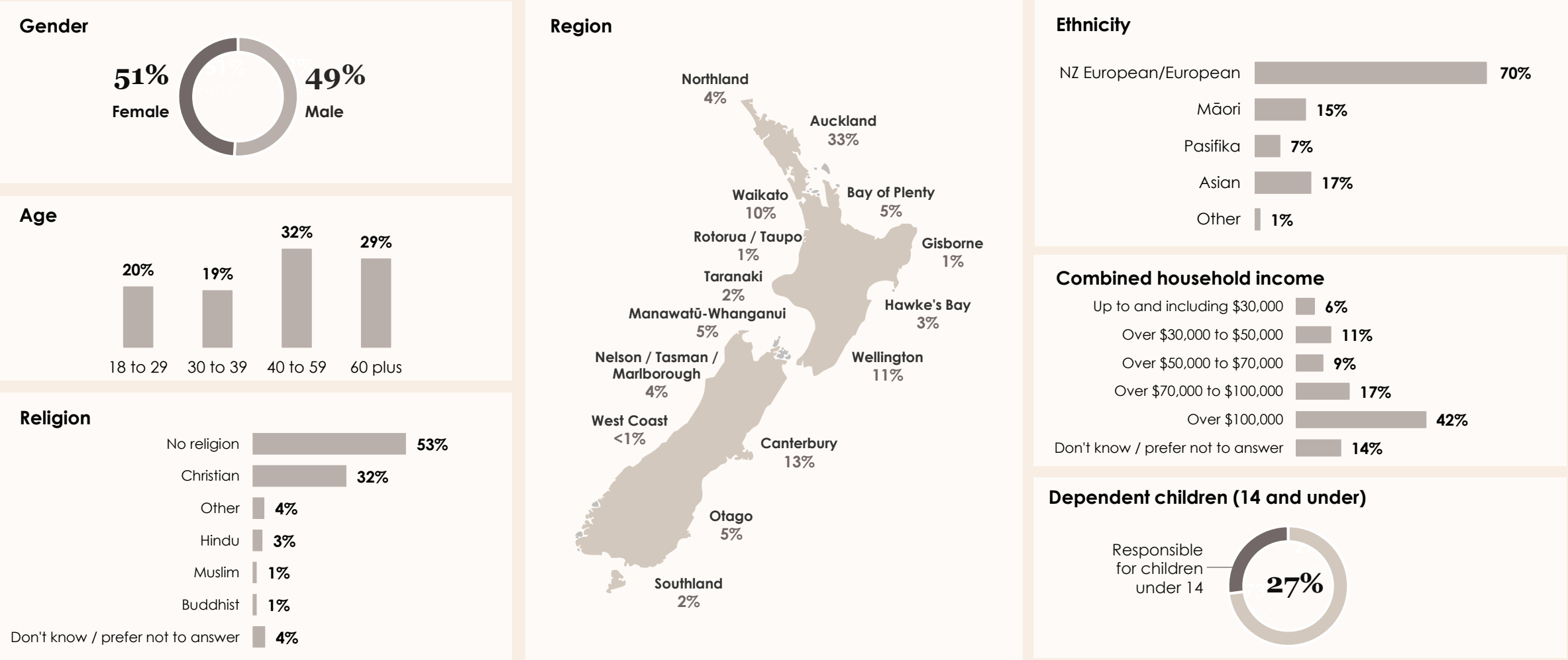
Jesus Fucking Christ

Note

- 5 new words were added to the 2025 survey (*)
- 5 words from the 2021 survey were removed in 2025: Nutter, Pōkokohua, Kai a te kuī, Puaaelo, E te fai la'u mea e ai.
- The 31 words have been grouped into these six broad categories to aid interpretation of the findings in this report. These groupings were not used in the survey questionnaire.

Broadcast scenario:	Description
Interviewees (TV or radio)	People being interviewed or asked to give opinion in news, documentaries and current events programmes on TV or radio
News media presenter/host (TV or radio)	When used by a host/presenter in news, documentaries and current events programmes on TV or radio
TV drama (after 8.30pm)	In a television drama screened after 8.30pm
TV drama/comedy (between 7pm & 8.30pm)	In a television drama, soap or comedy screened between 7pm and 8.30pm
Stand-up comedy (after 8.30pm on TV or radio)	Comedians in stand-up comedy programmes played on radio or shown on TV after 8.30pm
Reality TV	In a reality television programme
Music video (TV)	In a hip hop, rap or other music video played on television
Radio talkback caller	When used by a caller to a talkback radio station
Radio talkback host	When used by a radio host on a talkback radio station
Breakfast radio host	When used by a radio host in a breakfast programme
Song on radio	When used in a hip hop, rap or other song on radio
Sports commentary (TV or radio)	When used during a sports commentary programme on TV or radio

Sample profile (weighted)



Source: Q14 Gender, Q15 Age, Q16 Ethnicity, Q20 Region, Q17 Combined household income, Q14 Responsible for children
Base: All respondents (n=1,501)
Note: Results were weighted to be representative of the New Zealand population. As respondents could select more than one ethnicity the total may not add to 100%.

Summary of findings



Summary of findings

01

Racial slurs and words that target specific communities are viewed as most potentially offensive.

In 2025, 19 of the 31 words assessed were rated by fewer than 50% of people as totally unacceptable in broadcasting. This indicates that tolerance for potentially offensive language in broadcasting remains relatively high.

Racial slurs dominate the top 10 words with the most potential for offence, with six of these words relating to race, ethnicity or culture. This includes two of the new words added to the 2025 survey (*nigga* and *wog*). *Nigger* again tops the list, with 70% viewing it as totally unacceptable in broadcasting.

Two thirds view the misogynistic *cunt* as totally unacceptable in broadcasting, cementing its position in the top three.

Two of the sexual-orientation words (*cocksucker* and *faggot*) are each considered totally unacceptable by nearly six in ten (59%).

The other three words added to the 2025 survey (*cripple*, *gypped* and *gypsy*) are ranked towards the lower end of unacceptability overall. Note, awareness of the word *gypped* is low at only 58%

02

There is growing intolerance of potentially offensive language in broadcasting.

More than half of the words assessed in both the 2021 and 2025 surveys are now seen as less acceptable in broadcasting than they were four years ago.

Misogynistic and racial slurs remain among the most offensive terms, with particularly sharp rises in unacceptability for words related to misogyny (especially *cunt* and *pussy*) – likely influenced by recent public debates and increased visibility in political contexts.

The growing unacceptability of slurs related to sexual orientation (*cocksucker*, *faggot* and *dyke*) may show an expanding recognition of harm caused by discriminatory language.

Change in the perception of religiously offensive language is also evident, with more people in 2025 regarding the blasphemy *Jesus Fucking Christ* as totally unacceptable in broadcasting. This is a reversal of the softening in attitude we observed between 2018 and 2021.

Attitudes towards just one word, *mental*, have softened since 2021.

2025 ranking on % 'totally <u>unacceptable</u> ' in all broadcast scenarios						% point change since 2021	
1	Nigger	70%	+5 ↑	15=	Coconut	48%	+1
2	Nigga	67%	NA	18=	Whore	47%	+7 ↑
3	Cunt	66%	+9 ↑	18=	Dyke	47%	+4 ↑
4	Curry muncher	60%	+3	18=	Hori	47%	+4
5=	Chink	59%	+3	21	Slut	46%	+6 ↑
5=	Cocksucker	59%	+8 ↑	22	Get fucked	45%	+4 ↑
5=	Faggot	59%	+6 ↑	23	Gypped	43%	NA
8	Gook	57%	+5 ↑	24=	Pussy	42%	+9 ↑
9	Wog	56%	NA	24=	Cock	42%	+4 ↑
10	Jesus Fucking Christ	53%	+7 ↑	26	Cripple	40%	NA
11	Retard	51%	+6 ↑	27	Fuck	38%	+1
12	Mother fucker	51%	+4 ↑	28	Bitch	32%	+3
13=	Spastic	49%	+6 ↑	29	Arsehole	31%	-1
13=	Homo	49%	+2	30	Gypsy	23%	NA
15	Nappy-head	48%	+1	31	Mental	20%	-6 ↓
15=	Tranny	48%	+4	Statistically significant increase/decrease since 2021			
↑↓							
● Race & ethnicity				● Disability & mental health			
● Misogynistic/sexist				● General profanity			
● Sexual orientation & gender identity				● Religious			

Summary of findings (continued)

03

Older women and Pacific peoples are more intolerant of potentially offensive language in broadcasting.

Pacific peoples are the least accepting of strong language in broadcasting.

Views on offensive language also vary by age and gender. Older men are generally the most tolerant, while older women are the least. Younger adults (aged 18–29) align more closely with national averages across most words. However, young women are less accepting than young men of the seven most offensive words, as well as *retard*, *gook*, *spastic*, and *gypped*. In contrast, young men are less accepting than young women of the term *arsehole*.

Religious affiliation also plays a role: Christians are less tolerant (than those without a faith) of strong language, particularly of the blasphemy *Jesus Fucking Christ*, which 84% of Christians find unacceptable.

04

Broadcast context matters. Attitudes towards potentially offensive language in reality TV have softened since 2021.

Tolerance is generally lower for potentially offensive words heard in talkback radio, sports commentary, or factual programming involving a host or presenter.

Broadcast timing also has a strong influence – language considered potentially offensive is seen as more problematic before 8.30pm.

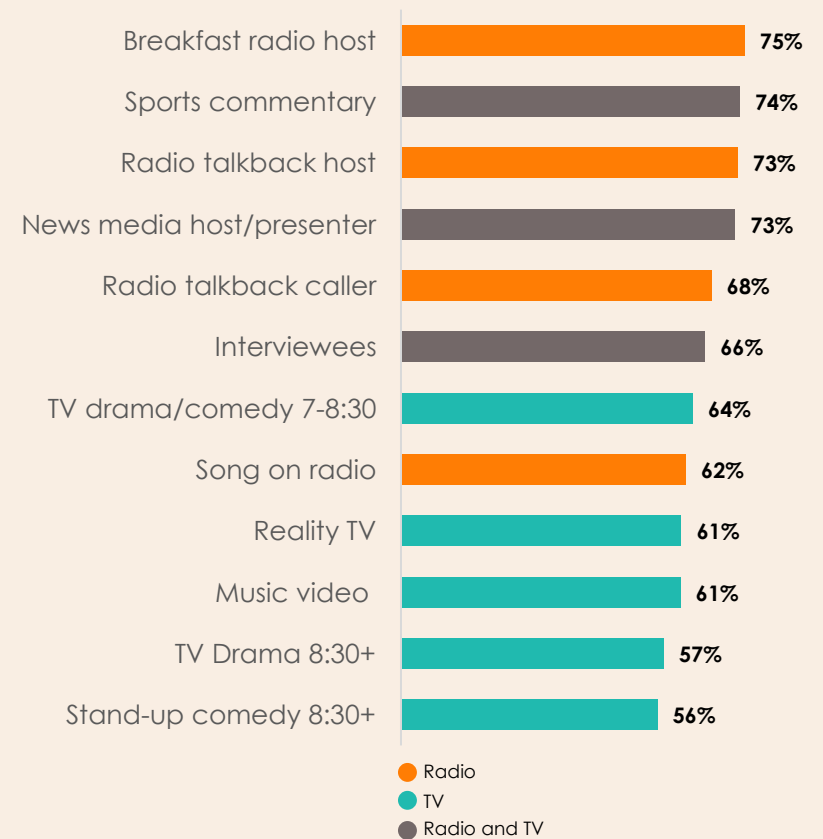
Comedy remains the context where audiences are generally more accepting of stronger language, although this still depends on programme timing.

Over the last four years, tolerance has grown significantly for potentially offensive language in reality TV. This contrasts with the other 11 scenarios where we see hardened attitudes.

Attitudes toward language are highly dependent on context. Although most words are seen as more unacceptable in certain situations, variants of *fuck* and words relating to sexism or gender identity are viewed as especially inappropriate when used by a host or presenter in factual programmes, talkback radio, or sports commentary. See page 27 for detailed comparisons.

Views on the use of *mental* have become more permissive across all types of broadcast content, with significant decreases in unacceptability ratings across all 12 scenarios.

Average 'totally or fairly unacceptable' rating across all 31 words (by broadcast scenarios) in 2025



All percentages are based on respondents who are aware of the word

In survey respondents' own words...



Today, broadcasting tends to be more relaxed, reflecting the way people actually speak in everyday life. Streaming platforms and online content in particular have pushed those boundaries further, making offensive language more common and often more accepted, especially in entertainment.

18-29 year old, NZ European woman



I think it is fine if it's necessary for clarity in news reporting but for the most part, the words listed are used in a derogatory sense against people and the world has moved on and developed better awareness that it is not acceptable to continue using that kind of language.

40-59 year old, Asian woman



There is more offensive language than when I was growing up. It's a negative shift. Makes these words common place like any other word used. No one cares about what children are learning off TV. When I was raising my daughter I didn't want her learning these inadvertently especially if I wasn't around to explain the word and why it was wrong to use it. Teaching children is a community thing and broadcasting should still care about this..

40-59 year old, NZ European woman



We are more accepting of its daily use and appearance on TV. We are more desensitised but we are also much less prudish than we used to be.

40-59 year old, NZ European man



Offensive language in broadcasting has gotten a lot more chill in recent years, especially since when I was a kid & I think it's a good thing. Makes shows more realistic & relatable because you hear it every day anyway.

