



New Zealand  
Crime and Victims **survey**

**HELP CREATE SAFER COMMUNITIES**

**Topical report: Controlling  
behaviours and help-seeking  
for family violence**

# **Key findings**

Cycle 4 (November 2020 to November 2021)

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4. Estimates in the text (including percentages) are rounded to the nearest thousands, hundreds or whole numbers. Graphs and tables provide accuracy to one decimal place.
5. Unfortunately, due to an error in data collection, this report does not include over 200 interviews from the Hawke's Bay area. Survey results were revised, amended and re-weighted to maintain accuracy and avoid bias.



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If you have any feedback or questions about NZCVS results, please email us on [nzcvs@justice.govt.nz](mailto:nzcvs@justice.govt.nz)

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## Survey participants

We would like to thank the 6,244 New Zealanders who gave their time to take part in the survey and share their stories.

## Service provider

We appreciate the work of Reach Aotearoa (formerly CBG Health Research Ltd). Their interviewing and data management services made this survey possible.

## Contributors

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## External experts

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*NZCVS Project Team*

# Executive summary

## Introduction

Family violence is a violation of human rights and a key issue of concern in Aotearoa New Zealand. While research suggests approximately 2% of New Zealand adults have experienced some form of offending by their intimate partner or their family/whānau members in a 12-month period,<sup>1</sup> it is likely that many more New Zealanders experience family violence but do not report it. As a consequence, the prevalence of family violence is likely to be much higher than the estimated 2%. Eliminating family violence is a key priority for Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa | the New Zealand Government, which has developed Te Aorerekura | The National Strategy to Eliminate Family Violence and Sexual Violence. Te Tāhū o te Ture | the Ministry of Justice, along with nine other government agencies, make up Te Puna Aonui, which is delivering this strategy.

In addition to physical and sexual violence in the context of family/whānau and intimate partner relationships, other acts or patterns of controlling behaviour can be used to assault, intimidate, humiliate, manipulate, and harm people. Coercive control is a form of family violence that includes controlling behaviours specific to individual relationships. Coercive control can change over time and be subtle or hard to recognise outside the relationship.<sup>2</sup>

This report examines the prevalence of controlling behaviours in the context of family or intimate relationships in a 12-month period. It explores who uses controlling behaviours to harm, the impacts of these controlling behaviours, and the situations where they occur as recorded in Cycle 4 (2020/21) of the New Zealand Crime and Victims Survey (NZCVS). This report first explores the prevalence of specific acts of controlling behaviour and of harm from these behaviours, and then analyses the demographics of victims. It then examines the people who used controlling behaviours to harm – specifically, partners, ex-partners, and other family/whānau members – before analysing the context for the behaviours causing harm.

This report also examines help-seeking behaviours among those who have experienced acts of controlling behaviour, any harm from controlling behaviour, and any offending by family/whānau members. It explores where people commonly sought help, and if they didn't seek help, the reasons why. The report looks at how people perceive their own safety in the context of their family/whānau. Finally, it measures the extent that people said they were aware of others in their community who experienced family violence, an indicator of the perception of prevalence that can help focus family violence education initiatives.

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<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Justice. 2022. *New Zealand Crime and Victims Survey. Cycle 4 survey findings. Descriptive statistics. June 2022. Results drawn from Cycle 4 2020/21 of the New Zealand Crime and Victims Survey.* Wellington: Ministry of Justice.  
<https://www.justice.govt.nz/assets/Documents/Publications/20220628-NZCVS-Cycle-4-Core-Report-v0.19.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Tolmie, J, Smith, R, Short, J, Wilson, D and Sach, J. 2018. Social entrapment: Realistic understanding of the criminal offending of primary victims of intimate partner violence. *New Zealand Law Review* 2018: 181–218.

## Key findings:

How many people experience controlling behaviour?

- 18% of respondents (approx. 700,000 adults) experienced harm from controlling behaviours
- 13% (approx. 500,000 adults) experienced at least one specific act of controlling behaviour

Who experiences controlling behaviour?

The following demographic groups were more likely to experience harm from controlling behaviours than the NZ average:

- People with diverse sexualities
- Young people (aged 15-29)
- Māori
- Women

Women were more likely than men to experience the following impacts of controlling behaviours:

- Anger/annoyance (69% compared with 53%)
- Crying/tears (50% compared with 12%)
- Loss of confidence/feeling vulnerable (43% compared with 24%)
- Anxiety/panic attacks (41% compared with 21%)
- Depression (36% compared with 19%)

What are the consequences?

- Taking time off work (20%)
- Taking time off study (9%)
- Accessed health professionals (24%)
- Police contact made (12%)

Do people seek help?

- People were more likely to report harm from controlling behaviours if they experienced other offending from family members (77% compared with those who had not experienced other offending 37%)
- Victims of family violence were most likely to seek help from family/whanau, friends, and neighbours (37%)

Controlling behaviours can include stalking a person, limiting who they spend time with, forcing them into or out of work, making decisions for them, or other acts that are designed to dominate and result in isolating them.<sup>3</sup> These acts are often hard to recognise because they can reflect accepted gender norms or stereotypes for the behaviour of men and women in heterosexual relationships.<sup>3,4</sup> Research suggests that controlling behaviours can appear benign in isolation, but as part of a pattern, the consequences can result in serious harm and even death.<sup>5</sup>

Knowing who seeks help and for what types of violence, and the reasons why some people do not seek help, has important policy implications. Understanding help-seeking behaviours can contribute to the development of family violence interventions and prevention initiatives. Perceptions of safety are likely to be a key factor in help-seeking behaviour; family/whānau, friends and neighbours are often the first points of contact for victims seeking help. Understanding the wider context of help-seeking behaviour emphasises the importance of community and the role of enabling community members to understand the complex issues involved with family violence.

## Limitations of this report

It is important to acknowledge that family violence and sexual violence is gendered. It is mainly or most often men who commit acts of violence against women, and women are more likely to experience repeated and severe forms of violence, and more likely to be seriously hurt or killed as a result of family violence. The Family Violence Death Review Committee's sixth report<sup>6</sup> states that of the 230 family violence deaths in Aotearoa New Zealand between 2009 and 2017, 102 people were killed by their intimate partner where a history of abuse was recorded. Among these 102 deaths, 71% were women. Of the intimate partner violence deaths, 96% of the women were identified as the primary victim, the person experiencing ongoing male-perpetrated violence.

The prevalence rates of acts of controlling behaviours and harms detailed in this report do not capture this trend clearly; the various acts captured in the survey are not necessarily part of harmful patterns of control and may not indicate family violence. To account for this, from section 3.5 onwards, the report analyses the controlling behaviours that caused harm. We recommend further research that controls for demographic factors to explore coercive control fully.

In addition, there are further limitations of the results relating to the NZCVS questionnaire and data. Firstly, the measure of harm as a result of controlling behaviour is likely a more reliable indicator of family violence than the experience of a specific act of controlling

<sup>3</sup> McMahon M and McGorrery P. 2020. *Criminalising coercive control: Family violence and the criminal law*. Singapore: Springer.

<sup>4</sup> Stark, E. 2007. *Coercive control: The entrapment of women in personal life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

<sup>5</sup> Boxall H and Morgan A. 2021. *Experiences of coercive control among Australian women*. Statistical Bulletin no. 30. Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology. <https://doi.org/10.52922/sb78108>

<sup>6</sup> Family Violence Death Review Committee. 2020. *Sixth report | Te Pūrongo tuaono: Men who use violence | Ngā tāne ka whakamahi i te whakarekerekere*. Wellington: Health Quality & Safety Commission.

behaviour. Respondents were given a list of different types of harms and asked to select harms they had experienced because of an intimate partner or family/whānau member's controlling behaviour. The harms – rather than the controlling behaviours - were more likely to be at the front of respondent's minds and therefore may be a better indication of patterns of family violence.

Secondly, victim experiences of controlling behaviours and their impact is often nuanced, determined by context and culture, and shaped by the person's relationship to their family/whānau member or intimate partner. Specific controlling behaviours and their impact are likely to be perceived differently by young and older people, Māori, Pasifika, people with diverse sexualities, disabled people, and people with diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds. The list of controlling behaviours in the survey may not have reflected how different people experience control, and it is therefore unlikely that all who have experienced controlling behaviours or harm from it were captured by the survey.

In addition, specific behaviours over a 12-month period may not be as front of mind as the harm resulting from the cumulative effect of these behaviours. With these points in mind, the survey may have inadvertently captured controlling behaviours that do not constitute forms of whānau/family or intimate partner violence. Finally, the harm questions and controlling behaviour questions are not linked; that is, the harms are not asked about in relation to the specific set of controlling behaviours listed in the NZCVS.

This report is an initial exploratory analysis of new questions added for Cycle 4 of the NZCVS, and the results will inform future review of questions for subsequent cycles. This report is also an example of the type of information that has been collected and can be used for future or more in-depth research topics.

## Research approach

The data for analysis was derived from Cycle 4 of the NZCVS and covers the period of November 2020 to November 2021. Individuals living in Aotearoa New Zealand aged 15 years and above were surveyed about their experiences of crime and victimisation in the last 12 months, and this survey data was used to generate population estimates of controlling behaviour and harm prevalence.

All NZCVS respondents were asked if they had experienced one or more of nine specific harms related to how a partner, ex-partner or other family/whānau member behaved towards them. Respondents were also asked a separate question about whether they had experienced one or more of eight specific acts of controlling behaviour perpetrated by a partner, ex-partner or other family/whānau member. Please note, these questions were not linked.

# Contents

<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Executive summary</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>1 About this report</b> .....	<b>11</b>
1.1 About the New Zealand Crime and Victims Survey .....	11
1.2 Purpose and scope of this report.....	11
1.3 Key terms and definitions .....	12
1.4 Questionnaire information.....	13
1.5 Help-seeking organisations .....	15
1.6 Technical information .....	15
1.7 Interview methodology.....	16
1.8 Interpreting results.....	17
<b>2 Introduction</b> .....	<b>19</b>
2.1 Reducing harm and improving wellbeing .....	19
2.2 Controlling behaviours: an element of family violence .....	19
2.3 Help-seeking for offending, and controlling behaviours.....	21
2.4 Safety and community .....	22
<b>3 Results</b> .....	<b>24</b>
3.1 Prevalence of harm .....	24
3.2 Prevalence of controlling behaviours .....	25
3.3 Prevalence of specific harm and controlling behaviours with offending by family members .....	25
3.4 Prevalence of controlling behaviours and harm .....	26
3.5 Demographics of controlling behaviours and harm .....	27
3.6 Perpetrators of harm.....	29
3.7 Perpetrators of controlling behaviours .....	32
3.8 Perpetrators and victims by gender .....	33
3.9 Perpetrators and “do not wish to answer” responses .....	35
3.10 Context of harm.....	35
3.11 Help-seeking by victims for family violence.....	39
<b>4 Conclusions</b> .....	<b>45</b>
4.1 Summary of findings.....	45
4.2 Future research .....	47
<b>References</b> .....	<b>48</b>
<b>Appendix 1: Data and methods</b> .....	<b>50</b>
A.1 COVID-19 and data collection for Cycle 4 .....	50
A.2 Weighting .....	51
A.3 Uncertainty of estimates .....	51
A.4 Rounding.....	51



# List of figures

Figure 1.1	Overlap of controlling behaviours and offending by partners, ex-partners and family/whānau members, under the definition of family violence (not to scale).....	12
Figure 3.1	Percentage of adults who experienced harm from controlling behaviour perpetrated by a partner, ex-partner or family/whānau member in the last 12 months.....	24
Figure 3.2	Percentage of adults who experienced specific acts of controlling behaviour perpetrated by a partner, ex-partner or family/whānau member in the last 12 months.....	25
Figure 3.3	Estimate of prevalence and prevalence rate of any specific act of controlling behaviour, harm or both.....	26
Figure 3.4	Percentage of adults who experienced any harm, by victim gender and by personal factor.....	28
Figure 3.5	Percentage of adults who experienced specific acts of controlling behaviour (occurring with harm), by victim gender and by personal factor .....	28
Figure 3.6	Percentage of adults who experienced any harm, by perpetrator relationship .....	29
Figure 3.7	Percentage of adults who experienced harms from controlling behaviour, by gender and relationship to perpetrator .....	31
Figure 3.8	Percentage of adults who experienced controlling behaviours, by gender and by relationship to perpetrator .....	33
Figure 3.9	Percentage of adults who experienced harm or controlling behaviours, by gender of perpetrator and victim .....	34
Figure 3.10	Percentage of adults who experienced harm, by gender of perpetrator and victim and by relationship .....	34
Figure 3.11	Percentage of adults who experienced controlling behaviours, by gender of perpetrator and victim and by relationship .....	35
Figure 3.12	Percentage of adults who experienced reactions as a result of harm caused by a partner, ex-partner or family/whānau member's behaviour, by gender and by reaction.....	37
Figure 3.13	Groups analysed for help-seeking behaviour (not to scale).....	40
Figure 3.14	Percentage of adults who sought help for family harm, by victim's experience.....	41
Figure 3.15	Percentage of adults who sought help from family/whānau, friends or neighbours at a higher or lower rate than the New Zealand average, by factor .....	42

## List of tables

Table 3.1	Prevalence rate of harms, by respondent's relationship to perpetrator.....	30
Table 3.2	Prevalence rate of specific acts of controlling behaviour, by respondent's relationship to perpetrator.....	32
Table 3.3	Percentage of adults whose work or study was impacted because of controlling behaviours, by impact.....	38
Table 3.4	Percentage of adults who had further involvement with someone who had experienced family violence, by the type of involvement.....	43
Table 3.5	Percentage of adults who did not have further involvement with someone who had experienced family violence, by reason .....	44

# 1 About this report

## 1.1 About the New Zealand Crime and Victims Survey

The New Zealand Crime and Victims Survey (NZCVS) is a nationwide, face-to-face, annual, random-sample survey. Adults who are aged 15+ and living in private dwellings are surveyed about experiences of crime they had in New Zealand over the previous 12 months. This includes both incidents reported to the Police and unreported incidents.

