

# COVID-19 Justice Sector Survey

Report 008 (2 June – 8 June 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 and loneliness**
- **Perceptions of safety**, including reasons why people feel unsafe
- **Experience of some types of crimes** (for example, fraud and COVID-19 related scam which are increasingly of concern internationally)
- **Crimes reported and not reported to Police**
- **Perceptions of the Criminal Justice System**
- **Access to justice services**
- **Availability for jury services**

This report provides the key results for the week of interviewing between **Tuesday 2 June and Monday 8 June** after interviewing **219** adult respondents (15 years old and above). These results are compared with the previous survey periods. The total number of interviewed adults is now **2355**.

Percentages for the current period (2–8 June) are provided in bold and followed by the figure related to the previous week (in brackets in *italic*). For example, in the statement:

Most respondents did not feel lonely at all or only a little of the time over the last week, **90% (91%)**.

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.**

In order to improve interpretation, some graphs present average values for particular Alert Levels rather than individual weeks values.

All confidence intervals displayed are at the 95% level.

## Key messages

### Overall

The results of this eighth pulse survey are consistent, by and large, with the previous surveys. From Tuesday 26/05 an updated questionnaire was in use reflecting changes in the COVID-19 response level. This limits comparability for some questions. Two new sections, “Ability to access justice services” and “Jury trials” were added starting in report #7. Notable findings from this survey are:

- The pattern of loneliness is stable over the 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.
- An overwhelming majority of respondents did not experience property crime and personal non-violent crime. The only offence types reported by more than 1% of respondents are COVID-19 related scam, **4%** and trespass, **2%** (1%).
- **24%** (29%) of respondents would have concerns at Alert Level 1 about participating in jury service, because of the COVID-19 situation. **6%** (12%) of respondents said that, due to the COVID-19 situation, they would have concerns about participating in the jury service even after the elimination of COVID-19.

### Social connection and loneliness

- Most people continue to find it easy or very easy to stay connected with family, whānau or friends outside of their household, **94%** (92%).
- Most respondents did not feel lonely at all or only a little of the time over the last week, **90%** (91%).

### Perceptions of safety

- An overwhelming majority of people feel safe and very safe, with **1%** (2%) feeling unsafe or very unsafe at home.
- Only a small proportion of respondents feel unsafe or very unsafe while using public transport **2%** (1%), though **11%** feel unsafe or very unsafe when in the city or town centre.
- People feel least safe when walking alone in their neighbourhood after dark with **14%** (15%) feeling unsafe or very unsafe.
- The most common neighbourhood problems were dangerous driving, **17%** (15%) and noisy neighbours, **10%** (12%).
- People say they will feel safer if there is/they have:
  - Financial and economic security (**19%**)
  - More people following the rules/staying home (**15%**)
  - Pandemic control/less exposure to virus/eradication of COVID-19 (**13%**)
  - A greater police presence (**13%**)

### 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 1% of respondents are COVID-19 related scams, **4%** and trespass, **2%** (1%).

- Of those experiencing the above crimes, **18% (29%)** reported all or some incidents to Police. The total number of reports continues to be very small resulting in substantial variation and low robustness.

### Perception of the criminal justice system

- A clear majority of respondents, **77% (76%)** 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 is unchanged from the previous week and continues to be extremely low, **1%**.
- The most frequent suggestion about how to improve the justice system response to COVID-19 is still “Enforce the COVID-19 rules / greater consequences for law breakers”, **35%**. However, we have observed a shift in opinion from policing and enforcement to system and services improvement, better COVID-19 monitoring and clarity of safety rules.

### Ability to access justice services

- An overwhelming majority of respondents did not need to access justice services including Police, courts, legal services and justice sector social service organisations. Since the beginning of COVID-19 Alert Level 4, **4% (6%)** needed to contact Police, **2%** legal services and **2%** social service organisations. Nobody (**1%**) reported a need to access courts. Of 18 respondents who needed to contact the above organisations, 17 were able to do it.

