

COVID-19 Justice Sector Survey

Report 001 (12-20 April 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 have been reported to be increasing concern internationally)
- Crimes reported and not reported to Police
- Understanding and sticking to **COVID-19 rules**
- **Perceptions of the Criminal Justice System**

Below are the key results after interviewing **357** adult (15 years old and above) respondents between **Saturday 12 April and Monday 20 April**. All information in the report relates to the **seven days prior to the interview**.

Key messages

Social connection

- Most people are connecting socially. For about a third of people though, loneliness is an issue¹. About 4% of people feel lonely most of the time. People aged 20-24 are more likely to feel this way.
- Most people feel very safe but 1.6% feel very unsafe at home.
- Twenty-eight percent of people noticed a problem in their neighbourhood, most commonly dangerous driving and noisy neighbours.

Perceptions of safety

- While 77% of people don't worry about being a victim of crime, 3% worry most or all of the time.
- 91% of people say they have easy access to someone to talk to if they are feeling unsafe. But 4% of people feel it is hard to find someone to talk to.
- People would feel safer if:
 - there was more certainty
 - COVID-19 was eliminated
 - they had work security and stable income
 - Alert Level 4 was extended for a longer time
 - they were able to return to normal life there was greater visibility of police/greater presence to stop unreasonable behaviour.

Experiencing crime and reporting to Police

- An overwhelming majority of respondents did not experience property crime and personal non-violent crime. 6% said they did experience a COVID-19 related scam.

Understanding and sticking to the COVID-19 rules

- Almost all people (96%) say Alert Level 4 rules are either clear or very clear to understand and they know where they can go and what they can do. One percent say the rules are unclear or very unclear. 92% percent of people say it is easy for them to follow the rules.

Perception of the Criminal Justice System

- A significant majority of respondents (78%) think that the criminal justice system response to the COVID-19 pandemic was good or excellent. However, 2% said that the response was poor.
- Some people suggested that the criminal justice system could be doing better at this time. Most said that the criminal justice system should be tougher to those breaking the lockdown rules. A popular suggestion was to introduce instant fines for the lockdown offences.

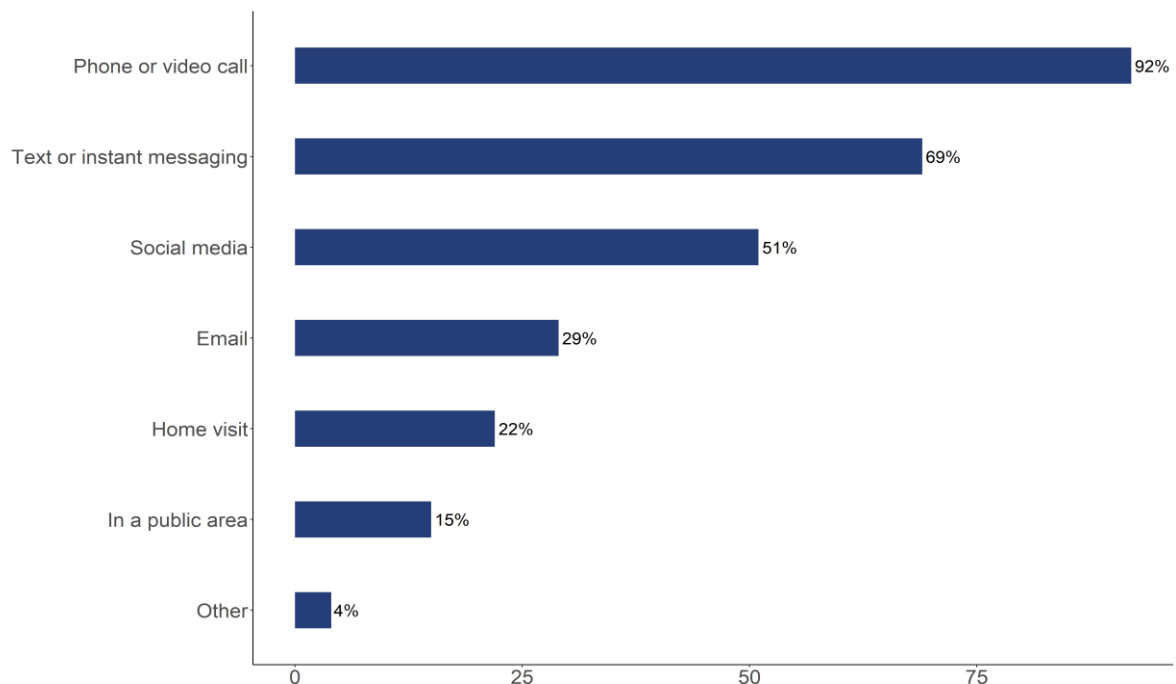
¹ It was erroneously stated that about a quarter of people reported that they have a feeling of loneliness. The error is fixed 14/05/2020.