## 1.2 Purpose and scope of this report

This report provides insights and analysis derived from the 2020/21 NZCVS. New findings are presented regarding New Zealand adults' experiences of controlling behaviours and harm in the context of a close personal relationship (current and previous partners, and other family/whānau members). The report focuses on those who experienced offending by family/whānau members and specifically how these individuals may or may not seek help. The data comes from responses to survey questions that were designed to capture the broader patterns of family violence as it is defined in the Family Violence Act 2018.

This analysis has been developed to help understand the prevalence of controlling behaviours and harm in Aotearoa New Zealand, how this impact people's lives, and what population groups are most likely to experience these. The questions will capture only some of the many ways that controlling behaviours can be expressed and the harm they cause in familial relationships. While the questions may over-estimate controlling behaviours in some contexts (for example, one-off behaviours), this is balanced by the unique experiences of controlling behaviour that are dependent on the characteristics of the victim, the perpetrator, and the resources available to them.

In addition, this report seeks to understand who is receiving help and who is not. By looking at demographic, socio-economic and wellbeing factors, as well as the violence the respondents have experienced, it determines who is seeking help and from where, and what may prevent individuals from seeking help. Both help-seeking for controlling behaviours and offending by partners, ex-partners and family/whānau members are analysed in this report.

Finally, this report analyses victims' feelings of safety with family/whānau and whether they know anyone else experiencing aspects of family violence (defined in section 1.3). Family/whānau, friends and neighbours are often the first point of contact for those experiencing family violence, highlighting the importance of community education around family harm.

**All results presented about the New Zealand population are estimates based on the results of the survey.**

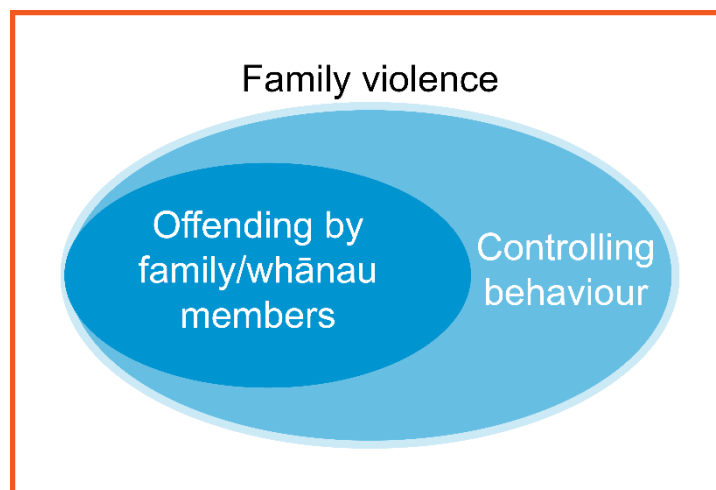
## 1.3 Key terms and definitions

**Family violence**, as defined in the Family Violence Act, is a pattern of behaviour that **coerces, controls or harms** in the context of a close personal relationship. It can include physical, sexual, psychological and emotional harm as well as being isolated from whānau and friends. It is not just about things that are done to a person, but also the impact of those behaviours on a victim’s sense of wellbeing and safety. Although the Family Violence Act recognises any pattern of coercive, controlling and harmful behaviour as family violence, it does not directly criminalise it. However, if a protection order is in place, any family violence is a breach of the order – which is a criminal offence.

**Coercive control** is any ongoing pattern of behaviour towards another person that uses force or threats that compel a particular response (Stark 2007) and impact self-determination, which is a person’s ability to make decisions and manage their life. Coercive control cannot be defined at a point in time in a relationship, and all family violence tactics are coercive control. Coercive control is nuanced, and we cannot fully understand coercive control with the data collected by NZCVS and therefore it is out of scope for this report. However, it is important to understand what coercive control is and how controlling behaviours can be part of a pattern of coercive control.

**Controlling behaviours** are **specific acts of control** that are used to coerce, isolate and harm a person and impact their self-determination. Controlling behaviours are best understood by knowing the context of a person’s life, such as the other forms of violence they may experience, their relationship with the offender and their autonomy. The measure of controlling behaviours from the NZCVS reflects some ways in which coercive control can be expressed and the harm that it may cause in familial relationships. Figure 1.1 demonstrates family violence being made up of patterns of controlling behaviour and that all “offending by family/whānau members” is controlling. However, some controlling behaviours are not prosecutable and thus fall outside of the “offending by family/whānau members” definition that the NZCVS uses. **Controlling behaviours are not equivalent to coercive control.**

**Figure 1.1** Overlap of controlling behaviours and offending by partners, ex-partners and family/whānau members, under the definition of family violence (not to scale)



### Use of the term “victim”



We acknowledge that some people who have been harmed by crime do not like being referred to as a “victim” (Chief Victims Advisor to Government 2019; Te Uepū Hāpai I te Ora | Safe and Effective Justice Advisory Group 2019). While some feel the term accurately describes their experience, some prefer to be referred to as “survivors”, and some wish for no label at all.

We use the term “victim” in this report because it is consistent with legislation and recognisable for our audiences, including criminal justice agency personnel. We hope that through future consultation with those who have been harmed by crime, we can find a better solution to recognise and respect their needs.

For the help-seeking analysis, **offences by family/whānau members** refers to the following offence types where the offender is a family/whānau member:

- Physical assault
- Sexual assault
- Harassment and threatening behaviour
- Other offences (damage to personal or household property and damage to motor vehicles and robbery).

Certain offences such as theft; burglary; fraud and deception; cybercrime; and trespassing were not counted as offences by family/whānau members as these were not included in the NZCVS definition of offences by family/whānau members.

The group of offences by family/whānau members includes **offences by intimate partners**. **Intimate partner** is defined as a person with whom an individual has, or previously had, an intimate relationship.

## 1.4 Questionnaire information

Respondents are asked situational questions for both (a) controlling behaviours and the harm they may cause, and (b) offending by family/whānau members. The answers to these determine if a respondent goes on to answer questions in more detail for specific incidents (or clusters of incidents) through an incident form for offending by family/whānau members or as part of the controlling behaviour section. This does not focus on specific incidents; it focuses on *behaviours* over the previous 12-month period.

The survey questions ask about controlling behaviours and harms in the context of family violence only. Respondents are asked about experiences with partners, ex-partners, or other family/whānau members. **Partners and ex-partners** could include anyone an individual

currently has or previously had an intimate relationship with, and **other family/whānau members** could include anyone an individual is related to, including “step” and “in-law” relationships.

## NZCVS measures of controlling behaviour

Controlling behaviours can present in many ways, and behaviours can be controlling and harmful in the context of some relationships but not in others, depending on the intent behind the behaviours and the impact they have on the person’s life. A victim may not always be able to identify controlling behaviours, but they are likely to notice the impact the behaviours have on their life. The first set of questions<sup>7</sup> were designed to capture these **harms resulting from controlling behaviours**.

Respondents were asked if they had experienced any of the following in the last 12 months because of how a partner, ex-partner or other family/whānau member behaved, or how they thought they might react.

- Had to change your routine, behaviour, or appearance
- Been made to feel ashamed or bad about yourself
- Been made to feel that your mana had been stamped on, or your spirituality/wairua had been attacked
- Worried about your own safety or wellbeing
- Feared damage to your reputation, or the reputation of your family/whānau
- Worried about the safety of your child or dependents
- Been unable to contact or see your family/whānau or friends
- Worried about the safety of a pet
- Feared that false accusations could lead you to lose contact with your children

The second set of questions<sup>8</sup> was included to capture **specific acts of controlling behaviour** used by a perpetrator, such as financial abuse. This was intended to provide insight into *the ways in which* perpetrators achieve control. However, because perpetrators use highly individualised and often subtle tactics of abuse (Tolmie et al 2018), it is by no means an exhaustive list.

Respondents were asked if a partner, ex-partner or other family/whānau member had done any of the following in the last 12 months.

- Kept track of where you went, or who you spent time with
- Pressured you into work or study or pressured you not to work or study

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<sup>7</sup> Questions were answered with a frequency scale. If a respondent selected “All of the time”, “Most of the time”, “Some of the time” or “A little of the time”, then they were counted as having experienced harm or controlling behaviour. Residual responses (such as “don’t know” and “refused”) were excluded.

<sup>8</sup> Questions were answered with a frequency scale. If a respondent selected “All of the time”, “Most of the time”, “Some of the time” or “A little of the time”, then they were counted as having experienced harm or controlling behaviour. Residual answers were excluded.

- Monitored or controlled your money, or pressured you to take on debt, or sign legal documents
- Monitored or restricted your access to things like your phone, the Internet, or transport
- Made it difficult for you or your children to get healthcare or medication
- Made it difficult for you to access or use birth control or contraception
- Forced you to use alcohol or drugs, or to use more than you wanted to
- Threatened to use legal action against you unless you did what they wanted

The respondents could select experiencing any number of harms or acts of controlling behaviour. Throughout the analysis, harms or harms as a result of controlling behaviours will be used to refer to the first set of questions, and acts or specific acts of controlling behaviour will refer to the second set of questions (after section 3.5, controlling behaviours are only analysed if they are present with harms).

## 1.5 Help-seeking organisations

A specific list of support services and organisations were asked about in the questionnaire. These included:

- Victim Support
- Women's Refuge
- Rape Crisis
- Citizens Advice Bureau
- Lifeline Aotearoa
- Family Violence website or helpline ([www.areyouok.org.nz](http://www.areyouok.org.nz))
- Victims of Crime Information Line
- religious organisation (eg, Salvation Army)
- Whānau Ora or other Māori organisation
- work-based professional support (eg, employee assistance programme, in-house support team)
- court services for victims
- other government agency (not the Police).

## 1.6 Technical information

This report contains mostly descriptive statistics. It does not include analysis of relationships between variables, nor does it attribute causation.

This report does not include a description of survey methodology and metadata. These technical aspects are discussed in detail in the NZCVS [methodological report](#).

This report is based on the fourth year of interviewing. It follows and uses the same dataset as the [Cycle 4 \(2020/21\) core report](#) that was released in June 2022. As of November 2022, fieldwork for Cycle 5 had been completed.

The NZCVS results are not comparable with Police crime statistics. The main reason for this is that more than three quarters of crime incidents collected by the NZCVS were not reported to the Police ([see section 7 of the Cycle 4 core report](#)), and the proportion of incidents reported to the Police varies significantly depending on the offence type. The NZCVS timeframe is also different from that in the Police administrative data ([see section 2.5 of the Cycle 4 core report](#)).

Please note that some of the top level numbers reported in this report may differ slightly to those reported in the Cycle 4 core report due to subsequent dataset updates.

## 1.7 Interview methodology

Interviews for NZCVS were conducted using:

- computer-assisted personal interviewing (CAPI), where interviewers enter respondents' answers into a laptop
- computer-assisted self-interviewing (CASI), where respondents are handed the laptop and can enter their own responses

The use of CASI, which is used for sensitive questions, allows respondents to answer the survey confidentially and can reduce bias. While most of the survey can be considered sensitive, questions relating to sexual assault, other assault, harassment, threatening behaviour and controlling behaviours were determined to be the most sensitive and as such were all administered by CASI.

There were a couple of general exceptions to this division. Some respondents were offered the opportunity to self-complete the questions relating to property damage, theft, trespass, robbery, fraud and cybercrime. The rationale being that some of these incidents may have been committed by family members, which respondent may be reluctant to disclose to the interviewer. In addition to this, the respondent could elect for the interviewer to continue to administer the questions in CAPI mode provided that their privacy was protected.

Interviewers were trained using Reach Aotearoa baseline training modules, including cultural awareness and safety management. All interviewers were assessed by Reach Aotearoa managers to confirm that they were ready to begin delivering the survey. The assessments included examination of recruitment technique, interview delivery and incident description recording.

Respondents were required to sign a consent form to confirm that they knew participation was confidential, no identifiable information would be included in any reports, and that their answers were protected by the Privacy Act 2020. Interviewers were also given the opportunity to record any observations, such as the presence of other people during the interview, the duration they were present for and if they were involved in the survey process.



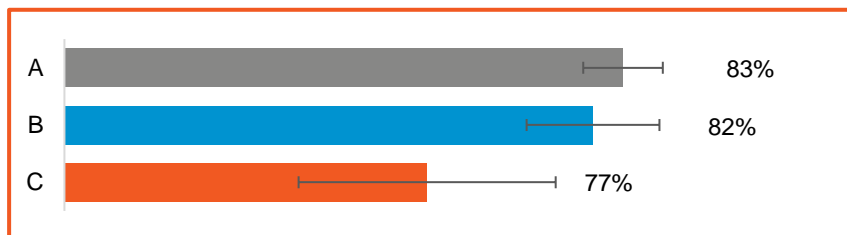
A factsheet was offered to respondents at the end of the survey. The factsheet provided an explanation of the criminal justice system and services available to support victims.

## 1.8 Interpreting results

The NZCVS is a survey based on a representative sample of the Aotearoa New Zealand population. As for any sample survey, there are limits to the data. The data is presented with reference to the following statistical concepts to aid interpretation and provide context.

**Confidence intervals** are used to show how reliable estimates are. They indicate the range of values above and below the estimate, between which the actual value is likely to fall.<sup>9</sup> This range that estimates are likely to fall within is called the **margin of error**.

Confidence intervals are displayed as bars around estimates in **graphs** in this report. For example, in the graph below, the confidence intervals around each of the estimates illustrate the range in which the true values are likely to fall. While the estimate for Group A is 83%, the confidence interval reflects that it is likely to fall between 82% and 85%. The estimate for Group C has a wider confidence interval than Group A, which means there is more uncertainty around it (it is likely to fall between 73% and 81%).



**Statistical significance** describes whether differences between estimates for different population groups is the result of sampling or reflects true differences in the populations. One estimate is described as statistically significantly different from another when their confidence intervals do not overlap. When the confidence intervals of two estimates do overlap, the difference between the estimates is described as not statistically significant. This is a more conservative approach than a formal statistical test.

The colour coding used to indicate statistical significance in the graphs is described below. See Appendix A for more information on data and methods.

In the graph above, the estimates for Group A and Group B have confidence intervals that are overlapping. This means that the estimates are described as not statistically significant. The confidence intervals around estimates for Group A and Group C are not overlapping, so the difference between them is statistically significant.

<sup>9</sup> Ninety-five percent confidence intervals are used, which means that we can be 95% confident that the true figure lies within the confidence interval provided.

