

# COVID-19 Justice Sector Survey

Report 003 (28 April – 4 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
- Understanding and sticking to **COVID-19 rules**
- **Perceptions of the Criminal Justice System**

This report provides the key results for the week of interviewing between **Tuesday 28 April and Monday 4 May** after interviewing **239** adult respondents (15 years old and above). These results are compared with the previous periods (12–20 April and 21–27 April). The total number of interviewed adults is now **868**.

Note that from Tuesday 28 April New Zealand moved to Alert Level 3.

Percentages for the current period (28 April–4 May) are provided in bold and followed by the figure related to the previous period (in brackets in *italic*). For example, in the statement:

**90% (95%)** of people say they have easy access to someone to talk to if they are feeling unsafe. But **3% (2%)** of people feel it is hard to find someone to talk to.

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.**

## Key messages

### Overall

The results of this third pulse survey are consistent, by and large, with the first and second pulse surveys. Notable findings from this survey are:

- The pattern of loneliness is roughly similar to levels prior to the lockdown.
- Compared (with caution) to before the lockdown, the results indicate that people worried much less about being a victim of crime.
- A significant majority of people find the COVID-19 rules easy to understand and to follow. However, a smaller proportion of respondents clearly understood Level 3 rules, **88%**, than Level 4 rules (96%-99%).
- 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.

### Social connection

- Most people are connecting socially, but almost a third of people mention the feeling of loneliness. About **6%** of people feel lonely most or all of the time.
- **8%** (7%) of respondents aged 65 years and older feel lonely all or most of the time. This is consistent with findings from the 2018/2019 NZCVS
- After moving to Level 3, the combined proportion of contacts by home visits and in a public area increased to **31%** from 26% a week ago.

### Perceptions of safety

- Most people feel very safe, with only **0.8%** (1.8%) feeling very unsafe at home.
- While **79%** (89%) of people don't worry about being a victim of crime, only **5%** (1%) worry most or all of the time.
- The most common neighbourhood problems were dangerous driving, **11%** (13%) and noisy neighbours, **11%** (7%).
- The proportion of those who feel unsafe and very unsafe at home and especially while walking in their neighbourhood is much lower than in the pre-pandemic period.
- People will feel safer if:
  - There is higher police presence
  - People follow the rules and stay at home
  - COVID-19 is eradicated
  - They have job security and financial security
  - There is more certainty about the future
  - A vaccine against COVID-19 is developed
  - They may stay at home with somebody close to them
  - 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. The proportion of those experiencing a COVID-19 related scam reduced

to **2%** (5%). Overall, there is no significant difference with the numbers reported in the previous week.

- Those experiencing incidents of crime reported **14%** of them to Police. This is 10 percentage points more than a week ago (4%).

#### Understanding and sticking to the COVID-19 rules

- We asked about people's awareness of COVID-19 rules to see whether there was a relationship with other questions asked in the survey. However, a very small proportion of those who either do not understand or do not follow the COVID-19 rules makes such analysis statistically unreliable. A significant majority of people find the COVID-19 rules easy to understand and to follow. Still, a smaller proportion of respondents clearly understood Level 3 rules, **88%**, than Level 4 rules (96%-99%).

#### Perception of the Criminal Justice System

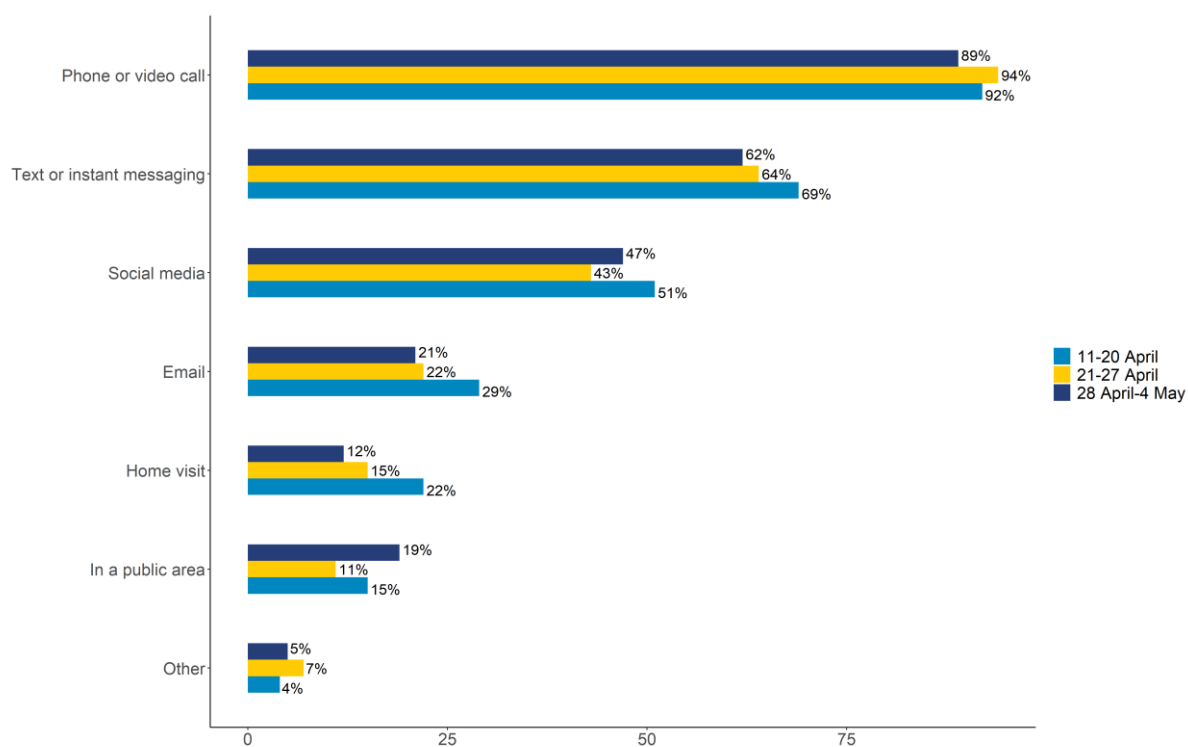
- **69%** (79%) think that the criminal justice system response to the COVID-19 pandemic was good or excellent. This is 10 percentage points lower than a week ago. However, the proportion of those who think that the response was poor remains at **3%**. The reason for a decline in "good" or "excellent" answers is due to an increase of "do not know" responses.
- About a third of respondents 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, instant fines for law breakers, clearer guidelines and better tracking of people.

