

COVID-19 Justice Sector Survey

Report 005 (12–18 May 2020)

This telephone survey provides information about how safe people feel and what crime and safety issues matter to them most. The report covers the following key topics:

- **Social connection**
- **Perceptions of safety**, including reasons why people feel unsafe
- **Experience of some types of crimes** (for example, fraud and cybercrime which are increasingly of concern internationally)
- **Crimes reported and not reported** to Police
- **Perceptions of the Criminal Justice System**

This report provides the key results for the week of interviewing between **Tuesday 12 May and Monday 18 May** after interviewing **273** adult respondents (15 years old and above). These results are compared with the previous survey periods (12–20 April, 21–27 April and 28 April–4 May). The total number of interviewed adults is now **1468**.

Percentages for the current period (12–18 May) are provided in bold and followed by the figure related to the previous period (in brackets in *italic*). For example, in the statement:

92% (*94%*) said it would be easy or very easy to talk to someone if they felt unsafe or fearful, while only **4%** (*1%*) think it would be hard or very hard.

Where there is no bracketed figure it means the result is the same as last week.

In the detailed findings we have **bolded** noticeable differences in results between the current period and the previous period.

When people were interviewed, they were asked to think about the **seven days prior to the interview**.

Where available and appropriate, data collected by the New Zealand Crime and Victims Survey (NZCVS) between October 2018 and September 2019 are presented alongside the survey results. **These data are intended to provide a reference to similar topics and questions before the introduction of Alert Level 4. Looking at the pattern of difference can be informative. However, unless otherwise suggested, readers are advised to avoid direct comparison of these survey results with the NZCVS. A key difference is that the NZCVS data is based on 12 months experience rather than on one week and there are differences in the way questions are asked and the research methods used.**

All confidence intervals displayed are at the 95% level.

Key messages

Overall

The results of this fifth pulse survey are consistent, by and large, with the four previous surveys. Notable findings from this survey are:

- The pattern of loneliness is stable over four weeks of surveying and roughly similar to levels prior to the lockdown.
- Compared (with caution) to before the lockdown, the results of this survey indicate that people are worrying much less about being a victim of crime.
- There is a notable difference in the proportion of people mentioning dangerous driving, noisy neighbours and some other issues in their neighbourhoods compared with the pre-pandemic period. However, caution is needed interpreting this difference as the NZCVS data is based on 12 months experience rather than one week for this report.
- The proportion of those who feel unsafe or very unsafe at home and while working is lower than it was in the pre-pandemic period. However, caution is urged as the question in the NZCVS is about being alone at night.
- Incidents reported to Police continue to increase. However, the total number of incidents is small.
- We finalised a review of questions that provide less ongoing insight. As intended when the survey began, we will replace these in favour of questions more relevant to the times while making sure the survey length doesn't go over the average of 12 minutes. The questionnaire will be amended from Tuesday 26/05.

Social connection

- The frequency with which people connect with family, whānau or friends has remained relatively stable over the five weeks of interviewing, even as New Zealand transitioned into Alert Level 2.
- The use of phone and video calls, text or instant messaging, and social media to communicate with family, whānau and friends has remained high over the five weeks, even with the loosening of COVID-19 restrictions.
- The proportion of people meeting in home visits has increased gradually over the last two weeks but not that of people meeting in public areas.
- Patterns of loneliness have remained stable throughout the period of interviewing.

Perceptions of safety

- Most people feel very safe, with only **1.5%** (*0.6%*) feeling very unsafe at home. The proportion of people feeling safe in their neighbourhood and travelling to and from essential services has significantly increased since alert level 4.
- While **82%** (*81%*) of people don't worry about being a victim of crime, **3%** (*3%*) worry most or all of the time.
- The most common neighbourhood problems were dangerous driving, **13%** (*15%*) and noisy neighbours, **13%** (*9%*).
- People say they will feel safer if:
 - There is higher police presence
 - People follow the rules and stay at home
 - COVID-19 is eliminated

- They have work security and a stable income
- There is more certainty about the future
- They have better security or a safer neighbourhood
- If people stay home more often
- They can return to a normal life

Experiencing crime and reporting to Police

- An overwhelming majority of respondents did not experience property crime or personal non-violent crime. There is no significant difference with the numbers reported in the previous week. The only offence type reported by more than 2% of respondents is a COVID-19 related scam (**5%**).
- The proportion of respondents reporting crime incidents to Police continues to increase and, in this survey, reached **29%**. This is 12 percentage points higher than a week ago. Note that the comparable average reported in the NZCVS is 25%.