### Colour coding in graphs

The following colour scheme is used to highlight statistical significance of differences of estimates for groups from the total population.

	<b>All New Zealand adults</b> (victims and non-victims)
	<b>No statistically significant difference</b> from the New Zealand average (at 95% confidence level)
	<b>Statistically significant difference</b> from the New Zealand average (at 95% confidence level)

Note: Statistical testing is based on overlapping confidence intervals and not formal tests.

Answers to frequently asked questions may be found on the Ministry of Justice website – see <https://www.justice.govt.nz/assets/Documents/Publications/NZCVS-FAQs.pdf>

If you have any feedback or questions about NZCVS results, please email us on [nzcvcs@justice.govt.nz](mailto:nzcvcs@justice.govt.nz)

## 2 Introduction

### 2.1 Reducing harm and improving wellbeing

One of the transformational opportunities that the Ministry of Justice includes in its strategic priorities for 2019–2024 (Ministry of Justice 2020) is addressing family violence and sexual violence and working to improve the justice response for people impacted by family or sexual violence. The Ministry is also one of ten government agencies that make up Te Puna Aonui,<sup>10</sup> which is delivering Te Aorerekura | the National Strategy to Eliminate Family Violence and Sexual Violence.

The Ministry has an internal work programme to improve the experiences of participants going through family violence and sexual violence proceedings. The aim of this work programme is to ensure people affected by family violence and sexual violence feel safe, supported and informed during their involvement with the court and other justice services.

The NZCVS supports this national strategy, the internal work programme and more by providing information about the current state of crime and victimisation in Aotearoa New Zealand. The NZCVS contains information on the prevalence and incidence of offending and other controlling behaviours by intimate partners and other family/whānau members. The NZCVS is one of the key Aotearoa New Zealand-based sources of information about peoples' experiences of unreported crime.

The NZCVS enables victims to share their feelings and perceptions of the incidents experienced and how these may have affected their lives. This allows the Ministry to contribute to the key Te Aorerekura Action to “continuously develop and improve the learning system through the collection of evidence and voices”.

The goal of this report is to understand which adults are impacted by family violence (which includes controlling behaviours) to inform prevention measures, primary interventions, and responses that meet the diverse and intersectional needs of victims. Monitoring the scale of family violence over time and across different population groups is also important for understanding the level of need across communities and tracking the impact of initiatives aimed at reducing family violence.

### 2.2 Controlling behaviours: an element of family violence

Previous NZCVS reports describe how many New Zealand adults are victims of criminal offending by family/whānau members. However, family violence involves a much broader pattern of behaviour than what is captured by criminal offences. Reporting on the prevalence of these broader patterns of behaviour is crucial to informing the response to family violence.

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<sup>10</sup> See <https://tepunaaonui.govt.nz/>

This section outlines what controlling behaviour is, how it can be used to coerce, isolate and harm, and its context in Aotearoa New Zealand and internationally.

Controlling behaviour is used to coerce and isolate an individual, therefore it is personal and differs for each victim. A perpetrator uses their knowledge of the victim to tailor their tactics in a way that targets their sense of agency, as well as targeting other aspects of the victim's life that binds them to their perpetrator, such as children and financial security (Stark 2007). The intention is to punish, harm or control the victim, and the effects are cumulative.

The fifth report of the Family Violence Death Review Committee (FVDRC) states that the more impactful dynamics in the patterns of intimate partner violence are coercive and controlling behaviours, and physical abuse is not always the defining feature (FVDRC 2016). The report goes on to say that family violence is a form of "social entrapment", and there are three dimensions of this entrapment:

- social isolation, fear and coercion such as threats, tracking the victim or using children or pets as a way to control the victim
- indifference and apathy of institutions towards victims
- structural inequities of gender, class and racism.

These reinforce the power the abusive person has over the victim and limit victims' opportunities to seek safety from the violence (FVDRC 2016). By focusing on offences, the criminal justice system often privileges incidents of physical violence, and sentencing is then reactive to that incident rather than the wider pattern of harm, including controlling behaviours, the victim may be facing (FVDRC 2016).

Gender stereotypes and cultural norms often impact coercive and controlling behaviour. In societies and cultures where women are seen as subordinate to men, some men can feel threatened by a woman's social or economic independence (Stark 2007). Due to the division of power that comes with gender norms and a male's sense of entitlement that may come with this, Stark (2007) suggests that some men exhibit coercive and controlling behaviours because they believe they need to protect their privileges against female cultural autonomy, independence and equality.

While family violence is often looked at from this gender perspective and Western worldview, Wilson et al (2019) explored how this can differ for Māori women. Māori women living with violence have different experiences to other women, as they are faced with the further complexities that come with living in a country with ongoing colonisation, such as social marginalisation, racism and economic deprivation. In addition to this, Māori women fear seeking help will put their children at risk of being taken into state care. Ultimately, Māori women are trapped not only by their partners but also at the system level too.

While intimate partner violence is more often reported by women and is widely known as a gendered phenomenon, Walker et al (2019) found that 48.6% of male participants in their study reported "boundary crossing" in a relationship. This term described any behaviour that violates or restricts a person's rights and was used to avoid language that men may perceive as gendered and impacting masculinity.

While common in intimate partner relationships, these behaviours can be seen in other family/whānau relationships, especially where there is a power imbalance. Te Tari Kaumātua | Office for Seniors (2015) found that 1 in 10 older people reported a form of abuse, mostly linked to vulnerability and coercion. The FVDRC's seventh report also outlines disability as an important consideration when addressing a person's or a family/whānau context and violence. Family/whānau often plays a part in the care of disabled people, and this can sometimes put disabled people in a vulnerable position. They are at risk of experiencing controlling behaviours that can be enabled by legal means, especially behaviours around finances. Disability can also put additional stressors on a family/whānau, especially if there is limited support or resources for them to go about their lives, and this can exacerbate any patterns of violence that exist.

Whittington and Turner (2022) and Barber (1996) described parental control, another form of control in familial relationships, in which coercion is used to negatively impact a child's emotional development or manage their behaviour. Whittington and Turner (2022) go on to say that parental control may have impacts on the child's understanding of power dynamics in their own relationships in the future, therefore the harm may continue into the next generation.

The analysis in this report outlines the prevalence rates for specific acts of controlling behaviour and the resulting harm in Aotearoa New Zealand. In addition, the prevalence rates of these behaviours by different perpetrator relationships are explored, as well as the contexts that may surround some of these experiences.

## 2.3 Help-seeking for offending, and controlling behaviours

It is widely acknowledged that the burden of help-seeking falls to the victim, including whether and how to act (Tolmie 2018). It is often assumed by the public that the victim has the choice or opportunity to get help (Tolmie 2018). This assumption doesn't recognise the context of the victim's life, the trauma they have experienced, and the control they may be under as a consequence of coercive and controlling behaviours, including the threat of physical violence or other harm. A specific example of this impacting mothers is known as the "failure to protect" paradigm (FVDRC 2016), where mothers are perceived as neglecting their children if they remain with abusive partners or don't seek help, and it does not consider other barriers a mother may face. Precarious life circumstances and limited resources are additional barriers for help-seeking, and this is not often addressed in a criminal justice context (Tolmie 2018).

Something that can compound these barriers is the way a support service or organisation responds to a victim's help-seeking. Past experiences that prove to be unhelpful or don't provide enduring support, as well as those services that may minimise a victim's experience, will deter further help-seeking (FVDRC 2022). A survey by the Backbone Collective in 2019 asked victim-survivors about their experiences with formal support services. Over half said that the services lacked knowledge of family violence, and 40% said the services actually made their situation worse (Backbone Collective 2020). The Backbone Collective's (2020)

report on the survey results states that support services were most beneficial when they understood family violence and were victim-survivor-centric, and the victim-survivor's safety and needs were most important.

The FVDRC's sixth report describes the importance of trauma- and violence-informed services. By understanding the behaviours of men who use violence, services can more effectively address barriers to help-seeking for people who use violence, while also being tailored to the complexities of the trauma that the people and community have experienced (FVDRC 2020).

While this report looks at help-seeking from the perspective of the victim, it is important to understand that help must be sought from all sides, especially the perpetrators. Eliminating family violence across generations is contingent on effective support services and system responses.

Fanslow and Robinson (2010) state that ultimately services cannot be provided to all who need it and that prevention is key to the problem. Changing societal beliefs around relationships and roles of women and men should be at the forefront of any preventative effort (Fanslow and Robinson 2010).

The analysis in this report explores help-seeking behaviours of (a) victims who experienced harms or specific acts of controlling behaviour, and (b) victims of offending by family/whānau members. Understanding this context – for example, the presence or absence of offending – may clarify who is getting help and from where, and who is coming across barriers to help-seeking and requires greater access.

## 2.4 Safety and community

This section of the report reviews the importance of community, both demographic and geographic, for those who are victims of family violence, both directly and indirectly. Community mobilisation is an approach that will enable communities to change attitudes and behaviours towards family violence (Hann and Trewartha 2015) and develop their understanding of different experiences and responses (FVDRC 2020). The way people in the community respond to family violence help-seeking can have an impact on whether victims will seek informal help in future (Backbone Collective 2020). Understanding the prevalence of family violence and whether members of the community get involved will inform appropriate approaches to be planned and implemented where they are most required. Organisations and services can utilise already strong communities and collaborate on strategies to prevent harm and violence.

The FVDRC's sixth report builds on this idea of community mobilisation. The FVDRC believes that developing and supporting community organisations will benefit both victims and people who use violence, but these organisations will need resourcing and training. Community-based prevention will need to work with nationwide initiatives to focus on the structural inequities and other social norms that can lead to violence. Fanslow and Robinson

(2010) state that more discussion and knowledge at the community level around the seriousness of violence and potential risk factors may support women seeking help and support family and friends to respond.

The analysis in this report examines feelings of safety with family/whānau, and if respondents know others who may be experiencing aspects of family violence. All NZCVS respondents were asked these questions to provide a greater understanding of how common family violence may be in their community and how often others in the community are utilised for support and help.

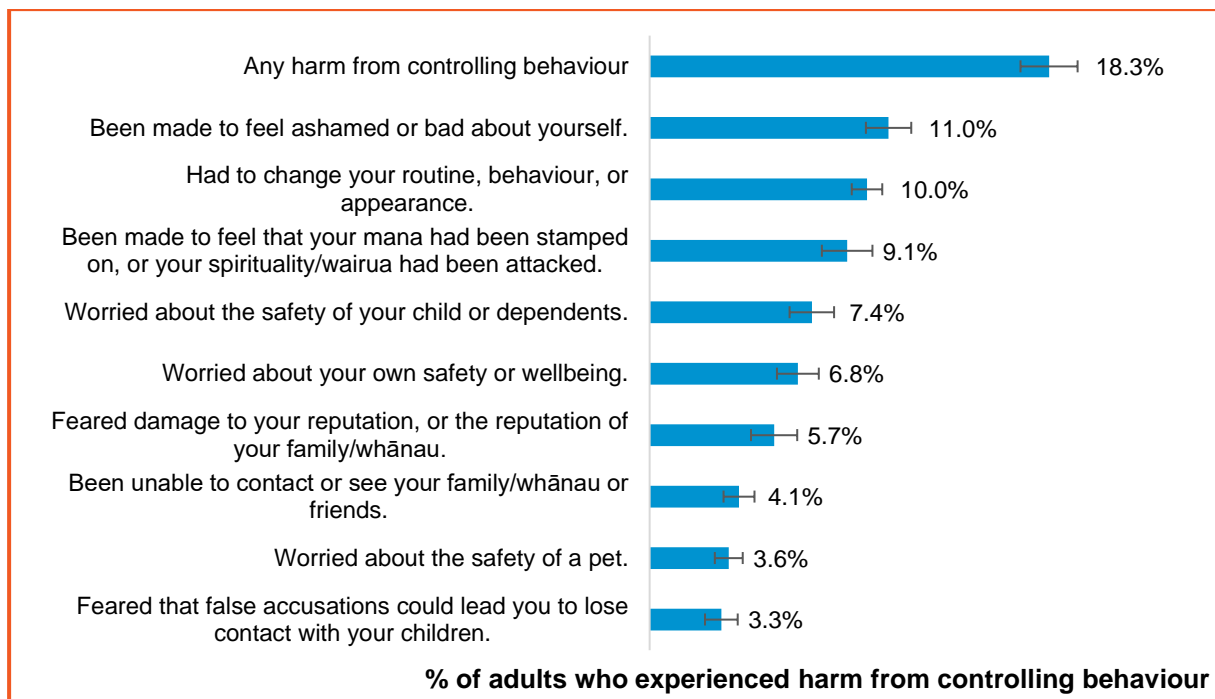
# 3 Results

In terms of family violence, while males can be victims, it is females who are particularly impacted, with males often being the ones using violence (FVDRC, 2016). The results presented in this report are an initial exploration of the data collected during Cycle 4 of the NZCVS, so while we acknowledge the gendered nature of family violence and coercive control, we conduct overall population analyses for official statistics in addition to the specific gender analyses.

## 3.1 Prevalence of harm

Eighteen percent of the respondents had experienced at least one specific harm as a result of controlling behaviour perpetrated by a partner, ex-partner or family/whānau member (Figure 3.1). The most common harm experienced was “being made to feel ashamed or bad about yourself”, with 11% of adults experiencing this.