Detailed findings

Social connection

- Almost all respondents (98%) had communicated with family, whānau or friends outside of their household, and most (82%) had communicated on at least four days.
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.

Figure 1: How did you communicate?

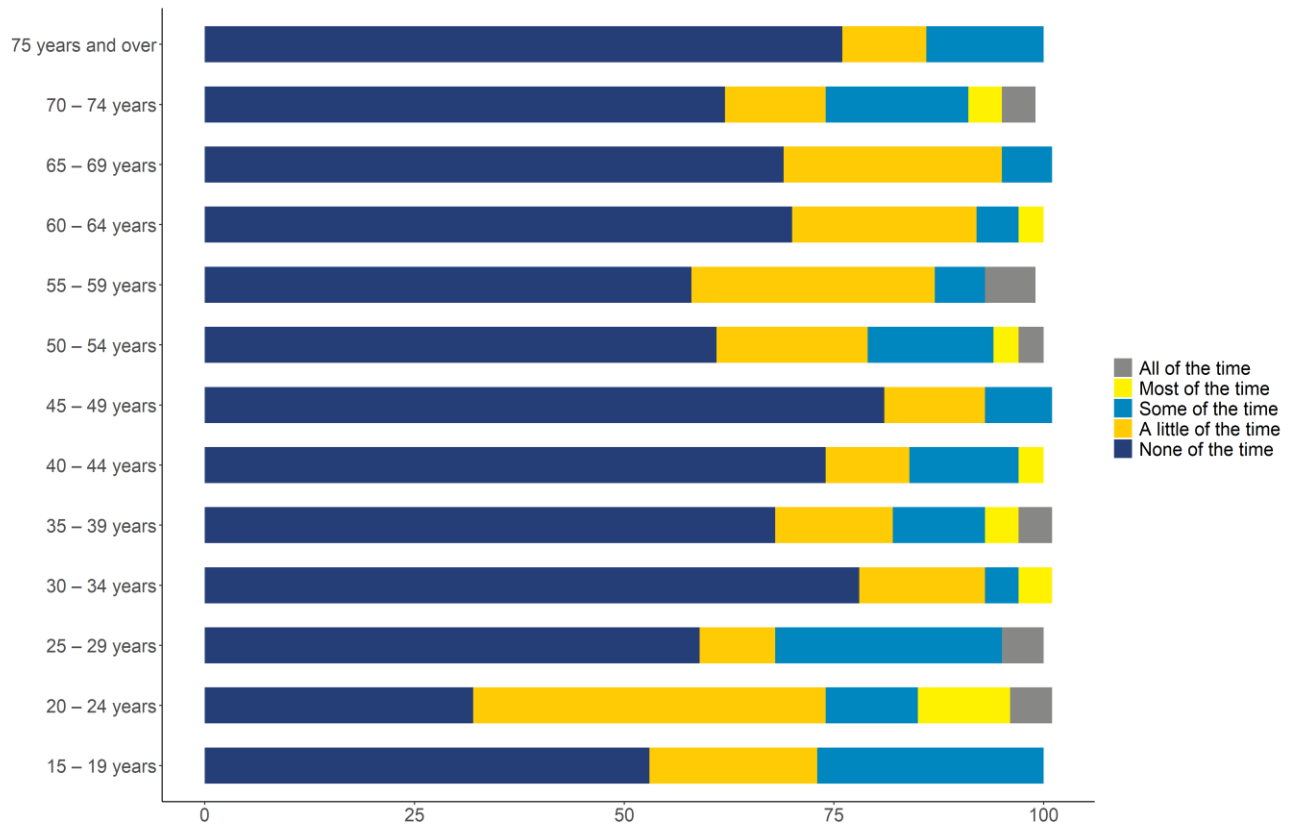


- For 90% of respondents communication with family, whānau and friends over the last week was either easy or very easy. Only 5% reported that it was hard or very hard.

Loneliness

- Two thirds of respondents (66%) did not feel lonely at all over the last week, while almost one fifth (18%) felt lonely a little of time. However, 4% reported feeling lonely all or most of the time.
This pattern is similar to results from the 2018/2019 NZCVS, in which 69% of adults said they felt lonely none of the time over the past four weeks, 17% felt lonely a little of the time, and 3% felt lonely all of the time.
- Proportion of those feeling lonely all or most of the time increases to 14% among people with no access to internet.
- Interestingly, only 2% of respondents aged 65 years and older are feeling lonely all or most of the time, which is consistent with findings from the 2018/2019 NZCVS. This proportion increases to 7% for people younger than 30 years.

Figure 2: How often did you feel lonely over previous seven days (by age groups)

