

COVID-19 Justice Sector Survey

Report 006 (19–15 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 19 May and Monday 25 May** after interviewing **315** adult respondents (15 years old and above). These results are compared with the previous survey periods. The total number of interviewed adults is now **1783**.

Percentages for the current period (19–25 May) are provided in bold and followed by the figure related to the previous period (in brackets in *italic*). For example, in the statement:

For **96%** (*95%*) of respondents, communication with family, whānau and friends over the last week was either easy or very easy.

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 sixth 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.
- Notably, **nobody** reported feeling unsafe or very unsafe at home.
- Proportion of incidents reported to Police reduced this week and returned back approximately to the level reported in early May. The total number of incidents is small.
- From Tuesday 26/05 interviewers are using an updated questionnaire reflecting changes in the COVID-19 response level.

Social connection

- Most people continue to find it easy or very easy to stay connected with family, whānau or friends outside of their household, **96%** (95%).
- Noticeably more people had communicated by meeting in a public area, **33%** (22%) or home visit, **26%** (14%) than in the previous week.
- Most respondents did not feel lonely at all or only a little of the time over the last week, **92%** (88%). The proportion of people who didn't feel lonely at all during the last seven days has increased by 14 percentage points, from 66% in the first week of interviewing to **80%** (71%) in the last week.

Perceptions of safety

- Overwhelming majority of people feel safe and very safe, with **0%** (1.5%) feeling unsafe or very unsafe at home. The proportion of people feeling safe and very safe in their neighbourhood and travelling to and from essential services has considerably increased since alert level 4.
- While **83%** (82%) of people don't worry about being a victim of crime, **1%** (3%) worry most or all of the time.
- The most common neighbourhood problems were dangerous driving, **15%** (13%) and noisy neighbours, **11%** (13%).
- People say they will feel safer if there is/they have:
 - Pandemic control/less exposure to virus/eradication of COVID-19
 - A greater police presence
 - Financial and economic security
 - More home security/a safer neighbourhood

Experiencing crime and reporting to Police

- An overwhelming majority of respondents did not experience property crime and personal non-violent crime. The only offence types reported by more than 2% of respondents is COVID-19 related scam, **3%** (5%) and trespass, **4%** (2%). Experience of crime by specific offence types is presented in the chart below.

- After recording very high level of reporting to Police last week (29%), the current week's proportion returned back approximately to the level reported in early May, **13%**. The total amount of reports continues to be small.

Perception of the Criminal Justice System

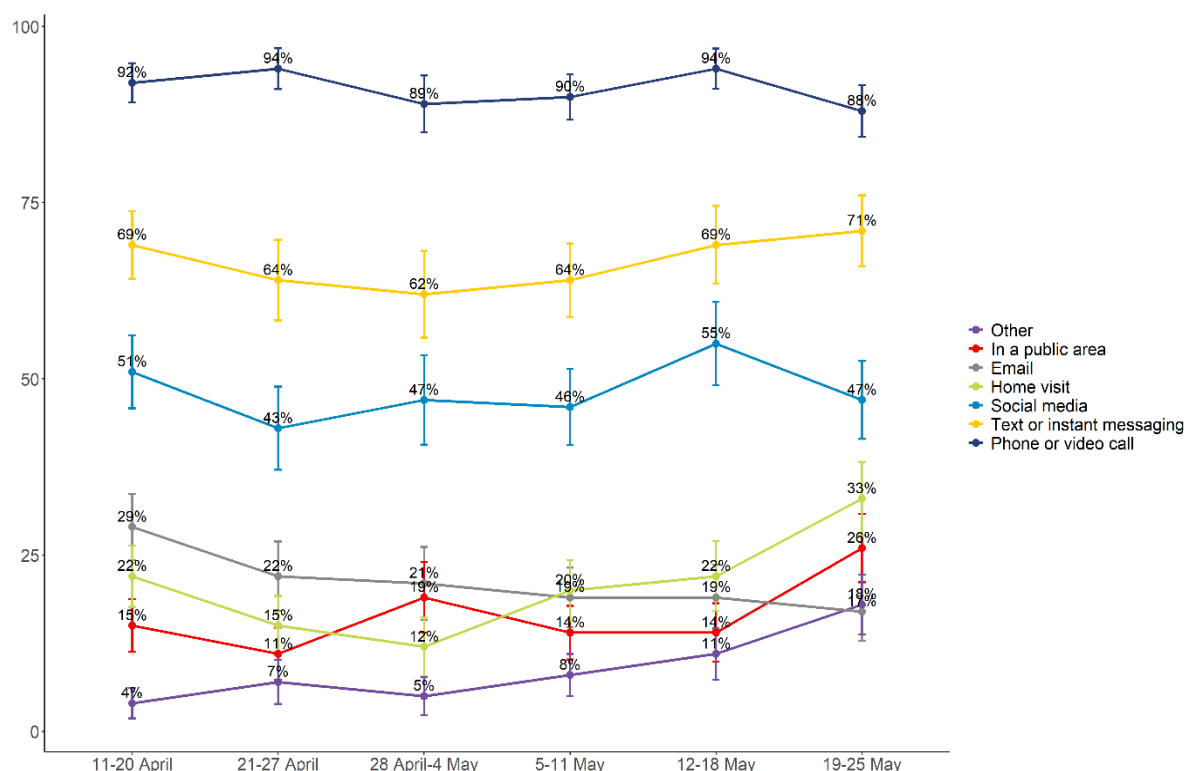
- A clear majority of respondents, **74%** think that the criminal justice system response to the COVID-19 pandemic was good or excellent. This proportion was not changed from the previous week and is stable over the period of interviewing.
- Responses on a free format question, what, if anything, the criminal justice system could be doing better at this time, indicate a shift in respondents' views from punitive actions during Level 4 response to support and better services on Level 2.