### Jury trials

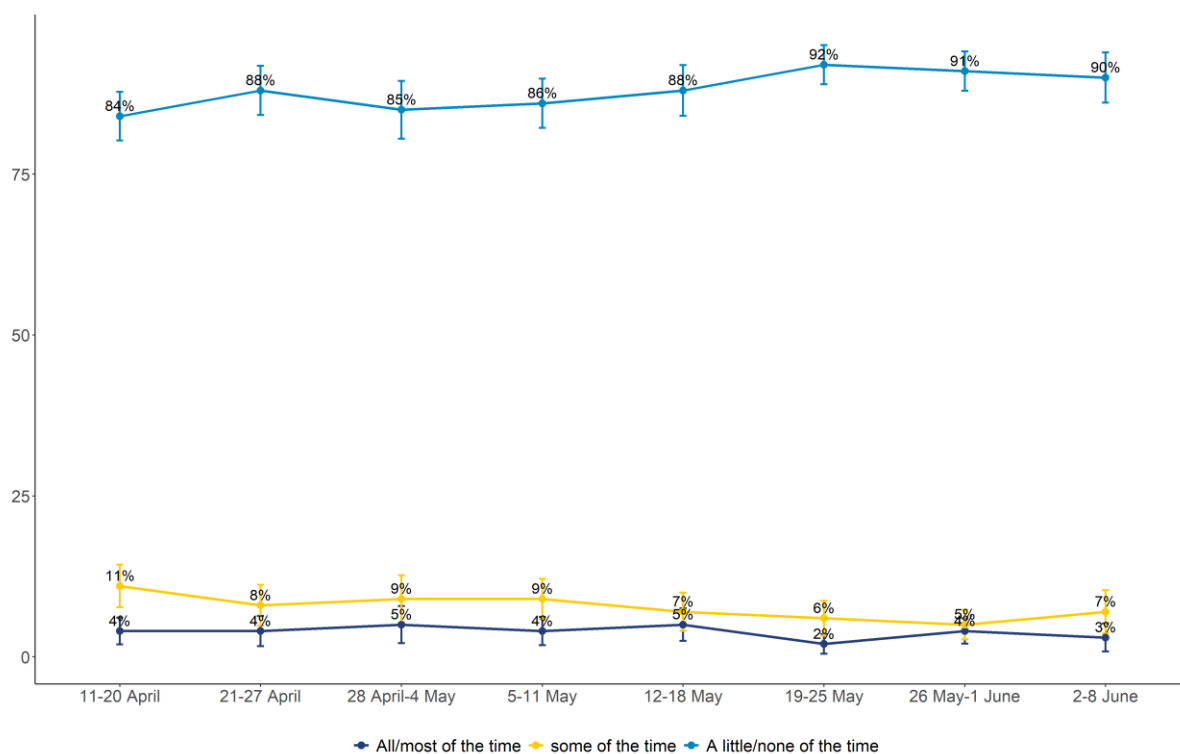
- **24% (29%)** of respondents would have concerns about participating in jury service, because of the COVID-19 situation, at Alert Level 1. **This was significantly more than the proportion that would have concerns at Alert Level 2, 11% (22%).**

## Detailed findings

### Social connection and loneliness

- For **94%** (92%) 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. These results have remained relatively stable over the six weeks of interviewing.
- Most respondents did not feel lonely at all or only a little of the time over the last week, **90%** (91%). A further **7%** (5%) of people felt lonely some of the time and **3%** (4%) 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.