Perception of the Criminal Justice System

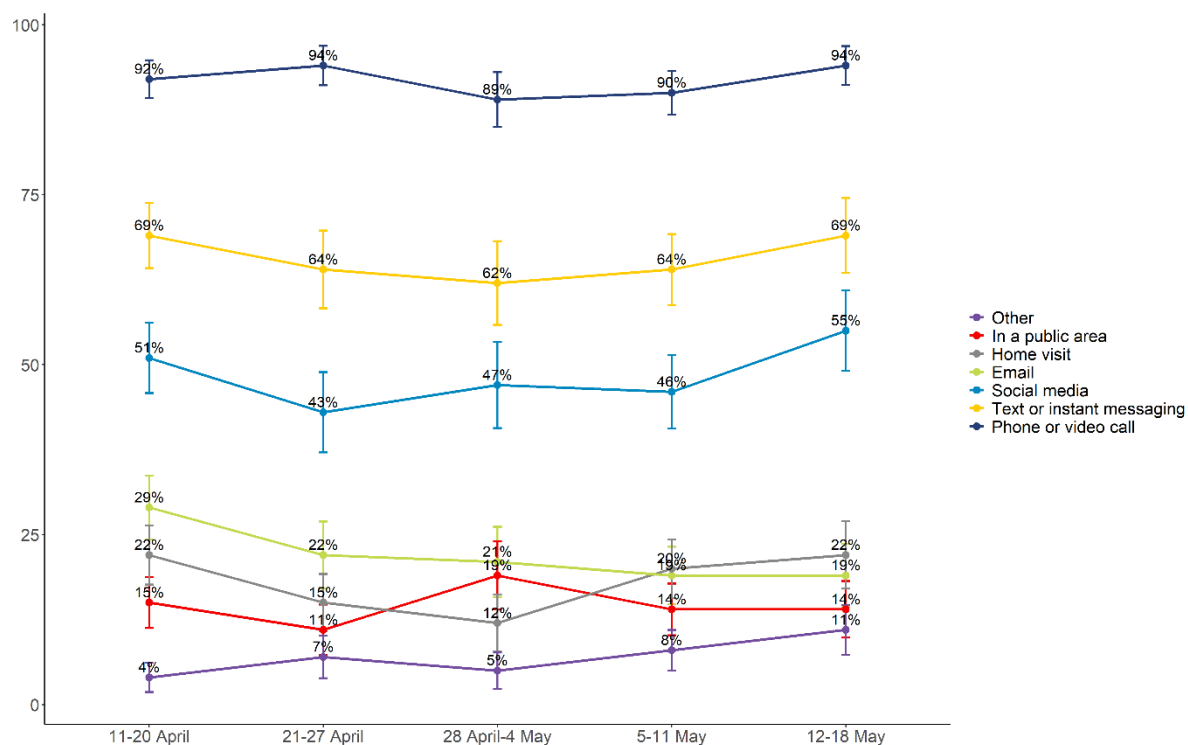
- A clear majority of respondents, **74%** (73%) think that the criminal justice system response to the COVID-19 pandemic was good or excellent. The proportion of those who perceive the criminal justice system response to the COVID-19 pandemic was poor or very poor continues to be very low at **3%** (2%).
- Most often respondents suggested that the criminal justice system should be tougher on those breaking the lockdown rules. Other common responses include enforcing COVID-19 rules, more police presence and instant fines for law breakers.

Detailed findings

Social connection

- **99%** (96%) of adults had communicated with family, whānau or friends outside of their household, and most, **83%** (82%), had communicated on at least four days of the week. These proportions have remained stable over the five weeks of interviewing.
- Note that, according to the 2018/2019 New Zealand Crime and Victims Survey (NZCVS), 83% of New Zealand adults meet socially at least once a week.
- The use of different methods of communicating have been relatively stable over the last four weeks, with phone or video calls the most common followed by text or instant messaging and social media.
- The last days of interviewing this week covered the transition from Alert Level 3 to Alert Level 2. The percent of people meeting family, whānau or friends increased to **22%** (19%) and the proportion of people meeting in a public place remained stable at **14%**.
- Contact with family, whānau or friends by phone, text or instant messaging, and by social media appeared to increase slightly on last week, but the changes were not statistically significant.

Figure 1: How did you communicate?

