



TE MANA WHAKAATU  
**Classification  
Office**

5 April 2023

## **REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL**

OPEN TENDER

### Research project for Te Mana Whakaatu Classification Office and Netsafe

Research subject: Young people's experiences and views about media content, online behaviour, and the potential impacts on body image

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## INTRODUCTION

At Te Mana Whakaatu – Classification Office (the Office) we focus our research on issues that are important to the wellbeing of New Zealanders and relevant to the wider work of the Office. This includes [research](#) about commercial entertainment such as movies, shows and video games, and other (mostly online) content such as pornography or misinformation. Our research tends to focus on identified gaps in evidence and provides practical value for the public, academics, educators, government agencies and other stakeholders.

Netsafe has a proud history of building productive relationships and working with others in the online safety ecosystem to produce [data and research](#) to assess and respond to the online safety and digital issues of our time. Collaboration is the key to continuing to meet these challenges, and the effectiveness of Netsafe’s public education relies on a future focus on content and platform harms, and how they are impacting our children and young people in particular.

Netsafe and Te Mana Whakaatu have identified the potential impacts of media content and online behaviour on body image, and associated health and wellbeing issues, as a key concern following consultation with rangatahi and health professionals.

There is relatively little NZ research exploring young people’s experiences and views about this topic, and so we are seeking assistance in developing qualitative research with rangatahi to obtain robust, up-to-date evidence. We aim to publish results in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of 2023.

## PROJECT DETAILS

### Purpose

The research aims to develop the evidence base around media content, online behaviour, and the impact on body image in the New Zealand context, including social and cultural insights specific to Aotearoa.

Research findings may inform the development of:

- Cross-government work on policy and regulatory responses to young people’s engagement with this content.
- Clinical or therapeutic responses, awareness and understanding.
- Awareness raising initiatives, and educational resources for rangatahi, whānau, educators and those working in youth health and wellbeing.
- Approaches to classification work (the Office).
- Approaches to public harm prevention campaigns, in-school education materials and helpline contact centre staff support (Netsafe).

We expect the findings to identify further gaps in the knowledge base and guide future research on this and related topics. This may include additional research by the Office, such as a quantitative survey.

### Scope and subject matter

We’re interested in young people’s experiences and views about media content, online behaviour, and the potential impacts on body image and associated health and wellbeing issues.

Media content is a very broad category encompassing everything from advertising, to movies and games, to social media. This content may have positive or negative impacts in relation to body image. However, our key concern is content (and associated online behaviour) that promotes or encourages attitudes and behaviours relating to body image that may be harmful to young people's mental or physical health and wellbeing (we'll refer to this as 'harmful content'). We expect social media will be the primary focus of discussions in relation to this.

### **Harmful content**

'Harmful content' is itself a broad category, and may include content related to:

- dieting, eating disorders and disordered eating,
- extreme exercise/bulking,
- drug or supplement use in relation to dieting, exercise, etc.
- body modification,
- content relating to body image that encourages people to view themselves or others as somehow inferior, deficient or wrong based on things like weight or body type, race/ethnicity, sexuality, culture/nationality, and gender identity.
- This includes misogynistic content relating to body image, for example content on social media that comments on women and girls' bodies and appearance in a denigrating or hateful way

Harms associated with body image include (but are not limited to) eating disorders and disordered eating, compulsive exercise, self-harm, anxiety, depression, and body dysmorphia.

### **How are rangatahi engaging with this content?**

Online, people's experience of content is often shaped by the way in which it is being shared, commented on and promoted. This includes potentially harmful 'person-to-person' activities such as bullying, harassment, or sending unsolicited and unwanted content.

We expect that young people's experiences and views will be about content itself and also about associated 'behaviours' such as those listed above. It is not always possible to draw a strict line between 'content' and 'behaviour', and participants likely won't be making clear distinctions about this.

We are interested in how young people come across content, including:

- Whether they have sought content out, come across it accidentally, or been sent it by someone (or a mix of these)
- Where they have seen the content, for example specific social media platforms.
- The role of social media and other online platforms in 'serving' this content to users by way of algorithms etc – whether this is something rangatahi notice and what they think about it.
- Their ability to manage exposure or 'self-censor' material they don't want to see.