Detailed findings

Social connection

- **97% (99%)** of adults had communicated with family, whānau or friends outside of their household, and most, **81% (83%)**, had communicated on at least four days of the week. These proportions have remained stable over the five weeks of interviewing, but there appears to be a slight shift over the last two weeks of fewer people communicating 6 or 7 days of the week, and more people communicating 3–5 days per week.
- 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.
- **There were statistically significant increases in the proportion of people communicating by meeting in a public area, 33% (22%) or home visit, 26% (14%) since last week.** These are the highest levels of meeting with others we have seen since interviewing began during Alert Level 4.
- Communication using technology remained relatively more common than in-person contact. The use of phone or video calls, **88% (94%)** and social media, **47% (55%)** fell slightly on the previous week, but these changes are not statistically significant.

Figure 1: How did you communicate?

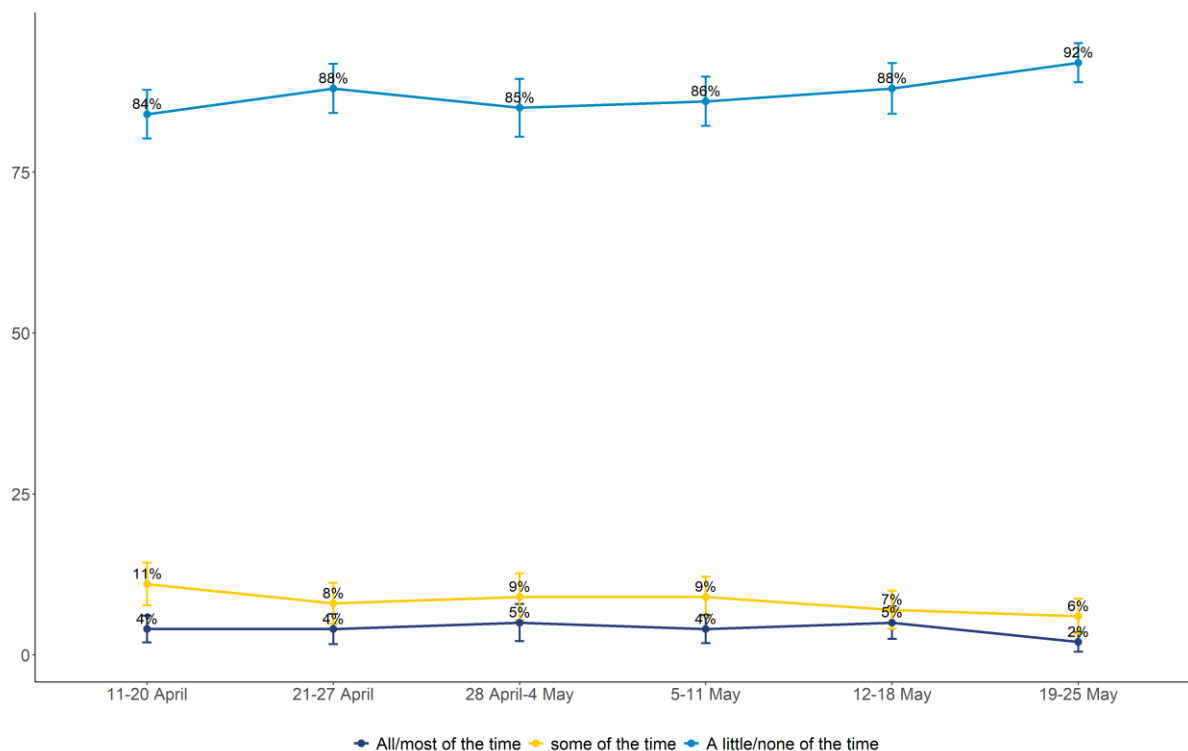


- For **96% (95%)** of respondents, communication with family, whānau and friends over the last week was either easy or very easy. Only **1%** of respondents (same as a week ago) reported that it was hard or very hard. These results have remained relatively stable over the six weeks of interviewing.