30-39 year old Māori man



It feels like there's been a shift towards more offensive language being used over time. I remember when the Toyota bugged commercial came out and the uproar when the bugged was allowed for broadcast on television. I find offensive language for sexual preferences and ethnicities to be the worst (homo/faggot/nigger), those are horrible.

40-59 year old, NZ European man



I think some words have become more taboo (especially those related to sexuality such as faggot or tranny), while others (particularly the 'f' word) have become more normalised. Even young kids use the 'f' word these days.

60+ year old, Asian man

It has generally got a lot worse. This is negative because community standards of politeness, fair play and being reasonable have gone down considerably.

60+ year old, Māori man

03

Detailed findings

The shifting boundaries of acceptable language in broadcasting



Learnings about the most unacceptable words in 2025

The charts on the next two pages illustrate the following:

- For each of the 31 words tested, the proportion of respondents who consider the word to be totally unacceptable in all broadcasting scenarios. These proportions are based on respondents who are aware of each word*.
- Changes in total unacceptability over time (since 2013). Note that some words were not tested in all years.
- The rankings of the 31 words tested in 2025, based on the unacceptability ratings described above.

Due to the number of words removed and added to the survey over the years, our interpretation of the findings does not emphasise comparisons in rankings. However, the 2021 ranking is shown in an appended table. See page 46.

The appendix also contains a graph that shows the full responses to the question ('totally unacceptable in all scenarios', 'depends on the scenario', and 'totally acceptable in all scenarios'). See page 45.

*Except for *gypped*, where 42% did not know the meaning, fairly small proportions of respondents were unaware of the other words.

- More New Zealanders consider over half of the words tested in both the 2021 and 2025 surveys (15 of 26 words) to be totally unacceptable in 2025. These increases span all themes, but are especially evident for misogynistic words. Notably, the words *cunt* and *pussy* have seen especially sharp rises in unacceptability – this may be attributed to their increased visibility and heated debate in public forums, such as parliamentary discussions, over the past year. This exposure may well have heightened awareness of their offensive nature, especially in the context of misogyny.
- As in 2021, racial and cultural slurs feature heavily among the top seven most unacceptable words in 2025. *Nigger* remains the most offensive, with unacceptability now sitting at 70%.
- Four of the five words related to sexual orientation and gender identity are in the top half of the list. Marked increases in unacceptability for *cocksucker* and *faggot* place them as equal fifth in the 2025 rankings.
- After declining since 2013, the blasphemy *Jesus Fucking Christ* has increased in unacceptability, now at just over half (53%) and ranked 10th.
- Two of the five new words assessed in 2025, the racial insults *nigga* and *wog*, rank highly for unacceptability (second and ninth, respectively). The racial slurs *gypped* and *gypsy* are towards the bottom of the list. The particularly low ranking of *gypsy* may be due to its offensiveness being highly context-dependent. The final new word, *cripple*, ranks low on the list, regarded as less unacceptable than *retard* or *spastic*, but more so than *mental*.

2025 ranking of 31 potentially offensive words in broadcasting

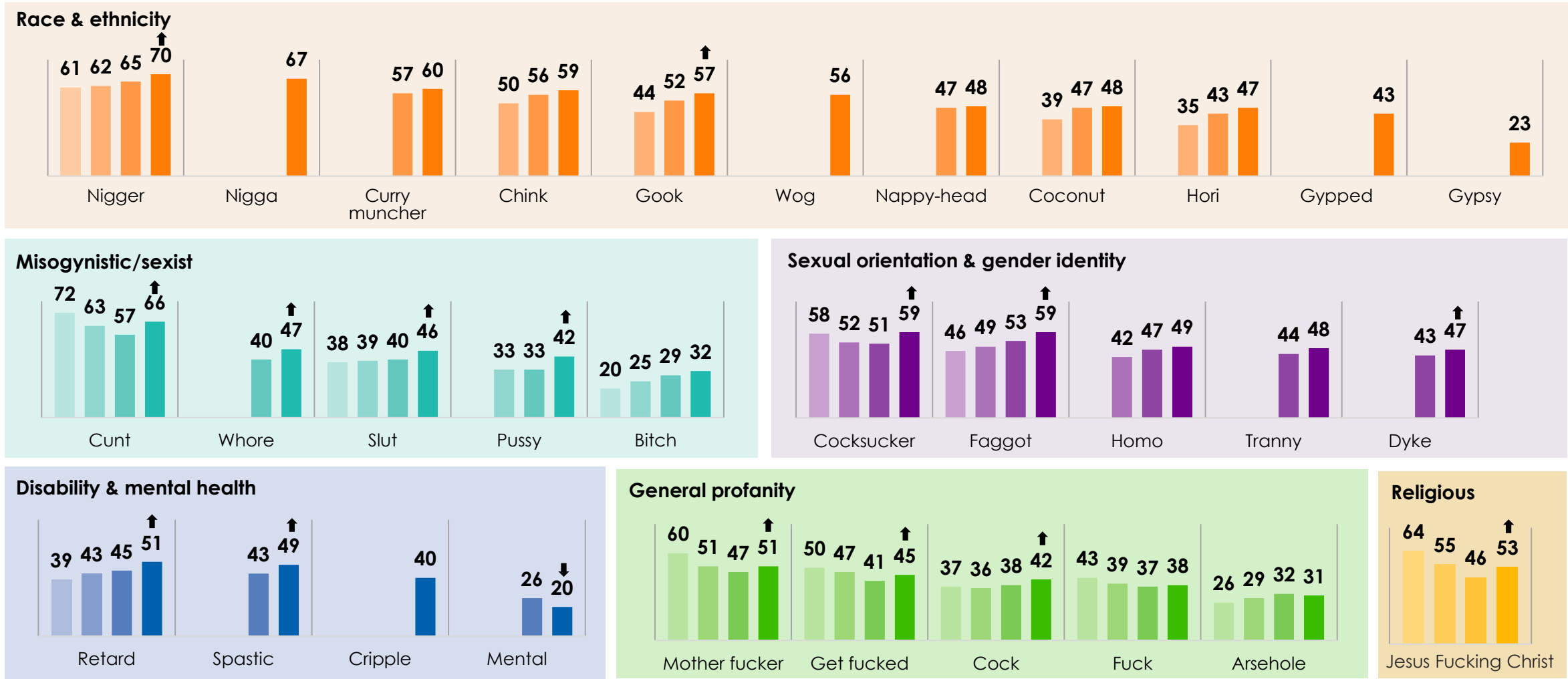
Ranking		% totally unacceptable	% pt change since 2021			% totally unacceptable	% pt change since 2021			% totally unacceptable	% pt change since 2021
1	Nigger	70%	+5↑	12	Mother fucker	51%	+4↑	23	Gypped	43%	NA
2	Nigga	67%	NA	13=	Spastic	49%	+6↑	24=	Pussy	42%	+9↑
3	Cunt	66%	+9↑	13=	Homo	49%	+2	24=	Cock	42%	+4↑
4	Curry muncher	60%	+3	15	Nappy-head	48%	+1	26	Cripple	40%	NA
5=	Chink	59%	+3	15=	Tranny	48%	+4	27	Fuck	38%	+1
5=	Cocksucker	59%	+8↑	15=	Coconut	48%	+1	28	Bitch	32%	+3
5=	Faggot	59%	+6↑	18=	Whore	47%	+7↑	29	Arsehole	31%	-1
8	Gook	57%	+5↑	18=	Dyke	47%	+4↑	30	Gypsy	23%	NA
9	Wog	56%	NA	18=	Hori	47%	+4	31	Mental	20%	-6↓
10	Jesus Fucking Christ	53%	+7↑	21	Slut	46%	+6↑	<div><div></div> Race and ethnicity</div> <div><div></div> Misogynistic / sexist</div> <div><div></div> Sexual orientation and gender identity</div> <div><div></div> Disability and mental health</div>			
11	Retard	51%	+6↑	22	Get fucked	45%	+4↑				

↑↓ Significantly more/less totally unacceptable than 2021

- Race and ethnicity
- Misogynistic / sexist
- Sexual orientation and gender identity
- Disability and mental health
- General profanity
- Religious

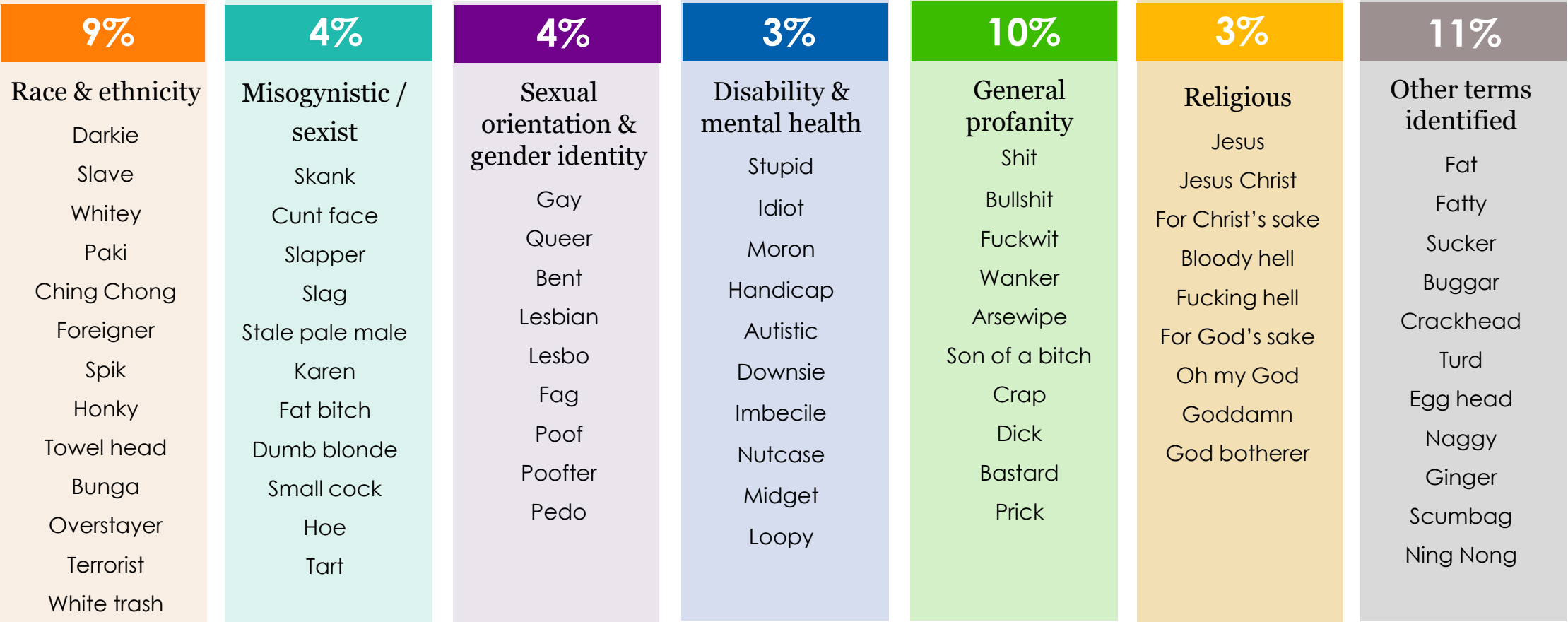
Total unacceptability of words over time

% totally unacceptable across all broadcasting scenarios



Over a quarter (28%) of respondents commented on ‘other’ offensive terms or phrases.

Respondents were asked if there are any other words that they would personally find unacceptable if used in a broadcast. Their responses are grouped into themes below. Words related to sexual orientation, general profanity, and race/ethnicity are most common.



Note: The percentages for each category sum to over 28% as respondents could provide multiple additional words. A small number of respondents gave non-English words. Examples of these are provided in the appendix.

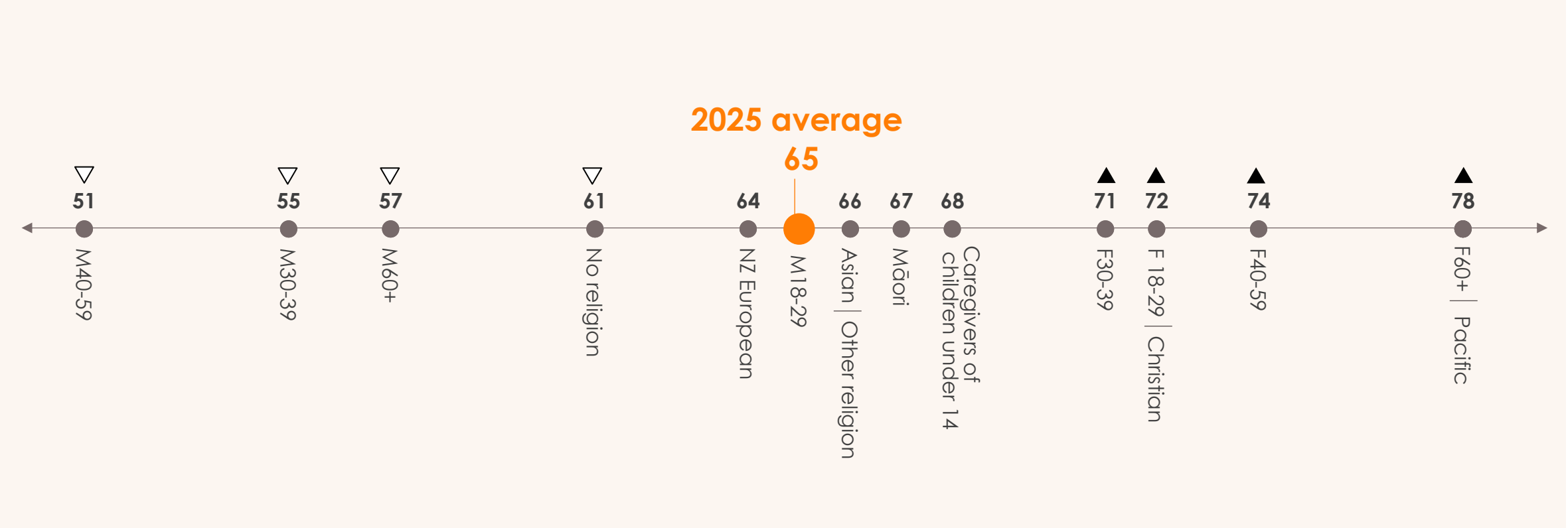
Demographic patterns



On average, Pacific peoples, women (especially older women) and Christians are least accepting of potentially offensive words in broadcasting.