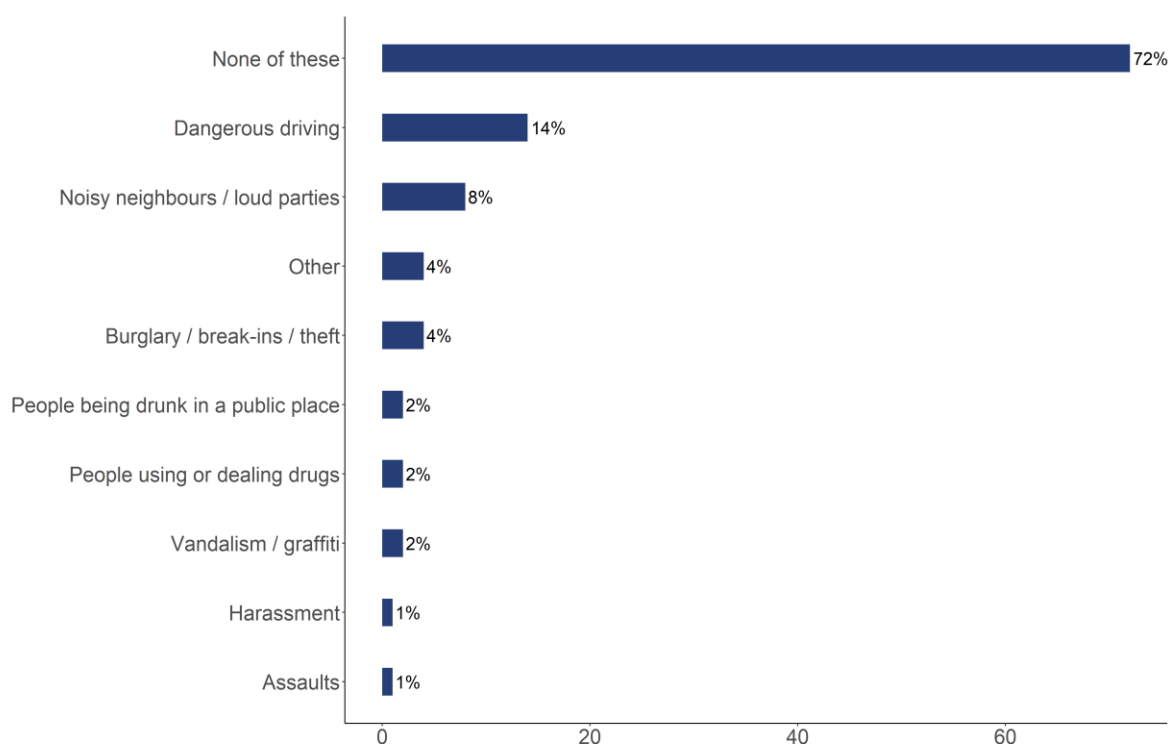


Perceptions of safety

- Over the last week, 1.6% of respondents felt unsafe or very unsafe at home, 1.6% while walking alone in their neighbourhood and 2.2% when travelling to or from essential services.
- The most common reasons for not feeling completely safe related to the risk of being infected and general uncertainty caused by COVID-19.
- More than a quarter of respondents (28%) noticed a problem in their neighbourhood or local area. The most common problems were dangerous driving (14%) and noisy neighbours (8%).

Note that issues with noisy neighbours and dangerous driving were also seen as problems for New Zealanders before the lockdown: 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.

Figure 3: Over the past 7 days, have any of these been a problem in your neighbourhood / local area?



- 77% did not worry at all about being the victim of a crime and further 13% worried a little of the time. However, 3% worried about being a victim of crime most or all of the time. These results seem to indicate that during the Level 4 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.