Loneliness

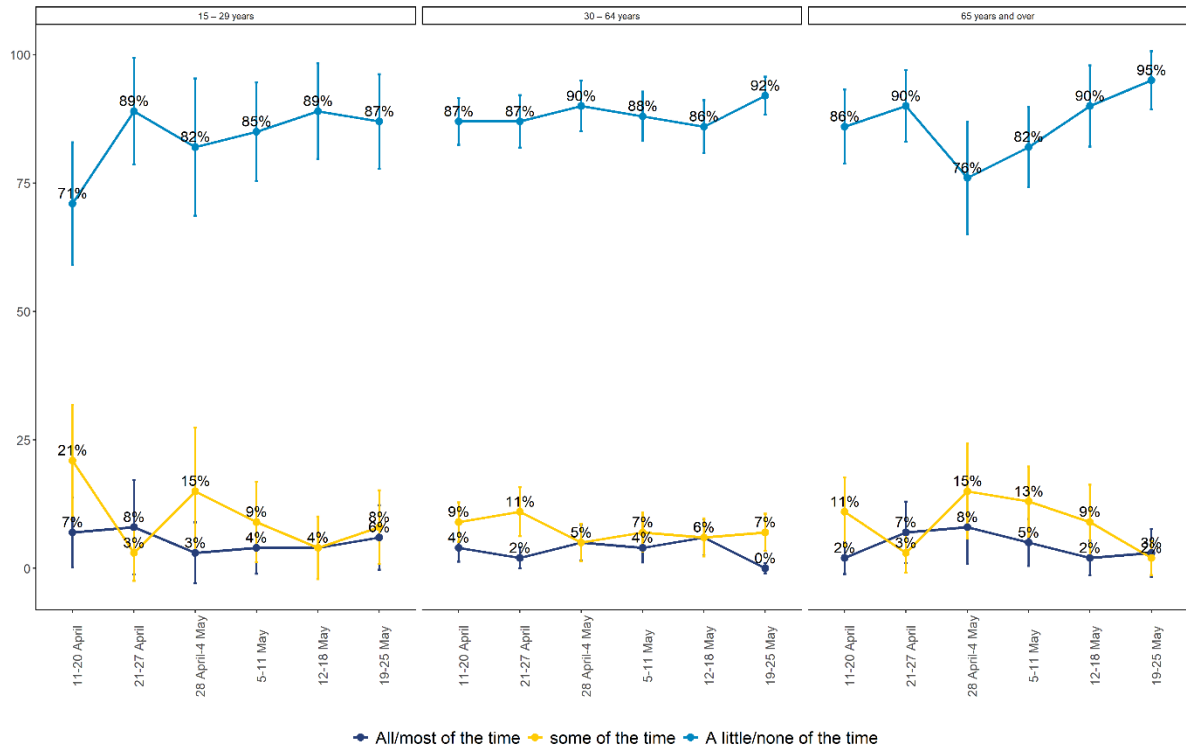
- Most respondents did not feel lonely at all or only a little of the time over the last week, **92%** (88%). A further **6%** (7%) of people felt lonely some of the time and **2%** (5%) felt lonely all or most of the time.
- These patterns of loneliness are at least as good as those reported in the 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 some of the time, and 3% felt lonely all or most of the time.
- The proportion of people who didn't feel lonely at all during the last seven days has increased from 66% in the first week of interviewing to **80%** (71%) in the last week.

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 **95%** (90%) feeling lonely a little or none of the time.
- For reference, 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.
- There have been no statistically significant changes in loneliness over time amongst adults in other age groups.

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



Perceptions of safety

- None **0%** (1.5%) of the respondents feel unsafe or very unsafe at home, only **0.9%** (2.6%) while walking alone in their neighbourhood and **1.6%** (2.2%) 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 to 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