**Figure 1: How often people feel lonely over the previous seven days?**

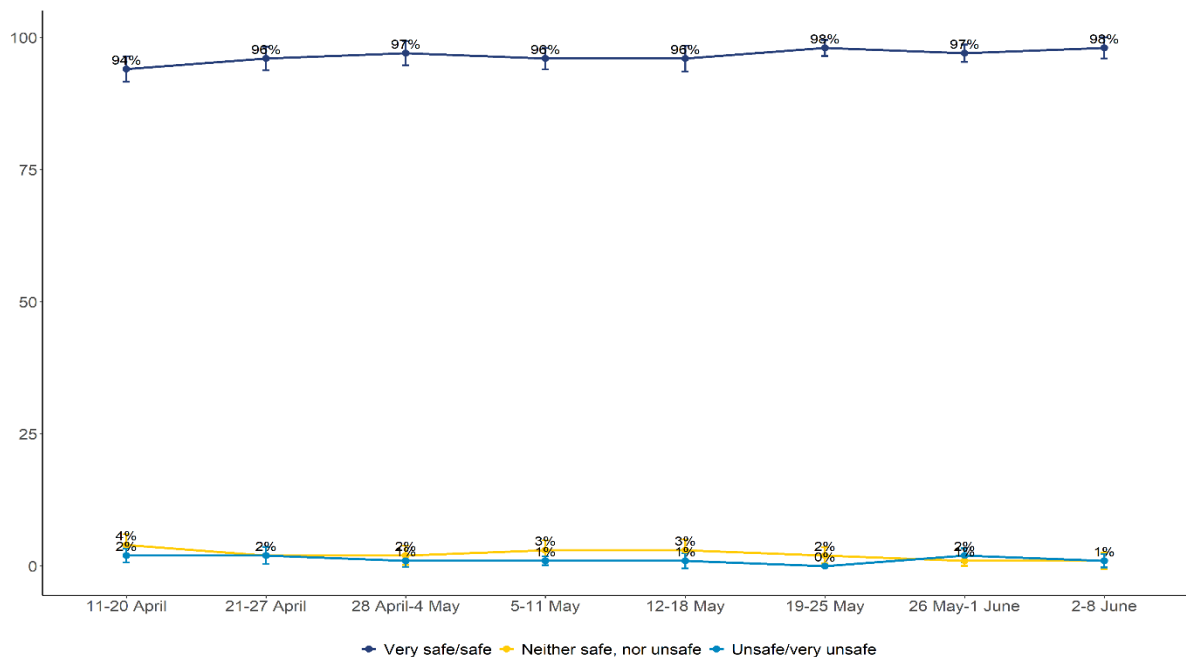


### Perceptions of safety

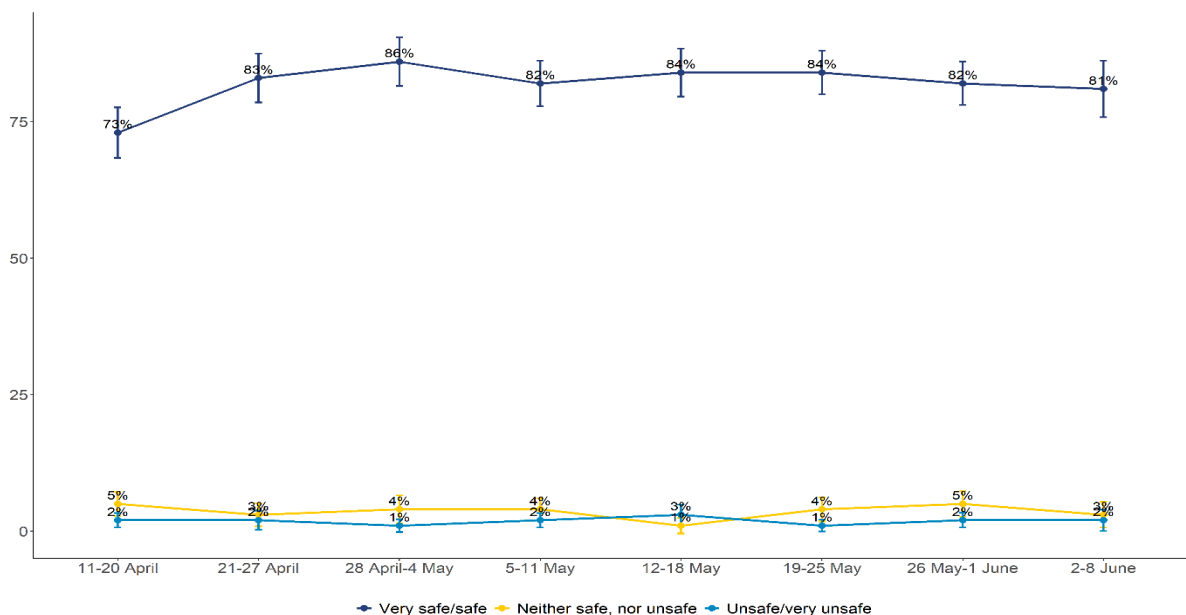
- **Note** that two weeks ago the questions in this section were modified. We added questions about feeling safe when alone at home at night and when walking alone in the neighbourhood after dark and removed a question about feeling safe on the way to/from essential services. This might affect direct comparison of this week's results with the weeks before the changes were made.
- Only **1%** (2%) of respondents feel unsafe or very unsafe at home and only **2%**, the same as a week ago, while walking alone in their neighbourhood. These questions were unchanged and the proportions are similar to those reported in the previous weeks.

- A slightly higher proportion of people feel unsafe or very unsafe when alone in their home at night **3%** (4%), and a much higher proportion **14%** (15%) feel unsafe or very unsafe walking alone in their neighbourhood after dark.
- The above proportions are still lower than the 2018/2019 NZCVS, where 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.