Average 'totally or fairly unacceptable' rating across all 31 words in 2025

%



▲▼ Significantly higher or lower than national average

Older women are least accepting of potentially offensive language.

Generally, older women are least accepting of these words being used in broadcasting, whereas middle aged men are most accepting of them.

Younger people (18 to 29 year olds) are closer to the national averages for most of the words.

Young women are less accepting than young men of the top 7 words, as well as *retard*, *gook*, *spastic* and *gypped*¹ (with a gap of at least 10 percentage points for each of these words). Conversely, young men are less accepting of *arsehole* than young women¹.

¹ This latter finding is not highlighted in the table because the table compares demographic groups to the total sample, rather than other demographic groups (such as young women versus young men).

% totally or fairly unacceptable									
Word or phrase	Total 2025	Male				Female			
		18 to 29 (n=113-149)	30 to 39 (n=76-125)	40 to 59 (n=149-241)	60 plus (n=127-208)	18 to 29 (n=89-144)	30 to 39 (n=77-144)	40 to 59 (n=128-245)	60 plus (n=122-235)
Nigger	84%	79%	78%	76%	79%	89%	86%	91%	92%
*Nigga	82%	75%	72%	74%	78%	86%	87%	90%	91%
Cunt	79%	73%	72%	64%	79%	85%	83%	86%	93%
Curry muncher	79%	73%	65%	66%	74%	87%	86%	89%	88%
Faggot	77%	71%	68%	65%	65%	85%	90%	91%	85%
Chink	75%	69%	63%	67%	69%	79%	82%	87%	85%
*Wog	75%	62%	59%	62%	71%	80%	84%	86%	88%
Cocksucker	74%	74%	64%	57%	71%	80%	77%	79%	88%
Retard	71%	71%	60%	54%	56%	81%	80%	83%	87%
Gook	71%	65%	60%	63%	61%	85%	77%	85%	77%
Dyke	70%	69%	59%	59%	58%	77%	74%	83%	82%
Slut	70%	74%	62%	48%	57%	80%	76%	81%	84%
Homo	69%	66%	62%	58%	54%	73%	81%	81%	81%
Spastic	67%	60%	52%	53%	60%	72%	67%	77%	89%
Whore	67%	76%	66%	45%	48%	77%	78%	79%	77%
Jesus Fucking Christ	67%	68%	57%	50%	69%	69%	69%	70%	81%
Mother fucker	66%	68%	61%	52%	63%	70%	66%	68%	81%
Coconut	66%	60%	51%	55%	62%	64%	65%	78%	79%
Tranny	65%	70%	58%	44%	47%	78%	79%	77%	76%
Hori	64%	61%	51%	48%	61%	65%	63%	73%	81%
*Cripple	63%	61%	47%	44%	52%	70%	73%	73%	80%
Get fucked	63%	65%	53%	47%	60%	67%	62%	66%	79%
*Gypped	62%	60%	46%	42%	51%	77%	76%	79%	78%
Nappy-head	61%	65%	54%	46%	49%	66%	70%	73%	71%
Pussy	60%	62%	52%	41%	44%	67%	69%	71%	78%
Cock	58%	62%	49%	42%	45%	70%	68%	62%	70%
Fuck	56%	54%	46%	42%	56%	58%	61%	57%	72%
Bitch	50%	60%	45%	38%	36%	61%	62%	51%	58%
Arsehole	42%	52%	32%	33%	39%	41%	42%	43%	53%
*Gypsy	38%	41%	33%	25%	26%	45%	44%	43%	51%
Mental	31%	37%	19%	19%	24%	34%	27%	38%	43%

Significantly less/more unacceptable than total 2025

Pacific peoples are least accepting of potentially offensive language.

Consistent with the last survey, Pacific people are again the demographic group least accepting of the use of potentially offensive language in broadcasting. However, in 2025 *curry muncher* is the most offensive term for them, with *nigger* and *cunt* second equal in ranking.

Some of the biggest differences between Pacific people and the national averages can be seen for the lower ranked words, e.g. *tranny*, *gypped*, *gypsy*, as well as the more traditional offensive language words *pussy* and *cock* (Pacific ratings for all of these words are 18 to 19 percentage points higher than the national averages).

Compared with those of NZ European or Asian ethnicity, Māori find *curry muncher*, *retard*, and *coconut* especially unacceptable.

Asian New Zealanders find nine of the words (largely general profanity) less acceptable in broadcasting (compared with those of NZ European or Māori ethnicity).

NZ Europeans, along with Māori and Pacific peoples, find *coconut* and *spastic* more offensive than Asian New Zealanders.

Demographic patterns

% totally or fairly unacceptable

Word or phrase	Total 2025	NZ European (n=510-889)	Māori (n=262-401)	Pacific peoples (n=107-165)	Asian (n=210-363)
Nigger	84%	85%	87%	89%	80%
*Nigga	82%	84%	84%	88%	78%
Cunt	79%	80%	79%	89%	80%
Curry muncher	79%	79%	84%	91%	76%
Faggot	77%	77%	80%	86%	77%
Chink	75%	76%	78%	85%	72%
*Wog	75%	76%	76%	86%	68%
Cocksucker	74%	71%	73%	86%	80%
Retard	71%	72%	78%	82%	62%
Gook	71%	70%	76%	87%	71%
Dyke	70%	71%	73%	81%	64%
Slut	70%	69%	74%	82%	69%
Homo	69%	70%	72%	82%	64%
Spastic	67%	69%	65%	73%	59%
Whore	67%	65%	69%	83%	70%
Jesus Fucking Christ	67%	63%	67%	83%	73%
Mother fucker	66%	62%	62%	78%	78%
Coconut	66%	69%	75%	75%	49%
Tranny	65%	63%	69%	84%	69%
Hori	64%	65%	61%	75%	59%
*Cripple	63%	63%	66%	76%	59%
Get fucked	63%	58%	62%	80%	71%
*Gypped	62%	60%	68%	81%	60%
Nappy-head	61%	61%	65%	75%	57%
Pussy	60%	58%	58%	78%	67%
Cock	58%	53%	57%	76%	68%
Fuck	56%	52%	54%	69%	64%
Bitch	50%	46%	47%	63%	64%
Arsehole	42%	38%	38%	56%	51%
*Gypsy	38%	36%	39%	57%	39%
Mental	31%	28%	30%	50%	34%

Significantly less/more unacceptable than total 2025

Source: Q6: Please rate how acceptable or unacceptable you find each of these words in broadcasting.

Base: All respondents who have heard this word or phrase (n=884-1,493). The subgroup base size ranges reflect the different number of people responding to each word.

Religion plays no role in racist words, but is a factor in how people view blasphemy and variants of *fuck*.

Some words are viewed as unacceptable in broadcasting regardless of a person's religion. This is especially the case for racist words.

However, Christians are much more likely than those without a faith to feel some words are unacceptable – the largest differences are for *Jesus Fucking Christ* and other variants of *fuck*, as well as *cocksucker*.

The smaller base sizes associated with the results for those with another religion means many of the differences are not statistically significant. However, those with another faith are in line with Christians in their views on the use of *bitch* and *mental* in broadcasting. They are significantly more likely than those without a faith to view these as unacceptable.

Demographic patterns				
% totally or fairly unacceptable				
Word or phrase	Total 2025	No religion (n=434-753)	Christian (n=289-477)	Other religion (n=122-194)
Nigger	84%	85	85	77
*Nigga	82%	83	83	74
Cunt	79%	74	88	78
Curry muncher	79%	77	83	72
Faggot	77%	77	79	75
Chink	75%	75	77	67
*Wog	75%	73	78	71
Cocksucker	74%	66	83	80
Retard	71%	71	74	67
Gook	71%	70	74	71
Dyke	70%	69	76	65
Slut	70%	66	74	73
Homo	69%	69	73	64
Spastic	67%	66	71	62
Whore	67%	63	71	71
Jesus Fucking Christ	67%	53	84	72
Mother fucker	66%	55	81	75
Coconut	66%	66	69	54
Tranny	65%	63	70	67
Hori	64%	62	70	57
*Cripple	63%	62	65	62
Get fucked	63%	52	78	69
*Gypped	62%	59	65	66
Nappy-head	61%	58	66	67
Pussy	60%	54	68	68
Cock	58%	49	69	64
Fuck	56%	45	72	60
Bitch	50%	44	57	61
Arsehole	42%	34	52	48
*Gypsy	38%	34	43	43
Mental	31%	23	41	40

Significantly less/more unacceptable than total 2025

Source: Q6: Please rate how acceptable or unacceptable you find each of these words in broadcasting.

Base: All respondents who have heard this word or phrase (n=884-1,493). The subgroup base size ranges reflect the different number of people responding to each word.

23

Acceptability across broadcasting contexts



12 scenarios tested the acceptability of words in different broadcasting contexts.

Broadcast scenario:	Description
Interviewees (TV or radio)	People being interviewed or asked to give opinion in news, documentaries and current events programmes on TV or radio
News media presenter/host (TV or radio)	When used by a host/presenter in news, documentaries and current events programmes on TV or radio
TV drama (after 8.30pm)	In a television drama screened after 8.30pm
TV drama/comedy (between 7pm & 8.30pm)	In a television drama, soap or comedy screened between 7pm and 8.30pm
Stand-up comedy (after 8.30pm on TV or radio)	Comedians in stand-up comedy programmes played on radio or shown on TV after 8.30pm
Reality TV	In a reality television programme
Music video (TV)	In a hip hop, rap or other music video played on television
Radio talkback caller	When used by a caller to a talkback radio station
Radio talkback host	When used by a radio host on a talkback radio station
Breakfast radio host	When used by a radio host in a breakfast programme
Song on radio	When used in a hip hop, rap or other song on radio
Sports commentary (TV or radio)	When used during a sports commentary programme on TV or radio

The graph on the next page shows, for each of the 12 broadcast scenarios, the average unacceptability rating – that is, the mean percentage (across 31 words) of people who considered a word either totally or fairly unacceptable.

The table on page 27 compares the unacceptability ratings for each word and scenario. Each unacceptability rating is the percentage of people who considered a word either totally or fairly unacceptable in that scenario.

Words are generally seen as more unacceptable when used in talkback radio, sports commentary, or fact-based programmes featuring a host or presenter.

The time of broadcast also plays a key role – potentially offensive language is viewed as less acceptable before 8.30pm than afterwards.

Language used in comedy continues to attract greater acceptance overall (but this is timing dependent).

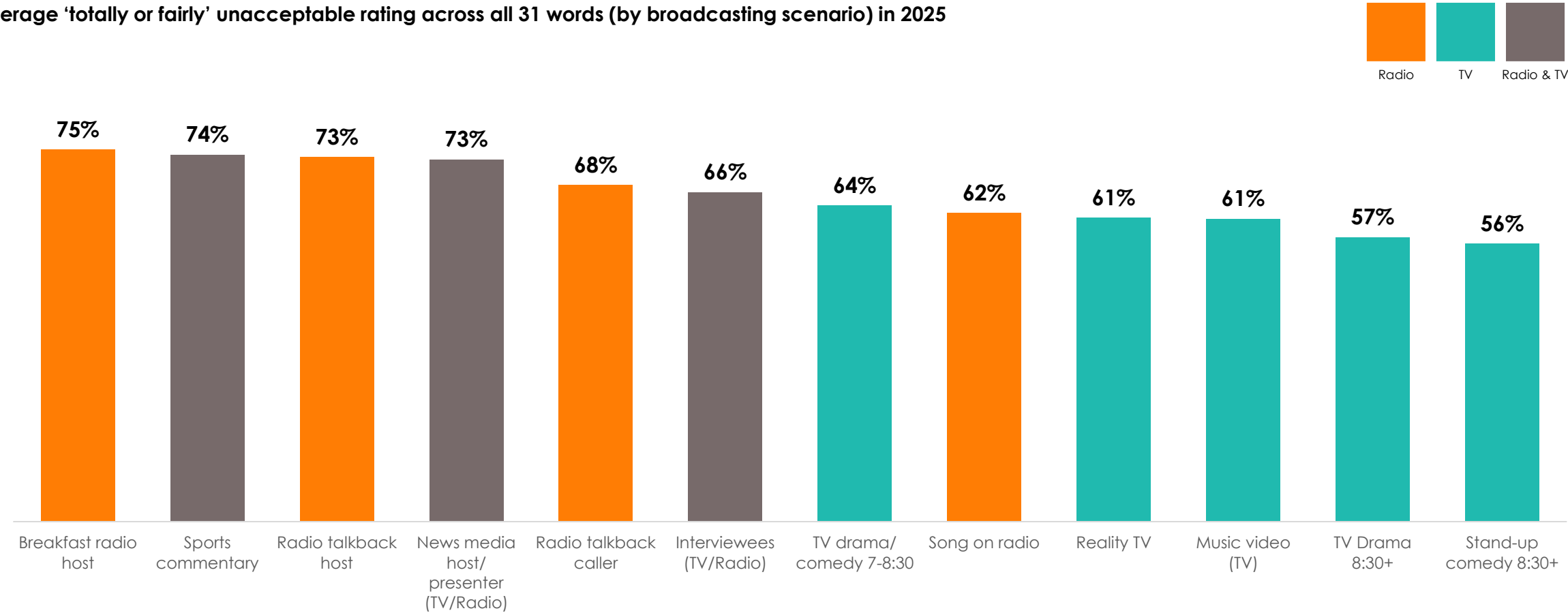
Tolerance has grown for offensive language in reality TV.