## Detailed findings

### Social connection

- **97%** (98%) of adults had communicated with family, whānau or friends outside of their household, and most, **80%** (82%), had communicated on at least four days of the week. These proportions are similar to those from the previous 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.
- After moving to Alert Level 3 there was a decrease in the proportion of contacts through home visits but an increase in the proportion of contacts in a public area. **The combined proportion of contacts by home visits and in public area increased from 26% a week ago to 31% in the current period.**

Figure 1: How did you communicate?



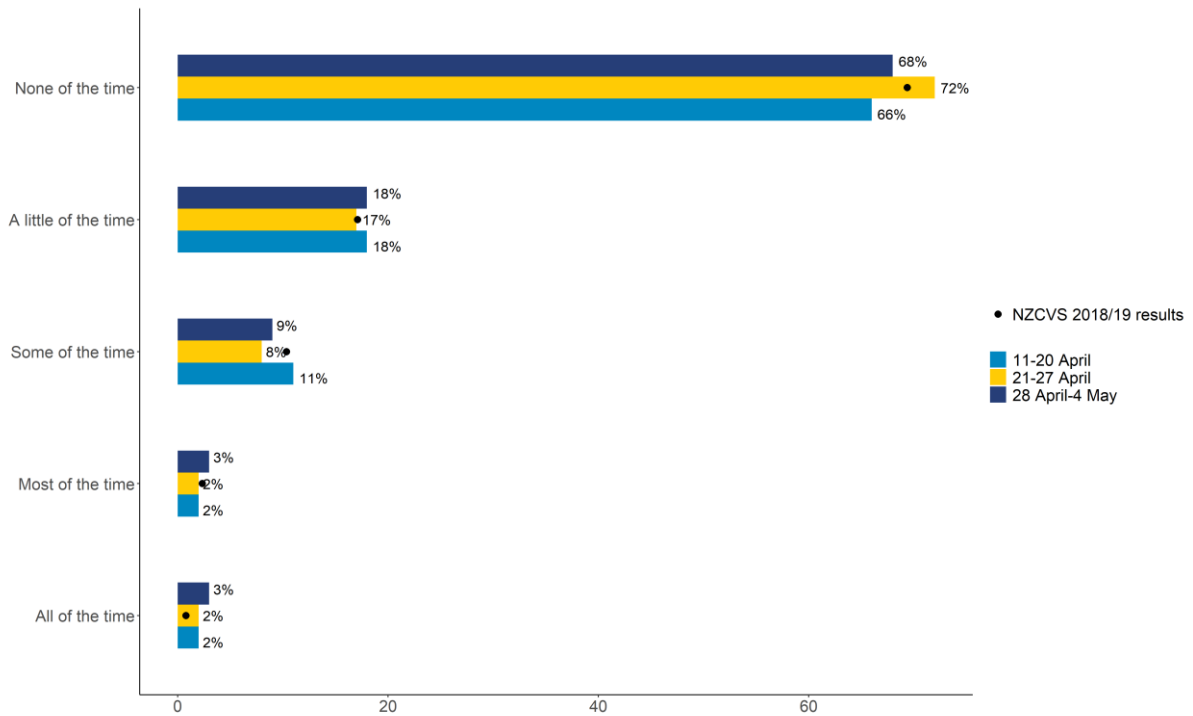
- For **94%** (91%) of respondents, communication with family, whānau and friends over the last week was either easy or very easy. Only **2%** (3%) of respondents reported that it was hard or very hard.

### Loneliness

- More than two thirds of respondents, **68%** (71%) did not feel lonely at all over the last week, while a further **18%** (17%) felt lonely a little of the time. However, **6%** (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. Note, however, that the NZCVS 2018/2019 results are based on loneliness over the previous four weeks, not seven days.

- The pattern of loneliness is stable over the three weeks of surveying.