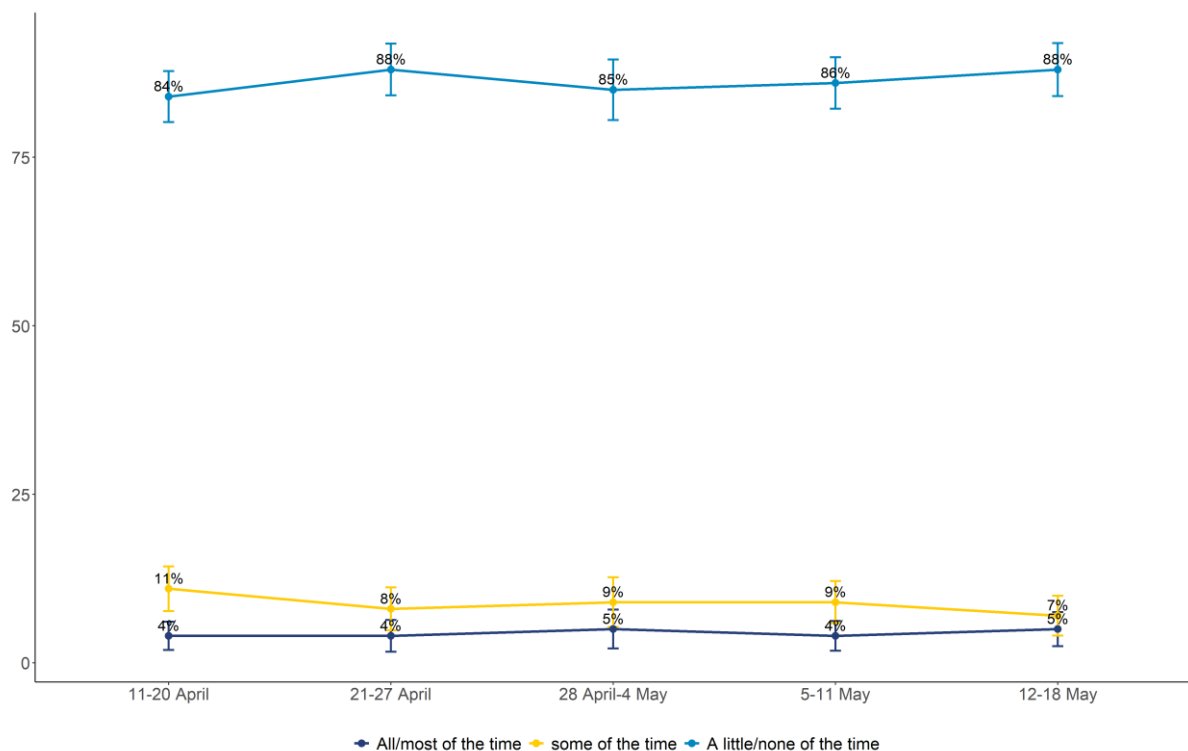


- For **95%** (90%) of respondents, communication with family, whānau and friends over the last week was either easy or very easy. Only **1%** (2%) of respondents reported that it was hard or very hard. These results have remained relatively stable over the four weeks of interviewing.

Loneliness

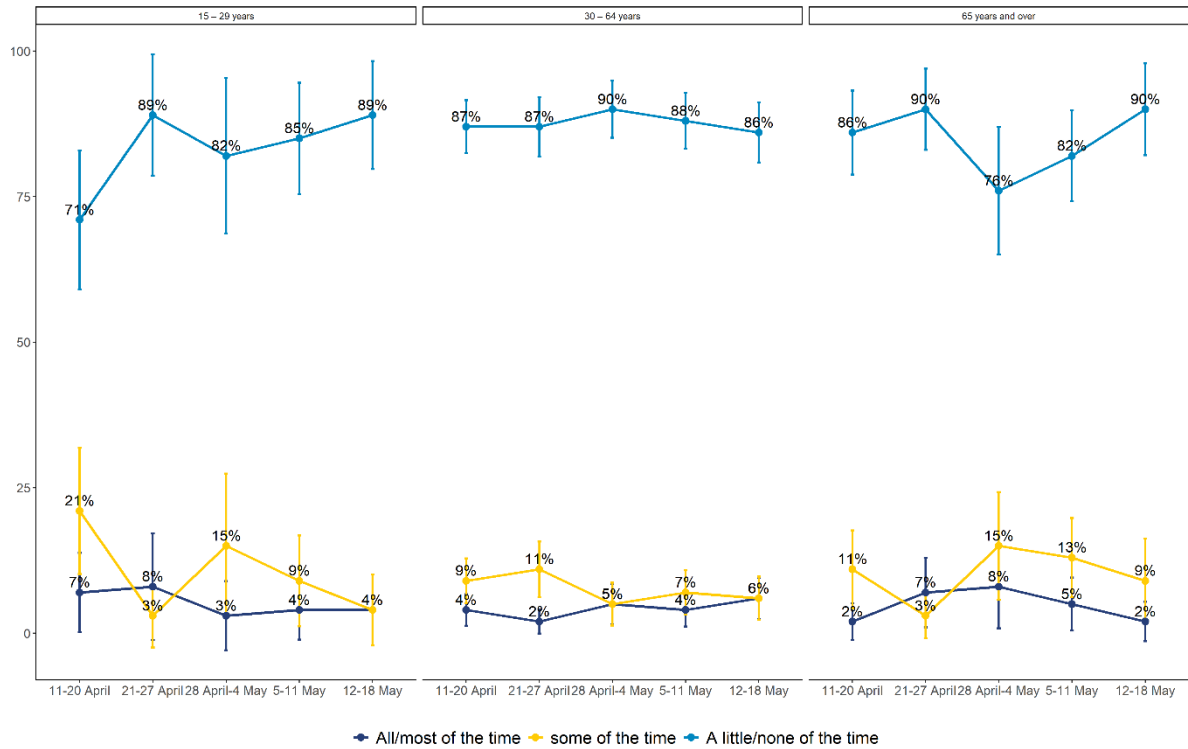
- Most respondents did not feel lonely at all or only a little of the time over the last week, **88%** (86%). A further **7%** (9%) felt lonely some of the time. However, **5%** (4%) felt lonely all or most of the time.
- This pattern is very similar to results from the 2018/2019 NZCVS, in which 86% of adults said they did not feel lonely at all or only a little of the time over the past four weeks, 10% felt lonely a little of the time, and 3% felt lonely all or most of the time.
- The pattern of loneliness is stable over the five weeks of surveying.

Figure 2: How often people feel lonely over the previous seven days



- It appears that loneliness amongst adults aged 65 and over spiked in the week of 28 April–4 May, when 76% said they felt lonely a little or none of the time over the last 7 days. This rate has since recovered to **90%** (82%) feeling lonely a little or none of the time. However, these changes over time are not statistically significant due to small sample sizes.
- For comparison, 89% of adults aged 65 and over felt lonely a little or none of the time during the last 4 weeks in the 2018/2019 NZCVS.