**Figure 3.1 Percentage of adults who experienced harm from controlling behaviour perpetrated by a partner, ex-partner or family/whānau member in the last 12 months**

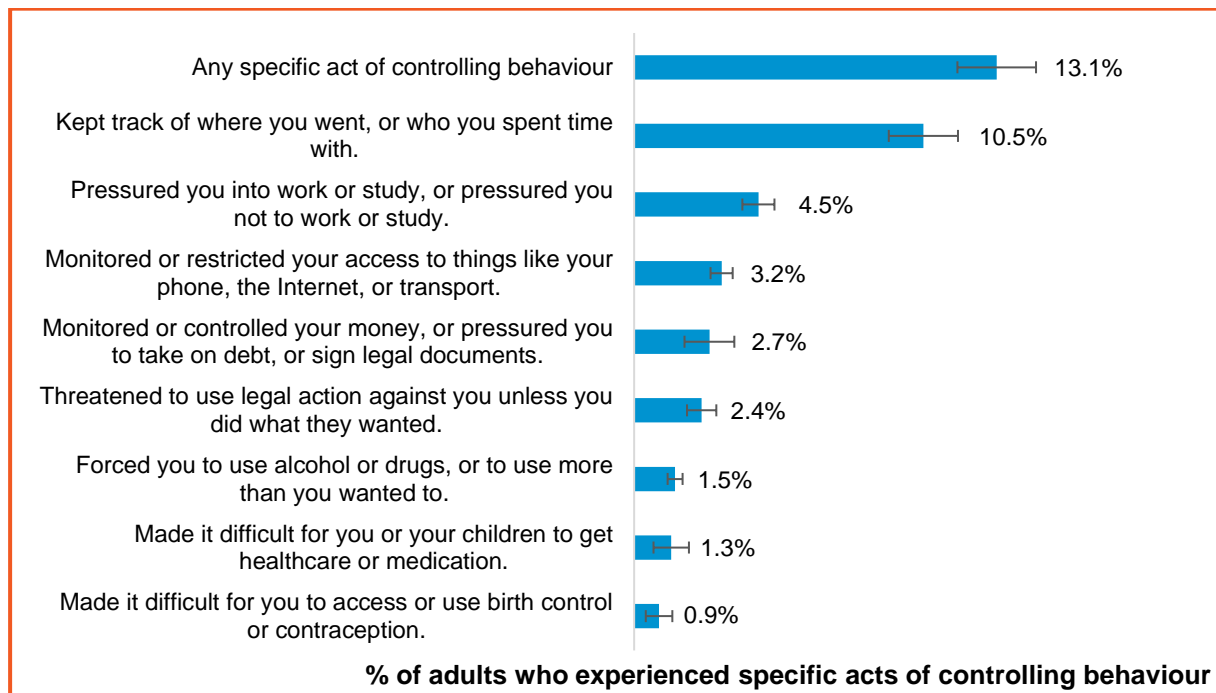




## 3.2 Prevalence of controlling behaviours

As reported in the [NZCVS Cycle 4 core report](#), 13% of adults experienced at least one specific act of controlling behaviour perpetrated by a partner, ex-partner or family/whānau member (Figure 3.2). The most prevalent act perpetrated by a partner, ex-partner or family/whānau member was “kept track of where you went, or who you spent time with”, with nearly 11% of adults experiencing this.

**Figure 3.2 Percentage of adults who experienced specific acts of controlling behaviour perpetrated by a partner, ex-partner or family/whānau member in the last 12 months**



## 3.3 Prevalence of specific harm and controlling behaviours with offending by family members

Of adults who experienced offending by a family member (including intimate partners), 97% said they had also experienced at least one harm as a result of controlling behaviour. Close to 90% of adults who experienced offending by family members had “been made to feel ashamed or bad about themselves” and about 86% had “been made to feel that their mana had been stamped on, or their spirituality/wairua had been attacked”.

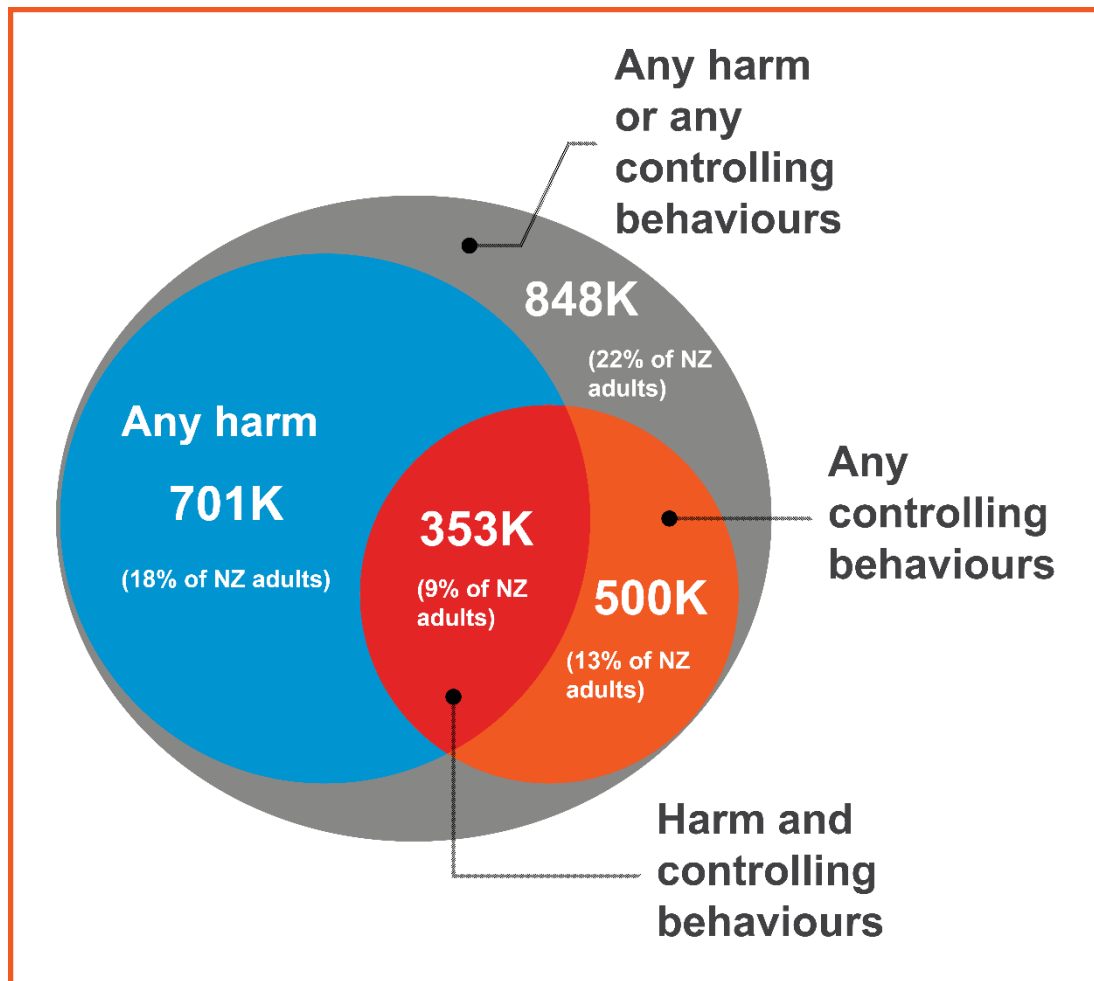
Just under 80% of adults who experienced offending by family members also experienced at least one specific act of controlling behaviour. Around 60% had a family member “keep track of where they went, or who they spent time with” and just over 40% had a family member “threaten to use legal action against them unless they did what that person had wanted”.

## 3.4 Prevalence of controlling behaviours and harm

Figure 3.3 shows that 9% of New Zealand adults experienced both controlling behaviour and harms, and 42% of the victims of acts of or harms from controlling behaviour experienced both.

The prevalence rate of any specific acts of controlling behaviour or harm was 22% (Figure 3.3). Bisexual adults (57%), 15–29-year-olds (39%), and Māori adults (31%) were significantly more likely to experience harms or specific acts of controlling behaviour.

**Figure 3.3** Estimate of prevalence and prevalence rate of any specific act of controlling behaviour, harm or both



As previously mentioned, the list of specific acts of controlling behaviour used by the NZCVS is not exhaustive. This is evidenced by the fact that nearly half of all adults who experienced harm related that harm to an intimate partner or family/whānau member's behaviour but did not select a specific act of behaviour. Almost 30% of respondents who experienced specific acts of controlling behaviour did not experience any of the harms that were listed. The list of harms in the NZCVS is not exhaustive, but it is possible that some of the behaviours were

seen as harmless by the person experiencing them, and therefore were not reported. In addition to this, and as previously discussed, family violence experiences are a gendered phenomenon, so those who experienced controlling behaviours and not harm may be males reporting experiences that they perceived as controlling but were not of the same coercive nature that causes harm. For example, the results show that the prevalence rate of controlling behaviours without harms is higher for males (5%) than for females (3%). While this difference is not statistically significant, we continue to accumulate data and, in the future, can test this hypothesis with a larger sample.

For this reason, subsequent sections in the results will mainly focus on harms from controlling behaviours. Occasionally, specific acts of controlling behaviour will be analysed, but only when harm was also experienced, as these are likely the best measure of family violence.<sup>11</sup>

## 3.5 Demographics of controlling behaviours and harm

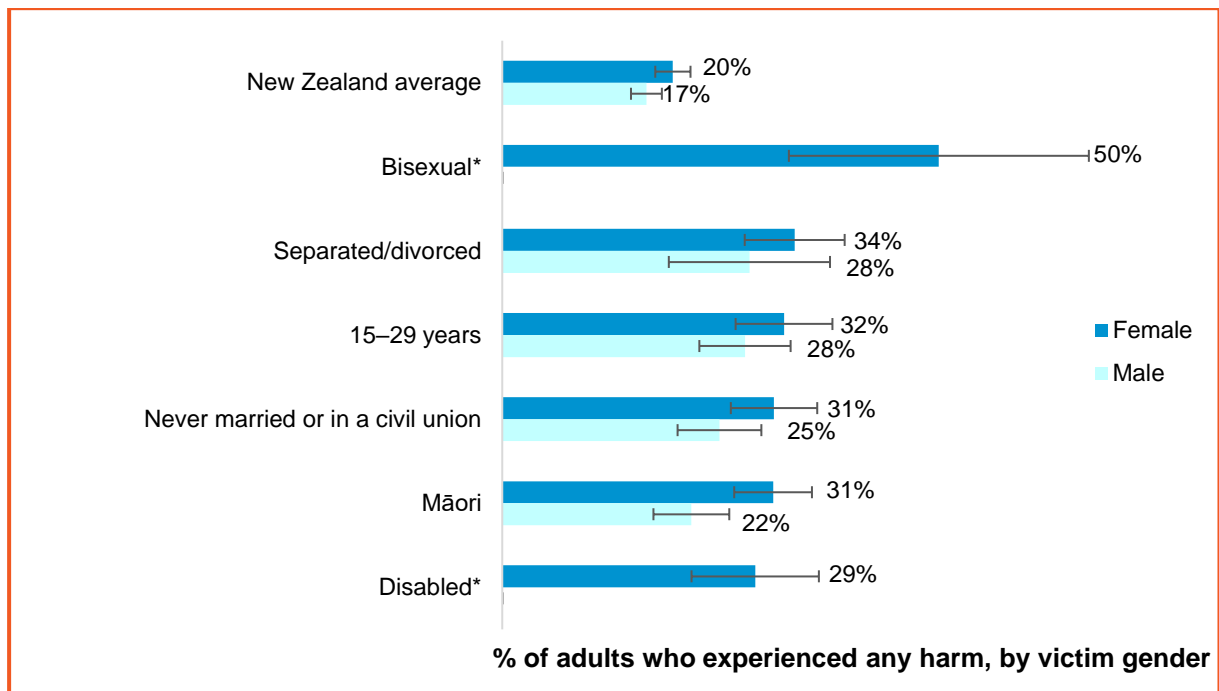
Figure 3.4 shows the groups of adults who were more likely to experience any harms from controlling behaviour. All female groups saw higher prevalence rates than males. Māori females experienced significantly higher prevalence rates of harm than Māori men, and while no other differences between females and males were statistically significant, adding more cycles of data in future will allow for further analysis of these differences.

Figure 3.5 shows the groups of adults who were more likely to experience specific acts of controlling behaviour. Once again, nearly all female groups saw higher rates of controlling behaviour. Young males (aged 15–29) saw a higher prevalence rate than the females, but it is important to consider the context of the behaviours; for example, whether the behaviours have been perpetrated by a partner or ex-partner or by other family/whānau members.

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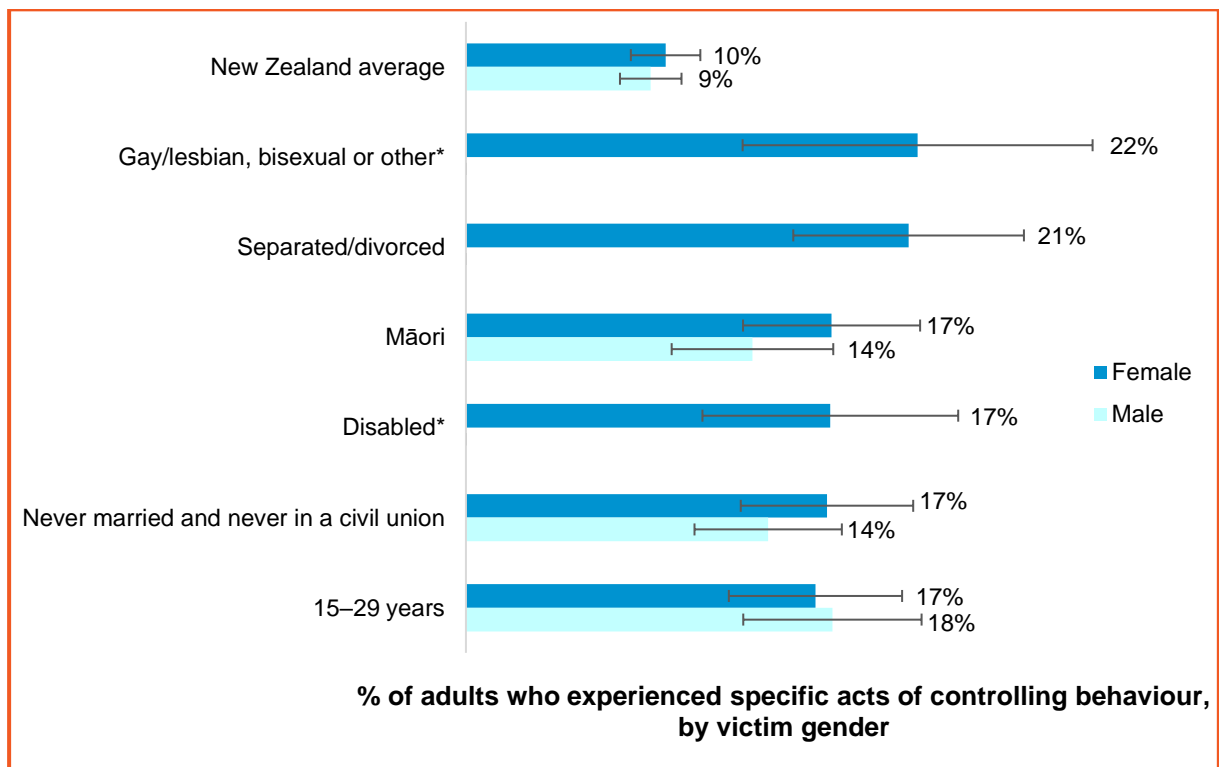
<sup>11</sup> Section 3.10 on help-seeking looks at both harm and specific acts of controlling behaviour together.