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

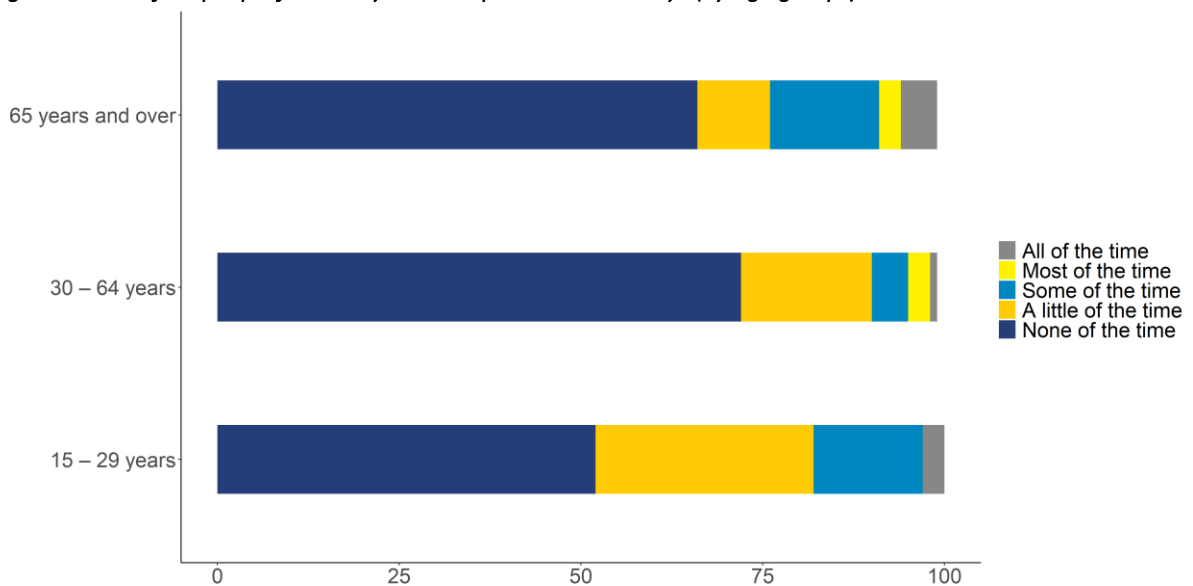


**Note:**

1. NZCVS 2018/2019 results are based on loneliness over the previous four weeks, not seven days.

- The proportion of those feeling lonely all or most of the time increases to **23%** among people with no access to internet.
- **8% (7%)** of respondents aged 65 years and older feel lonely all or most of the time. This is consistent with findings from the 2018/2019 NZCVS.

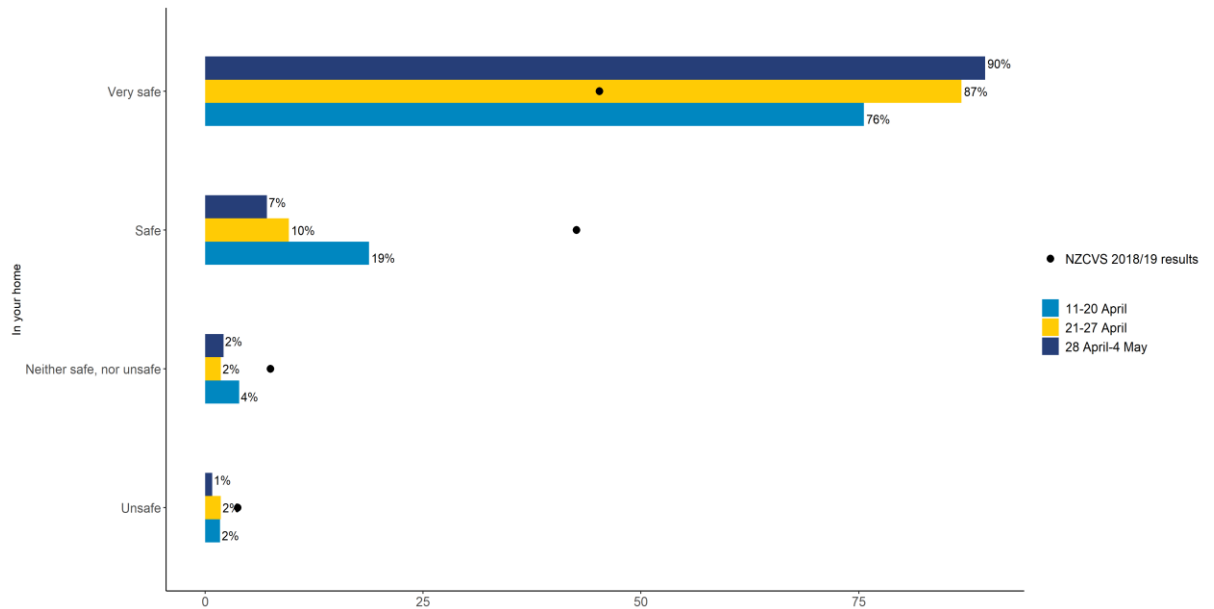
Figure 3: How often people feel lonely over the previous seven days (by age groups)