The research will also explore how rangatahi engage with this content more broadly, including sharing and/or creating content themselves.

### **It's not just about harm**

We've focused above on potentially harmful content, and this is our key concern. However, we need to ensure the subject matter is not framed in a negative way when we engage with rangatahi. Young people are likely to express complex and nuanced views that may be positive, negative or a mix of

both. The research will explore and acknowledge this, and participants must be given the space and opportunity to talk about any related issues or types of content or online behaviour that are relevant or top of mind for them.

## Key research questions

In broad terms, the research will address the following questions:

- What type of content are rangatahi creating and/or engaging with that has an impact on attitudes or behaviours around their own or other people's bodies?
- How do young people come across this content? Are rangatahi seeking it out – if so, why?
- What steps, if any, do rangatahi take to avoid some types of content or to manage/cope with content they might not want to see?
- What are positives or negatives rangatahi associate with this content? What impact does viewing content have – how does it make young people feel? What impact does viewing content have on them/others?
- Are young people creating/sharing content – if so, why? How do they feel about this, and how might others feel who see their content?
- Is this a big/important issue for rangatahi? Why/why not?
- What is the relationship between online content and the 'offline' world, if any? How does one impact on the other?
- How does content affect rangatahi of various genders, ethnicities, sexualities and cultures in different ways?
- How might these issues be addressed? What interventions or mitigating actions are rangatahi aware of that might help? What might not work so well? What role might individual content creators and consumers play, and what do young people want from social media platforms etc?
- How do rangatahi feel about societal messages/discourse around body image issues, body positivity etc? What works and what doesn't resonate or could be changed/improved?

## Research design

The research provider will be responsible for research design, recruitment, data collection/analysis, producing a report of findings, and assisting the Office research team to draft a final report for publication.

The research provider will need to work in close collaboration with the Office research team at every stage of development.

The Office will update Netsafe regularly on progress, and will work in consultation with Netsafe on key elements of the research, such as designing interview topic guides.

Proposals must outline how the research design will be informed by Treaty principles and/or specific frameworks for effective and ethical research practices with respect to Māori.

## Fieldwork and data collection

We expect that the primary format will be up to 50 single participant interviews, and also a small number of participants receiving clinical care (see *Interviews for those receiving clinical care* below). Proposals should consider different options to encourage participation and remove barriers for

young people. For example interviews could be a mix of in-person, via Zoom, by telephone, via questionnaire or potentially in an internet chat format.

In addition to the primary interview format, we will need to gather data in other ways, such as:

- A short survey of participants before interviews providing demographic and other key information that will be useful in adding further context for analysis and for how interviews are conducted.
- A survey and/or option to provide written responses post-interview, which would give participants an opportunity to address things they weren't comfortable talking about in interviews or any further thoughts, and provide another level of support for participants.

Focus groups may also be considered and advice and recommendations about this in proposals would be useful, and achievable within resource/time limitations. One option might be for focus groups to be used in a solutions-focused context (this may involve a co-design process) and would not include discussion of personal/sensitive issues, but practical actions etc that rangatahi think would be helpful.

## Participants and recruitment

### Age of participants

We expect participants will include young people age 14-17.

### Diversity

Diversity of participants is a key focus for our qualitative research, rather than participation aiming to be more representative based on population figures. Details will be worked out with the research provider, but we expect recruitment may involve quotas for: gender (including trans/gender diverse), sexuality, ethnicity (in particular Māori, Pacific but not excluding others), rural/urban, migrant communities, disability.

### Recruitment process

Proposals should demonstrate how recruitment of a range of participants will be undertaken in line with our expectations about diversity (including geographically diverse). Note that recruitment may need to be undertaken in stages. Findings from initial interviews may indicate gaps requiring alternative, more targeted approaches for further recruitment.

If the recruitment process involves collaboration with external groups or organisations, outline how this process would be undertaken.

### Interviews for those receiving clinical care

In consultations with experts and health officials there was general consensus that conducting interviews specifically with those most affected by serious health issues relating to body image – such as eating disorders – would add significant value to the research. This is something we wish to pursue as findings would be especially helpful for those providing services or care, and may therefore be of direct benefit for rangatahi who have experienced serious harm or are at risk of harm.