These comparisons show that attitudes toward language are highly dependent on context. Although most words are seen as more unacceptable in certain situations, variants of *fuck* and words relating to sexism or gender identity are viewed as especially inappropriate when used by a host or presenter in factual programmes, talkback radio, or sports commentary.

Views on the use of *mental* have become more permissive across all types of broadcast content.

On average, people are least accepting of offensive language from breakfast, talkback, news and sports hosts and commentators.

Average ‘totally or fairly’ unacceptable rating across all 31 words (by broadcasting scenario) in 2025



Rank (2025)	Word or phrase	Interviewees (TV/Radio)	News media host (TV/Radio)	TV drama/ comedy 7-8:30	TV drama 8:30+	Stand-up comedy 8:30+	Reality TV	Music video (TV)	Radio talkback caller	Radio talkback host	Breakfast radio host	Song on radio	Sports commentary
1	Nigger	85%	88%	84%	78%	78%	83%	80%	87%	89%	89%	80%	89%
2	*Nigga	82%	86%	80%	76%	75%	81%	77%	84%	87%	87%	77%	87%
3	Cunt	83%	86%	80%	72%	72%	76%	76%	83%	86%	87%	77%	86%
4	Curry muncher	80%	84%	76%	70%	69%	75%	75%	80%	84%	85%	75%	84%
5=	Chink	76%	80%	74%	70%	69%	73%	72%	77%	81%	82%	72%	81%
5=	Cocksucker	78%	83%	72%	65%	63%	69%	69%	77%	81%	82%	70%	81%
5=	Faggot	77%	82%	74%	68%	66%	73%	72%	78%	83%	84%	73%	83%
8	Gook	73%	77%	71%	68%	65%	70%	69%	73%	78%	79%	70%	78%
9	*Wog	73%	77%	71%	66%	65%	71%	68%	75%	79%	80%	70%	79%
10	Jesus Fucking Christ	70%	79%	68%	61%	60%	64%	66%	73%	78%	80%	67%	78%
11=	Retard	70%	76%	67%	62%	61%	66%	66%	71%	77%	78%	68%	77%
11=	Mother fucker	76%	81%	70%	60%	58%	66%	65%	76%	81%	82%	66%	81%
13=	Spastic	65%	71%	63%	59%	57%	62%	62%	67%	72%	73%	63%	72%
13=	Homo	68%	75%	67%	60%	59%	65%	64%	70%	76%	78%	65%	78%
15=	Nappy-head	65%	69%	62%	58%	55%	60%	60%	64%	69%	70%	61%	70%
15=	Tranny	63%	71%	62%	57%	55%	60%	60%	67%	73%	75%	62%	75%
15=	Coconut	67%	72%	65%	60%	57%	63%	62%	68%	73%	75%	63%	74%
18=	Whore	68%	76%	64%	56%	55%	61%	61%	71%	77%	79%	63%	78%
18=	Dyke	67%	75%	64%	57%	56%	61%	61%	69%	76%	78%	63%	78%
18=	Hori	66%	73%	64%	59%	56%	63%	63%	67%	74%	75%	62%	74%
21	Slut	71%	78%	64%	56%	55%	61%	61%	73%	78%	80%	63%	79%
22	Get fucked	69%	79%	64%	53%	52%	59%	60%	72%	79%	80%	62%	77%
23	*Gypped	52%	57%	53%	50%	48%	52%	51%	55%	59%	60%	52%	59%
24=	Pussy	61%	70%	58%	51%	49%	55%	54%	62%	71%	73%	56%	72%
24=	Cock	62%	71%	58%	49%	48%	53%	54%	61%	69%	72%	55%	70%
26	*Cripple	56%	62%	54%	51%	50%	55%	55%	59%	65%	65%	56%	66%
27	Fuck	60%	72%	58%	46%	44%	50%	52%	63%	72%	74%	54%	70%
28	Bitch	54%	65%	48%	38%	38%	42%	44%	53%	63%	67%	46%	65%
29	Arsehole	49%	63%	47%	37%	36%	40%	43%	48%	58%	64%	45%	60%
30	*Gypsy	33%	36%	33%	31%	30%	32%	32%	35%	38%	39%	33%	40%
31	Mental	33%	41%	34%	28%	29%	31%	32%	38%	45%	46%	33%	45%

■ Considered unacceptable by 80%+ ■ Considered unacceptable by 70-79% ■ Considered unacceptable by 60-69% ■ Considered unacceptable by 50-59%

In their own words...

“

I feel like some words, in the past, were considered highly offensive and "bad", but now some words are "less bad" and not at all offensive, because it's more used by everyone and more used as a joke manner. Words like bitch, asshole, cunt, and pussy, I feel are not offensive BUT should not appear in front of children nor be used by hosts – as I feel, hosts, are professionals and should use professional terminologies.

18-29 year old, Asian woman

“

I think with the rise of cable and now streaming TV shows people are used to hearing some words more on TV...Possibly swear words are more accepted now and racial words/words about disabilities and mental illness less so. I think this second thing is a positive and I don't have a problem with swear words being used in context on adult shows screened after children should be in bed.

40-49 year old, NZ European woman

Interviewees (TV/Radio)

Scenario: People being interviewed or asked to give opinions in news, documentaries and current events programmes on TV or radio

Interviewees are given a little more leniency than their hosts (see next page). Nevertheless, more than half of people find the use of all but three of the words unacceptable from interviewees.

Seven words (mainly the words that cause the most offense) are seen as less appropriate in this context than they were in 2021. In contrast, attitudes have softened towards *arsehole* and *mental*.

Like other broadcasting contexts that rely more on live or spontaneous content, *slut* is ranked more highly in this context than contexts that rely on scripted content.

% totally or fairly unacceptable

Rank	Word or phrase	2025 (n=1,501)	2021 (n=1,505)	2018 (n=1,514)	2013 (n=1,500)	Rank 2021	% point change
1	Nigger	85%	81%	79%	77%	1	4 ↑
2	Cunt	83%	77%	80%	86%	2	6 ↑
3	*Nigga	82%	-	-	-	-	-
4	Curry muncher	80%	74%	-	-	4	6 ↑
5	Cocksucker	78%	75%	73%	78%	3	3 ↑
6	Faggot	77%	73%	70%	65%	5=	4 ↑
7=	Chink	76%	73%	68%	-	5=	3
7=	Mother fucker	76%	72%	73%	80%	7	4 ↑
9=	Gook	73%	71%	60%	-	8	2
9=	*Wog	73%	-	-	-	-	-
11	Slut	71%	68%	63%	61%	10=	3 ↑
12=	Jesus Fucking Christ	70%	67%	73%	79%	12=	3
12=	Retard	70%	68%	62%	57%	10=	2
14	Get fucked	69%	67%	70%	74%	12=	2
15=	Homo	68%	69%	63%	-	9	-1
15=	Whore	68%	66%	-	-	15	2
17=	Coconut	67%	67%	54%	-	12=	0
17=	Dyke	67%	65%	-	-	16	2
19	Hori	66%	63%	53%	-	18	3
20=	Spastic	65%	62%	-	-	19=	3
20=	Nappy-head	65%	64%	-	-	17	1
22	Tranny	63%	62%	-	-	19=	1
23	Cock	62%	62%	60%	59%	19=	0
24	Pussy	61%	58%	53%	-	23	3
25	Fuck	60%	61%	64%	68%	22	-1
26	*Cripple	56%	-	-	-	-	-
27	Bitch	54%	54%	50%	40%	24	0
28	*Gypped	52%	-	-	-	-	-
29	Arsehole	49%	53%	48%	50%	25	-4 ↓
30	*Gypsy	33%	-	-	-	-	-
31	Mental	33%	40%	-	-	30	-7 ↓

↑↓ Significantly more/less unacceptable than 2021

Source: Q8/Q10: How acceptable to you is <word> in this scenario?
Base: All respondents who have heard this word or phrase (n=884-1,493)

News media host/presenter (TV/Radio)

Scenario: When used by a host/presenter in news, documentaries and current events programmes on TV or radio

TV hosts and presenters of factual information are regarded as one of four broadcasting contexts where the public is least lenient about the use of potentially offensive language.

The more intolerant attitudes noted in 2021 have become more pronounced in 2025, with eight words deemed increasingly unacceptable by 2025. These tend to be the most potentially offensive language.

Like all other broadcasting contexts, *mental* is seen as less problematic in 2025.

% totally or fairly unacceptable

Rank	Word or phrase	2025 (n=1,501)	2021 (n=1,505)	2018 (n=1,514)	2013 (n=1,500)	Rank 2021	% point change
1	Nigger	88%	84%	62%	61%	1	4 ↑
2=	Cunt	86%	81%	63%	72%	2	5 ↑
2=	*Nigga	86%	-	-	-	-	-
4	Curry muncher	84%	79%	-	-	4=	5 ↑
5	Cocksucker	83%	79%	52%	58%	4=	4 ↑
6	Faggot	82%	80%	49%	46%	3	2
7	Mother fucker	81%	77%	51%	60%	8	4 ↑
8	Chink	80%	79%	50%	-	4=	1
9=	Jesus Fucking Christ	79%	74%	55%	63%	12=	5 ↑
9=	Get fucked	79%	75%	47%	50%	10=	4 ↑
11	Slut	78%	75%	39%	38%	10=	3
12=	Gook	77%	78%	44%	-	7	-1
12=	*Wog	77%	-	-	-	-	-
14=	Retard	76%	74%	43%	39%	12=	2
14=	Whore	76%	72%	-	-	15=	4 ↑
16=	Homo	75%	76%	42%	-	9	-1
16=	Dyke	75%	72%	-	-	15=	3
18	Hori	73%	70%	35%	-	17=	3
19=	Coconut	72%	73%	39%	-	14	-1
19=	Fuck	72%	70%	39%	43%	17=	2
21=	Spastic	71%	68%	-	-	21=	3
21=	Tranny	71%	70%	-	-	17=	1
21=	Cock	71%	70%	36%	38%	17=	1
24	Pussy	70%	67%	33%	-	23	3
25	Nappy-head	69%	68%	-	-	21=	1
26	Bitch	65%	64%	25%	20%	25	1
27	Arsehole	63%	65%	29%	26%	24	-2
28	*Cripple	62%	-	-	-	-	-
29	*Gypped	57%	-	-	-	-	-
30	Mental	41%	47%	-	-	30	-6 ↓
31	*Gypsy	36%	-	-	-	-	-

↑↓ Significantly more/less unacceptable than 2021

Source: Q8/Q10: How acceptable to you is <word> in this scenario?
Base: All respondents who have heard this word or phrase (n=884-1,493)

TV drama/comedy between 7pm and 8:30pm

Scenario: In a television drama, soap or comedy screened between 7pm and 8.30pm

As we have seen previously, there is lower tolerance for content aired earlier than later in the evening.

The unacceptability of just three words has increased significantly in this context, with small increases for *nigger*, *cunt* and *curry muncher*. The softening of *mental* is consistent with all other broadcasting contexts.

% totally or fairly unacceptable

Rank	Word or phrase	2025 (n=1,501)	2021 (n=1,505)	2018 (n=1,514)	2013 (n=1,500)	Rank 2021	% point change
1	Nigger	84%	80%	77%	78%	1	4 ↑
2=	*Nigga	80%	-	-	-	-	-
2=	Cunt	80%	75%	78%	86%	2	5 ↑
4	Curry muncher	76%	72%	-	-	3=	4 ↑
5=	Chink	74%	72%	67%	-	3=	2
5=	Faggot	74%	72%	68%	64%	3=	2
7	Cocksucker	72%	70%	70%	78%	7	2
8=	Gook	71%	71%	60%	-	6	0
8=	*Wog	71%	-	-	-	-	-
10	Mother fucker	70%	69%	72%	81%	8	1
11	Jesus Fucking Christ	68%	66%	72%	82%	10=	2
12=	Retard	67%	66%	61%	56%	10=	1
12=	Homo	67%	68%	62%	-	9	-1
14	Coconut	65%	65%	54%	-	12=	0
15=	Hori	64%	62%	52%	-	14=	2
15=	Dyke	64%	62%	-	-	14=	2
15=	Slut	64%	62%	62%	62%	14=	2
15=	Whore	64%	61%	-	-	18=	3
15=	Get fucked	64%	65%	70%	77%	12=	-1
20	Spastic	63%	60%	-	-	21	3
21=	Nappy-head	62%	61%	-	-	18=	1
21=	Tranny	62%	62%	-	-	14=	0
23=	Pussy	58%	55%	53%	-	14=	3
23=	Cock	58%	59%	57%	60%	22	-1
23=	Fuck	58%	61%	64%	73%	18=	-3
26	*Cripple	54%	-	-	-	-	-
27	*Gypped	53%	-	-	-	-	-
28	Bitch	48%	47%	45%	38%	29	1
29	Arsehole	47%	50%	46%	50%	28	-3
30	Mental	34%	40%	-	-	30	-6 ↓
31	*Gypsy	33%	-	-	-	-	-

↑↓ Significantly more/less unacceptable than 2021

Source: Q8/Q10: How acceptable to you is <word> in this scenario?
Base: All respondents who have heard this word or phrase (n=884-1,493)

TV drama after 8:30pm

Scenario: In a television drama screened after 8.30pm

Public tolerance for potentially offensive language is greatest for content aired after 8.30pm.