- 91% said it would be easy or very easy to talk to someone if they felt unsafe or fearful, while 4% think it would be hard or very hard.
- Some respondents reported feeling signs of psychological distress.
 - 18% of respondents felt nervous some, most or all of the time
 - 10% felt hopeless
 - 27% felt restless or fidgety
 - 6% felt so depressed that nothing could cheer you up
 - 17% felt that everything was an effort
 - 7% felt worthless

Note that an individual may have experienced more than one of the above feelings.

- Respondents were asked (in a free format) what may improve their feeling of safety. Most often (in no particular order) people mentioned more certainty, elimination of COVID-19, work security/stable income, extension of level 4 for longer time, return to normal life, more visible police presence and stopping unreasonable behaviour.

Understanding and sticking to COVID-19 rules

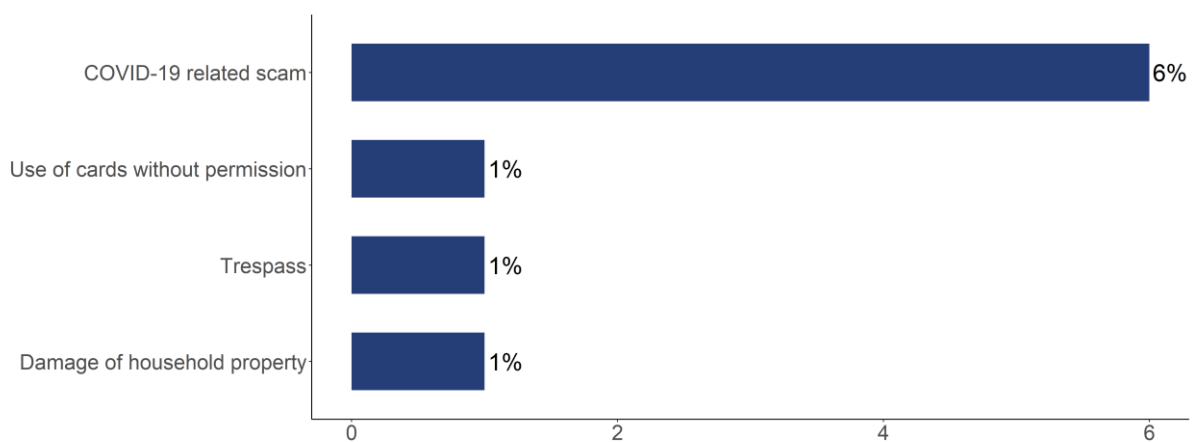
- An overwhelming majority of respondents (96%) said that it is either clear or very clear where they can go and what they can do during the current COVID-19 Alert Level (Level 4). Only 1% of respondents found the rules unclear or very unclear.