**Figure 3.4 Percentage of adults who experienced any harm, by victim gender and by personal factor**



\* The rates for disabled males and bisexual males were suppressed due to high margin of error.

**Figure 3.5 Percentage of adults who experienced specific acts of controlling behaviour (occurring with harm), by victim gender and by personal factor**

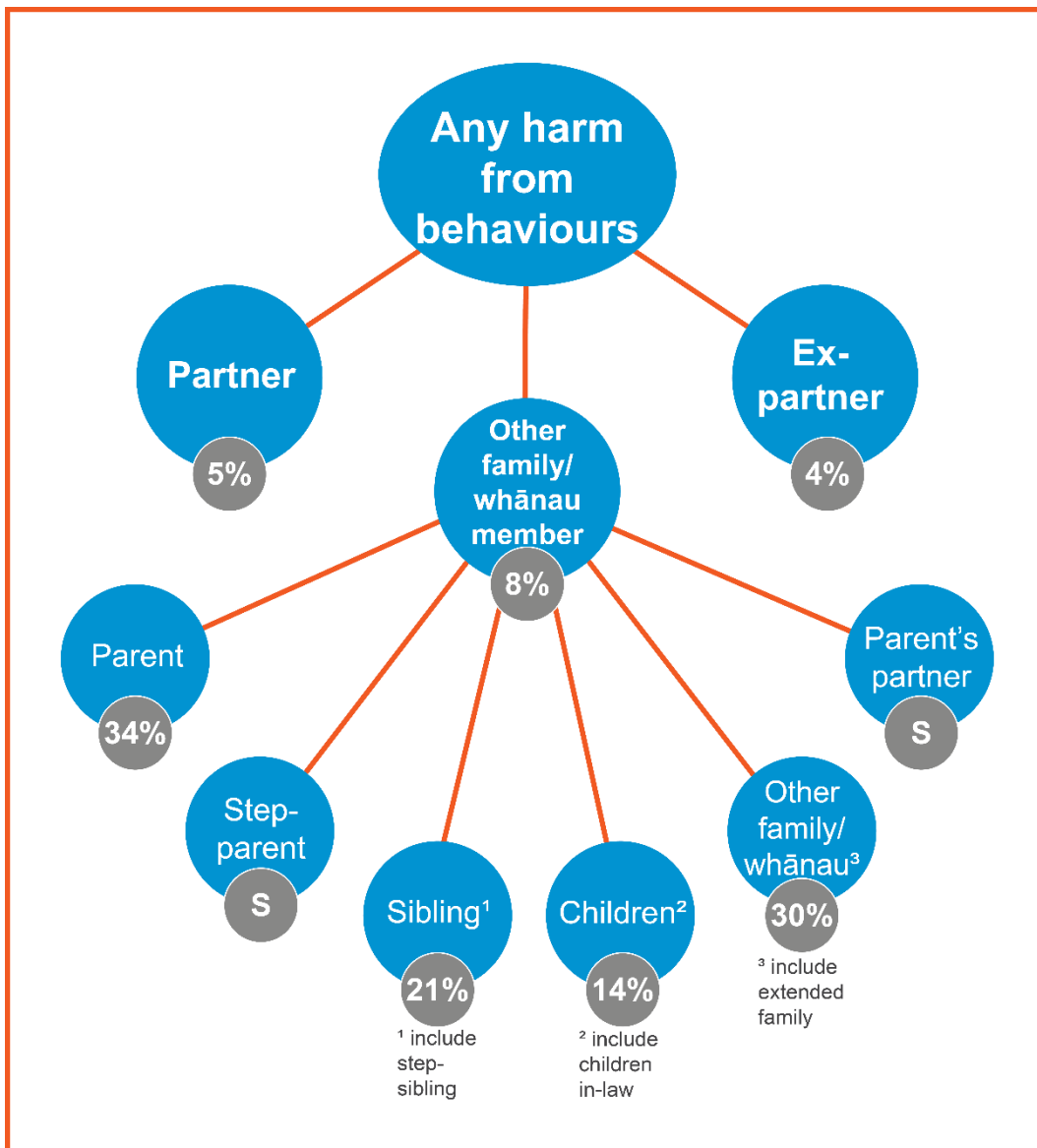


\* The rates for males with diverse sexualities, separated/divorced males, and disabled males were suppressed due to high margin of error

### 3.6 Perpetrators of harm

Behaviour resulting in harm was most often perpetrated by family/whānau members who were not an intimate partner. The prevalence rate of harm by other family/whānau members was 8% (Figure 3.6), which was significantly higher than the rates for partners and ex-partners (5% and 4%, respectively). When the respondent indicated experiencing behaviours by other family/whānau members, the most common relationship was the parent of the respondent (34%), followed by other family/whānau member (including extended family), who were the perpetrators about 30% of the time. If parent, step-parent and parent’s partner are grouped together, the prevalence rate of harm perpetrated by this group is 41%.

**Figure 3.6 Percentage of adults who experienced any harm, by perpetrator relationship**



S = Suppressed because the percentage has a margin of error greater than or equal to 20 percentage points, or the count estimate/mean has a relative sampling error greater than or equal to 50%, which is considered too unreliable for general use.

Māori adults and those aged 20–29 were significantly more likely to experience harms as a result of an ex-partner’s behaviour. Finally, Māori adults, those with diverse sexualities, and those aged 15–29 were more likely to experience harm as a result of another family/whānau member’s behaviour.

The specific types of harm as a result of behaviours that had the highest prevalence rates across different perpetrator relationships (Table 3.1) included:

- Had to change your routine, behaviour, or appearance
- Been made to feel ashamed or bad about yourself
- Been made to feel that your mana had been stamped on, or your spirituality/wairua had been attacked.

**Table 3.1 Prevalence rate of harms, by respondent’s relationship to perpetrator**

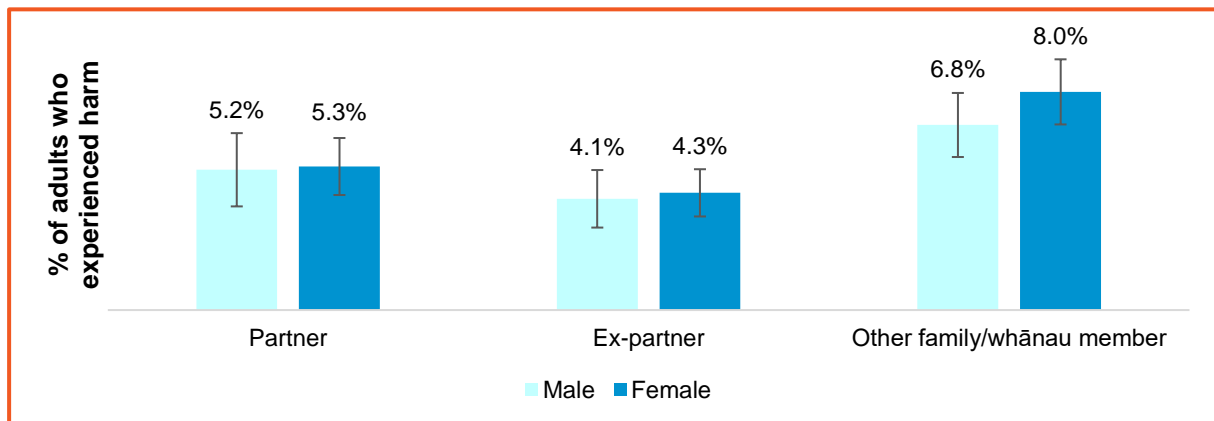
Harms	Relationship to perpetrator		
	Partner (%)	Ex-partner (%)	Other family/whānau member (%)
Had to change your routine, behaviour, or appearance	3.3	2.3	2.8
Been made to feel ashamed or bad about yourself	2.8	2.6	3.2
Been made to feel that your mana had been stamped on, or your spirituality/wairua had been attacked	2.0	2.2	3.4
Worried about your own safety or wellbeing	0.9	1.8	1.8
Feared damage to your reputation, or the reputation of your family or whānau	0.7	1.6	1.8
Worried about the safety of your child or dependents	0.5	1.7	2.0
Feared that false accusations could lead you to lose contact with your children	0.4	1.2	0.8
Been unable to contact or see your family/whānau or friends	S	0.7	1.5
Worried about the safety of a pet	S	0.4	0.7

S = Suppressed because the percentage has a margin of error greater than or equal to 20 percentage points, or the count estimate/mean has a relative sampling error greater than or equal to 50%, which is considered too unreliable for general use.

## Differences between males and females

When looking at males and females separately,<sup>12</sup> females were more likely to experience harm as a result of controlling behaviour than males regardless of the relationship to the perpetrator. However, none of these differences between males and females were statistically significant (Figure 3.7).

**Figure 3.7 Percentage of adults who experienced harms from controlling behaviour, by gender and relationship to perpetrator**



When separating by gender, there were no personal factors that meant an individual was more likely to experience harm from controlling behaviour perpetrated by partners. The female groups who were more likely to experience harm from controlling behaviour perpetrated by ex-partners included young people (aged 15–29), Māori, those who were separated, and those who had never been married or in a civil union. The male groups who were more likely to experience harm from the behaviours of ex-partners were young people (aged 15–29) and those who had never been married or in a civil union.

Both young males and females (aged 15–29) were significantly more likely than the average to experience harm from controlling behaviour that was perpetrated by other family/whānau members. Māori females, females with diverse sexualities, and those who had never been married or in a civil union were also more likely to experience harm perpetrated by other family/whānau members.

## Victims of multiple harms from controlling behaviour

Half (52%) of victims of harm by partners were victims of multiple harms from controlling behaviour. This was 75% for victims of ex-partners and 59% for victims of other family/whānau members.

Among victims who experienced multiple harms by other family/whānau members, 70% of female victims experienced multiple harms, which was a significantly higher rate compared to 45% of male victims.

<sup>12</sup> Results for gender-diverse adults were suppressed due to high margin of error.

## 3.7 Perpetrators of controlling behaviours

The specific controlling behaviours that had the highest prevalence rates across different perpetrator relationships (Table 3.2) included:

- Kept track of where you went, or who you spent time with
- Pressured you into work or study, or pressured you not to work or study.

**Table 3.2 Prevalence rate of specific acts of controlling behaviour, by respondent's relationship to perpetrator**

Controlling behaviour	Relationship to perpetrator		
	Partner (%)	Ex-partner (%)	Other family/whānau member (%)
Kept track of where you went, or who you spent time with	2.5	1.9	2.1
Pressured you into work or study or pressured you not to work or study	0.7	0.4	1.1
Monitored or controlled your money, or pressured you to take on debt, or sign legal documents	0.6	0.5	0.7
Monitored or restricted your access to things like your phone, the Internet, or transport	0.5	0.6	0.5
Made it difficult for you or your children to get healthcare or medication	S	S	S
Made it difficult for you to access or use birth control or contraception	S	S	S
Forced you to use alcohol or drugs, or to use more than you wanted to	S	S	S
Threatened to use legal action against you unless you did what they wanted	S	1.0	S

S = Suppressed because the percentage has a margin of error greater than or equal to 20 percentage points, or the count estimate/mean has a relative sampling error greater than or equal to 50%, which is considered too unreliable for general use.

Among New Zealand adults, the prevalence of controlling behaviours is similar across relationships (partner is 2.3%, ex-partner is 2.2%, other family/whānau member is 2.4%).

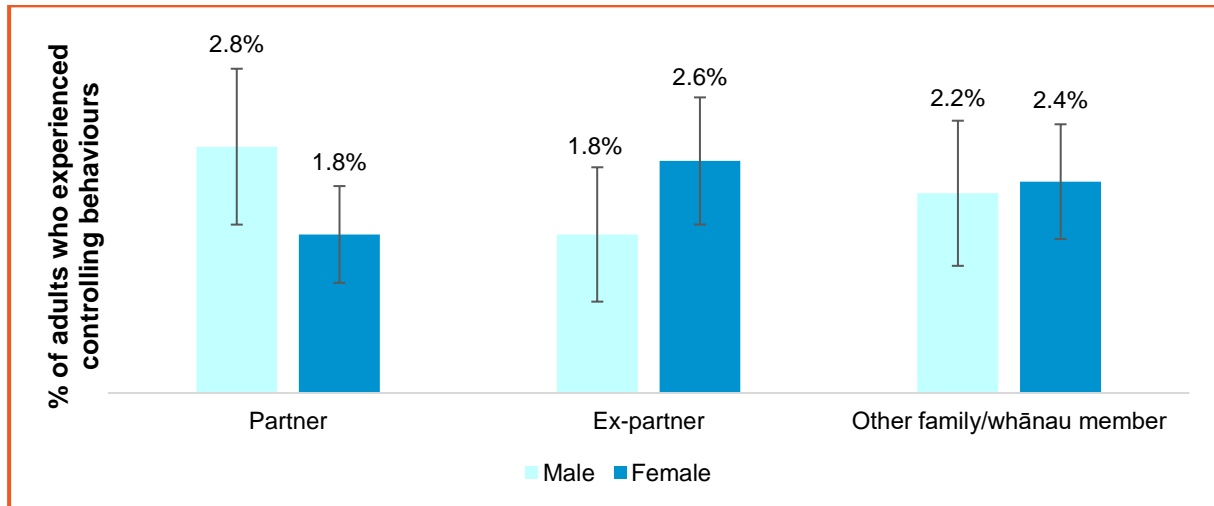
Young people (aged 15–19) were significantly more likely to experience controlling behaviours by other family/whānau members.