However, like most of the broadcasting contexts assessed, the public are less tolerant of potentially offensive language in TV dramas after 8.30pm since 2021. The unacceptability of 12 words has significantly increased since 2025. Increases are largest for *Jesus Fucking Christ* (up six percentage points) and *cunt*, *faggot*, *cocksucker*, *whore*, and *pussy* (each up five points).

% totally or fairly unacceptable

Rank	Word or phrase	2025 (n=1,501)	2021 (n=1,505)	2018 (n=1,514)	2013 (n=1,500)	Rank 2021	% point change
1	Nigger	78%	74%	72%	71%	1	4 ↑
2	*Nigga	76%	-	-	-	-	-
3	Cunt	72%	67%	72%	79%	2=	5 ↑
4=	Curry muncher	70%	67%	-	-	2=	3 ↑
4=	Chink	70%	66%	62%	-	4	4 ↑
6=	Faggot	68%	63%	59%	56%	6	5 ↑
6=	Gook	68%	64%	54%	-	5	4
8	*Wog	66%	-	-	-	-	-
9	Cocksucker	65%	60%	62%	66%	7	5 ↑
10	Retard	62%	58%	55%	50%	10	4 ↑
11	Jesus Fucking Christ	61%	55%	65%	71%	14=	6 ↑
12=	Mother fucker	60%	57%	62%	69%	11	3
12=	Homo	60%	59%	55%	-	8=	1
12=	Coconut	60%	59%	49%	-	8=	1
15=	Hori	59%	56%	48%	-	12=	3
15=	Spastic	59%	55%	-	-	14=	4 ↑
17	Nappy-head	58%	56%	-	-	12=	2
18=	Dyke	57%	53%	-	-	17=	4 ↑
18=	Tranny	57%	55%	-	-	14=	2
20=	Slut	56%	52%	51%	50%	19	4
20=	Whore	56%	51%	-	-	20=	5 ↑
22	Get fucked	53%	51%	58%	61%	20=	2
23=	Pussy	51%	46%	46%	-	26=	5 ↑
23=	*Cripple	51%	-	-	-	-	-
25	*Gypped	50%	-	-	-	-	-
26	Cock	49%	48%	47%	48%	25	1
27	Fuck	46%	46%	50%	54%	26=	0
28	Bitch	38%	36%	35%	27%	29	2
29	Arsehole	37%	38%	35%	33%	28	-1
30	*Gypsy	31%	-	-	-	-	-
31	Mental	28%	34%	-	-	30	-6 ↓

↑↓ Significantly more/less unacceptable than 2021

Source: Q8/Q10: How acceptable to you is <word> in this scenario?
Base: All respondents who have heard this word or phrase (n=884-1,493)

Stand-up comedy after 8:30pm

Scenario: Comedians in stand-up comedy programmes played on radio or shown on TV after 8.30pm

Public acceptability of potentially offensive language is greatest for stand-up comedy aired on TV after 8.30pm. Nevertheless, over two thirds (22 of the 31 words) are still viewed as unacceptable by more than 50% in this context.

The unacceptability of four words has increased significantly since 2021. Two of these increases *Jesus Fucking Christ* and *cunt*) are reversals of what we observed in 2021.

% totally or fairly unacceptable

Rank	Word or phrase	2025 (n=1,501)	2021 (n=1,505)	2018 (n=1,514)	2013 (n=1,500)	Rank 2021	% point change
1	Nigger	78%	74%	72%	71%	1	4 ↑
2	*Nigga	75%	-	-	-	-	-
3	Cunt	72%	66%	70%	78%	3=	6 ↑
4=	Curry muncher	69%	67%	-	-	2	2
4=	Chink	69%	66%	61%	-	3=	3
6	Faggot	66%	64%	60%	55%	5=	2
7=	*Wog	65%	-	-	-	-	-
7=	Gook	65%	64%	53%	-	5=	1
9	Cocksucker	63%	60%	61%	64%	7	3
10	Retard	61%	58%	54%	50%	9=	3
11	Jesus Fucking Christ	60%	55%	63%	70%	12=	5 ↑
12	Homo	59%	59%	54%	-	8	0
13	Mother fucker	58%	56%	59%	67%	11	2
14=	Spastic	57%	55%	-	-	12=	2
14=	Coconut	57%	58%	48%	-	9=	-1
16=	Dyke	56%	53%	-	-	18	3
16=	Hori	56%	54%	45%	-	15=	2
18=	Slut	55%	52%	51%	49%	19=	3
18=	Whore	55%	52%	-	-	19=	3
18=	Tranny	55%	54%	-	-	15=	1
18=	Nappy-head	55%	55%	-	-	12=	0
22	Get fucked	52%	52%	55%	59%	19=	0
23	*Cripple	50%	-	-	-	-	-
24	Pussy	49%	44%	44%	-	27	5 ↑
25=	Cock	48%	46%	45%	46%	25	2
25=	*Gypped	48%	-	-	-	-	-
27	Fuck	44%	45%	48%	52%	26	-1
28	Bitch	38%	37%	35%	28%	29	1
29	Arsehole	36%	38%	34%	34%	28	-2
30	*Gypsy	30%	-	-	-	-	-
31	Mental	29%	35%	-	-	30	-6 ↓

↑ ↓ Significantly more/less unacceptable than 2021

Source: Q8/Q10: How acceptable to you is <word> in this scenario?
Base: All respondents who have heard this word or phrase (n=884-1,493)

Reality TV

Scenario: In a reality television programme

Public tolerance towards potentially offensive language in a reality television programme has softened considerably over the last four years. Unacceptability ratings for nearly three quarters of the words assessed in both 2021 and 2025 have significantly declined in the last four years. The largest decreases include more common expletives (*mental*, *fuck*, *arsehole*, *bitch*, and *get fucked*).

This shift in tolerance may reflect the greater choice (and exposure) that NZ viewers now have of reality TV formats (via streaming), including international ones. Some of the newer or re-imagined formats are focused on adult relationships, conflict, or explicit behaviour.

% totally or fairly unacceptable

Rank	Word or phrase	2025 (n=1,501)	2021 (n=1,505)	2018 (n=1,514)	2013 (n=1,500)	Rank 2021	% point change
1	Nigger	83%	82%	79%	76%	1	1
2	*Nigga	81%	-	-	-	-	-
3	Cunt	76%	78%	77%	82%	2	-2
4	Curry muncher	75%	76%	-	-	4=	-1
5=	Chink	73%	76%	68%	-	4=	-3
5=	Faggot	73%	77%	69%	59%	3	-4 ↓
7	*Wog	71%	-	-	-	-	-
8	Gook	70%	75%	62%	-	6=	-5 ↓
9	Cocksucker	69%	75%	71%	70%	6=	-6 ↓
10=	Retard	66%	71%	63%	53%	10	-5 ↓
10=	Mother fucker	66%	72%	71%	74%	9	-6 ↓
12	Homo	65%	74%	64%	-	8	-9 ↓
13	Jesus Fucking Christ	64%	70%	73%	75%	11=	-6 ↓
14=	Coconut	63%	70%	55%	-	11=	-7 ↓
14=	Hori	63%	67%	54%	-	18	-4 ↓
16	Spastic	62%	64%	-	-	19=	-2
17=	Dyke	61%	69%	-	-	15=	-8 ↓
17=	Slut	61%	70%	63%	57%	11=	-9 ↓
17=	Whore	61%	70%	-	-	11=	-9 ↓
20=	Tranny)	60%	68%	-	-	17	-8 ↓
20=	Nappy-head	60%	64%	-	-	19=	-4
22	Get fucked	59%	69%	68%	66%	15=	-10 ↓
23=	*Cripple	55%	-	-	-	-	-
23=	Pussy	55%	60%	54%	-	23	-5 ↓
25	Cock	53%	62%	55%	51%	22	-9 ↓
26	*Gypped	52%	-	-	-	-	-
27	Fuck	50%	63%	61%	59%	21	-13 ↓
28	Bitch	42%	53%	45%	32%	27=	-11 ↓
29	Arsehole	40%	52%	44%	38%	29	-12 ↓
30	*Gypsy	32%	-	-	-	-	-
31	Mental	31%	45%	-	-	30	-14 ↓

↑↓ Significantly more/less unacceptable than 2021

Source: Q8/Q10: How acceptable to you is <word> in this scenario?
Base: All respondents who have heard this word or phrase (n=884-1,493)

Music video (TV)

Scenario: In a hip hop, rap or other music video played on television

Music videos are one of the more tolerated broadcasting contexts for potentially offensive language.

There has been moderate hardening of attitudes towards five words since 2021 (mainly among the more potentially offensive words, plus *hori*).

Like in all other scenarios, the use of mental is more acceptable than in 2021.

% totally or fairly unacceptable

Rank	Word or phrase	2025 (n=1,501)	2021 (n=1,505)	2018 (n=1,514)	2013 (n=1,500)	Rank 2021	% point change
1	Nigger	80%	77%	77%	76%	1	3 ↑
2	*Nigga	77%	-	-	-	-	-
3	Cunt	76%	72%	77%	84%	2	4 ↑
4	Curry muncher	75%	71%	-	-	3	4 ↑
5=	Chink	72%	69%	67%	-	4=	3
5=	Faggot	72%	69%	67%	65%	4=	3
7=	Gook	69%	68%	60%	-	6	1
7=	Cocksucker	69%	65%	69%	75%	7	4 ↑
9	*Wog	68%	-	-	-	-	-
10=	Retard	66%	64%	61%	58%	8=	2
10=	Jesus Fucking Christ	66%	63%	71%	79%	10=	3
12	Mother fucker	65%	63%	68%	78%	10=	2
13	Homo	64%	64%	61%	-	8=	0
14	Hori	63%	59%	52%	-	18=	4 ↑
15=	Coconut	62%	61%	53%	-	12=	1
15=	Spastic	62%	61%	-	-	12=	1
17=	Dyke	61%	60%	-	-	15=	1
17=	Slut	61%	61%	60%	61%	12=	0
17=	Whore	61%	60%	-	-	15=	1
20=	Tranny	60%	60%	-	-	15=	0
20=	Nappy-head	60%	59%	-	-	18=	1
20=	Get fucked	60%	58%	66%	73%	20	2
23	*Cripple	55%	-	-	-	-	-
24=	Pussy	54%	51%	52%	-	27	3
24=	Cock	54%	54%	55%	58%	22=	0
26	Fuck	52%	54%	59%	67%	22=	-2
27	*Gypped	51%	-	-	-	-	-
28	Bitch	44%	42%	43%	38%	29	2
29	Arsehole	43%	45%	46%	49%	28	-2
30=	*Gypsy	32%	-	-	-	-	-
30=	Mental	32%	39%	-	-	30	-7 ↓

↑↓ Significantly more/less unacceptable than 2021

Source: Q8/Q10: How acceptable to you is <word> in this scenario?
Base: All respondents who have heard this word or phrase (n=884-1,493)

Radio talkback caller

Scenario: when used by a caller to a talkback radio station

The public is more accepting of callers using potentially offensive language on a radio talkback than hosts.

Perceptions are largely consistent with 2021, with four increases in unacceptability ratings and two decreases. Since 2021, both *arsehole* and *mental* are viewed more tolerably.

% totally or fairly unacceptable

Rank	Word or phrase	2025 (n=1,501)	2021 (n=1,505)	2018 (n=1,514)	2013 (n=1,500)	Rank 2021	% point change
1	Nigger	87%	82%	81%	79%	1	5 ↑
2	*Nigga	84%	-	-	-	-	-
3	Cunt	83%	78%	80%	86%	2	5 ↑
4	Curry muncher	80%	77%	-	-	3=	3
5	Faggot	78%	77%	72%	66%	3=	1
6=	Chink	77%	75%	69%	-	6=	2
6=	Cocksucker	77%	76%	73%	78%	5	1
8	Mother fucker	76%	72%	74%	81%	8=	4 ↑
9	*Wog	75%	-	-	-	-	-
10=	Gook	73%	75%	64%	-	6=	-2
10=	Jesus Fucking Christ	73%	71%	74%	81%	11=	2
10=	Slut	73%	72%	67%	64%	8=	1
13	Get fucked	72%	69%	72%	77%	15=	3 ↑
14=	Retard	71%	71%	64%	59%	11=	0
14=	Whore	71%	70%	-	-	13=	1
16	Homo	70%	72%	66%	-	8=	-2
17	Dyke	69%	69%	-	-	15=	0
18	Coconut	68%	70%	57%	-	13=	-2
19=	Hori	67%	65%	55%	-	18=	2
19=	Tranny	67%	67%	-	-	17	0
19=	Spastic	67%	64%	-	-	20=	3
22	Nappy-head	64%	65%	-	-	18=	-1
23	Fuck	63%	64%	65%	72%	20=	-1
24	Pussy	62%	61%	56%	-	23	1
25	Cock	61%	63%	60%	59%	22	-2
26	*Cripple	59%	-	-	-	-	-
27	*Gypped	55%	-	-	-	-	-
28	Bitch	53%	55%	51%	41%	25=	-2
29	Arsehole	48%	54%	49%	51%	28	-6 ↓
30	Mental	38%	45%	-	-	30	-7 ↓
31	*Gypsy	35%	-	-	-	-	-

↑↓ Significantly more/less unacceptable than 2021

Source: Q8/Q10: How acceptable to you is <word> in this scenario?
Base: All respondents who have heard this word or phrase (n=884-1,493)

Radio talkback host

Scenario: When used by a radio host on a talkback radio station

The public shows relatively low levels of tolerance towards radio talkback hosts using potentially offensive language.