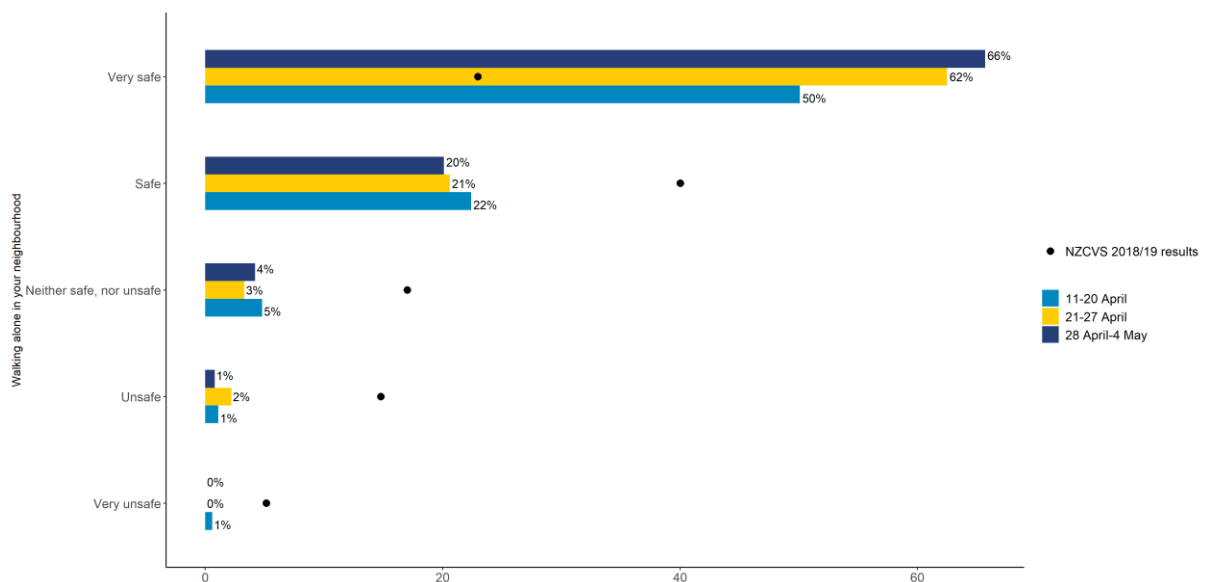
## Perceptions of safety

- Only **0.8%** (**1.8%**) of respondents feel unsafe or very unsafe at home, **0.8%** (**2.2%**) while walking alone in their neighbourhood and **1.3%** (**2.2%**) when travelling to or from essential services. This is even lower than an already small proportion observed a week ago. Most often people feel unsafe because of the risk of infection by COVID-19.

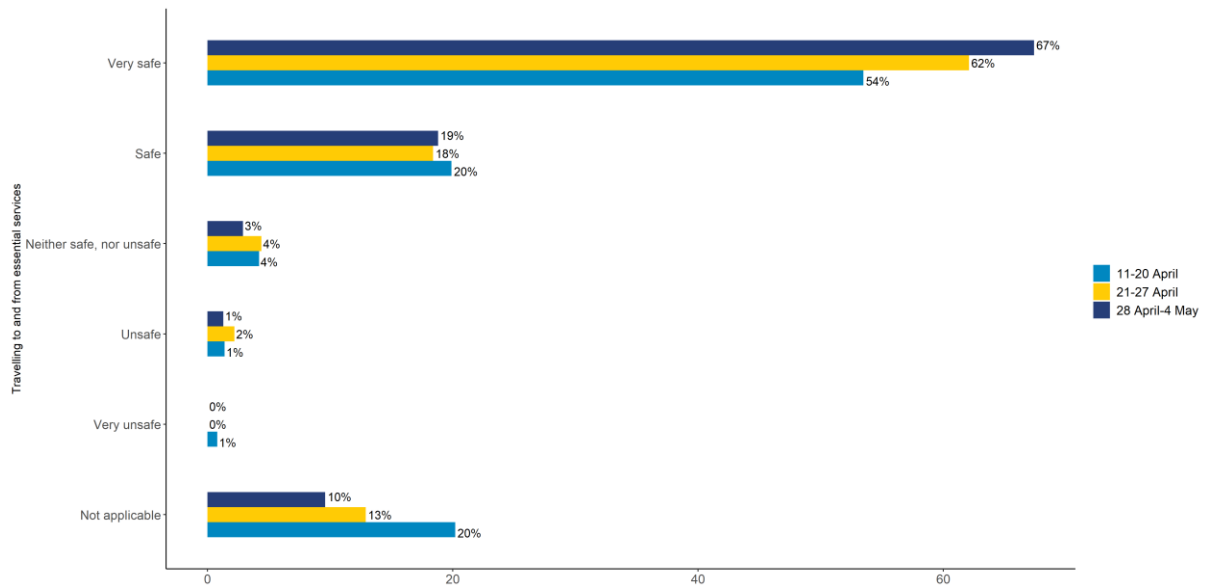
**Figure 4: How safe or unsafe people feel at home**



**Figure 5: How safe or unsafe people feel in the neighbourhood**



**Figure 6: How safe or unsafe people feel when travelling to or from work**



- According 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 proportion of people who feel unsafe or very unsafe by themselves at night at home and especially walking by 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 eradicated
  - They have job security and financial security
  - There is more certainty about the future
  - A vaccine against COVID-19 is developed
  - They may stay at home with somebody close to them
  - They can return to a normal life

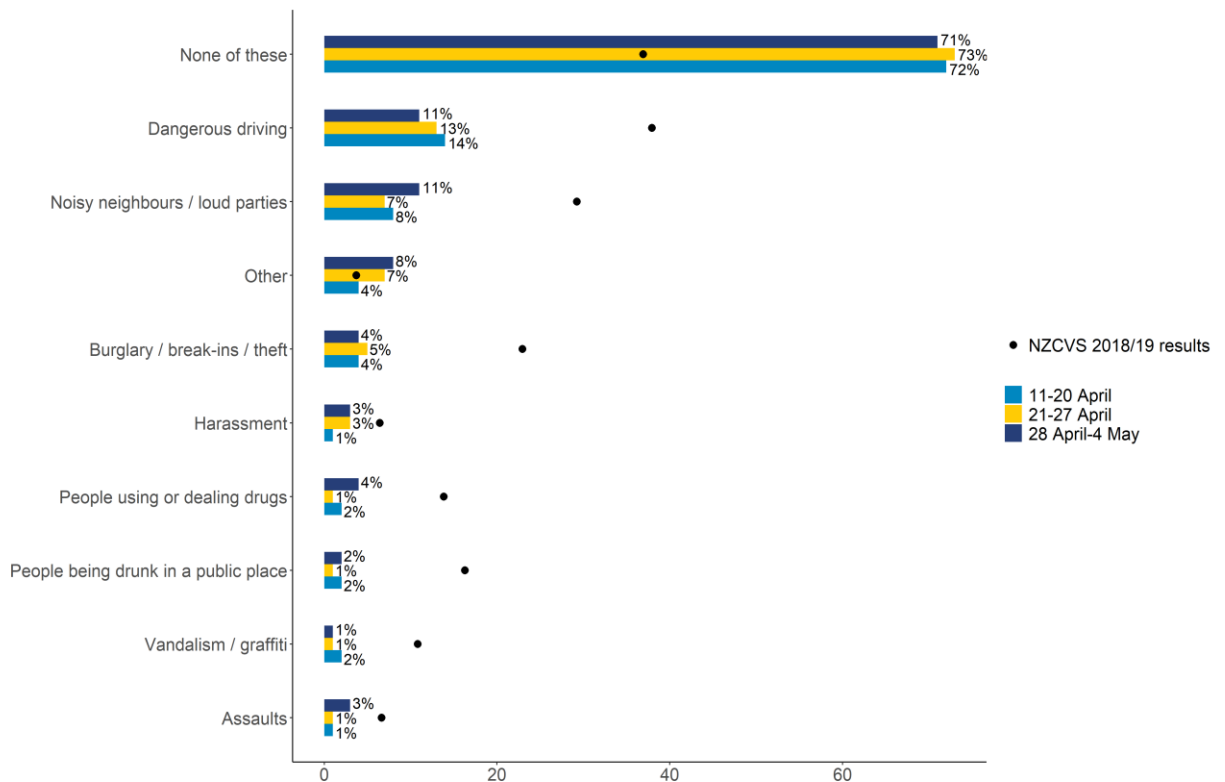
Figure 7: Answers on the question, “What, if anything, would make you feel more safe at this time?”