This would involve a small group of participants (no more than ten).

We have had preliminary discussions with care providers/health officials in relation to this and have had offers of assistance. The approach to these interviews would differ significantly from the wider group of participants. For example, interviews would likely be undertaken on premises of care facilities and involve assistance from health professionals – regardless of whether an interview was conducted in person, via phone, etc.

This process would involve specific ethical and safety considerations which would also be guided by health professionals in this space. Regarding this, there was also general consensus from experts we consulted that the risk of harm for these participants would not be greater than for the wider group of participants. Rather, the general view was that young people in care are used to talking about these issues and we would likely find participants who were willing and able to engage on these topics in a safe environment.

Proposals should consider how we might approach this aspect of the research, and consider practical implications for the project as a whole such as capacity to deliver within project timelines. We do not expect proposals to include a detailed plan, and we will work alongside the selected provider, and clinicians, to look at options and develop an approach. Note that this part of the research would require health research ethics approval, and proposals should take this into account.

## Interviewers/facilitation

Proposals should include information about who would conduct interviews. Experience with conducting similar interviews with rangatahi is of key importance.

Proposals should consider options such as whether interviews are conducted by members of their research team, whether it is preferable to bring in external interviewers, or a mixed approach depending on who is being interviewed. Depending on the recommended approach, proposals will need to provide some detail on what this will involve, eg training requirements etc.

## Topic guide/interview design

We will work closely with the chosen research provider to develop appropriate questions and topic guides, in consultation with Netsafe and other stakeholders and experts.

Proposals should outline the provider's thinking and approach to designing topic guides and practical methods to be used in interviews in line with best practice. This should include information about methods they will employ to ensure the topic guide is robust and fit for purpose for this project, and also describe the benefits (or any potential drawbacks) of the proposed approach. Proposals should include information about approaches to topic guide design, however we do not require details about specific potential questions or analysis of the subject matter.

Proposals should include some information around ongoing evaluation and how the process and/or topic guide may evolve over time during fieldwork based on how the interviews are going, the information we're getting on different topics and so on. We expect providers to be in contact regularly during fieldwork to provide updates and discuss potential changes in approach etc.

Proposals should discuss how the interview process/method of interviewing might vary according to things like age, culture, gender etc., and also how the approach might be different for the participants who are currently in treatment.

## Manaakitanga, ethics, privacy, and risk management

Our aim is not only to manage risk to participants of any negative impacts, but for the research to be conducted in a way that promotes the wellbeing of participants and leaves them feeling more confident and supported than before.

The material dealt with in this research is highly sensitive in nature. The research provider must, in consultation with the Office, ensure that participants' privacy and confidentiality is protected during and subsequent to research engagement. This includes a clear plan for how personal details of participants and collected data are managed.

Proposals should discuss how participants, whānau and/or other groups involved in the research are informed about the purpose of the research, how it is being conducted and how findings will be shared.

We will need an indication of how parental consent might be managed, and whether parental consent for participation will be necessary for all age groups. One potential issue here, related to privacy, is the potential for parents to easily link information in the final report with their child if they are from a minority group, for example transgender youth. With this in mind it may be necessary to limit the amount of demographic information included with quotations in the final report, for example.

Proposals must demonstrate an understanding of culturally safe practice and provide specific details about how this will inform the research process. This includes ethical considerations for different groups, including younger participants, Māori and Pacific, migrant communities, LGBTQ+, people with disabilities, and those in clinical care.

Proposals must demonstrate an understanding of Treaty principles, and provide clear information about how different stages of the research project will be informed by Treaty principles and/or specific frameworks for effective and ethical research practices with respect to Māori.

External ethics approval would be required for interviewing those in clinical care. Proposals should outline how this might be managed, and consider any implications for the project as a whole.