With two exceptions (*mental* and *gypsy*) over half of people consider each of the words to be inappropriate to use in this context.

This intolerance has heightened, with 12 significant increases in unacceptability ratings since 2021 (including all of the *fuck* variants assessed).

% totally or fairly unacceptable

Rank	Word or phrase	2025 (n=1,501)	2021 (n=1,505)	2018 (n=1,514)	2013 (n=1,500)	Rank 2021	% point change
1	Nigger	89%	84%	82%	81%	1	5 ↑
2	*Nigga	87%	-	-	-	-	-
3	Cunt	86%	80%	82%	87%	3	6 ↑
4	Curry muncher	84%	79%	-	-	4	5 ↑
5	Faggot	83%	81%	75%	71%	2	2
6=	Chink	81%	78%	72%	-	5=	3
6=	Cocksucker	81%	78%	75%	81%	5=	3 ↑
6=	Mother fucker	81%	75%	77%	84%	9	6 ↑
9=	*Wog	79%	-	-	-	-	-
9=	Get fucked	79%	73%	74%	81%	14=	6 ↑
11=	Gook	78%	77%	67%	-	7=	1
11=	Jesus Fucking Christ	78%	73%	77%	84%	14=	5 ↑
11=	Slut	78%	74%	70%	68%	10=	4 ↑
14=	Retard	77%	74%	69%	62%	10=	3
14=	Whore	77%	74%	-	-	10=	3
16=	Homo	76%	77%	70%	-	7=	-1
16=	Dyke	76%	73%	-	-	14=	3
18	Hori	74%	69%	60%	-	18	5 ↑
19=	Coconut	73%	74%	61%	-	10=	-1
19=	Tranny	73%	71%	-	-	17	2
21=	Spastic	72%	68%	-	-	19=	4 ↑
21=	Fuck	72%	68%	70%	76%	19=	4 ↑
23	Pussy	71%	65%	61%	-	23	6 ↑
24=	Nappy-head	69%	68%	-	-	19=	1
24=	Cock	69%	68%	65%	65%	19=	1
26	*Cripple	65%	-	-	-	-	-
27	Bitch	63%	62%	57%	49%	24	1
28	*Gypped	59%	-	-	-	-	-
29	Arsehole	58%	60%	56%	60%	25	-2
30	Mental	45%	50%	-	-	30	-5 ↓
31	*Gypsy	38%	-	-	-	-	-

↑↓ Significantly more/less unacceptable than 2021

Source: Q8/Q10: How acceptable to you is <word> in this scenario?
Base: All respondents who have heard this word or phrase (n=884-1,493)

Breakfast radio host

Scenario: When used by a radio host in a breakfast programme

Of all the broadcasting contexts assessed, the public least tolerates breakfast radio hosts using potentially offensive language.

Sixty percent or more of people find nearly all the words assessed inappropriate in this setting. This includes slang (like *slut* and *get fucked*) that is much more tolerable in scenarios depicting scripted content.

Attitudes toward breakfast and talkback hosts are similar, with unacceptability ratings rising significantly for 12 words.

% totally or fairly unacceptable

Rank	Word or phrase	2025 (n=1,501)	2021 (n=1,505)	2018 (n=1,514)	2013 (n=1,500)	Rank 2021	% point change
1	Nigger	89%	84%	83%	82%	1	5 ↑
2=	*Nigga	87%	-	-	-	-	-
2=	Cunt	87%	81%	82%	88%	2=	6 ↑
4	Curry muncher	85%	79%	-	-	6	6 ↑
5	Faggot	84%	81%	76%	73%	2=	3 ↑
6=	Chink	82%	80%	73%	-	3=	2
6=	Cocksucker	82%	80%	77%	82%	3=	2
6=	Mother fucker	82%	76%	77%	85%	9=	6 ↑
9=	*Wog	80%	-	-	-	-	-
9=	Jesus Fucking Christ	80%	76%	77%	85%	9=	4
9=	Slut	80%	75%	72%	70%	11=	5 ↑
9=	Get fucked	80%	74%	75%	81%	14=	6 ↑
13=	Gook	79%	78%	67%	-	7	1
13=	Whore	79%	75%	-	-	11=	4 ↑
15=	Retard	78%	75%	69%	63%	11=	3
15=	Homo	78%	77%	71%	-	8	1
15=	Dyke	78%	74%	-	-	14=	4 ↑
18=	Coconut	75%	74%	61%	-	14=	1
18=	Hori	75%	70%	60%	-	18=	5 ↑
18=	Tranny	75%	72%	-	-	17	3
21	Fuck	74%	70%	71%	78%	18=	4 ↑
22=	Spastic	73%	70%	-	-	18=	3
22=	Pussy	73%	68%	63%	-	22=	5 ↑
24	Cock	72%	70%	67%	68%	18=	2
25	Nappy-head	70%	68%	-	-	22=	2
26	Bitch	67%	65%	59%	51%	24	2
27	*Cripple	65%	-	-	-	-	-
28	Arsehole	64%	64%	59%	63%	25	0
29	*Gypped	60%	-	-	-	-	-
30	Mental	46%	50%	-	-	30	-4 ↓
31	*Gypsy	39%	-	-	-	-	-

↑↓ Significantly more/less unacceptable than 2021

Source: Q8/Q10: How acceptable to you is <word> in this scenario?
Base: All respondents who have heard this word or phrase (n=884-1,493)

Song on radio

Scenario: When used in a hip hop, rap or other song played on radio

Radio songs and TV music videos are now similarly judged on all potentially offensive words assessed, with public attitudes softening for the use of *arsehole* in radio songs since 2021.

However, the use of six words in radio songs – mostly among the potentially more offensive (except for *pussy*) – have seen notable increases in unacceptability.

% totally or fairly unacceptable

Rank	Word or phrase	2025 (n=1,501)	2021 (n=1,505)	2018 (n=1,514)	2013 (n=1,500)	Rank 2021	% point change
1	Nigger	80%	78%	77%	77%	1	2
2=	*Nigga	77%	-	-	-	-	-
2=	Cunt	77%	73%	77%	85%	2	4 ↑
4	Curry muncher	75%	71%	-	-	3	4 ↑
5	Faggot	73%	69%	68%	67%	5=	4 ↑
6	Chink	72%	70%	67%	-	4	2
7=	Gook	70%	69%	61%	-	5=	1
7=	Cocksucker	70%	67%	69%	76%	7	3 ↑
7=	*Wog	70%	-	-	-	-	-
10	Retard	68%	65%	61%	59%	8=	3
11	Jesus Fucking Christ	67%	64%	72%	80%	10	3
12	Mother fucker	66%	63%	69%	78%	11	3 ↑
13	Homo	65%	65%	63%	-	8=	0
14=	Coconut	63%	61%	54%	-	12=	2
14=	Spastic	63%	60%	-	-	15=	3
14=	Dyke	63%	61%	-	-	12=	2
14=	Slut	63%	61%	62%	61%	12=	2
14=	Whore	63%	60%	-	-	15=	3
19=	Hori	62%	60%	53%	-	15=	2
19=	Tranny	62%	60%	-	-	15=	2
19=	Get fucked	62%	59%	67%	74%	19=	3
22	Nappy-head	61%	59%	-	-	19=	2
23=	*Cripple	56%	-	-	-	-	-
23=	Pussy	56%	52%	53%	-	23=	4 ↑
25	Cock	55%	55%	56%	59%	21	0
26	Fuck	54%	54%	60%	68%	22	0
27	*Gypped	52%	-	-	-	-	-
28	Bitch	46%	45%	45%	40%	29	1
29	Arsehole	45%	49%	48%	51%	28	-4 ↓
30	*Gypsy	33%	-	-	-	-	-
31	Mental	33%	39%	-	-	30	-6 ↓

↑↓ Significantly more/less unacceptable than 2021

Source: Q8/Q10: How acceptable to you is <word> in this scenario?
Base: All respondents who have heard this word or phrase (n=884-1,493)

Sports commentary

Scenario: When used during a sports commentary programme on TV or radio

There is generally low tolerance towards the use of potentially offensive language in sports commentary.

As for other hosted radio and TV shows, there is particular intolerance towards racist and misogynistic words, as well as the use of variants of *fuck* in sports commentary.

Attitudes have hardened since 2021 for 12 of the words, with the biggest increases for *mother fucker* and the sexist words *cunt* and *pussy*.

% totally or fairly unacceptable

Rank	Word or phrase	2025 (n=1,501)	2021 (n=1,505)	2018 (n=1,514)	2013 (n=1,500)	Rank 2021	% point change
1	Nigger	89%	84%	82%	61%	1	5 ↑
2	*Nigga	87%	-	-	-	-	-
3	Cunt	86%	79%	82%	72%	3=	7 ↑
4	Curry muncher	84%	79%	-	-	3=	5 ↑
5	Faggot	83%	80%	76%	46%	2	3 ↑
6=	Chink	81%	78%	72%	-	5=	3
6=	Cocksucker	81%	78%	76%	58%	5=	3 ↑
6=	Mother fucker	81%	74%	77%	60%	11=	7 ↑
9=	*Wog	79%	-	-	-	-	-
9=	Slut	79%	76%	71%	38%	9	3
11=	Jesus Fucking Christ	78%	73%	76%	63%	15	5 ↑
11=	Gook	78%	77%	68%	-	7=	1
11=	Whore	78%	74%	-	-	11=	4 ↑
11=	Homo	78%	77%	71%	-	7=	1
11=	Dyke	78%	74%	-	-	11=	4 ↑
16=	Get fucked	77%	72%	74%	50%	16=	5 ↑
16=	Retard	77%	75%	69%	39%	10	2
18	Tranny	75%	72%	-	-	16=	3
19=	Coconut	74%	74%	61%	-	11=	0
19=	Hori	74%	70%	61%	-	18	4 ↑
21=	Spastic	72%	69%	-	-	19=	3
21=	Pussy	72%	66%	62%	-	23	6 ↑
23=	Fuck	70%	69%	70%	43%	19=	1
23=	Cock	70%	67%	65%	38%	22	3
23=	Nappy-head	70%	68%	-	-	21	2
26	*Cripple	66%	-	-	-	-	-
27	Bitch	65%	63%	58%	20%	24	2
28	Arsehole	60%	62%	58%	26%	25	-2
29	*Gypped	59%	-	-	-	-	-
30	Mental	45%	49%	-	-	30	-4 ↓
31	*Gypsy)	40%	-	-	-	-	-

↑ ↓ Significantly more/less unacceptable than 2021

Source: Q8/Q10: How acceptable to you is <word> in this scenario?
Base: All respondents who have heard this word or phrase (n=884-1,493)

Acceptability of language on pay TV



Most (six in ten) people see no difference in how acceptable potentially offensive language is on pay TV versus free-to-air.

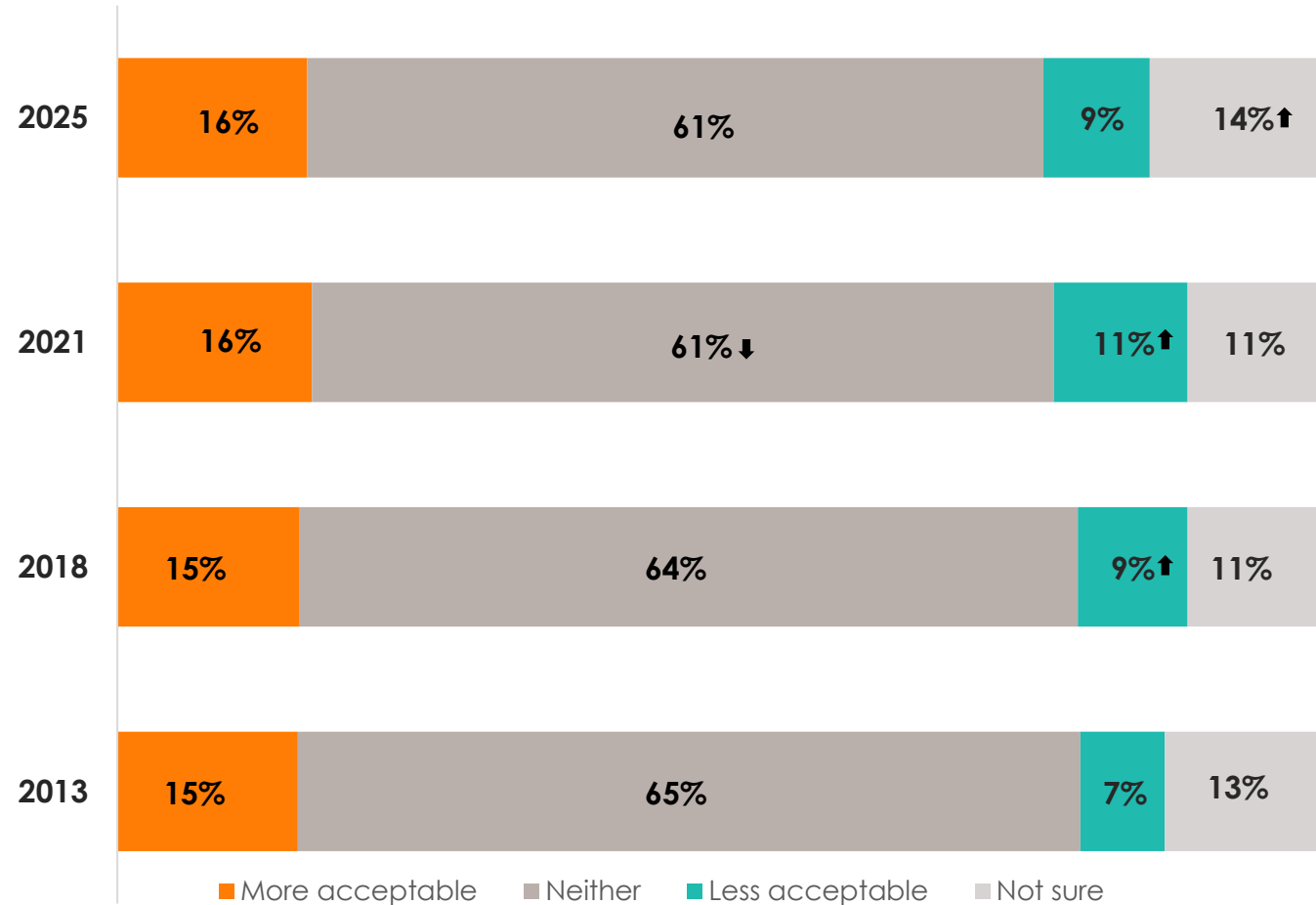
Respondents were asked if any of their survey answers would have been different if the words were used on television shows that had been on pay TV (e.g. SKY).