- More than a quarter of respondents, **29% (27%)** noticed a problem in their neighbourhood or local area. The most common problems were dangerous driving, **11% (13%)** and noisy neighbours, **11% (7%)**. The **proportion of those complaining about noisy neighbours under Level 3 increased by 4 percentage points from 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, comparison with the NZCVS requires caution as the time periods used in these questions are different between the two surveys.



**Figure 8: Problems in the neighbourhood / local area over the past 7 days**



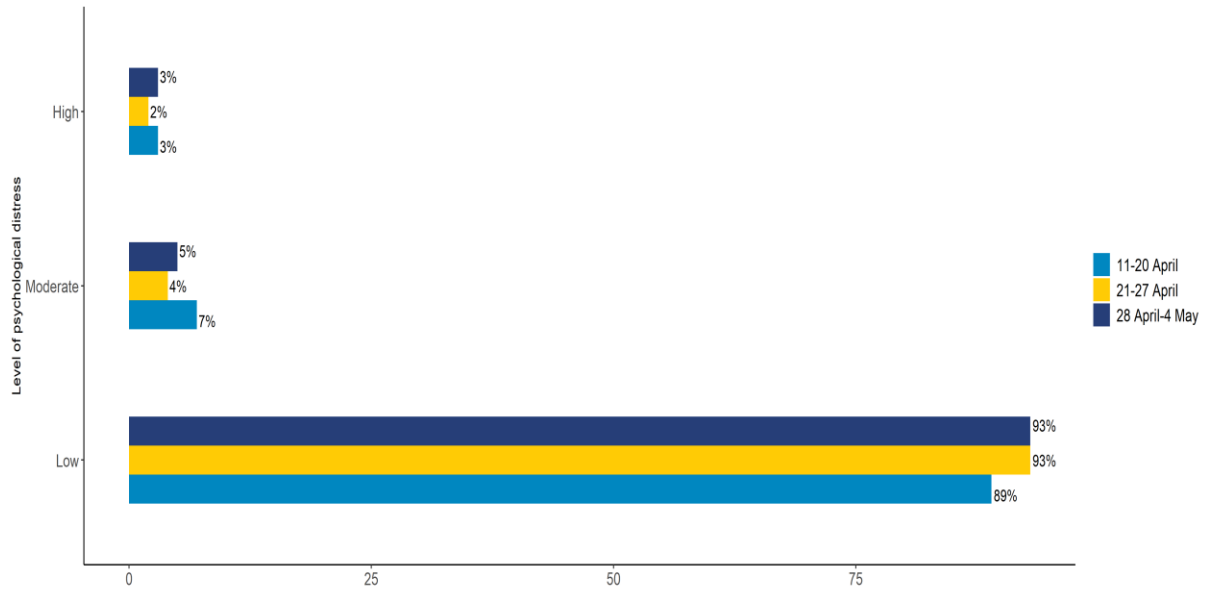
**Note:**

1. The NZCVS 2018/2019 results are based on problems in the neighbourhood / local area over the past 12 months

- **79% (89%)** did not worry at all about being the victim of a crime. **This is 10 percentage points down on the previous week. 12% (7%)** worried only a little of the time. **5% (1%)** worried about being a victim of crime most or all of the time. These figures are similar to those recorded two weeks ago.
- 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. However, comparison with the NZCVS data requires caution as the time periods used in these questions are different between the two surveys.
- **90% (95%)** said it would be easy or very easy to talk to someone if they felt unsafe or fearful, while only **3% (2%)** think it would be hard or very hard.
- Some respondents reported signs of psychological distress<sup>1</sup>. However, **93% (93%)** of respondents demonstrated a low level of psychological distress. This is consistent with the NZCVS data where 88% of respondents have low level of psychological distress.

<sup>1</sup> 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.