**Figure 2: How safe or unsafe people feel at home**



**Figure 3: How safe or unsafe people feel in their neighbourhood**

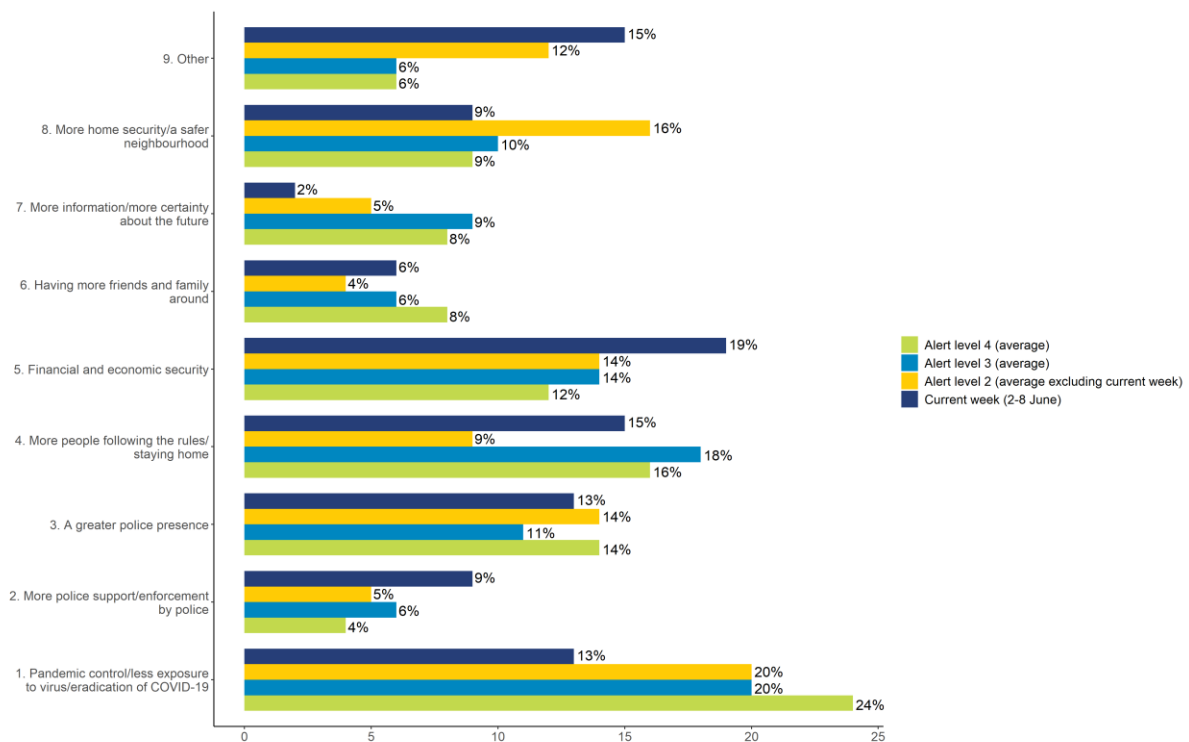


- Most often people feel unsafe because of general uncertainty caused by COVID-19 (**19%**) followed by a high level of stress (**8%**). However, a high proportion of respondents who did

not feel safe reported “Other” reasons for feeling unsafe (**53%**). Among these other reasons were feeling unsafe due to crime, neighbourhood environment and gang activity.

- Only a small proportion of respondents feel unsafe or very unsafe while using public transport **2.3% (0.9%)**, though **11.5% (11.2%)** feel unsafe or very unsafe when in the city or town centre.
- The most common things that make people feel safer at this time include:
  - Financial and economic security (**19%**)
  - More people following the rules/ staying home (**15%**)
  - Pandemic control/less exposure to virus/eradication of COVID-19 (**13%**)
  - A greater police presence (**13%**)
- As the COVID-19 alert levels have reduced from alert level 4 through to level 2, the need for “Pandemic control/less exposure to virus/eradication of COVID-19” and “More information/certainty about the future” has steadily reduced, whereas the need for “Financial and economic security” and “More police support/enforcement by police” has steadily increased.

**Figure 4: Answers to the question, “What, if anything, would make you feel more safe at this time?”**



- Almost a third of respondents, **29% (32%)** noticed a problem in their neighbourhood or local area. The most common problems were dangerous driving, **17% (15%)** and noisy neighbours, **10% (12%)**. **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. Any comparison of these results to the current survey needs to be understood with caution as the time periods used in these questions are different between the two surveys.

- Problems in the neighbourhood reported across the survey weeks as shown in Tables 1 and 2.