Figure 3: How often people feel lonely over the previous seven days (by age groups)



Perceptions of safety

- Only **1.5%** (0.6%) of respondents feel unsafe or very unsafe at home, **2.6%** (1.5%) while walking alone in their neighbourhood and **2.2%** (0.6%) when travelling to or from essential services. **The proportion of people feeling safe or very safe in their neighbourhood and travelling to and from essential services has significantly increased compared with the first week of the survey taken during alert level 4.**
- Most often people feel unsafe because of the risk of infection by COVID-19 or the general uncertainty caused by COVID-19.

Figure 4: How safe or unsafe people feel at home

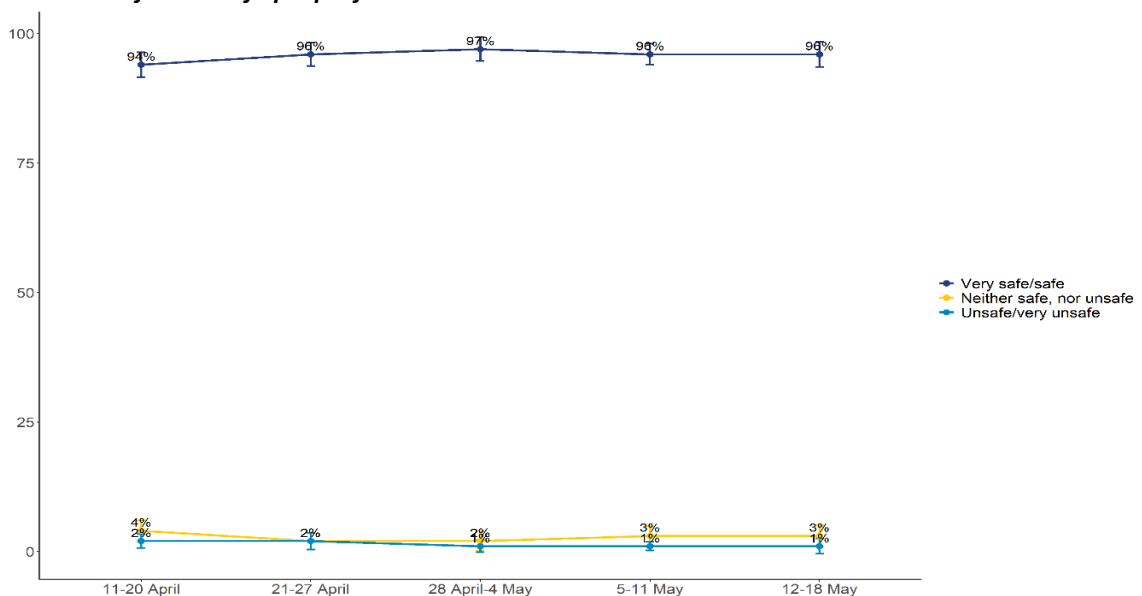


Figure 5: How safe or unsafe people feel in their neighbourhood

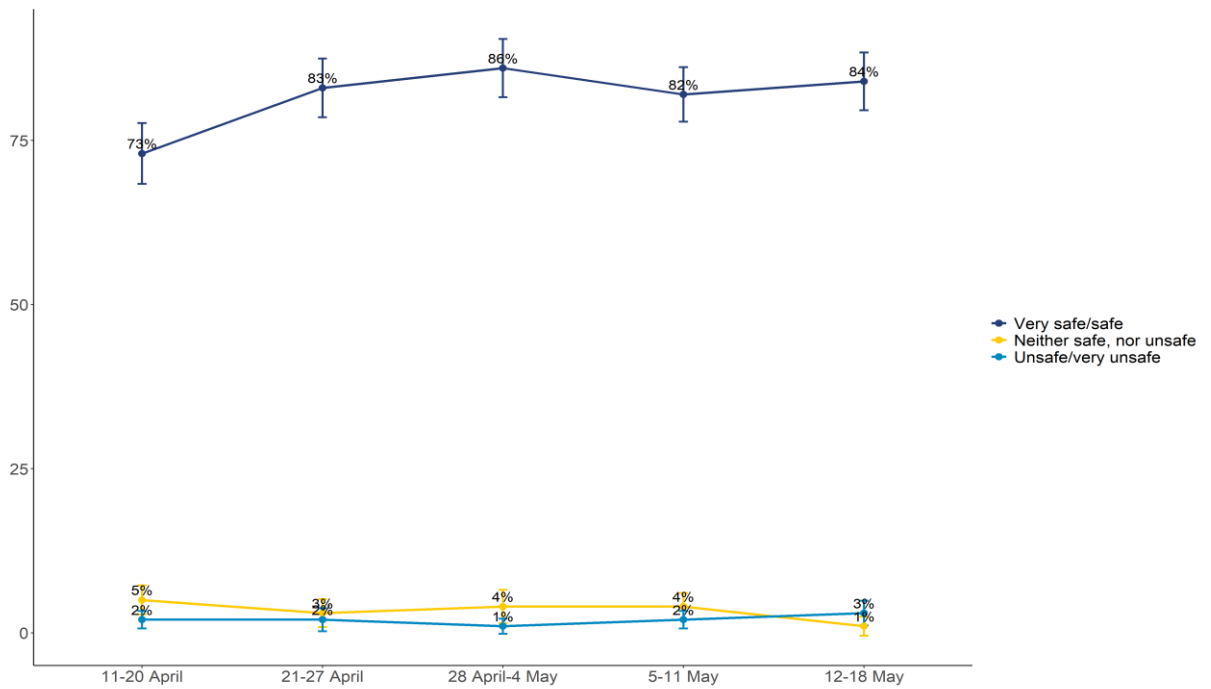
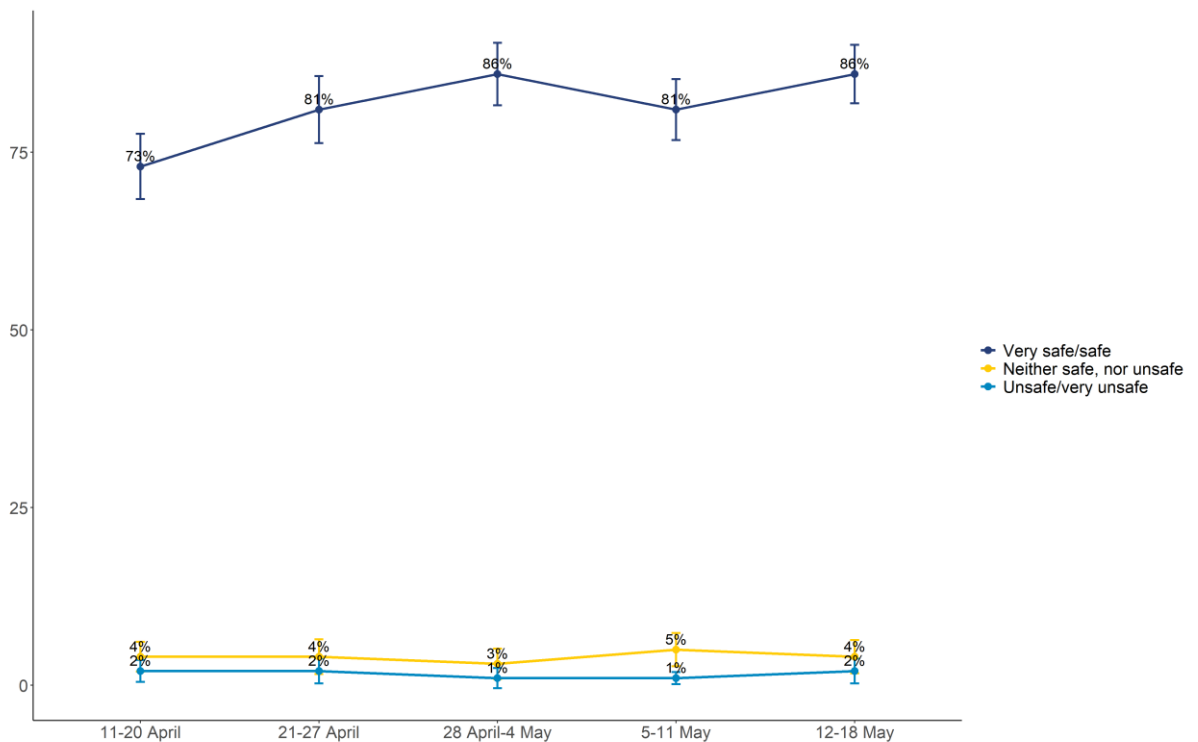


Figure 6: How safe or unsafe people feel travelling to and from essential services



- According to the 2018/2019 NZCVS, 5% of adults felt unsafe or very unsafe at home by themselves at night and 20% felt unsafe or very unsafe walking alone in their neighbourhood after dark. Though it appears from the COVID-19 survey that people now feel safer at home

and in their neighbourhoods, interpretation of this could be because the question in the NZCVS is about being alone at night.

- People will feel safer if:
 - There is higher police presence
 - People follow the rules and stay at home
 - COVID-19 is eliminated
 - They have work security and a stable income
 - There is more certainty about the future
 - They have better security or a safer neighbourhood
 - If people stay home more often
 - They can return to a normal life

Figure 7: Answers on the question, “What, if anything, would make you feel more safe at this time?”



- More than a quarter of respondents, **27%** (27%) noticed a problem in their neighbourhood or local area. The most common problems were dangerous driving, **13%** (15%) and noisy neighbours, **13%** (9%). **These proportions are similar to those reported during alert level 4.**
- Issues with noisy neighbours and dangerous driving were also the most often mentioned neighbourhood problems for New Zealanders before the pandemic: 29% of NZ adults in the 2018/2019 NZCVS said they had an issue with noisy neighbours in their neighbourhood or local area in the last 12 months, and 38% had an issue with dangerous driving. However, this interpretation needs to be understood with caution as the time periods used in these questions are different between the two surveys.