The research provider must evaluate and mitigate the risk of causing distress and ensure that interviews and other forms of engagement are managed safely and respectfully. Proposals must provide detailed information about specific potential risks or safety considerations and how these will be managed, including policies on handling disclosures. The table below can be used as a template or the information can be provided in an alternative way.

| Category            | Risk                 | Consequence  | Probability                 | Impact                      | Risk level   | Risk mitigation plan                            | Risk owner                                  | Post mitigation risk level  |
|---------------------|----------------------|--|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|--|---|---|---|
| <i>Type of risk</i> | <i>Specific risk</i> | <i>Potential issues/problems resulting from risk</i> | <i>Eg low, medium, high</i> | <i>Eg low, medium, high</i> | <i>Eg low, medium, high – taking into account probability and impact</i> | <i>Summary info on how risk will be managed</i> | <i>Who is responsible for managing risk</i> | <i>Overall level of risk if suggested mitigation plans are followed. Eg low, medium, high</i> |

## Analysis and reporting requirements

### Reporting requirements:

- The provider will draft a report providing high-level analysis of findings in a plain English style with a clear and easy to follow structure.
- The Office will use this analysis as a basis for drafting the final report for public release, in consultation with Netsafe and the research provider. The author/s of the initial analysis report will be listed as co-authors on the final report.

Proposals should provide details on the proposed methodological approach for analysis of findings and reporting, and outline a process for keeping the Office research team updated about how interviews and analysis of transcripts is progressing.

One or more designated members of the Office research team will require access to the complete research data, including interview transcripts and survey responses (subject to ethical and privacy requirements, eg. Data will not include any personal identifying information about participants). This is for the purpose of analysis and we will hold the data until the project is completed or as otherwise agreed according to an agreed ethics process. Note that requirements around privacy and data security may differ in relation to the clinical group.

Our preference is for transcription of interviews to be undertaken during the period of fieldwork. Transcripts, and other data such as survey results will need to be provided to the Office research team as they become available.

In drafting the final report, the research team at the Office will undertake further analysis of findings based on the raw data such as surveys and transcripts, alongside the report of analysis from the provider. This will augment the in depth analysis from the research provider and ensure we have comprehensive understanding of this analysis and how it relates to the raw data.

It would be useful to know what software the provider will be using for analysis, and whether this data can also be shared with the Office research team if we have compatible software. This is not a requirement but may help to streamline the analysis process at our end.

While drafting the final report we expect the Office research team to be in regular contact with the provider for feedback and advice, including reviewing drafts as they become available.

## Intellectual Property

Netsafe and the Office will have joint ownership of the research including the collateral and final output.

- The Office has the right to request data and supporting materials produced during the process of conducting the research. This is subject to ethical and privacy concerns and we will not request any information containing identifying information about participants.
- Netsafe and the Office are happy to negotiate if the provider wishes to reuse any of the collateral produced in the course of conducting the research.
- Netsafe and the Office will consult with each other and agree on any third party requests to reuse the collateral produced in the course of conducting the research, or the final output.
- Netsafe and the Office will lead all public communications on the research.

## Indicative timeline

*All dates 2023.*

|  |                |
|--|----------------|
| <b>RFP issued:</b>                                 | 5 April        |
| <b>Proposal submitted:</b>                         | 1 May          |
| <b>Research commissioned:</b>                      | 5 May          |
| <b>Report with analysis of findings submitted:</b> | By 2 October   |
| <b>Final report published:</b>                     | By 30 November |

We aim to have the project completed within this timeframe. However, we acknowledge the complex nature of the project and our key concern is insuring there is sufficient time to undertake the research to the highest quality standards. If necessary, we may extend the deadline for submission of the initial analysis report.

Proposals should include a detailed timeline and list of key milestones, from the time the research is commissioned to submission of the analysis report.

## Budget

The available budget for this project is up to \$100,000, inclusive of all components of the research including travel and separate contracts (if applicable) for external interviewers and the primary research provider.

Please provide information about cost estimates for various elements of the project. If necessary, you may wish to provide a range of costing options taking into account various factors such as

- The number of interviews and participants (and how participants are recruited)
- Different timeframes for completion of key deliverables
- Location and format of interviews (for example, the cost and time involved in conducting interviews in regional cities in addition to main centres)
- The impact of different costings, timeframes and methods on the quality of the data.

Costing options should be indicative. We recognise that cost parameters will require a level of flexibility during the planning and implementation process, considering the variables and complexity involved.

## Summary of expectations

The project will involve your organisation as the primary research provider, the Office research team, Netsafe, and potentially one or more third party organisations to provide interviewers or facilitators.