**Figure 9: The level of psychological distress**

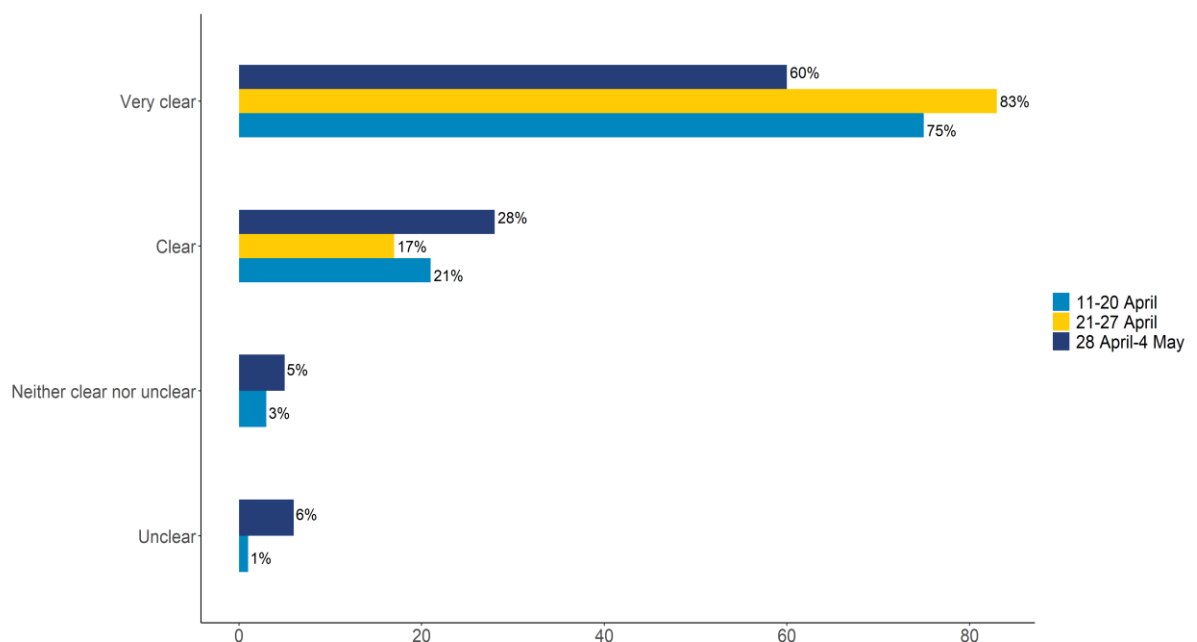


- Respondents were asked (in a free format) what might improve their feelings of safety. Most often (in no particular order) people mentioned more certainty, elimination of COVID-19, work security/stable income, extension of lockdown for a longer time, a return to normal life, more visible police presence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

### Understanding and sticking to COVID-19 rules

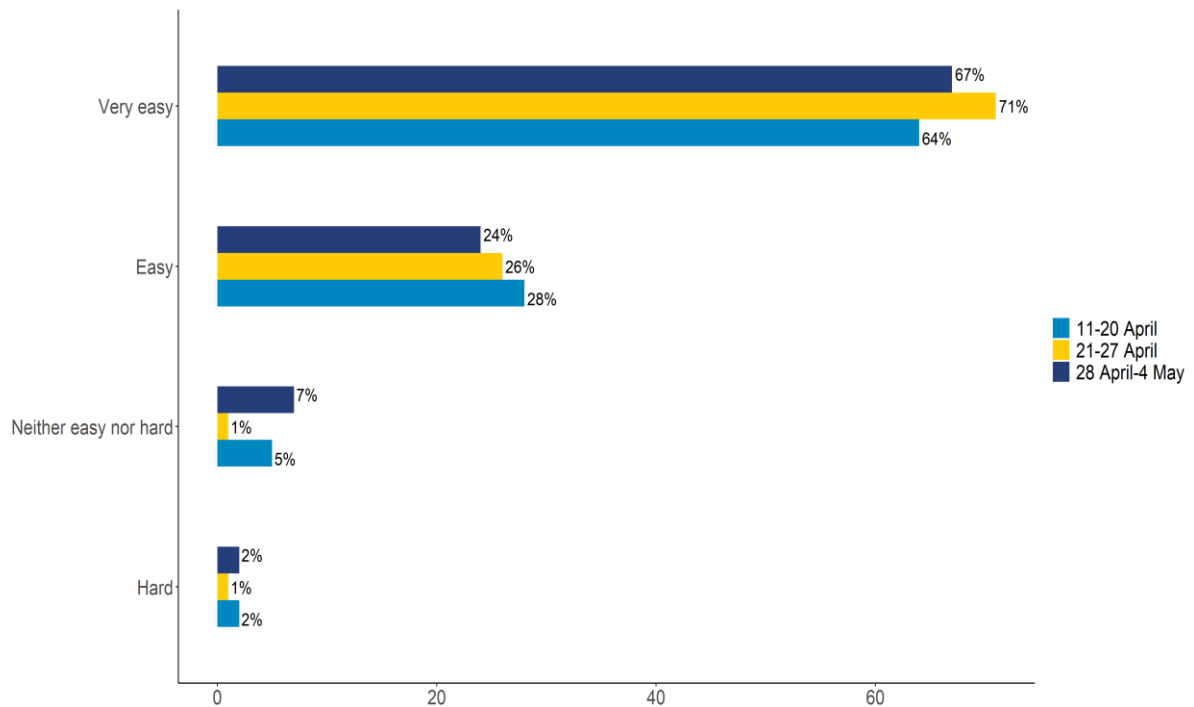
- A substantial majority of respondents, **88% (99%)** said that it is either clear or very clear where they can go and what they can do during the current COVID-19 Alert Level (Level 3). **It is, however, 11 percentage points less than when people were under Level 4 rules. 6% (1%)** of respondents found the rules unclear or very unclear (**5 percentage points up from the previous week**).

**Figure 10: Clarity of the rules for the current COVID-19 Alert Level**



- **91% (97%)** of respondents said it was easy or very easy for them to stick with the rules. **This is 6 percentage points lower than a week ago.** Only **2% (1%)** said it was hard or very hard to stick with the rules.