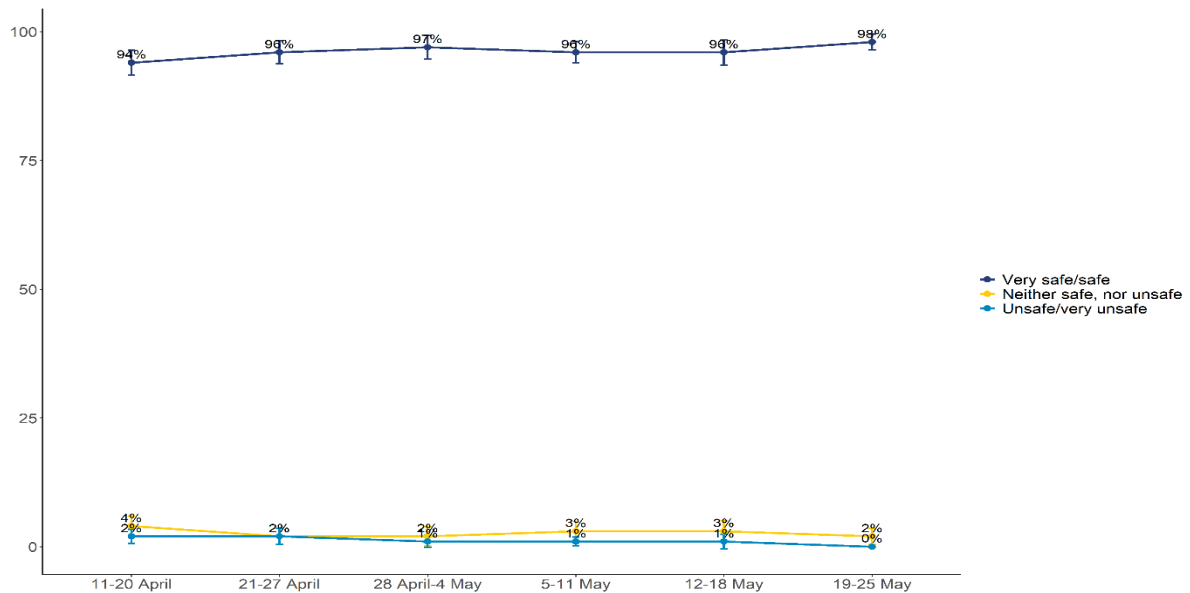


Figure 5: How safe or unsafe people feel in their neighbourhood

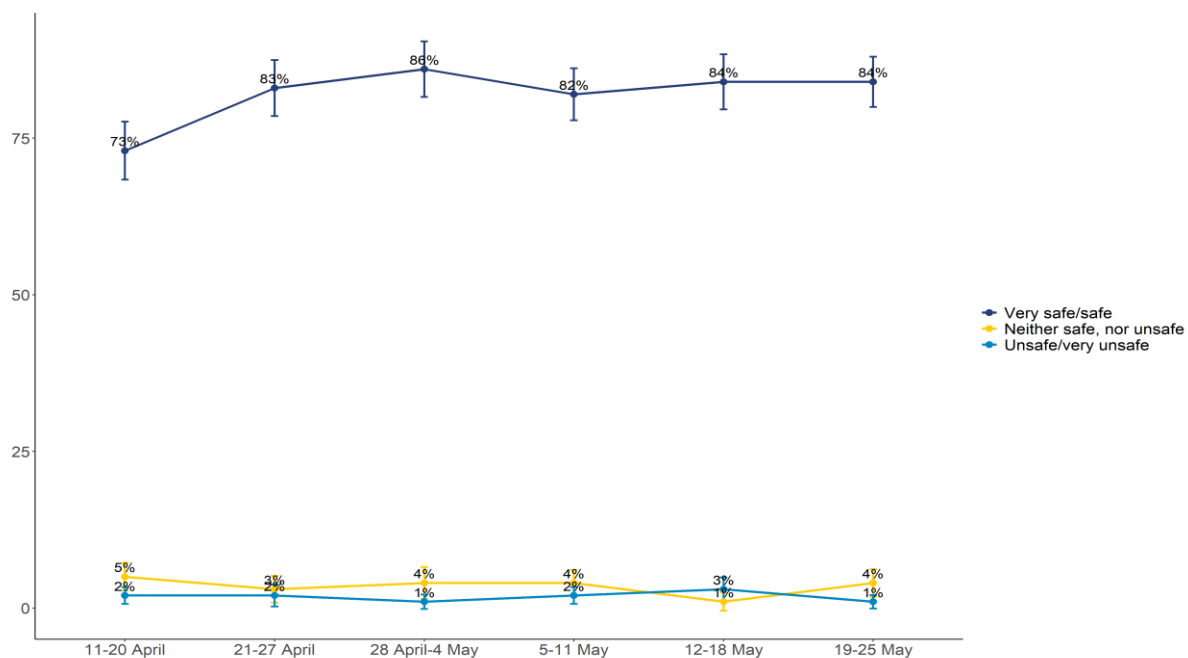
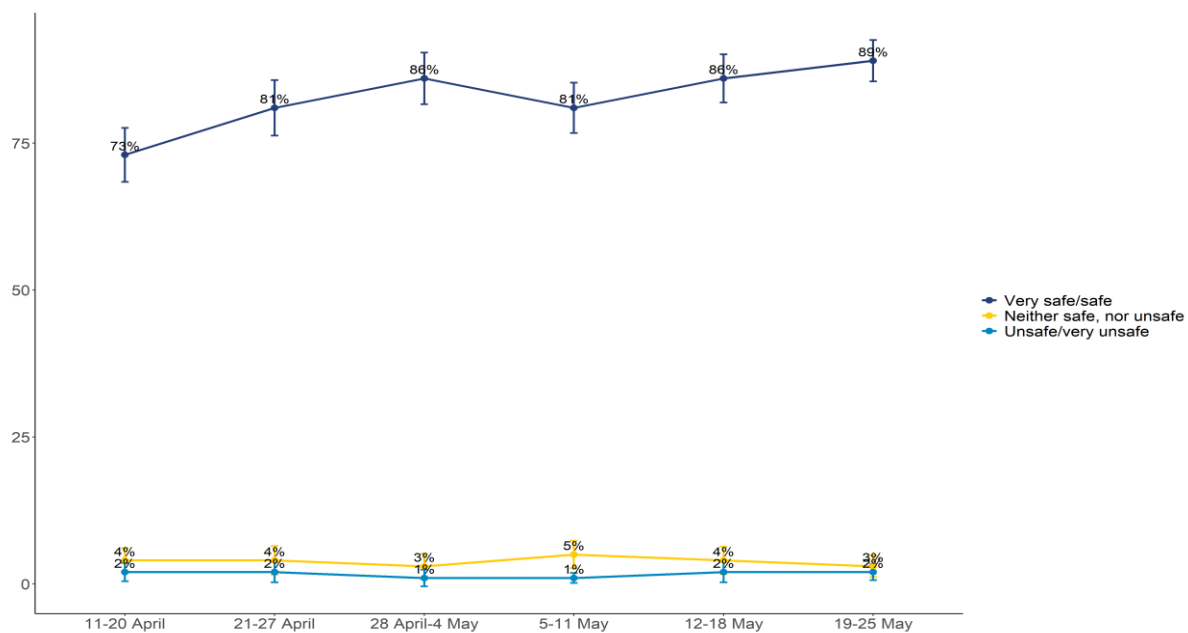