- Furthermore, 92% of respondents said it was easy or very easy for them to stick with the rules, while only 2% said it was hard or very hard.
- The reasons some people gave about why it was difficult for them to stick with the rules included: boredom, being separated with the rest of the family, lack of social contact, having to keep children at home, and observing those who violate the rules. Some people mentioned difficulties related to their physical disability.

Experiencing crime and reporting to Police

- An overwhelming majority of respondents did not experience property crime and personal non-violent crime. Experience of crime by specific offence types is presented in the chart below.

Figure 4: Percent of respondents experiencing non-violent crime over the last 7 days



Notes:

1. Other types of non-violent crime (burglary, theft, other fraud or deception, computer crime) were not mentioned by respondents and not presented on the chart.
2. This survey does not ask about violent crime including family violence due to potential risk for respondents.

- None of the crimes experienced by respondents were reported to Police.

Perception of the criminal justice system

- A significant majority of respondents (78%) think that the criminal justice system response to the COVID-19 pandemic was good or excellent. However, 2% said that the response was poor.
- Respondents were asked (in a free format) what, if anything, the criminal justice system could be doing better at this time. Most of the approximately 120 responses to this question suggested that the criminal justice system should be tougher to those breaking the lockdown rules. A popular suggestion was to introduce instant fines for the lockdown offences.

Financial pressure

- 82% of respondents said they could afford an unexpected expense of \$500 in the next week without borrowing money, while 16% could not. Note: New Zealand Crime and Victims

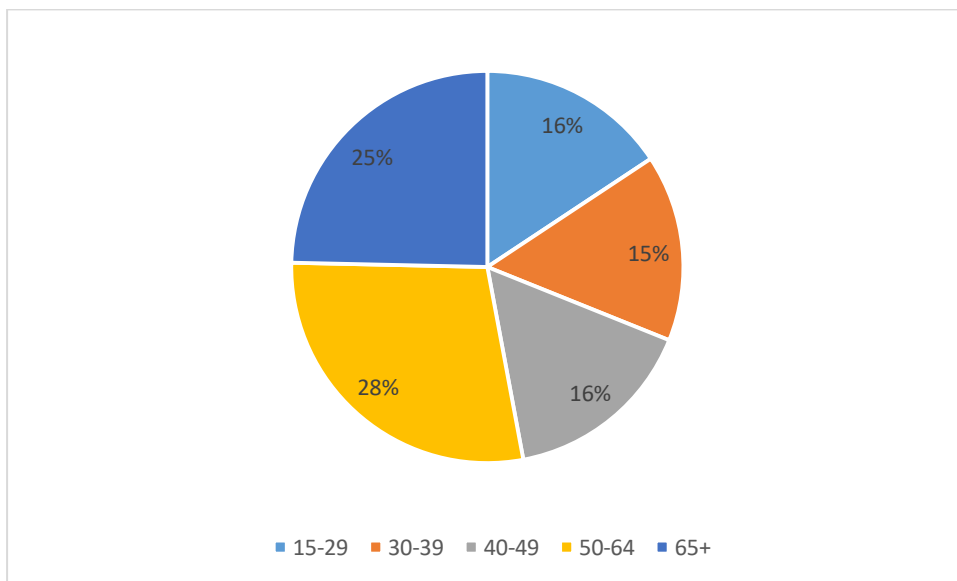
Survey, Cycle 2 (October 2018 – September 2019) reported close results: 78% of adults could afford an unexpected expense of \$500 in the next week without borrowing money, and 20% could not.

- In addition, 81% of respondents did not attempt to access any long-term investments they held, while 12% made such an attempt. Of those who attempted to access long term investments, 88% did not experience any problems with doing it.

Demographics

The survey interviewed 357 adult New Zealanders (15 years and above). The group consisted of 42% of male respondents and 58% of female respondents. The age breakdown is presented on the following chart.

Figure 5: Age of the respondents



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 is using a random nation-wide sample. The proportion of people 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 resulting in approximately 300 finalised interviews (a response rate during the first nine days of interviewing was 82%). The 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.

April 21, 2020

Sector Group

Research and Evaluation Unit