**Figure 11: Ease of following the rules at the current COVID-19 Alert Level**

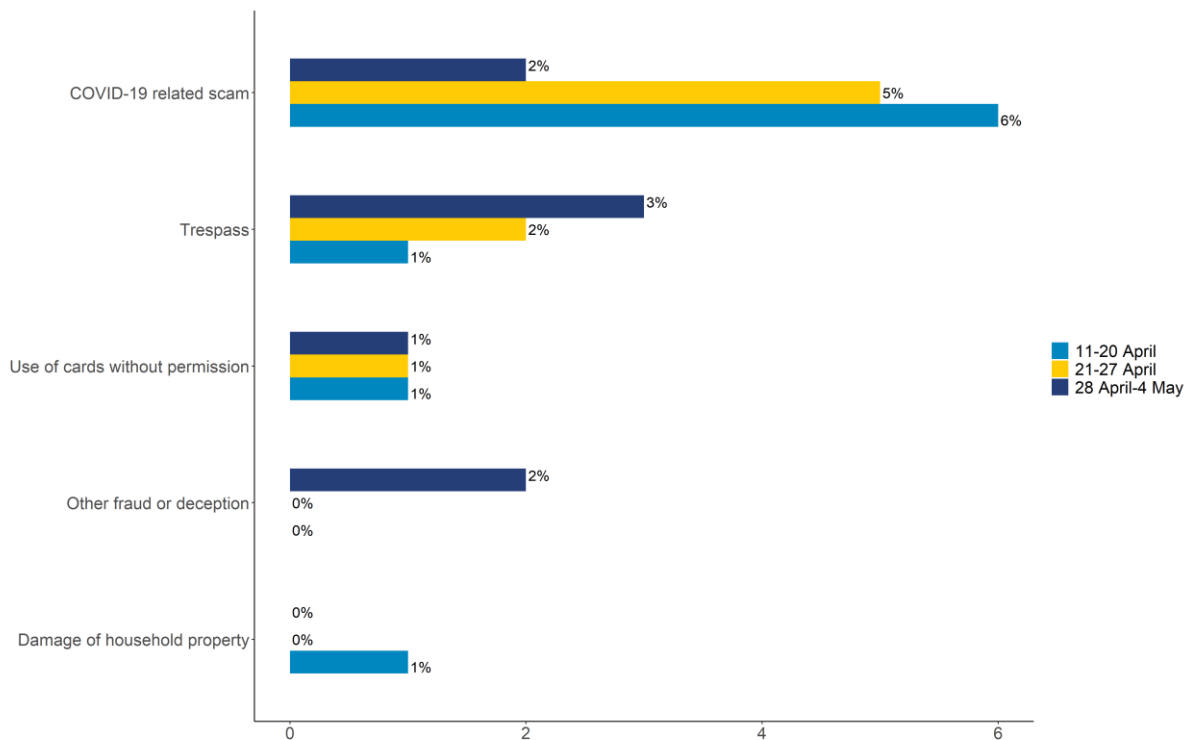


- The reasons some people gave about why it is difficult for them to stick with the rules included: loss of independence, being separated from the rest of the family, not very clear about bubble rules, having to keep children at home, and observing those who violate the rules. Some people mentioned difficulties 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 12: Percent of respondents experiencing non-violent crime over the last 7 days**



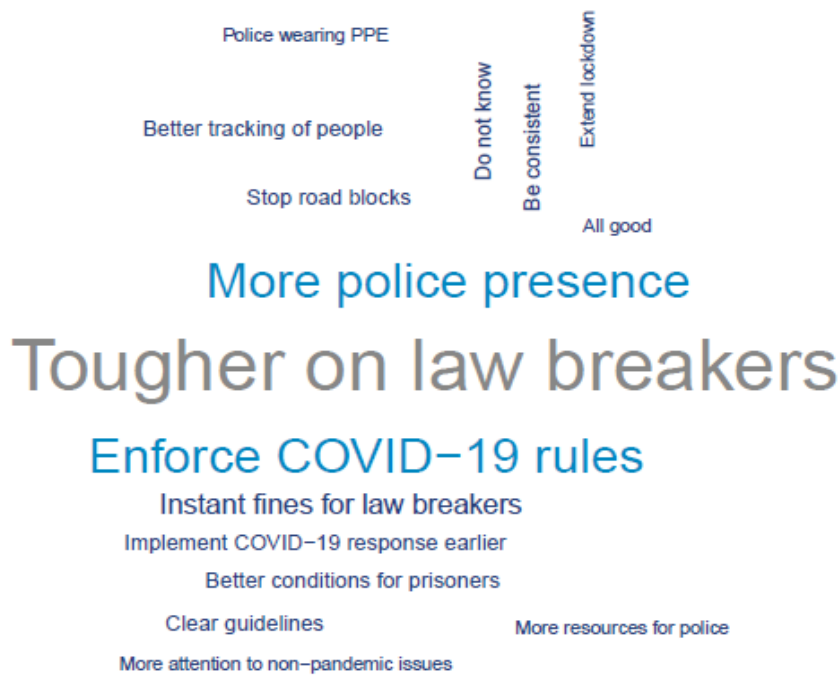
**Notes:**

1. Other types of non-violent crime (burglary, theft, computer crime) were mentioned by less than 0.5% of respondents or not mentioned at all, and not presented on the chart.
  2. This survey does not ask about violent crime including family violence due to potential risk for respondents.
- **14% (4%)** of the crimes experienced by respondents were reported to Police. **This is 10 percentage points higher than a week ago.**

**Perception of the criminal justice system**

- A clear majority of respondents, **69% (79%)** think that the criminal justice system response to the COVID-19 pandemic was good or excellent. **However, this is 10 percentage points less than a week ago.** The decline is caused by an increase in respondents who answered “Do not know”. The proportion of those who perceive the criminal justice system response to the COVID-19 pandemic was poor or very poor was unchanged, **3% (3%)**.
- Respondents were asked (in a free format) what, if anything, the criminal justice system could be doing better at this time. About a third of 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, instant fines for law breakers, clearer guidelines and better tracking of people.