The provider will need to work in close collaboration with the Office research team at every stage of development.

Working with the Office, the research provider will be responsible for:

- Developing topic guides/research design
- Organising recruitment of a diverse range of young people

- Logistics and planning of interviews/focus groups
- Training and working with external interviewers (if applicable)
- Data collection and analysis (including full transcription of interviews)
- A report to the Office providing high-level analysis of findings
- Providing assistance as needed to the Office research team while drafting the final report.

The project will involve ongoing consultation with experts and stakeholders, which will primarily be the responsibility of the Office research team. Feedback from consultations during the research process may require a level of flexibility in methodology and planning.

## Submission requirements

This is an open tender RFP, made available on the New Zealand Government Electronic Tenders Service (GETS). Applications must be made via GETS ([www.gets.govt.nz](http://www.gets.govt.nz)).

In your proposal, please include:

- Details about methodology including recruitment, interview design and analysis/reporting
- Steps for meeting the planning and reporting requirements
- Milestones against budget, with a selection of costed options if necessary/applicable
- Details and credentials of individual researchers participating in the project
- Information on relevant past projects undertaken
- Names and contact details of two referees.

Please submit your proposal before 1pm on 1 May, 2023.

**During the process of preparing a proposal we encourage research providers to contact us with questions and to discuss options and approaches.**

Please contact Henry Talbot (Principal Advisor – Research Lead) via email: [consultations@classificationoffice.govt.nz](mailto:consultations@classificationoffice.govt.nz)

## Selection criteria

Netsafe and the Office will evaluate proposals based on the evaluation criteria below.

The successful provider will:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the requirements and intent of the research
- Propose a suitable approach
- Name qualified and experienced staff
- Have experience of delivering similar projects to similar clients
- Have the ability and capacity including technical capabilities to conduct all services and provide all deliverables
- Be able to commit to the project timings and budget and provide value for money
- Provide quality assurance, security and risk management processes
- Outline how the research will be informed by Treaty principles and/or specific frameworks for effective and ethical research practices with respect to Māori.

# AGENCY BACKGROUNDS

## Te Mana Whakaatu – Classification Office

[www.classificationoffice.govt.nz](http://www.classificationoffice.govt.nz)

Te Mana Whakaatu is the government body responsible for classifying publications that may need to be restricted or banned. The legal definition of a ‘publication’ covers a wide range of mediums such as films, music recordings, books, magazines, video games and online content.

One of our Statements of Performance Expectations (SPE) and a requirement under the Classification Act is to carry out research that helps New Zealanders think critically about the content they consume and share. We conduct research and produce evidence-based resources to inform the classification process, promote media literacy and enable New Zealanders to make informed choices about content they consume.

You can find our published research on our website: [classificationoffice.govt.nz/resources/research](http://classificationoffice.govt.nz/resources/research)

### **Previous research from the Office – NZ Youth and Porn programme**

Between 2018-2020 we completed a three-part research project focusing on young New Zealanders’ views and experiences of pornography. The scope of the work and the approach undertaken was unique and is now widely cited and referenced, in particular in New Zealand. The research has influenced the creation of educational campaigns, workforce training, public engagements and resources for whānau, teachers, health professionals and those working with youth. The research project won Gold at the international ESOMAR Research Effectiveness Award 2022, and won the Supreme Award at the 2021 Research Association of New Zealand’s effectiveness awards.

The third and final report, *Growing Up With Porn*, is similar in many ways to our planned body image research and involved more than 50 interviews with a diverse range of participants age 14-17.

## Netsafe

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

For the last 25 years, Netsafe has been educating all people in New Zealand to understand what a safe online environment is, creating harm prevention education to foster more positive online experiences and supporting people when they are the victims of online harm.

In the year ended June 2022, Netsafe’s helpline processed 28,254 complaints as the Approved Agency under the Harmful Digital Communications Act (2015). These reports spanned the full spectrum of online safety issues, from harassment and bullying to scams, from child sexual abuse to parenting challenges and school incident management.

You can find our published research on the Netsafe Lab area of our website:

<https://netsafe.org.nz/netsafe-lab/>

These research outputs and data insights are used to support Netsafe’s education and operations teams by boosting the resilience of our online safety services and products.