**Table 1: Problems in the neighbourhood / local area over the past 7 days (Alert levels (AL) 4 and 3)**

| Problems                             | 11-20 April<br>AL4 |         | 21-27 April<br>AL4 |         | 28 April-4<br>May AL3 |         | 5-11 May<br>AL3 |         |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------|---------|--------------------|---------|-----------------------|---------|-----------------|---------|
|                                      | %                  | MoE (±) | %                  | MoE (±) | %                     | MoE (±) | %               | MoE (±) |
| Noisy neighbours / loud parties      | 8                  | 2.88    | 7                  | 3.11    | 11                    | 4.02    | 9               | 3.09    |
| Vandalism / graffiti                 | 2                  | 1.44    | 1                  | 1.43    | 1                     | 1.16    | 3               | 1.78    |
| Burglary / break-ins / theft         | 4                  | 2.08    | 5                  | 2.54    | 4                     | 2.42    | 3               | 1.78    |
| Assaults                             | 1                  | 0.95    | 1                  | 1.24    | 3                     | 1.99    | 1               | 1.19    |
| Harassment                           | 1                  | 0.95    | 3                  | 1.89    | 3                     | 2.14    | 1               | 1.03    |
| People using or dealing drugs        | 2                  | 1.44    | 1                  | 1.43    | 4                     | 2.42    | 3               | 1.78    |
| People being drunk in a public place | 2                  | 1.44    | 1                  | 1.02    | 2                     | 1.63    | 3               | 1.78    |
| Dangerous driving                    | 14                 | 3.64    | 13                 | 3.99    | 11                    | 3.96    | 15              | 3.84    |
| Other                                | 4                  | 2.02    | 7                  | 3.11    | 8                     | 3.44    | 6               | 2.48    |
| None of these                        | 72                 | 4.65    | 73                 | 5.30    | 71                    | 5.78    | 73              | 4.83    |

**Table 2: Problems in the neighbourhood / local area over the past 7 days (Alert level (AL) 2)**

| Problems                             | 12-18 May<br>AL2 |         | 19-25 May<br>AL2 |         | 26 May-1<br>June AL2 |         | 2-8 June<br>AL2 |         | NZCVS<br>2018/19 |         |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|---------|------------------|---------|----------------------|---------|-----------------|---------|------------------|---------|
|                                      | %                | MoE (±) | %                | MoE (±) | %                    | MoE (±) | %               | MoE (±) | %                | MoE (±) |
| Noisy neighbours / loud parties      | 13               | 3.97    | 11               | 3.43    | 12                   | 3.42    | 10              | 3.99    | 29               | 1.62    |
| Vandalism / graffiti                 | 3                | 2.00    | 2                | 1.63    | 3                    | 1.65    | 2               | 1.98    | 11               | 0.96    |
| Burglary / break-ins / theft         | 2                | 1.59    | 3                | 1.84    | 6                    | 2.42    | 4               | 2.64    | 23               | 1.45    |
| Assaults                             | 1                | 1.24    | 2                | 1.38    | 3                    | 1.65    | 1               | 1.26    | 7                | 0.8     |
| Harassment                           | 1                | 1.24    | 1                | 0.88    | 2                    | 1.35    | 1               | 1.26    | 6                | 0.68    |
| People using or dealing drugs        | 4                | 2.23    | 2                | 1.38    | 5                    | 2.30    | 3               | 2.17    | 14               | 1.06    |
| People being drunk in a public place | 3                | 2.00    | 4                | 2.03    | 7                    | 2.58    | 4               | 2.64    | 16               | 1.23    |
| Dangerous driving                    | 13               | 3.97    | 15               | 3.91    | 15                   | 3.73    | 17              | 4.97    | 38               | 1.52    |
| Other                                | 8                | 3.30    | 6                | 2.70    | 7                    | 2.63    | 2               | 1.78    | 4                | 0.65    |
| None of these                        | 73               | 5.26    | 71               | 5.01    | 68                   | 4.88    | 71              | 6.01    | 37               | 1.50    |