Table 1: Problems in the neighbourhood / local area over the past 7 days

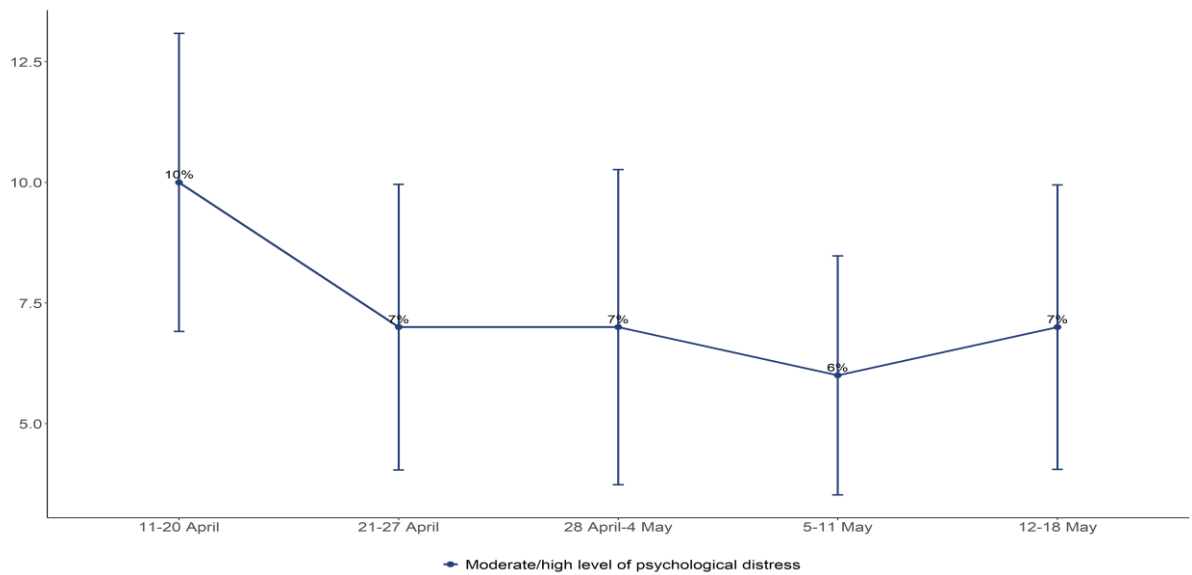
Problems	11-20 April		21-27 April		28 April-4 May		5-11 May		12-18 May		NZCVS 2018/19	
	%	MoE (±)	%	MoE (±)	%	MoE (±)	%	MoE (±)	%	MoE (±)	%	MoE (±)
Noisy neighbours / loud parties	8	2.88	7	3.11	11	4.02	9	3.09	13	3.97	29	1.62
Vandalism / graffiti	2	1.44	1	1.43	1	1.16	3	1.78	3	2.00	11	0.96
Burglary / break-ins / theft	4	2.08	5	2.54	4	2.42	3	1.78	2	1.59	23	1.45
Assaults	1	0.95	1	1.24	3	1.99	1	1.19	1	1.24	7	0.8
Harassment	1	0.95	3	1.89	3	2.14	1	1.03	1	1.24	6	0.68
People using or dealing drugs	2	1.44	1	1.43	4	2.42	3	1.78	4	2.23	14	1.06
People being drunk in a public place	2	1.44	1	1.02	2	1.63	3	1.78	3	2.00	16	1.23
Dangerous driving	14	3.64	13	3.99	11	3.96	15	3.84	13	3.97	38	1.52
Other	4	2.02	7	3.11	8	3.44	6	2.48	8	3.30	4	0.65
None of these	72	4.65	73	5.30	71	5.78	73	4.83	73	5.26	37	1.50

Note: The NZCVS 2018/2019 results are based on problems in the neighbourhood / local area over the past 12 months. MoE means Margin of Error

- **Similar to the previous week 82% (81%)** did not worry at all about being the victim of a crime. **11%** worried only a little of the time. **3%** worried about being a victim of crime most or all of the time. The results from this and previous weeks indicate that **during the COVID-19 response period adult New Zealanders are less worried about crime than usual**, with 40% of adults worrying none of the time, 33% a little of the time and 8% worrying all or most of the time in the 2018/2019 NZCVS.
- **92% (94%)** said it would be easy or very easy to talk to someone if they felt unsafe or fearful, while only **4% (1%)** think it would be hard or very hard.
- Some respondents reported signs of psychological distress¹. However, **93% (94%)** of respondents demonstrated a low level of psychological distress. **This is consistent with the previous three weeks** and NZCVS (2018/19) data where 88% of respondents had a low level of psychological distress.

¹ The Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K6) was used in the survey. The K6 is a psychometric scale which asks the respondent to report how they have been feeling over the past 4 weeks across six different areas. The scale is also used in the NZCVS and New Zealand Health Survey. However, for this survey, we have derived psychological distress from information on how people have been feeling over the past seven days instead of the past 4 weeks.