## Differences between males and females

Males experienced higher rates of controlling behaviour than females when the perpetrators were partners,<sup>13</sup> while females experienced higher rates of controlling behaviours than males when the perpetrator was an ex-partner. When the perpetrator was another family/whānau member, the rates were similar for both males and females (Figure 3.8).

**Figure 3.8 Percentage of adults who experienced controlling behaviours, by gender and by relationship to perpetrator**



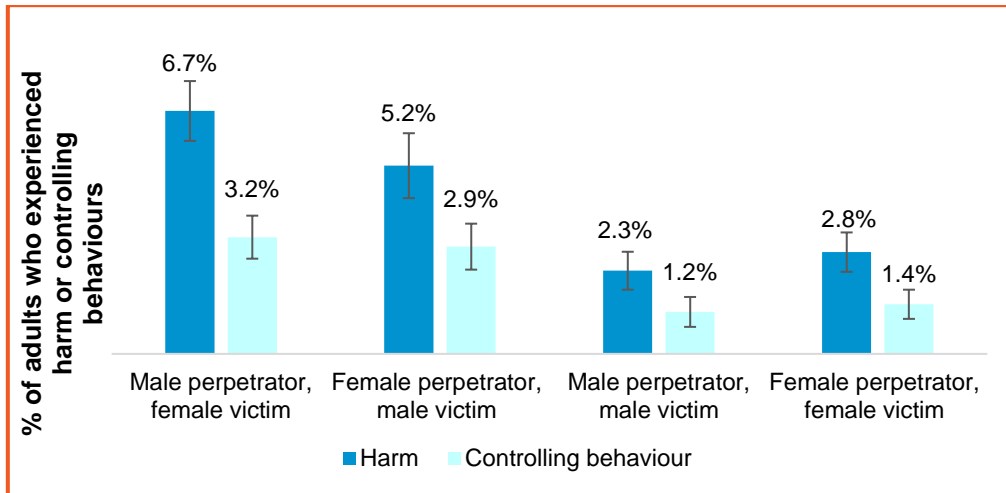
## 3.8 Perpetrators and victims by gender

Among all victims of harm, males were the perpetrator and females were the victim 7% of the time, and females were the perpetrator and males were the victim 5% of the time (Figure 3.9). The perpetrator and victim gender breakdown was also analysed by familial relationship (Figure 3.10 and Figure 3.11). Male-perpetrated harm against females saw the highest rates across all gender makeups (Figure 3.10).

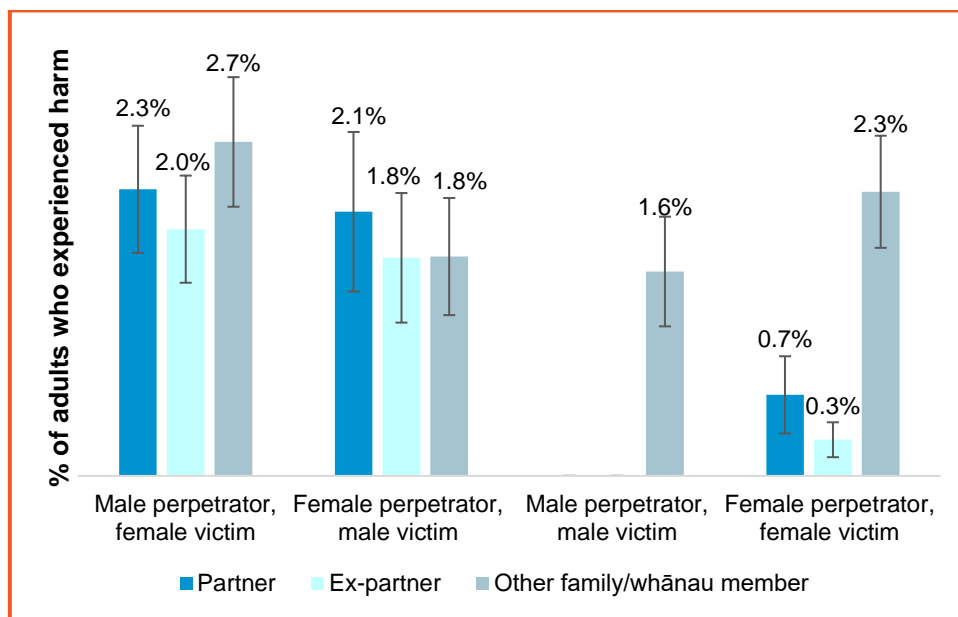
It is important to note that understanding the dynamics and context of a relationship can change how these numbers are viewed; for instance, whether a behaviour is a victim's response to a perpetrator. Also, gender norms related to a sense of entitlement and masculinity mean that men often over-report and women under-report (Kimmel 2002), and given that the NZCVS is self-reported, these results should be looked at with this limitation in mind.

<sup>13</sup> Results for gender-diverse adults were suppressed due to high margin of error.

**Figure 3.9 Percentage of adults who experienced harm or controlling behaviours, by gender of perpetrator and victim**

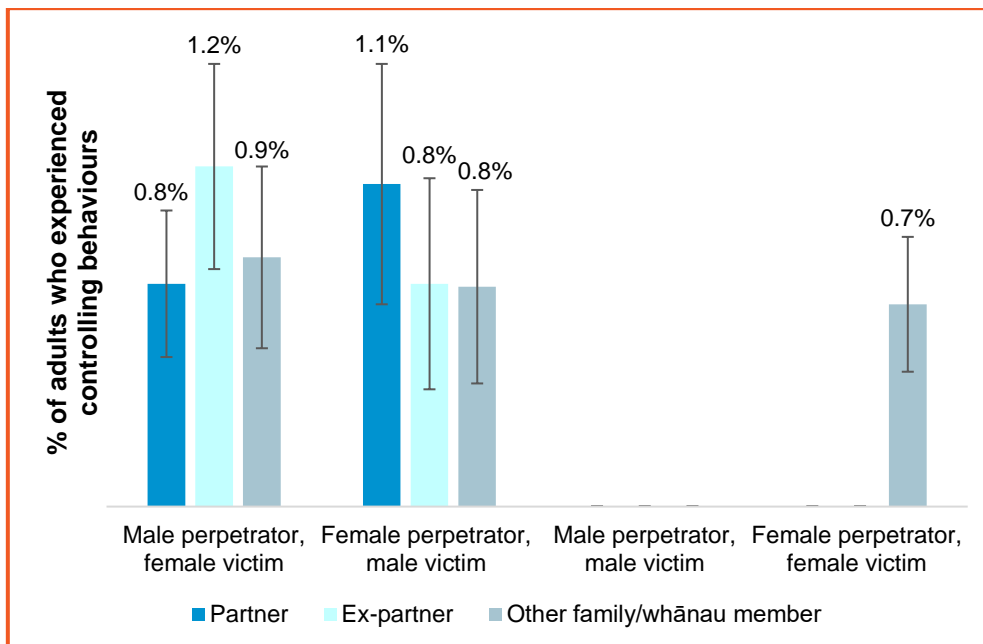


**Figure 3.10 Percentage of adults who experienced harm, by gender of perpetrator and victim and by relationship**



\* Partner and ex-partner rates for “male perpetrator, male victim” were suppressed due to large margin of error.

**Figure 3.11 Percentage of adults who experienced controlling behaviours, by gender of perpetrator and victim and by relationship**



\* Partner, ex-partner and other family/whānau member rates for “male perpetrator, male victim” and partner and ex-partner rates for “female perpetrator, female victim” were suppressed due to large margin of error.

## 3.9 Perpetrators and “do not wish to answer” responses

In the survey, respondents are given the option to select what their relationship is with the person who harmed them or used a specific controlling behaviour. There is an additional response of “do not wish to answer”. The group who selected this option for at least one behaviour or harm may be choosing not to disclose the perpetrator for a reason – for example, they don’t feel safe – so it is important to understand the prevalence of this group.

Among adults who experienced any harm, 31% chose not to disclose the perpetrator relationship. While there were no groups who were significantly more likely to choose not to disclose the perpetrator relationship, females (33%), Pacific peoples (41%), people aged 15–19 (33%), and people aged 40+ (35%) had the highest proportions of “do not wish to answer” responses. A greater sample size would be required for further analysis of these groups in future.

## 3.10 Context of harm

The following analysis describes the experiences of all respondents who indicated they had experienced at least one harm as a result of a partner, ex-partner or other family/whānau member’s behaviour.

Respondents who reported harm were asked further questions to establish whether discrimination and alcohol and/or other drug consumption could have contributed to the

perpetrator's behaviour. Questions were also asked about the impacts of the harm on their life, their perceptions of the harm (and the behaviours that caused it), and whether they contacted a health professional or the Police in response to the harm.

Victims who had experienced any harm were asked if they thought alcohol and/or other drugs contributed to the perpetrator's behaviour. Most respondents (59%) said no alcohol or other drugs were involved, while 21% said alcohol was involved and 15% said other drugs were involved. Females were more likely to say alcohol and/or other drugs contributed to the behaviour than males, though the difference was not statistically significant.

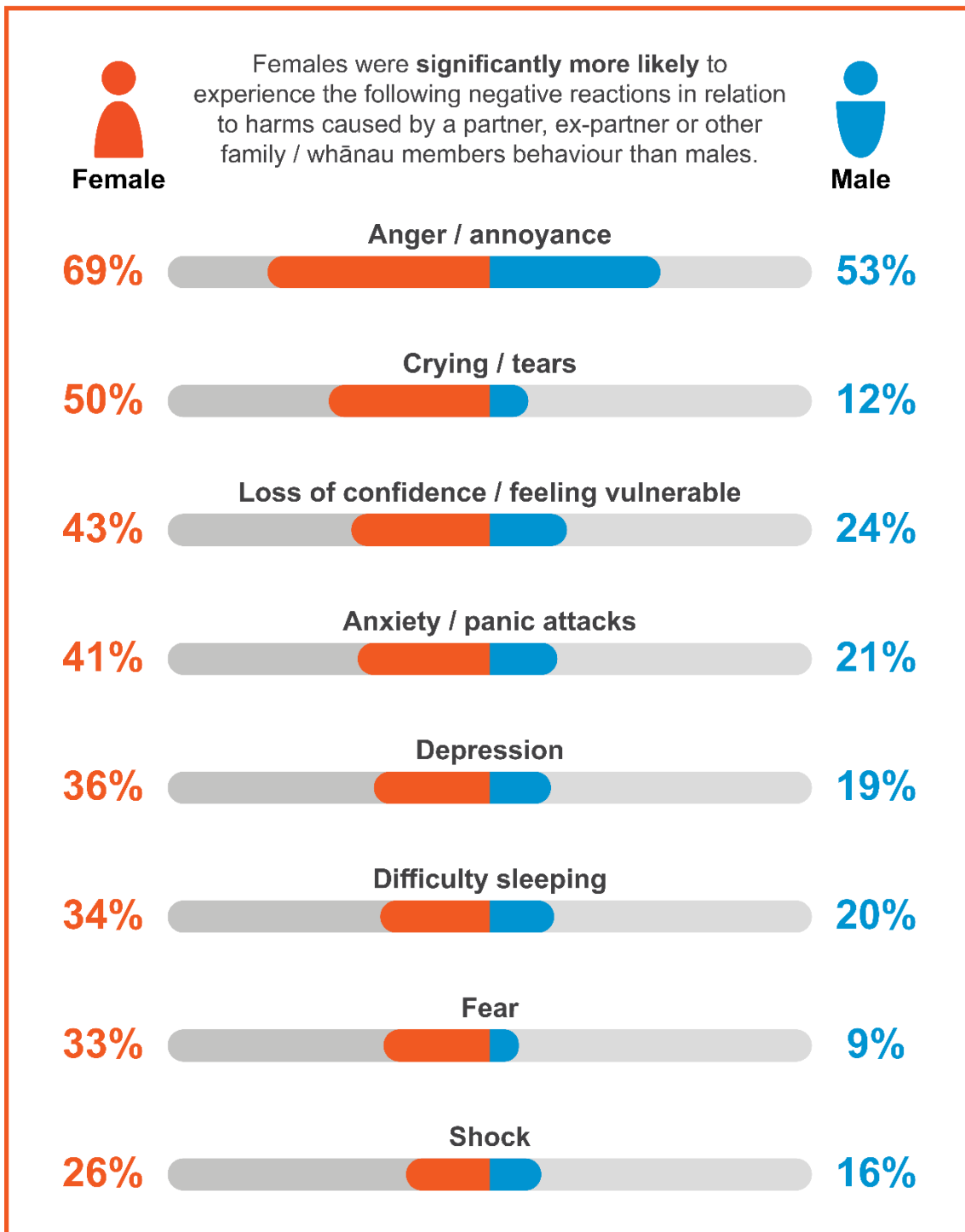
Victims were asked whether the behaviour towards them was driven by the perpetrator's attitudes towards aspects of their identity such as age and sex.

- Around 11% of respondents said that the behaviour was driven by the perpetrator's attitudes towards their sex.
- Nine percent of respondents said that the behaviour was driven by the perpetrator's attitudes towards their age.
- Nine percent said the behaviour was discriminatory against their religion/ethical beliefs or political opinion.
- Discrimination against race/ethnicity/nationality, sexuality/sexual orientation and disability was less common (5%, 5% and 3%, respectively).

Adults who identified themselves as neither Māori nor New Zealand European were significantly more likely than the New Zealand average to have experienced behaviours that were discriminatory against their race/ethnicity/nationality (12%), and males were significantly less likely than females and the New Zealand average to have experienced behaviours that were discriminatory to their sex (5%, compared to 15% for females).

Victims were asked about their reactions to the behaviours of family/whānau members or intimate partners. The most common reaction that was experienced was "anger/annoyance" (62%), followed by "loss of confidence/feeling vulnerable" (35%). Females were significantly more likely than males to experience many of these reactions, which reiterates the gendered nature of harm due to behaviour and that females feel these negative impacts at much higher rates than males. Males were significantly more likely to experience none of the reactions specified: 24% of men did not experience any of the reactions specified compared to 11% of women. Figure 3.12 shows the significantly higher prevalence rates of reactions as a result of behaviour and the associated harms for females compared with males.