Around one in six (16%) say the language would be more acceptable on pay TV, whereas just 9% say it would be less acceptable.

There are no significant differences by demographic subgroup.

Note, additional analysis shows opinion on this does not vary significantly between households with pay TV and households without pay TV.

Impact of pay TV on perceived acceptability of potentially offensive language



↑↓ Significant increase/decrease since previous wave

Source: Q11: Would any of your answers in this survey have been different if the words were used on television shows that had been on pay TV (e.g. SKY)? Would you say the words would be...?

Base: All respondents (2025, n=1,501); (2021, n=1,505); (2018, n=1,514); (2013, n=1,500)

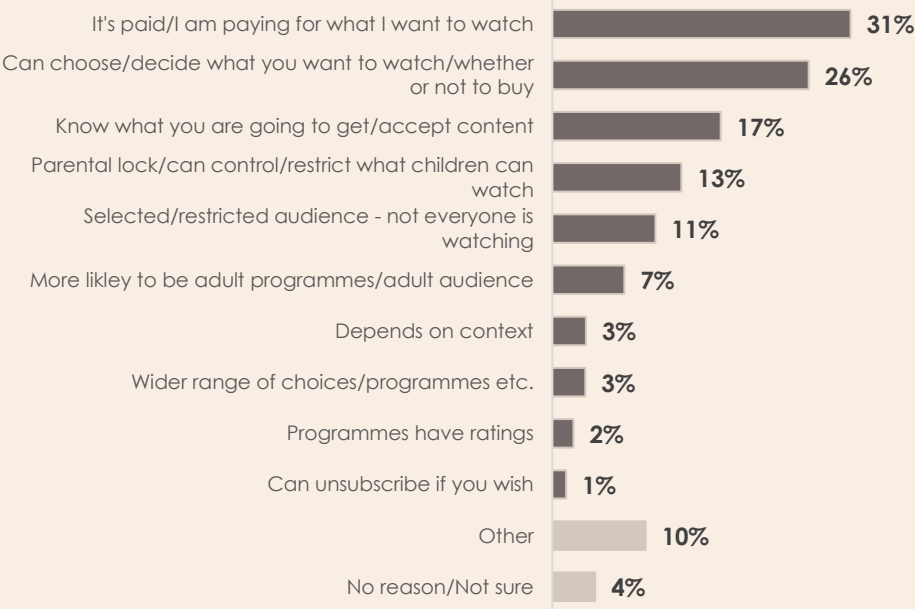
Factors influencing the acceptability of potentially offensive language on pay TV

We asked the 16% of people who feel potentially offensive language is more acceptable on pay TV why that is. Likewise, we asked the 9% of people who feel it is less acceptable on pay TV why that is.

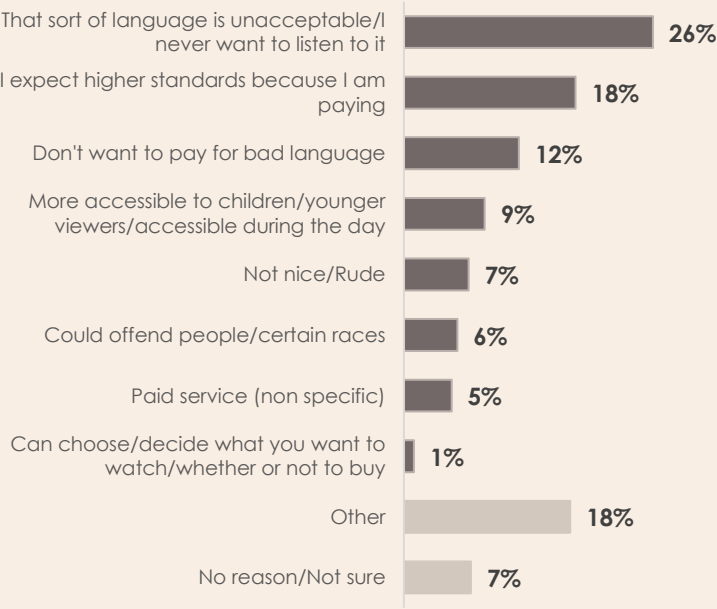
The belief that potentially offensive language is **more** acceptable on pay TV stems from a sense that paying for pay TV empowers subscribers to tailor their viewing experience according to their own preferences and standards – they choose whether or not to buy pay TV and what to watch. This sense of control is further supported by features such as parental locks and the ability to restrict children's viewing.

The perspective that potentially offensive language is **less** acceptable on pay TV is influenced by the view that certain language is never appropriate and that paying for television comes with an expectation of higher standards. Additionally, some feel that pay TV poses a greater risk of exposing children to such language, partly due to increased accessibility during daytime hours.

Why it would be more acceptable



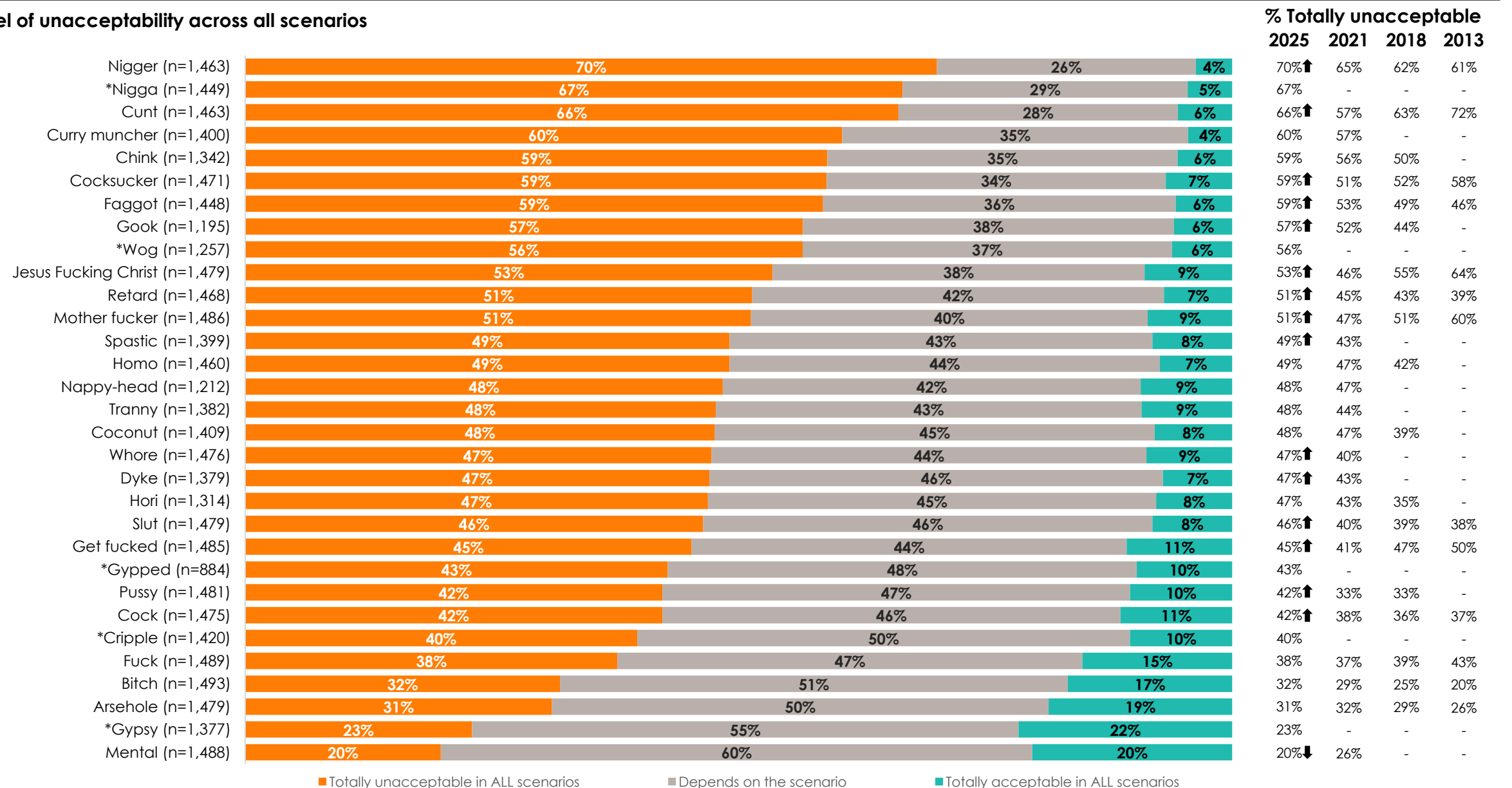
Why it would be less acceptable



04

Appendices

Level of unacceptability across all scenarios



*New word in 2025

↑↓ Significantly more/less totally unacceptable than 2021

2025 and 2021 rankings of the 31 words assessed.

This table includes the 2021 ranking. All other data in the table is presented in the body of the reports. Care should be taken in comparing the 2025 and 2021 rankings due to the number of words removed and added (see page 7 for details).

2025 RANK	Word or phrase	Totally unacceptable in <u>all</u> scenarios 2025 (n=1,501)	Totally unacceptable in <u>all</u> scenarios 2021 (n=1,505)	2021 Rank	% point change + / -
1	Nigger (n=1,463)	70%	65%	1	5 ↑
2	*Nigga (n=1,449)	67%	-	-	-
3	Cunt (n=1,463)	66%	57%	2=	9 ↑
4	Curry muncher (n=1,400)	60%	57%	2=	3
5=	Chink (n=1,342)	59%	56%	4	4
5=	Cocksucker (n=1,471)	59%	51%	7	8 ↑
5=	Faggot (n=1,448)	59%	53%	5	6 ↑
8	Gook (n=1,195)	57%	52%	6	5 ↑
9	*Wog (n=1,257)	56%	-	-	-
10	Jesus Fucking Christ (n=1,479)	53%	46%	12	7 ↑
11=	Retard (n=1,468)	51%	45%	13	6 ↑
11=	Mother fucker (n=1,486)	51%	47%	8=	4 ↑
13=	Spastic (n=1,399)	49%	43%	15=	6 ↑
13=	Homo (n=1,460)	49%	47%	8=	2
15=	Nappy-head (n=1,212)	48%	47%	8=	1
15=	Tranny (n=1,382)	48%	44%	14	4
15=	Coconut (n=1,409)	48%	47%	8=	1
18=	Whore (n=1,476)	47%	40%	20=	7 ↑
18=	Dyke (n=1,379)	47%	43%	15=	4 ↑
18=	Hori (n=1,314)	47%	43%	15=	4
21	Slut (n=1,479)	46%	40%	20=	6 ↑
22	Get fucked (n=1,485)	45%	41%	19	4 ↑
23	*Gypped (n=884)	43%	-	-	-
24=	Pussy (n=1,481)	42%	33%	27	9 ↑
24=	Cock (n=1,475)	42%	38%	25	4 ↑
26	*Cripple (n=1,420)	40%	-	-	-
27	Fuck (n=1,489)	38%	37%	26	1
28	Bitch (n=1,493)	32%	29%	29	3
29	Arsehole (n=1,479)	31%	32%	28	-1
30	*Gypsy (n=1,377)	23%	-	-	-
31	Mental (n=1,488)	20%	26%	30	-6 ↓

Source: Q8: Keeping in mind the programmes and situations listed on the previous screen, how acceptable are each of the following words in these scenarios?
 Base: All respondents who have heard this word or phrase (n=884-1,493)