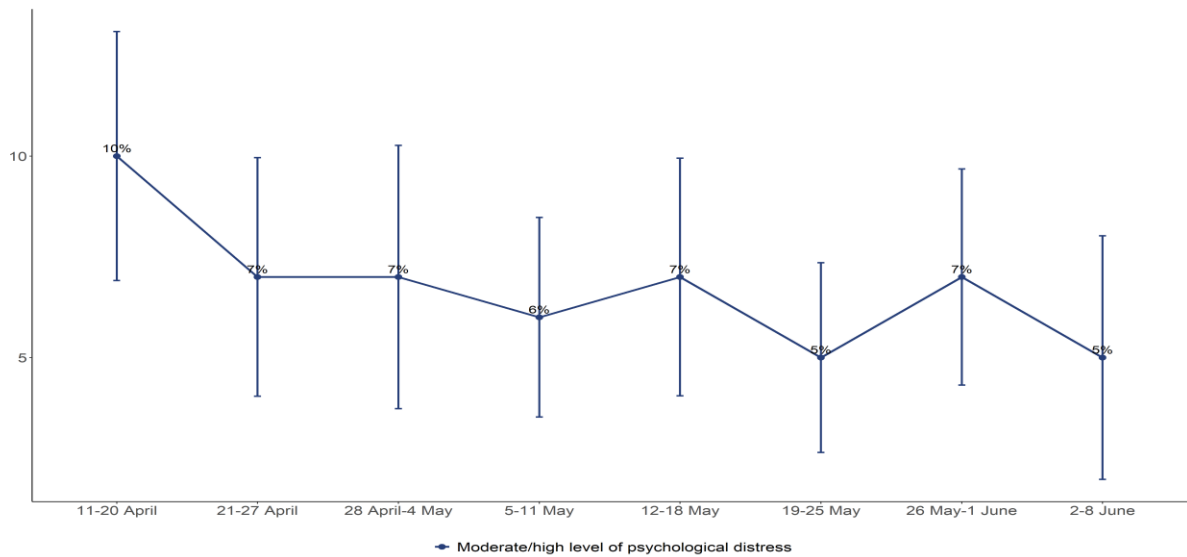
**Note:** The NZCVS 2018/2019 results are based on problems in the neighbourhood / local area over the past 12 months. MoE means Margin of Error

- **Similar to the previous week, 84% (81%)** did not worry at all about being the victim of a crime. **11% (15%)** worried only a little of the time. **1% (0%)** 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.
- Some respondents reported signs of psychological distress<sup>1</sup>. However, **95% (93%)** of respondents demonstrated a low level of psychological distress. **This is consistent with the**

<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. 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.

previous six weeks and NZCVS (2018/19) data where 88% of respondents had a low level of psychological distress.

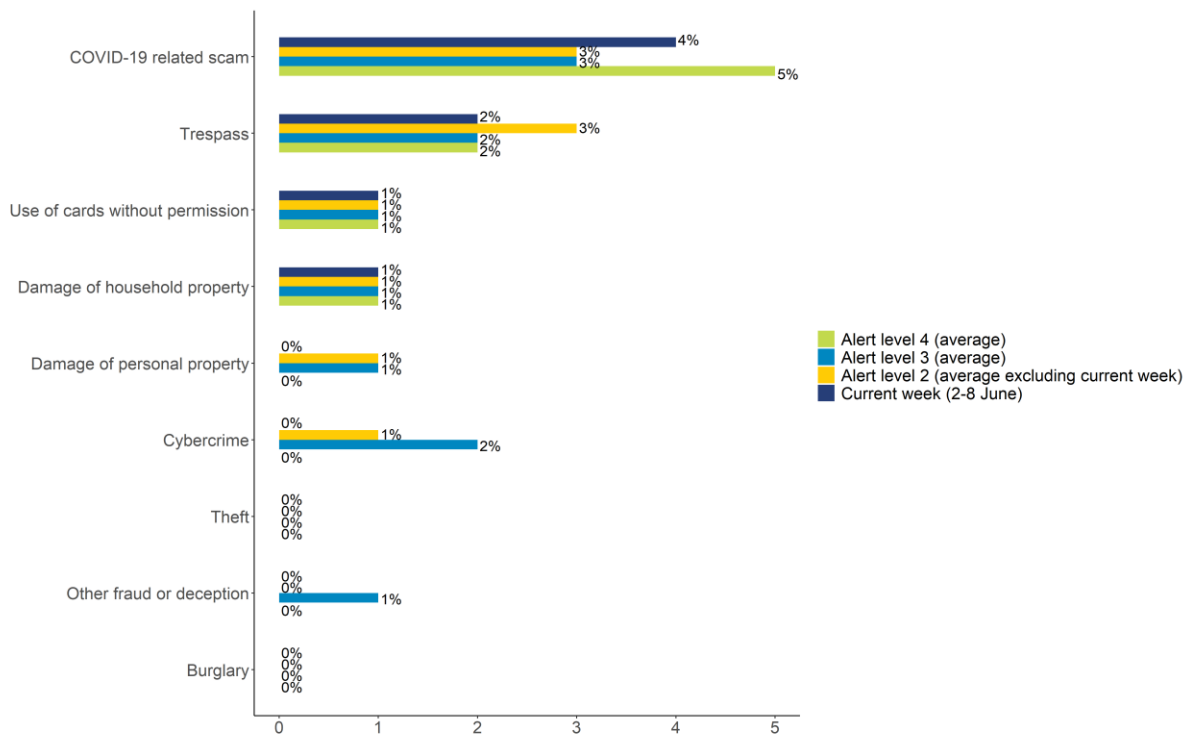
**Figure 5: The level of psychological distress**