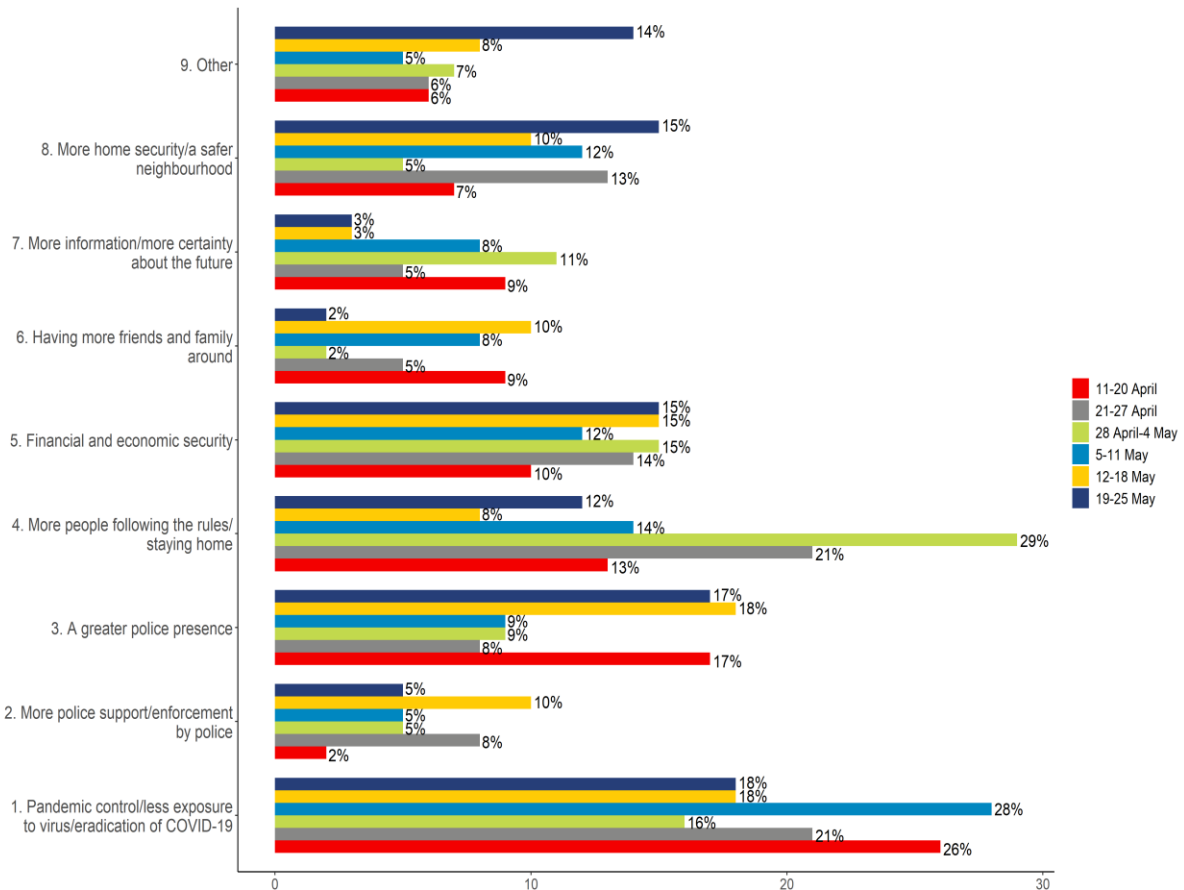
Figure 6: How safe or unsafe people feel travelling to and from essential services



- 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, this could be because the question in the NZCVS is about being alone at night.
- The most common things that will make people feel safer at this time include:
 - Pandemic control/less exposure to virus/eradication of COVID-19 (18%)
 - A greater police presence (17%)

- Financial and economic security (15%)
- More home security/a safer neighbourhood (15%)
- This is similar to what was reported in the previous weeks, although, compared to level three there are now more people saying that “A greater police presence” and “More home security/a safer neighbourhood” would make them feel safer and less people saying “More people following the rules/staying home” will make them feel safer.

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



- More than a quarter of respondents, **29%** (27%) noticed a problem in their neighbourhood or local area. The most common problems were dangerous driving, **15%** (13%) and noisy neighbours, **11%** (13%). **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.

- The problems in the neighbourhood reported across the survey weeks as shown in Table 1.