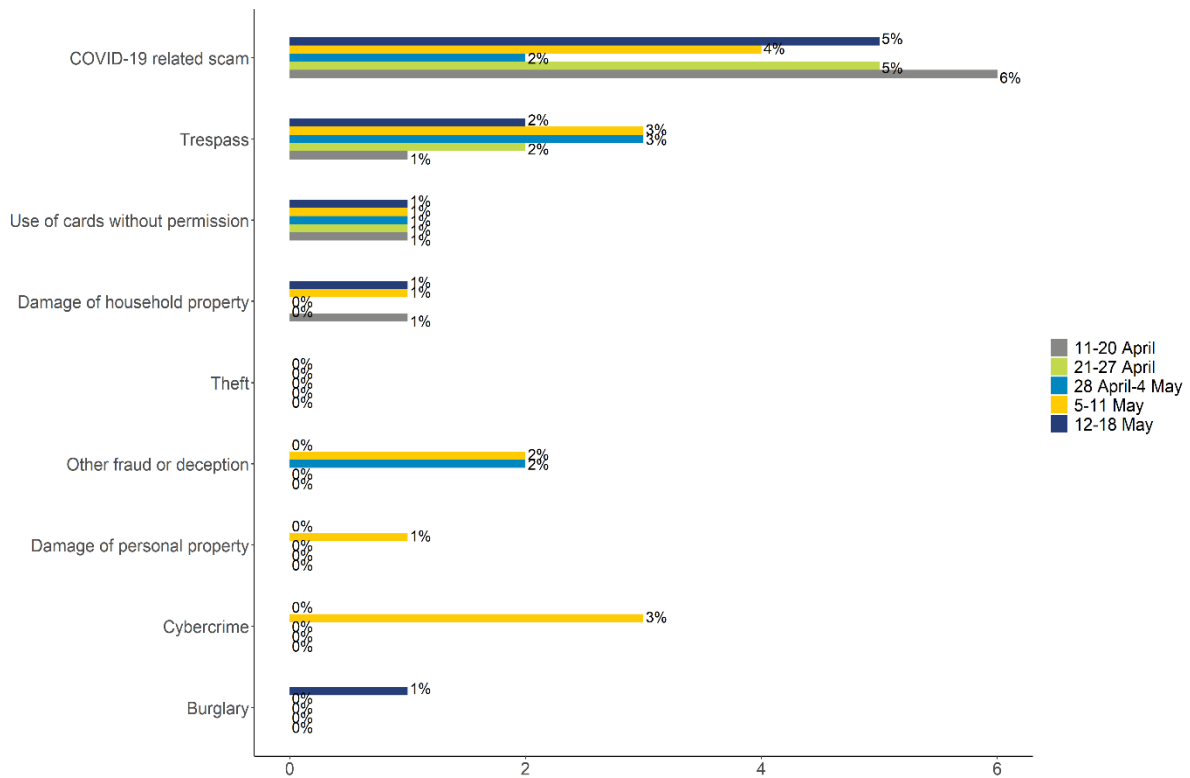
Figure 8: The level of psychological distress



Experiencing crime and reporting to Police

- An overwhelming majority of respondents did not experience property crime and personal non-violent crime. The only offence type reported by more than 2% of respondents is COVID-19 related scam, 5% (4%). Experience of crime by specific offence types is presented in the chart below.

Figure 9: Percent of respondents experiencing non-violent crime over the last 7 days



Note: This survey does not ask about violent crime including family violence due to potential risk for respondents.

- **29%** (17%) of respondents reported crime incidents which they experienced to Police. **This is 12 percentage points higher than a week ago**, 15 percentage points more than two weeks ago and 25 percentage points more than 3 weeks ago, reflecting an increasing trend in reporting to Police since interviewing began. However, the total amount of reports continues to be small.

Perception of the criminal justice system

- A clear majority of respondents, **74%** (73%) think that the criminal justice system response to the COVID-19 pandemic was good or excellent. This proportion is stable over the period of interviewing. The proportion of people who perceive the criminal justice system response to the COVID-19 pandemic as poor or very poor continues to be very low, **3%** (2%).

Respondents were asked (in a free format) what, if anything, the criminal justice system could be doing better at this time. Many respondents who answered on this question suggested that the criminal justice system should be tougher on those breaking the lockdown rules. Other popular responses include enforcing COVID-19 rules, more police presence and instant fines for law breakers.