### 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 1% of respondents are COVID-19 related scams, 4% and trespass, 2% (1%). Experience of crime by specific offence types is presented in the chart below.

**Figure 6: Percent of respondents experiencing non-violent crime over the last 7 days**





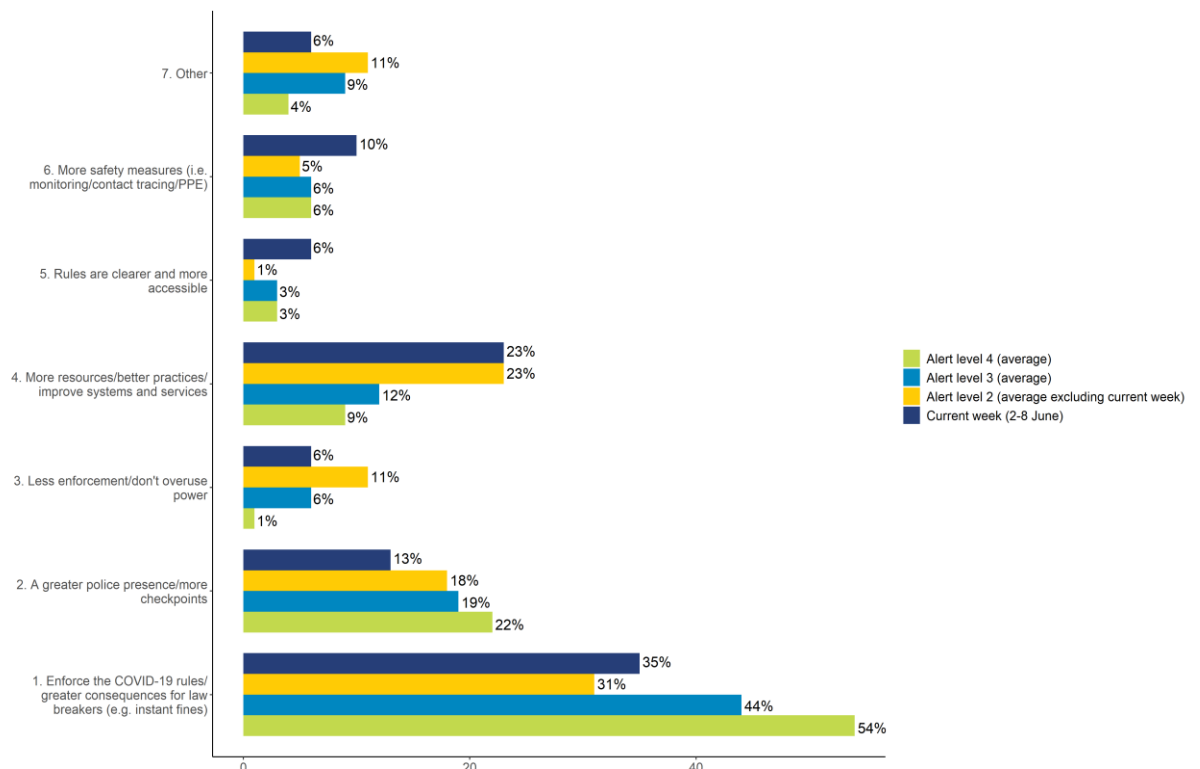
**Notes:**

1. This survey does not ask about violent crime including family violence due to potential risk for respondents.
2. Cybercrime may be not correctly recorded during the current week due to technical data collection error.
- Of those experiencing the above crimes, **18% (29%)** reported all or some incidents to Police. This is 11 percentage points lower than a week ago but higher than two weeks ago. Note that the total number of reports continues to be very small which results in substantial variation and low robustness of the data.