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

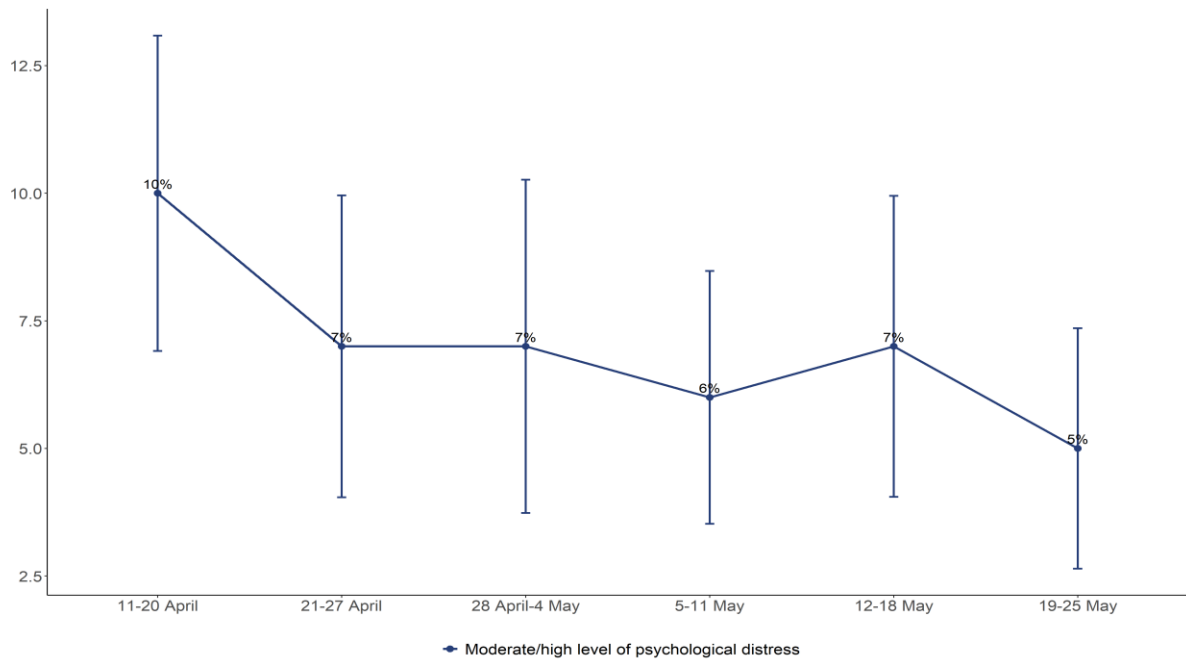
Problems	11-20 April		21-27 April		28 April-4 May		5-11 May		12-18 May		19-25 May		NZCVS 2018/19	
	%	MoE (±)	%	MoE (±)	%	MoE (±)	%	MoE (±)	%	MoE (±)	%	MoE (±)	%	MoE (±)
Noisy neighbours / loud parties	8	2.88	7	3.11	11	4.02	9	3.09	13	3.97	11	3.43	29	1.62
Vandalism / graffiti	2	1.44	1	1.43	1	1.16	3	1.78	3	2.00	2	1.63	11	0.96
Burglary / break-ins / theft	4	2.08	5	2.54	4	2.42	3	1.78	2	1.59	3	1.84	23	1.45
Assaults	1	0.95	1	1.24	3	1.99	1	1.19	1	1.24	2	1.38	7	0.8
Harassment	1	0.95	3	1.89	3	2.14	1	1.03	1	1.24	1	0.88	6	0.68
People using or dealing drugs	2	1.44	1	1.43	4	2.42	3	1.78	4	2.23	2	1.38	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	4	2.03	16	1.23
Dangerous driving	14	3.64	13	3.99	11	3.96	15	3.84	13	3.97	15	3.91	38	1.52
Other	4	2.02	7	3.11	8	3.44	6	2.48	8	3.30	6	2.70	4	0.65
None of these	72	4.65	73	5.30	71	5.78	73	4.83	73	5.26	71	5.01	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 83% (82%)** did not worry at all about being the victim of a crime. **10% (11%)** worried only a little of the time. **1% (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.
- 94% (92%)** said it would be easy or very easy to talk to someone if they felt unsafe or fearful, while only **1% (4%)** think it would be hard or very hard.
- Some respondents reported signs of psychological distress¹. However, **95% (93%)** of respondents demonstrated a low level of psychological distress. **This is consistent with the previous five 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.

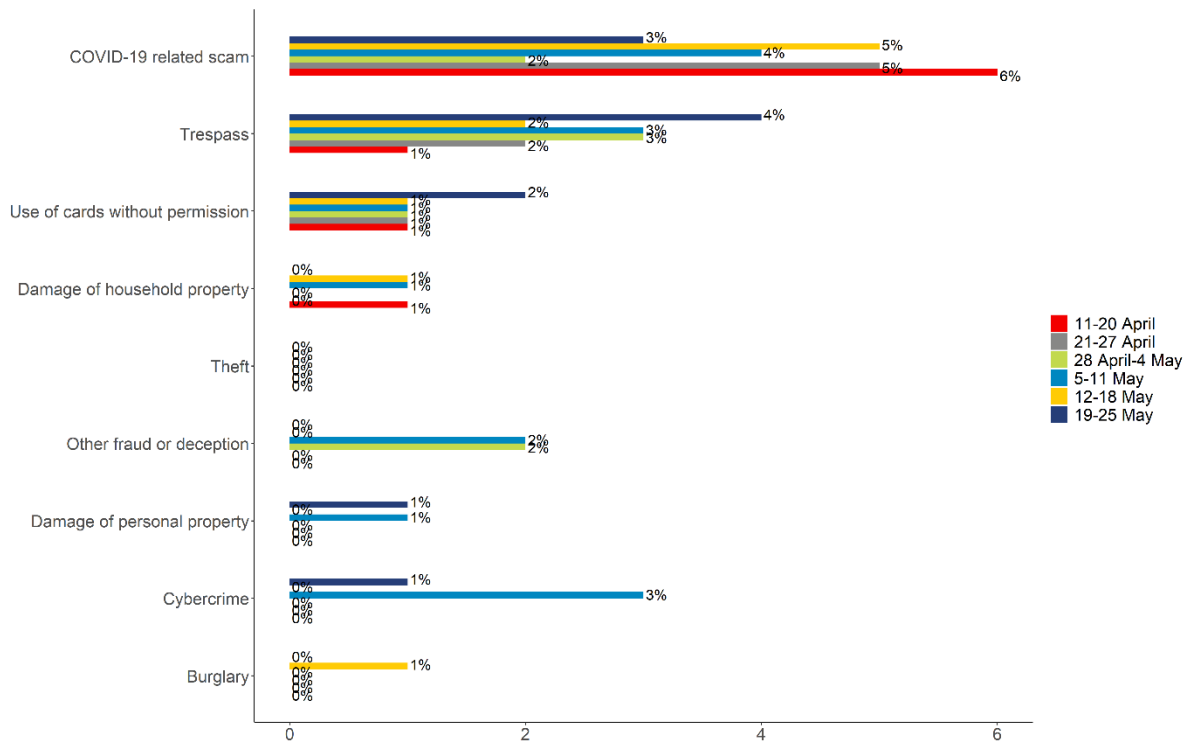
Figure 8: The level of psychological distress