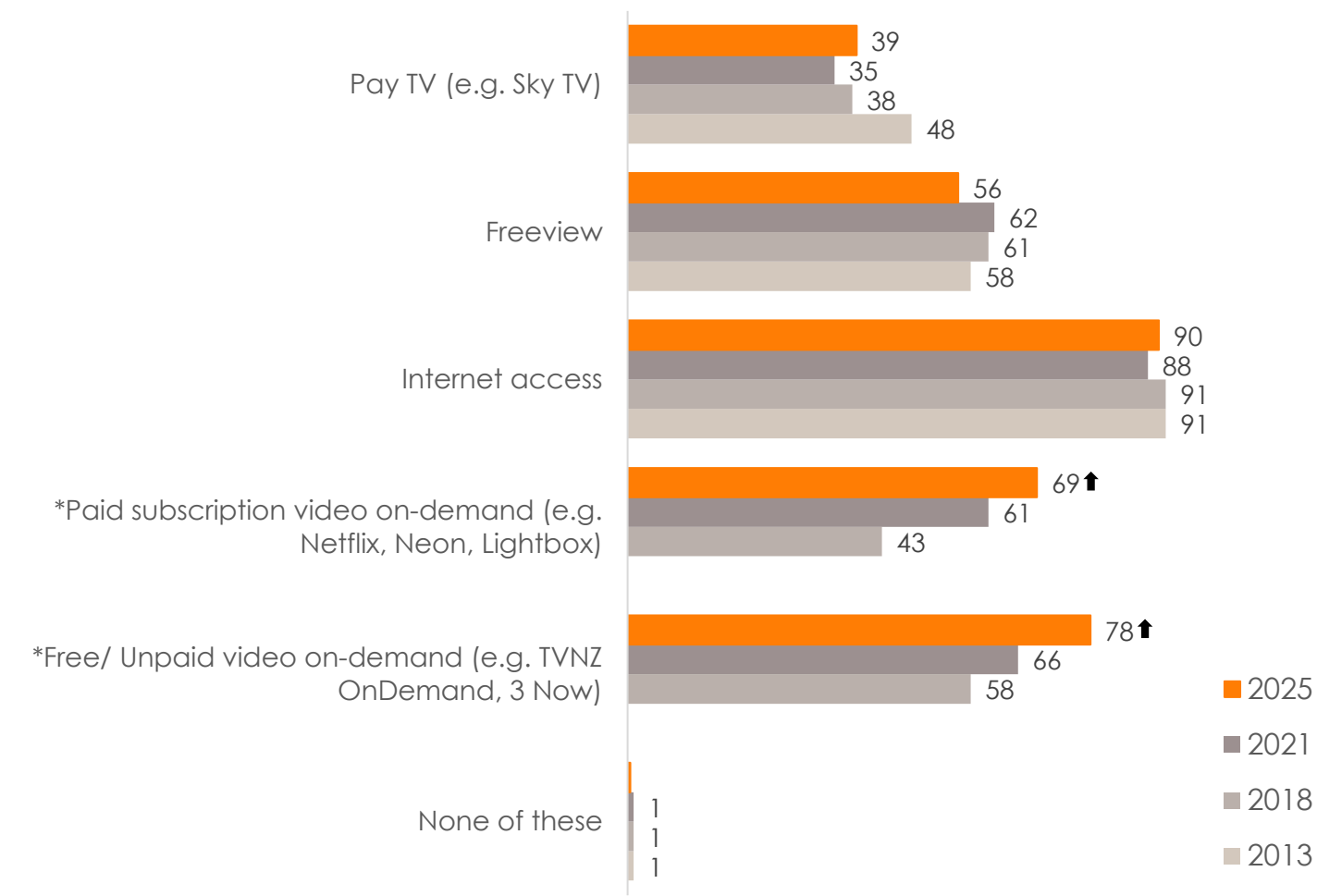
↑↓ Significantly more/less totally unacceptable than 2021

Media access: Access to on-demand content continues to climb.

More households are accessing on-demand content, both paid (up 8 points to 69%) and unpaid (up 12 points to 78%).

The rise in access to on-demand content is no longer at the expense of pay TV.

Media access in household %



Source: Q3: Do you have access to any of the following in your household?
Base: All respondents (2025, n=1,501); (2021, n=1,505); (2018, n=1,514); (2013, n=1,500)
Note: * Not asked in 2013

↑↓ Significantly more/less unacceptable than 2021

TV programmes: factual viewing is declining in favour of entertainment and sport.

Movies (68%) and news (65%) remain the two programme types that people most commonly regularly view.

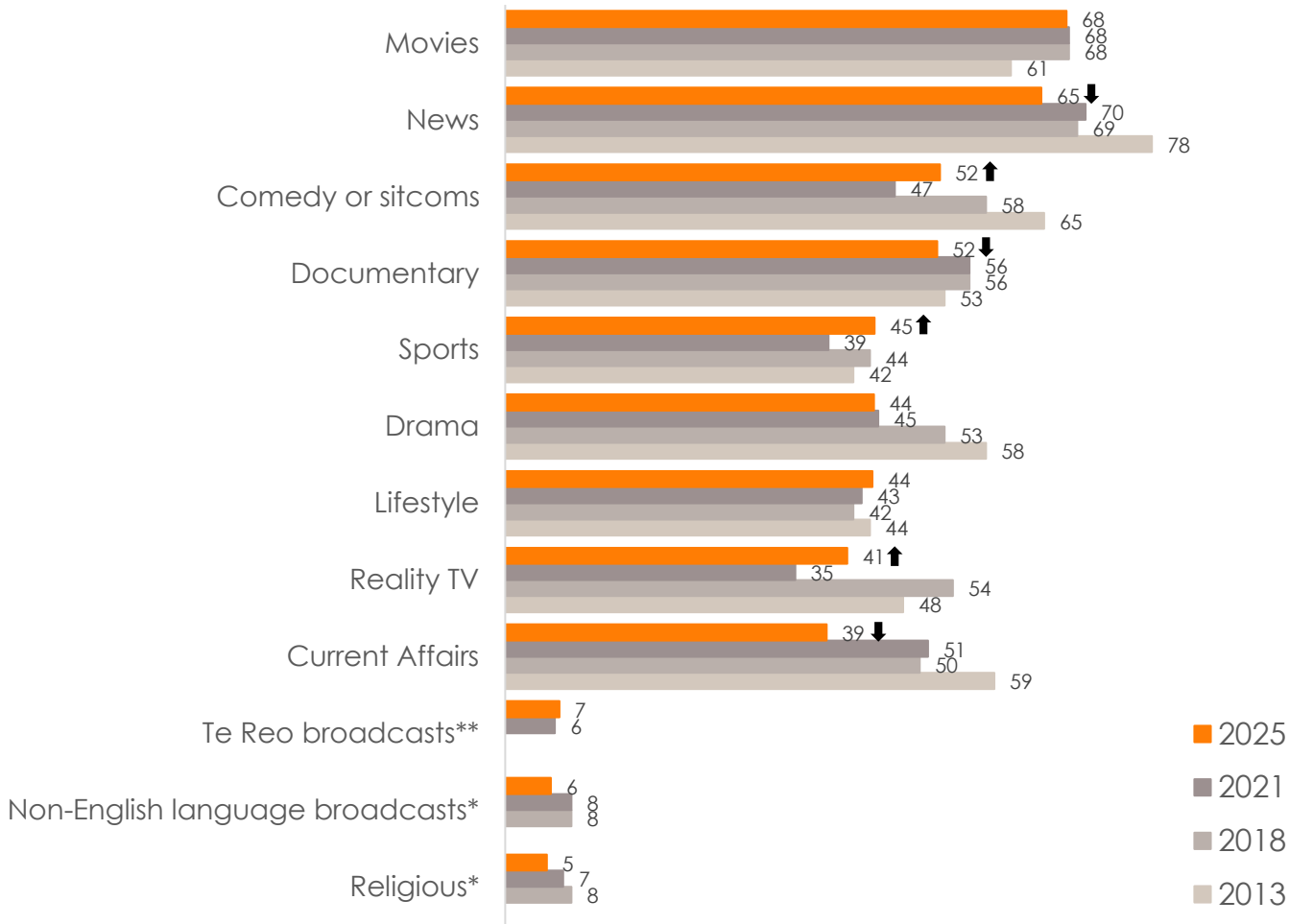
However, regular viewing of factual programming (news, current affairs, and documentary) has declined over the last four years, at the expense of more regular viewing of entertainment content (comedy/sitcoms and reality TV) and sport.

Amount of time people spend watching free-to-air or pay television on average each week:

- None (6%)
- Up to 14 hours (51%)
- 15-23 hours (26%)
- More than 23 hours (14%)
- Don't know (4%)

Source: Q4

Types of TV programmes regularly watched
%



Source: Q1: What kinds of TV programmes do you watch regularly?

Base: All respondents (2025, n=1,501); (2021, n=1,505); (2018, n=1,514); (2013, n=1,500)

Note: * Not asked in 2013

** Not asked in 2013 or 2018

↑↓ Significantly more/less unacceptable than 2021

Radio listening: music stations dominate radio listening.

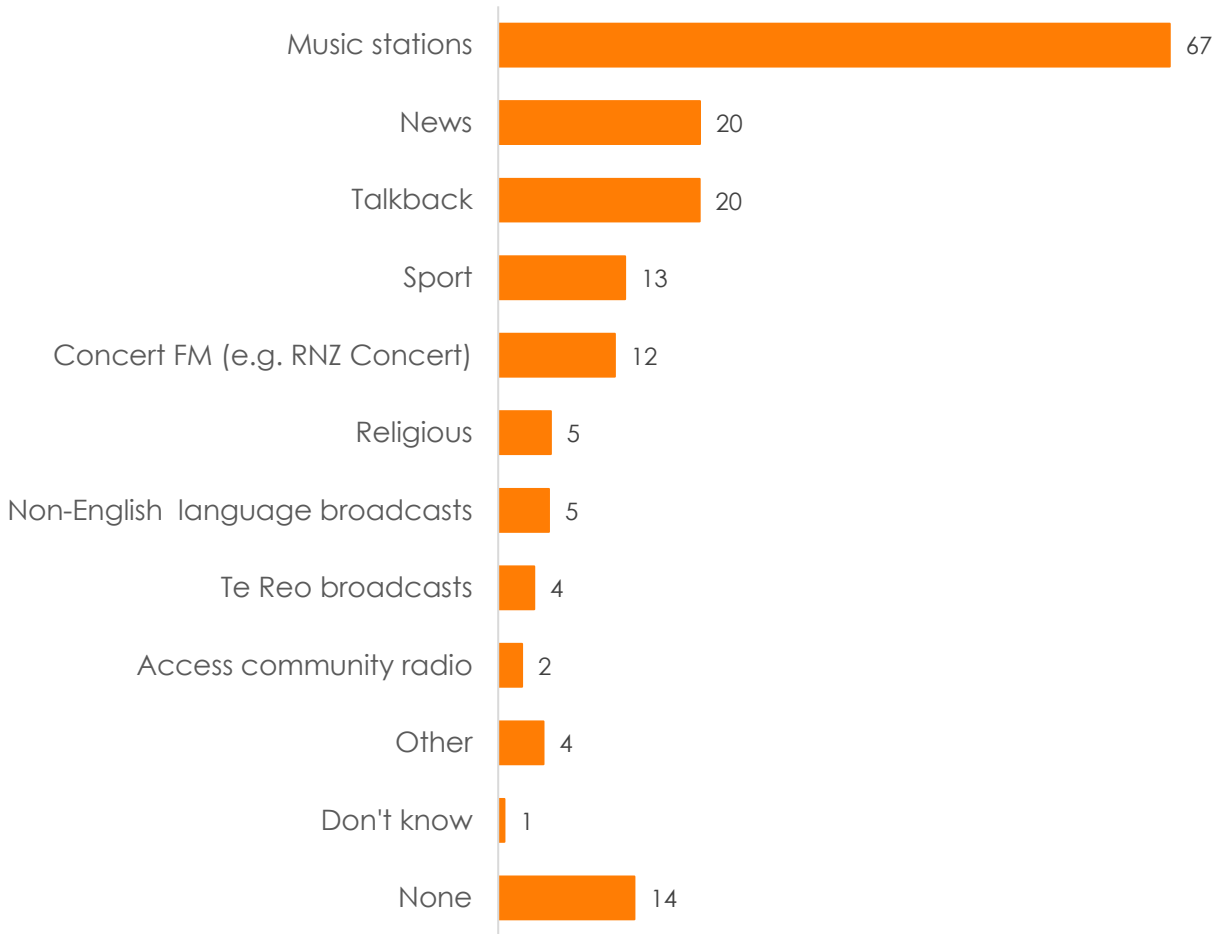
Around two thirds (67%) of New Zealanders regularly listen to music stations, well ahead of news (20%), talkback (20%) and sport focused stations.

Due to changes in the wording of the response categories, data for previous years are not shown.

- Amount of time** people spend listening to the radio on average each week:
- None (15%)
 - Up to 7 hours (55%)
 - 7-20 hours (17%)
 - More than 20 hours (10%)
 - Don't know (2%)

Source: Q5

Types of radio stations regularly listened to in 2025
%



Source: Q2: What kinds of radio stations do you listen to regularly?
Q5: And, how many hours per week, on average do you personally spend listening to the radio?
Base: All respondents (n=1,501)

Examples of non-English words provided at Q13

Respondents were asked if there were any other words that they would personally find unacceptable if used in a broadcast. Their responses are detailed on page 18. Below are examples of **non-English words** respondents said they found unacceptable in broadcasting.

- Kefe
- Pokokohua
- Chutiya
- Gaandu
- Paru
- Tae
- Teke
- Va si foda
- Kapohia
- Rangi
- Karakau
- Naagi
- Pouaru
- Poorhara
- Puku
- Motu