**Figure 3.12 Percentage of adults who experienced reactions as a result of harm caused by a partner, ex-partner or family/whānau member’s behaviour, by gender and by reaction**



Twenty percent of the respondents had to take time off work as a result of the behaviours experienced, and 9% had to take time off from studying. Table 3.3 shows the prevalence rate of the impacts that harm had on the victims’ work or study.

**Table 3.3 Percentage of adults whose work or study was impacted because of controlling behaviours, by impact**

Work or study impact	% of adults
Took time off work	20.0
Took time off study	9.4
Unable to get work	3.9
Gave up work completely	4.1
Gave up study completely	4.2
Unable to enrol for study	S

S = Suppressed because the percentage has a margin of error greater than or equal to 20 percentage points, or the count estimate/mean has a relative sampling error greater than or equal to 50%, which is considered too unreliable for general use.

Just 15% of respondents thought the behaviour they experienced was a crime. Instead, 41% of respondents would describe the behaviour as “wrong, but not a crime” and 44% as “just something that happens”. Though not statistically significant, females were more likely to describe the behaviour as a crime compared to males (18% compared to 11%) and more likely to describe the behaviour as “wrong, but not a crime”, which was significantly different from males (49% compared to 32%). However, males were significantly more likely to describe the behaviour as “just something that happens” compared to females (57% compared with 33%). It is important to note here that while controlling behaviour that is coercive in nature *can* involve criminal offences such as stalking, threats of violence, and physical and sexual assault, the overarching patterns of controlling behaviour are not against the law in Aotearoa New Zealand.<sup>14</sup> Even when behaviour involves criminal offences, victims may not recognise it as such.

Nearly one quarter (24%) of respondents had spoken to a health professional in response to the behaviours. Separated adults (52%) were significantly more likely to speak to a health professional than the New Zealand average.

<sup>14</sup> Although the Family Violence Act recognises any pattern of coercive, controlling and harmful behaviour as family violence, it does not directly criminalise it. However, if a protection order is in place, any family violence is a breach of the order – which is a criminal offence.

### As a result of the controlling behaviours or harms experienced



**20%** of adults had to take time off work



**9%** of adults had to take time off from studying



**12%** of adults had spoken to the Police



**24%** of adults had spoken to a health professional

On average, adults who spoke to a health professional rated the helpfulness of talking to a health professional as 7 out of 10 (where 10 is very helpful and 0 is not helpful at all). Males (14%) were significantly less likely to speak to a health professional. Just under 12% of respondents had reported the behaviour to the Police.

On average, adults who experienced any harm rated the seriousness of the experience(s) 7 out of 10 (with 10 being very serious and 0 being not serious at all). Looking at these scores by gender, on average, females scored the experiences 8 out of 10 and males scored the experiences 6 out of 10.

## 3.11 Help-seeking by victims for family violence

The NZCVS asks victims of family violence if they sought help, and if so, where they sought help from – for example, family violence organisations and support services; family/whānau, friends or neighbours; workplaces; and other government agencies. The survey also asks about reasons a person may have for not seeking help from one of these places. This section gives a high-level overview of who is seeking help and who is not, and what the reasons for not seeking help may be.

The questions about help-seeking were asked to any respondents who had experienced family violence. This includes **any offending** by a family/whānau member or **specific acts of controlling behaviour or any harm**. Therefore, these questions can be used for comparisons between help-seekers and non-help-seekers and is not specific to those who experienced controlling behaviours or the harms from controlling behaviour.

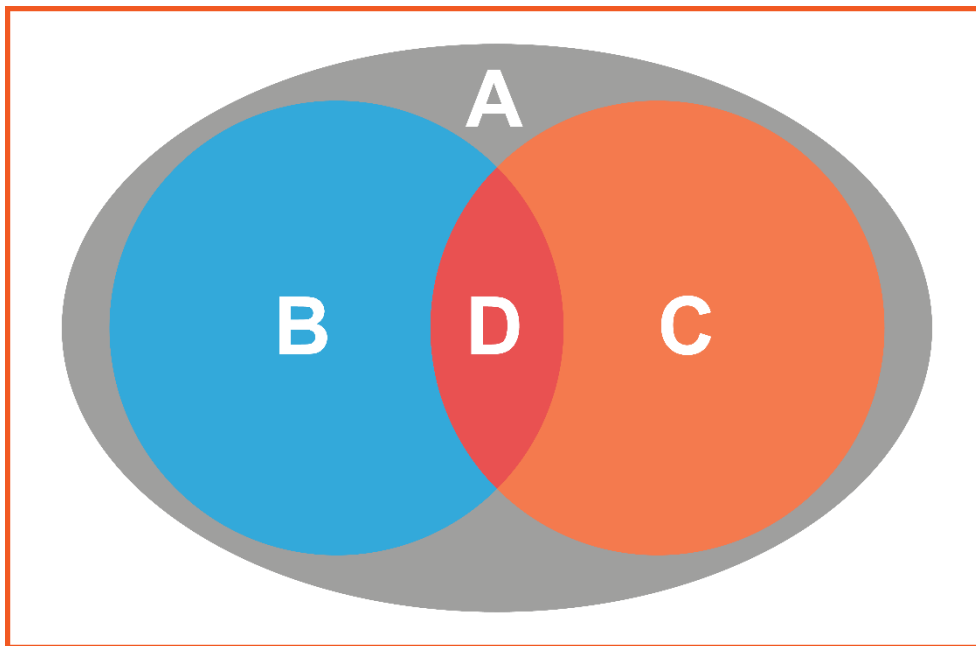
Figure 3.13 shows the overlap of the groups looked at (not to scale). The groups were defined as adults who had experienced<sup>15</sup>:

- any acts of controlling behaviour or harm **or** any offending by family/whānau members (Group A)
- **any** acts of controlling behaviour or harm (Group B)

<sup>15</sup> Formally,  $A = B + C - D$

- acts of controlling behaviour or harm **only** (Groups B–D)
- **any** offending by family/whānau members (as defined in section 1.3) (Group C)
- offending by family/whānau members **only** (Groups C–D)
- both acts of controlling behaviour or harm **and** offending by family/whānau members (Group D).

**Figure 3.13 Groups analysed for help-seeking behaviour (not to scale)**



The responses for adults who experienced offending by family/whānau members **only** were analysed, but the results were suppressed due to large margin of error. Some of the demographic, socio-economic and wellbeing factors within these groups were also suppressed due to the small sample size and subsequent large margin of error, so these will not be reported. It is worth noting that the overall prevalence of harms (18%) and controlling behaviours (13%) is much higher than that of offending by family/whānau members (1.7%). This reflects the fact that not all family violence is coded as a criminal offence (see [NZCVS Cycle 4 core report](#) for definition of offending by family/whānau members).

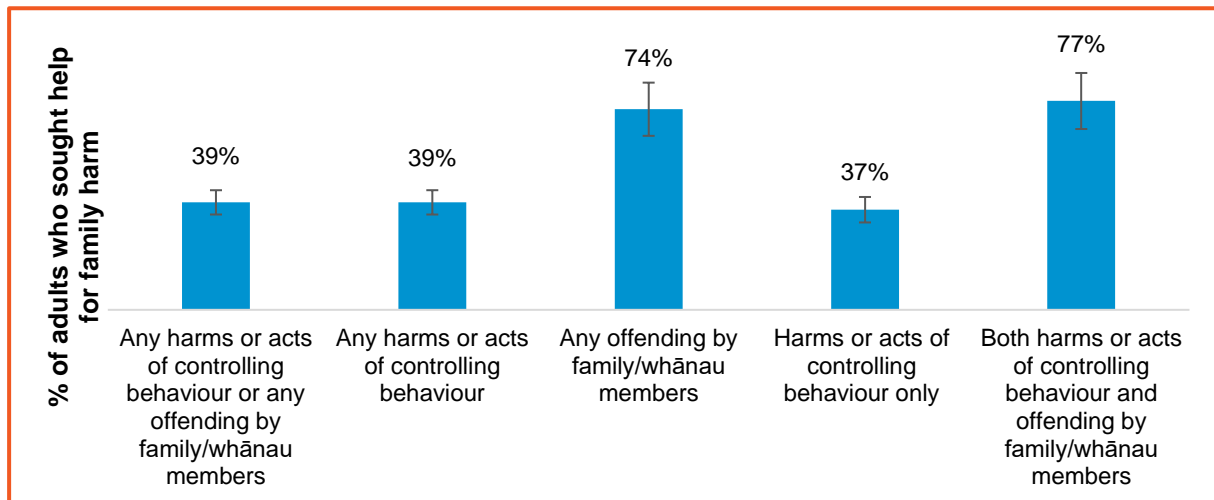
## 3.12 Prevalence of help-seeking

Where any family violence such as controlling behaviours, harm or offending occurred, the prevalence rate of help-seeking was 39% (Figure 3.14). Where offending by family/whānau members took place with or without controlling behaviours, the prevalence rate for help-seeking increased to 74%. This may indicate that the presence of offending by family/whānau members drives the rate of help-seeking up. Further to this, results show that amongst those who experienced controlling behaviours or harm, those who had also experienced other offending by family/whānau members were more likely to seek help than those who did not (77% vs 37%).



Among adults experiencing any family violence, the groups who were more likely to seek help included disabled adults (61%), separated (65%) or divorced (61%) adults, those who were unemployed and not seeking work (65%) and adults who were highly victimised – that is, they experienced four or more incidents in the last 12 months (62%).

**Figure 3.14 Percentage of adults who sought help for family harm, by victim’s experience**



While no groups or demographic factors were significantly less likely to seek help than the New Zealand average, males had lower rates of help-seeking (29%) and were statistically different from females (48%), who were more likely to seek help.

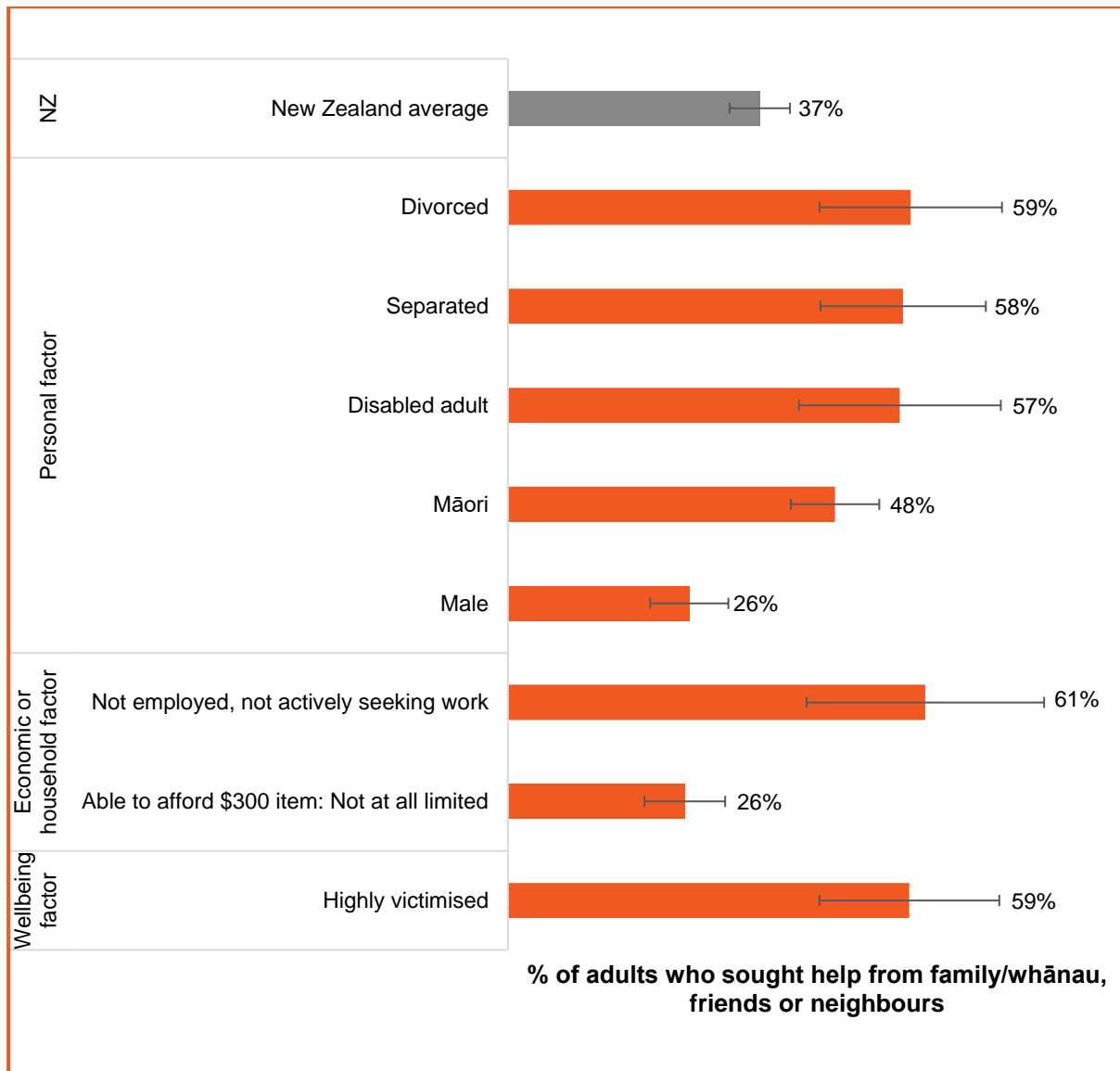
### 3.13 Where are victims going for help?

The majority of those who did seek help for any family violence went to family/whānau, friends or neighbours for help (37%), followed by work-based professional support (5%) and other government agencies, excluding the Police (4%). Victim Support and the Citizens Advice Bureau saw help-seeking rates of around 3%. Help-seeking rates for religious organisations (eg, the Salvation Army), Whānau Ora or other Māori organisations and Women’s Refuge were around 2%.<sup>16</sup>

The groups who were significantly more likely to seek help from family/whānau, friends and neighbours included Māori adults, disabled adults, those who were separated or divorced, those who were unemployed and not seeking work, and those who were highly victimised (Figure 3.15). Males and those who were not limited by their finances were less likely to seek help from family/whānau, friends or neighbours.

<sup>16</sup> Rates for other organisations asked about in the NZCVS were suppressed due to high margin of error.