Experiencing crime and reporting to Police

- An overwhelming majority of respondents did not experience property crime and personal non-violent crime. The only offence types reported by more than 2% of respondents is COVID-19 related scam, **3%** (5%) and trespass, **4%** (2%). 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



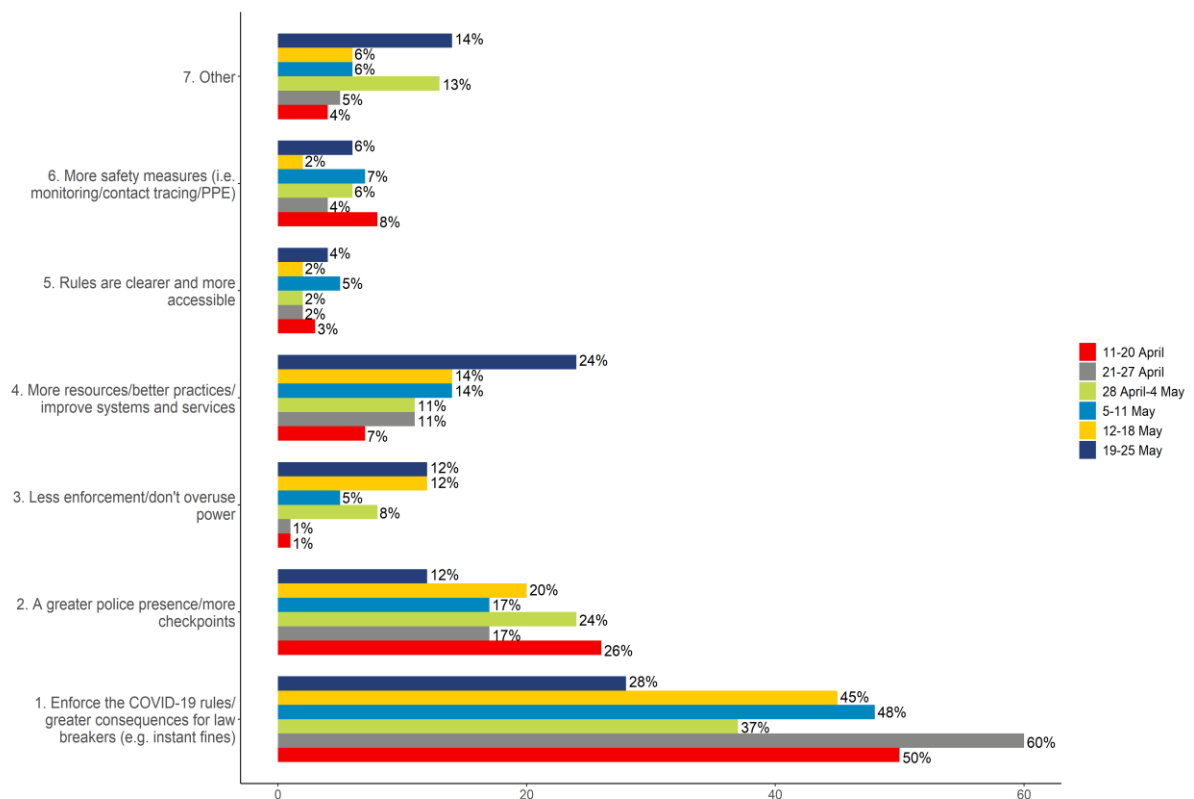
Note: This survey does not ask about violent crime including family violence due to potential risk for respondents.

- After recording very high level of reporting to Police last week (29%), the current week’s proportion returned back approximately to the level reported in early May, **13%**. The total amount of reports continues to be small.

Perception of the criminal justice system

- A clear majority of respondents, **74%** think that the criminal justice system response to the COVID-19 pandemic was good or excellent. This proportion was not changed from the previous week and 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, **4%** (3%).
- Respondents were asked (in a free format) what, if anything, the criminal justice system could be doing better at this time. These questions were then grouped to reflex the most popular topics. The most frequent response is still “Enforce the COVID-19 rules / greater consequences for law breakers. However, proportion of respondents supporting these measures reduced to **28%**, down 32 percentage points since late April (Level 4 response). A growing proportion of respondents (**24%**) vote for more resources, better practices and improved systems and services within the criminal justice system, 10 percentage points more than a week ago. This indicates a shift in respondents’ views from punitive actions during Level 4 response to support and better services on Level 2.