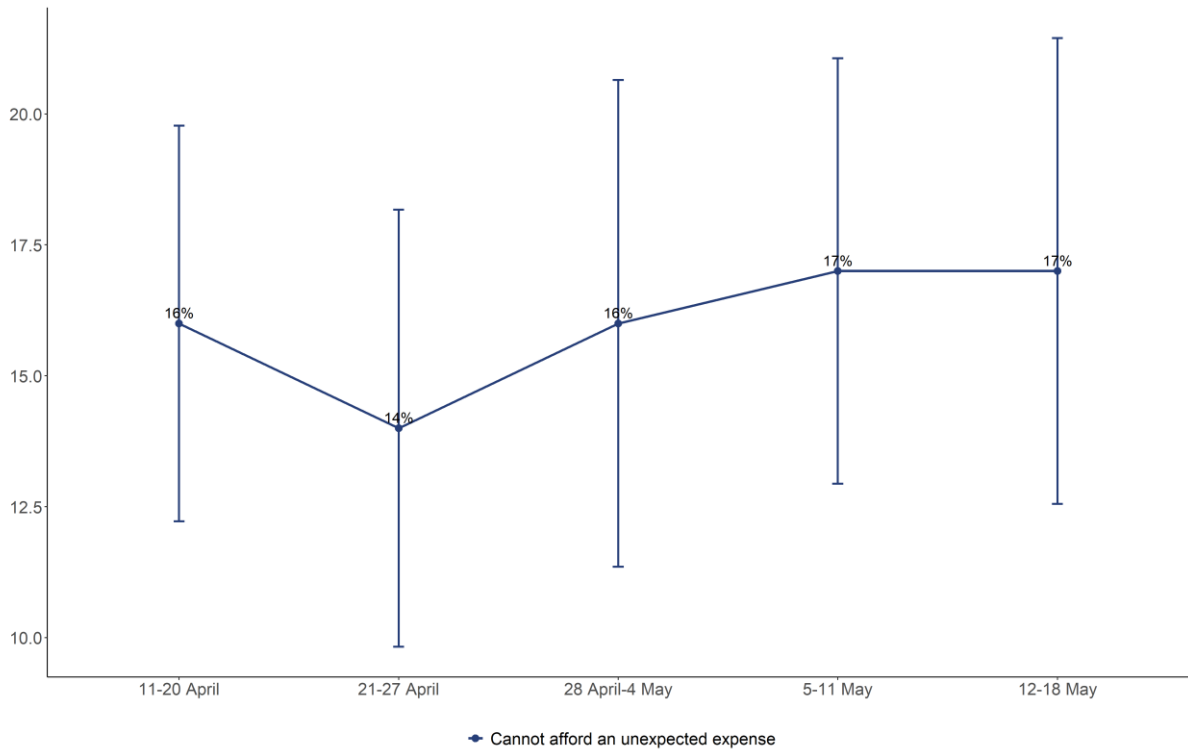
Figure 10: Answers on the question, “What, if anything, the criminal justice system could be doing better at this time?”



Financial pressure

- **80%** (81%) of respondents said they could afford an unexpected expense of \$500 in the next week without borrowing money, while **17%** could not. These levels are stable over last 5 weeks and consistent with NZCVS 2018/2019 results.

Figure 11: Percent of respondents experiencing financial pressure

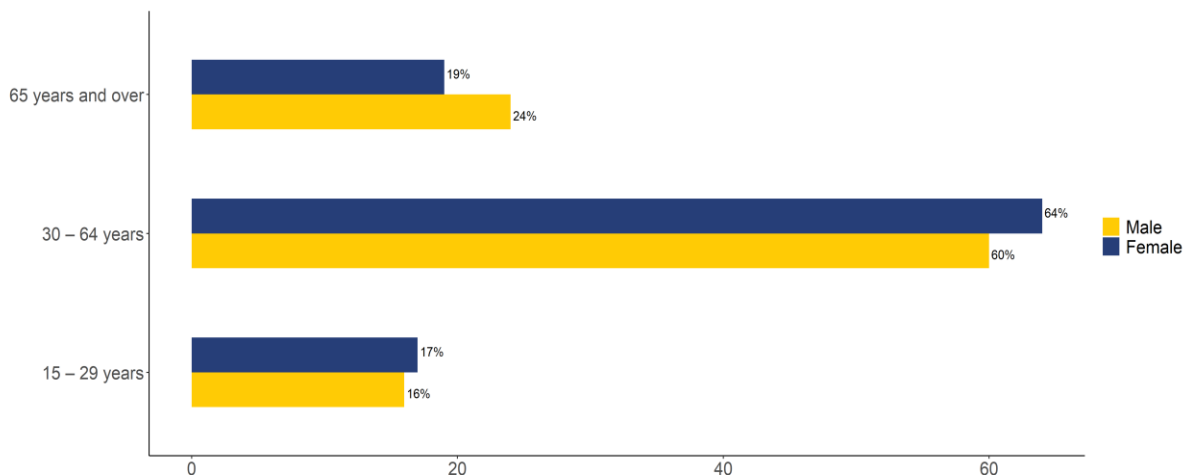


- In addition, **67%** (78%) of respondents did not attempt to access any long-term investments they held. This proportion is lower than over the last 4 weeks. Of those who attempted to access long term investments, **16%** (23%) experienced a problem doing so.

Demographics

273 adult (15 years and above) New Zealanders were interviewed in the week between **Tuesday 12 May and Monday 18 May**. The group consisted of 46% male respondents and 54% female respondents. 16% of the respondents were between 15-29 years old, 62% between 30-64 years old and 21% are 65 years and older. The breakdown of the respondents by sex and age is presented in the following chart.

Figure 12: Age of respondents by sex



Survey methodology

COVID-19 Justice Sector Survey is a phone survey (CATI - Computer Assisted Telephone Interviews) with weekly reporting. The survey interviews people who have taken part in the New Zealand Crime and Victims Survey (NZCVS) and have said they are happy to participate in future research.

NZCVS uses a randomly selected nation-wide sample. The proportion of people who consented to participate in future research is very high (more than 90%). This means that a sample used by COVID-19 Justice Sector Survey may be also considered random.

Approximately 370 people are contacted each week aiming to achieve approximately 300 finalised interviews (the response rate during the first nine days of interviewing was 82%). The average length of an interview is about 12 minutes. The survey follows the NZCVS strict approach to privacy and confidentiality and no contact details of interviewed adults are released.

May 12, 2020

Sector Group

Research and Evaluation Unit