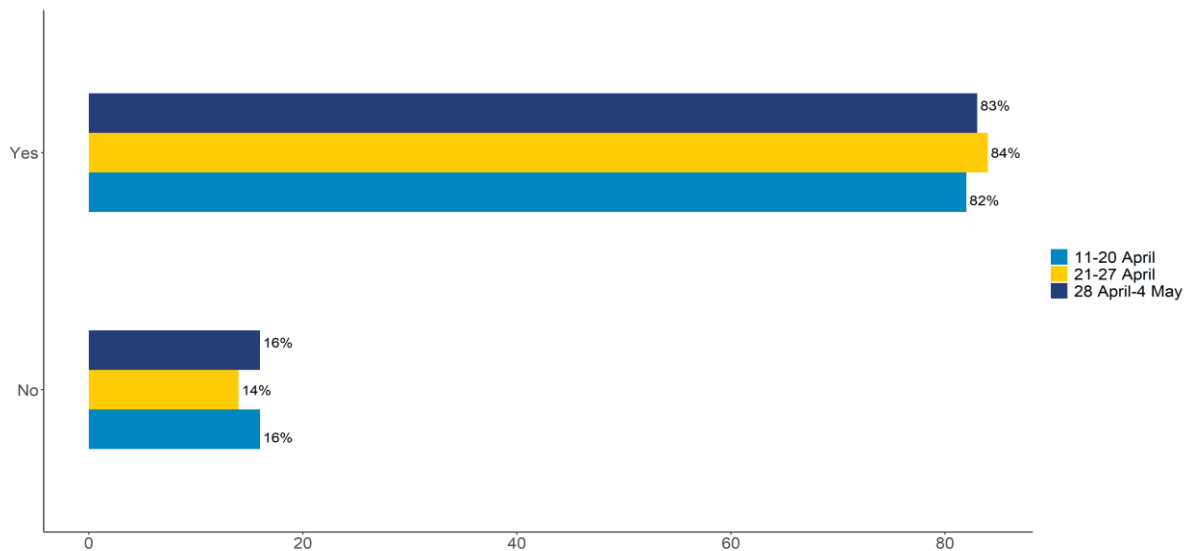
**Figure 13: Answers on the question, “What, if anything, the criminal justice system could be doing better at this time?”**



**Financial pressure**

- **83%** (84%) of respondents said they could afford an unexpected expense of \$500 in the next week without borrowing money, while **16%** (14%) could not. These levels are consistent with NZCVS results.

**Figure 14: Percent of respondents experiencing financial pressure**

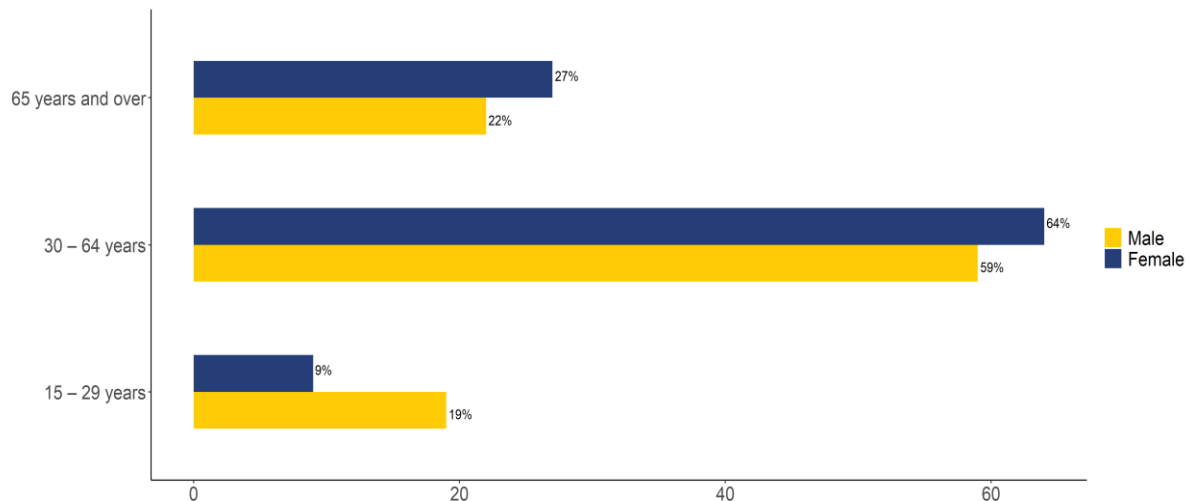


- In addition, **79%** (78%) of respondents did not attempt to access any long-term investments they held. Of those who attempted to access long term investments, **17%** (27%) experienced a problem doing so. **This is 10 percentage points less than a week ago.**

## Demographics

239 adult (15 years and above) New Zealanders were interviewed in the week between **Tuesday 28 April and Monday 4 May**. The group consisted of 46% of male respondents and 54% of female respondents. 14% of the respondents were between 15-29 years old, 62% between 30-64 years old and 25% are 65 years and older. The breakdown of the respondents by sex and age is presented in the following chart.

**Figure 15: 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 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 5, 2020**

**Sector Group**

**Research and Evaluation Unit**