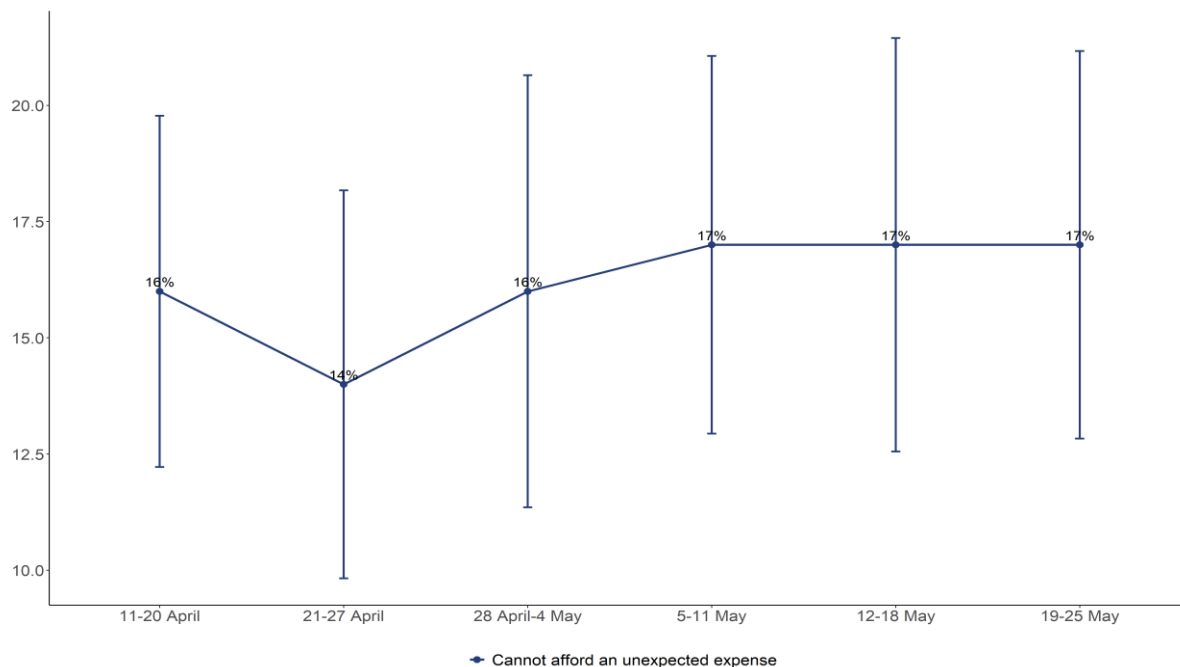
Figure 10: Answers on the question, “What, if anything, the criminal justice system could be doing better at this time?”



Financial pressure

- **80%** 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 the same as a week ago, stable over last 6 weeks, and consistent with NZCVS 2018/2019 results.

Figure 11: Percent of respondents experiencing financial pressure

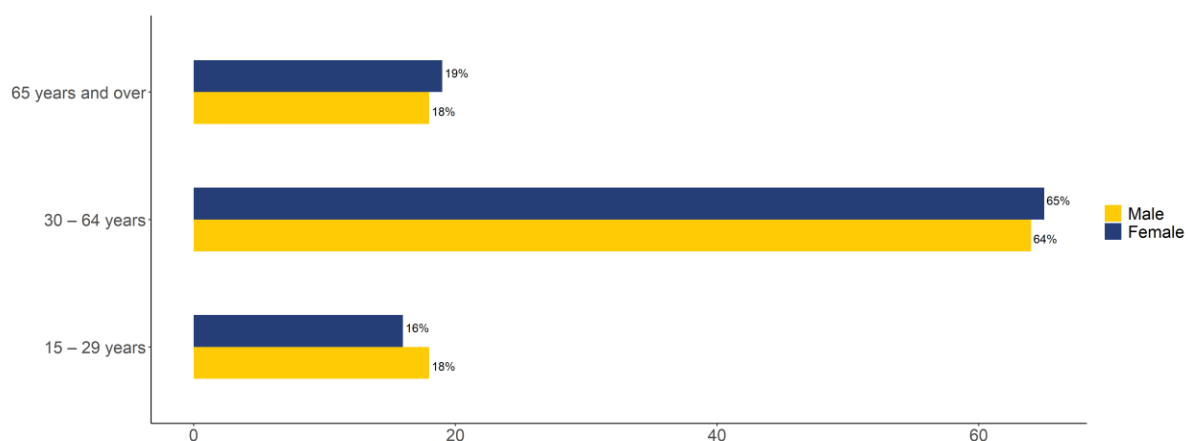


- In addition, **66%** (67%) of respondents did not attempt to access any long-term investments they held. Of those who attempted to access long term investments, **90%** (84%) did not experience any a problem doing so.

Demographics

315 adult (15 years and above) New Zealanders were interviewed in the week between **Tuesday 19 May and Monday 25 May**. The group consisted of 44% male respondents and 56% female respondents. 17% of the respondents were between 15-29 years old, 64% between 30-64 years old and 19% 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 last week of interviewing was 79%). 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 27, 2020

Sector Group

Research and Evaluation Unit