**Figure 3.15 Percentage of adults who sought help from family/whānau, friends or neighbours at a higher or lower rate than the New Zealand average, by factor**



Adults who said that they did not seek help from family/whānau were asked what the reasons were for not doing so. The top reason was that they “didn’t need help” (43%), followed by “wanted to handle it myself” (20%), “no reason” (13%) and it was a “private matter” (11%).

Adults who did not seek help from support services or organisations were also asked about their reasons for not seeking help, and the results were similar to those not seeking help from family/whānau, friends or neighbours. The top reason was that they “didn’t need help” (43%), followed by “wanted to handle it myself” (25%) and it was a “private matter” (16%).

### 3.14 Safety with family/whānau

All respondents were asked if they ever felt unsafe with family/whānau. Of the total adult population, 5% said they had felt unsafe with family/whānau (see [NZCVS Cycle 4 core report](#)).

Of adults who experienced any offending, or harms from or acts of controlling behaviour, 13% said they had felt unsafe with family/whānau. Females (19%), those experiencing financial pressures (24%), those living in the North Island of Aotearoa (excluding Auckland and Wellington – 23%), those living with high levels of psychological distress (31%) and those with low levels of life satisfaction (25%) were significantly more likely to feel unsafe with family/whānau than the New Zealand average. Unsurprisingly, highly victimised adults were also more likely to feel unsafe with family/whānau (32%).

### 3.15 Knowing others who have experienced family violence

All respondents in the survey were asked if, excluding themselves, they knew anyone else who had experienced family violence. Seventeen percent responded yes. Of these, 59% said they had direct involvement (eg, talking to the victim, calling the Police or support organisation). Table 3.4 outlines what their further involvement was.

**Table 3.4 Percentage of adults who had further involvement with someone who had experienced family violence, by the type of involvement**

What was that further involvement?*	% of adults
I talked to the victim	86.9
I offered support to the victim (eg, transport, first aid, money, place to stay)	57.7
I informed someone close to the victim	31.8
I talked to the offender	30.0
I called the Police	12.3
I offered support to the offender (eg, transport, first aid, money, place to stay)	11.9
I informed someone close to the offender	11.5
I called a support organisation (eg, Victim Support, Women’s Refuge)	7.2
I called Oranga Tamariki (Ministry for Children)	Ŷ
Other	Ŷ

\* Respondents could select all that applied.

Ŷ = Suppressed because the numerator and/or denominator of the ratio-based estimate has a relative sampling error greater than or equal to 50%, which is considered too unreliable for general use.

Table 3.5 shows respondents' reasons for not becoming involved when others experienced family violence. Nearly half (49.5%) said that "it wasn't my place to get involved", followed by a quarter (25%) saying that they felt their involvement "may have made things worse".

**Table 3.5 Percentage of adults who did not have further involvement with someone who had experienced family violence, by reason**

What were your reasons for not becoming involved?*	% of adults
It wasn't my place to get involved	49.5
I felt my involvement may have made things worse	24.7
I wasn't close enough to the people involved	22.1
It didn't seem serious enough for my involvement	11.5
I would have been putting myself in danger	6.2
Other	1.2
I wasn't sure what I could do to help	Ŷ
No reason	Ŷ

\* Respondents could select all that applied.

Ŷ = Suppressed because the numerator and/or denominator of the ratio-based estimate has a relative sampling error greater than or equal to 50%, which is considered too unreliable for general use.

Among adults who experienced family violence, 29% knew someone who had experienced family violence. Adults with diverse sexualities were significantly more likely than the average to know someone who had experienced family violence (60%). Adults who were highly victimised were also more likely to know others who had experienced family violence (52%). Of these adults, 56% had further involvement.

Overall, among adults who experienced family violence and had further involvement with someone else who had experienced violence, 93% "talked to the victim" and 63% "offered support to the victim". For those who did not become involved, the most common reason was that "it wasn't my place to get involved" (51%).

# 4 Conclusions

## 4.1 Summary of findings

### Controlling behaviours

The groups who are more likely than the New Zealand average to experience harms or specific acts of controlling behaviour are:

- adults with diverse sexualities
- young people (aged 15–29)
- Māori
- adults who are separated or divorced
- adults who have never been married or in a civil union.

Future work should prioritise insights from these groups about how to best provide support and be accessible to these different populations. Observing the prevalence rates across these demographic groups, females saw higher rates of harm than males. However, young males appear to experience higher rates of controlling behaviour. Analysis shows that when acts of controlling behaviour are experienced by young people, the perpetrators are often other family/whānau members. This could be related to a parent–child power imbalance – an idea that further research could explore.

While most adults said that alcohol and/or other drugs did not contribute to the behaviour, 21% said alcohol was involved and 15% said other drugs were involved. So, while some behaviours may be exacerbated by alcohol and/or other drug use, there are situations where behaviours are unrelated to someone's use, which is an important consideration for people working with perpetrators.

Females were significantly more likely than males to have experienced behaviours that were discriminatory against their sex, indicating that some behaviours may come from outdated social norms and beliefs about masculinity and dominance in a relationship (Stark 2007). Work is ongoing to shift these social and cultural beliefs, and various agencies are working to support healthy and consensual relationships for young people (Te Puna Aonui 2021).

One in five adults who had experienced any harms from controlling behaviour had to take time off work due to what they experienced. This reiterates the importance of workplaces being responsive to the needs of employees impacted by family violence – for example, in their leave policies and by providing supportive processes for disclosure and help-seeking. In a paper written for the New Zealand Family Violence Clearinghouse about intimate partner violence and the workplace, Rayner-Thomas, Fanslow and Dixon (2014) emphasise the need for workplaces to provide intervention, raise awareness, and implement strategies to support those who experience intimate partner violence, such as flexible working policies for hours and locations.

While the differences were not statistically significant, females were more likely than males to experience harms because of an intimate partner's or family/whānau member's behaviour. As more cycles of the NZCVS are completed and more evidence is gathered, we can see if a greater sample size emphasises this difference more or not. Males were more likely to experience specific controlling behaviours by partners, but females were more likely to experience specific controlling behaviours by ex-partners and other family/whānau. Gender scholars note that women and men may estimate their use of violence and their victimisation quite differently (Kimmel 2002). For instance, it could be that men are more likely than women to recognise controlling behaviours by their partners and to report them in the survey. Further exploration into gender differences between perceptions of offending and victimisation is a topic of future research that the NZCVS could support.

## Help-seeking, safety, and community

The results show that the rate of help-seeking is only 37% when harms or specific acts of controlling behaviour are the only form of family violence being experienced. Rates of help-seeking increase to 77% when offending by family/whānau members is also present. This result aligns with the perceptions of harms or acts of controlling behaviour held by nearly 45% of the adults who experienced them as “just something that happens”. Males were also significantly less likely to seek help than females, which Walker et al (2019) suggest may be due to societal perceptions of intimate partner violence as something that only happens to women, and men's fear that their masculinity would be challenged if they reported violence. The top reason for not seeking help from both support services and family/whānau, friends and neighbours was that the person “didn't need help”.

Most victims sought help from family/whānau, friends or neighbours, which reiterates the need for enabling people at the whānau and community level to respond and know what services are available for violence, in addition to specialist support services. Services such as [Whānau Ora](#), an approach where families and whānau have the authority to make decisions and are supported by many wrap-around services, are already demonstrating this.

Five percent of all respondents said they felt unsafe with family/whānau, and of those adults who experienced any family violence, 13% said they felt unsafe with family/whānau. This is a finding that would be interesting to explore in future; for example, what behaviours or offending were experienced by those who did feel safe with family/whānau and for by those who did not.

Nearly a third of respondents who had experienced family violence themselves knew someone else who had, and over half of these people were involved further, either through supporting or talking to the victim. Adults with diverse sexualities who experienced any family violence were twice as likely to know someone else who had experienced family violence. This is not surprising given that adults with diverse sexualities are disproportionately victimised ([NZCVS Cycle 4 core report](#)) compared to the New Zealand average. This offers further evidence of the need for tailored and community-level intervention and prevention.

## 4.2 Future research

This report is an initial exploration of the controlling behaviour and harm questions asked in Cycle 4 of the NZCVS. This high-level approach to the analysis introduces the variables and possibilities for future research including:

- The ability to expand this analysis as more cycles of the NZCVS are completed and the sample size increases for pooled data (all cycles together). With this, there is potential to include cross-sectional analysis to investigate different demographic groups and the impact of controlling behaviours and harm (eg, Māori adults, disabled adults, and adults with diverse sexualities).
- Investigating prevalence of different types of controlling behaviour reported among people interacting with services like the Police.
- Explore coercive and controlling behaviours by non-intimate partners – for example, other family/whānau members such as parents and children and any age dynamics.
- Understanding respondent interactions with the justice system by linking survey information with family court and other administrative data (eg, protection orders) or including questions in the NZCVS with respect to the courts.
- The prevalence rate of offending by family/whānau members is reported in the NZCVS as 2%, which is considerably lower than the prevalence rates of harm as a result of behaviours and acts of controlling behaviour. It would be useful to explore this disparity more.

The topics covered in this report introduce many further research projects for those in the family violence space using the information collected during Cycle 4 of the NZCVS. All four cycles of NZCVS data are now available to researchers in the Stats NZ Integrated Data Infrastructure, which links the survey to several other administrative datasets. As this is the first year of the controlling behaviour questions in this form, the data used in this report is not yet available in the Integrated Data Infrastructure.

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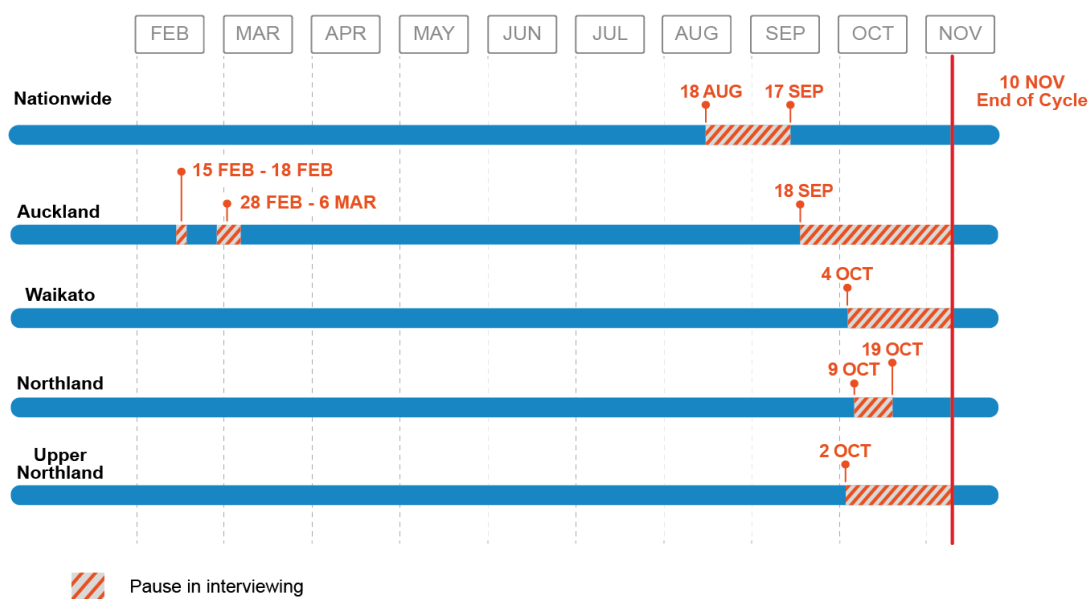
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# Appendix 1: Data and methods

## A.1 COVID-19 and data collection for Cycle 4

Cycles 3 and 4 covered an unusual time in Aotearoa New Zealand because of the COVID-19 pandemic and associated alert level restrictions. New Zealanders faced various restrictions on their movements and social interactions – the strongest at Alert Level 4, which was in place nationwide from 25 March to 27 April 2020 and from 17 August to 31 August 2021.

In line with the public health recommendations, the NZCVS team suspended interviews during Alert Levels 3 and 4. This requirement resulted in multiple fieldwork interruptions during Cycle 4 (see chart below).



As a result, interviewing continued later into the year than planned and achieved a lower number of responses – 6,244 instead of the planned 8,000. This also affected the overall response rate, which, while still being high, was marginally reduced from 80% to 76%.

When interviewers returned to the field, precautions were made to ensure the safety of respondents and interviewers. This included pre-interview screening to identify household members who had COVID-like symptoms, those who were self-isolating, and those who worked in high-risk occupations. Interviewers also employed a set of enhanced health and safety measures recommended by the Ministry of Health, including sanitising of hands and equipment before and after an interview; body temperature control and wider wellbeing checks; thorough record-keeping; and keeping masks and gloves available. All interviewers

undertook special COVID-related training. These efforts were important for maintaining a high response rate to the survey.

## A.2 Weighting

All estimates are calculated using person weights to adjust for differences between the survey sample and the Aotearoa New Zealand adult population. The weighting methodology is described in the [NZCVS Cycle 4 methodology report](#).

## A.3 Uncertainty of estimates

Because the NZCVS is a sample survey, it is subject to sampling error. Calculation of standard errors of the estimates is described in the [NZCVS Cycle 4 methodology report](#). Confidence intervals are constructed from the standard errors at the 95% level. Confidence intervals are provided as lines on graphs where suitable.

All observations and graphs in the report are based on data tables available from the separate Excel document located on the Ministry of Justice website.<sup>17</sup> The margins of error around estimates are provided in those tables.

Some estimates should be used with caution due to high margin of error. This is clearly stated in relevant spreadsheets. As a rule, caution is advised with all percentage estimates with the margin of error between 10 and 20 percentage points. All estimates with a margin of error higher than 20 percentage points are either suppressed or aggregated. They are also suppressed or aggregated if their underlying numerators or denominators have a relative sample error of more than 50%.

## A.4 Rounding

Percentage estimates are rounded to the nearest integer unless percentages are less than 10%, in which case they are rounded to 1 decimal place, and all numbers in the same figure will follow this rounding. Percentages have been calculated from the unrounded figures, so calculations using rounded figures may differ from those published.

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<sup>17</sup> See <https://www.justice.govt.nz/justice-sector-policy/research-data/nzcvsv/resources-and-results>

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