Perception of the criminal justice system

- A clear majority of respondents, **77% (76%)**, 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 is unchanged from the previous week and continues to be extremely low, **1%**.
- 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 reflect the most popular topics. While the most frequent response is still “Enforce the COVID-19 rules / greater consequences for law breakers”, **35%**, which is 6 percentage points higher than a week ago (29%), the graph below demonstrates a clear shift in opinion from policing and enforcement to system and services improvement, better COVID-19 monitoring and clarity of safety rules. Almost one quarter of respondents, **23% (24%)**, suggested more resources, better practices and improved systems and services within the criminal justice system, the same proportion as a week ago.

**Figure 7: Answers to the question, “What, if anything, the criminal justice system could be doing better at this time?”**



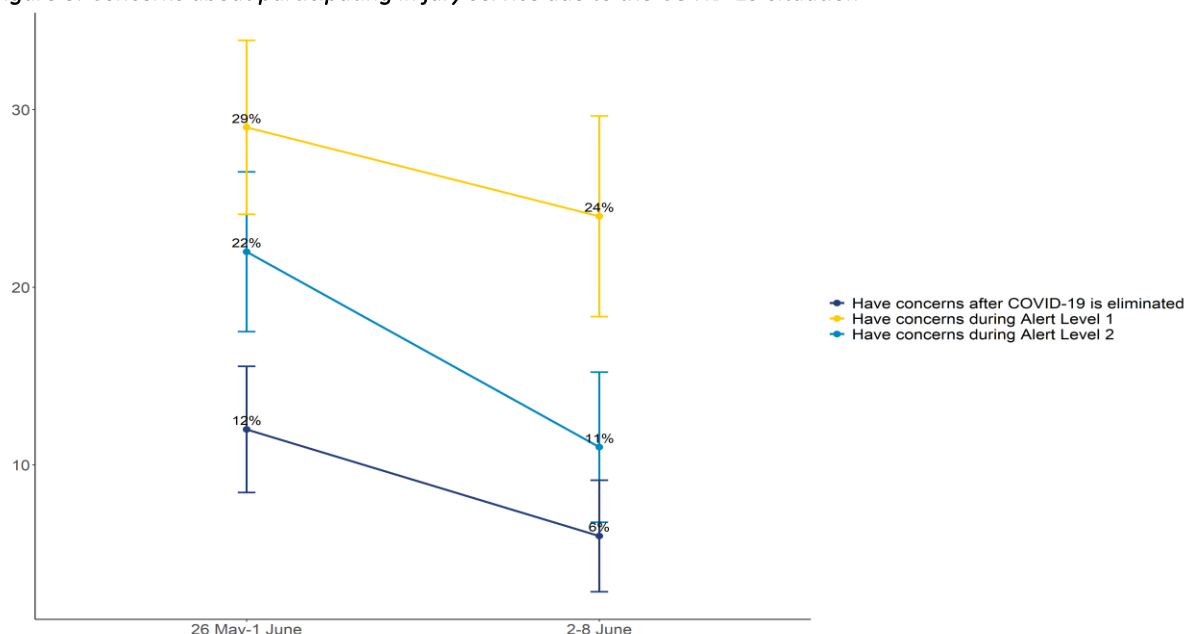
## Ability to access justice services

- We asked respondents if, since the beginning of COVID-19 Alert Level 4 until now, they needed to access different justice services including Police, courts, legal services and justice sector social service organisations offering support for people in the community (such as Women’s Refuge, Stopping Violence, Rape Crisis, Victim support, etc). This question was not included in the previous surveys and therefore we are not comparing answers with earlier weeks. During this week only 18 people reported a need to contact the abovementioned services. Therefore, **the numbers reported below are too small to make robust conclusions.**
- An overwhelming majority of respondents did not need to access the above services. However, since the beginning of COVID-19 Alert Level 4, **4%** (6%) needed to contact Police, **2%** legal services and **2%** social service organisations. Nobody (1%) reported a need to access courts.
- Of those 18 people who needed to contact justice services, 17 were able to do it. Only one person was unable to get in touch with a social service organisation.
- Most of those who contacted Police and all those who contacted legal and social services believed that the contact helped them to be supported or feel safer.

## Jury trials

- **The proportion of people who had concerns about participating in a jury service due to the COVID-19 situation at Alert Level 2 fell 11 percentage points to 11% (22%) since the previous week.** This change was statistically significant.
- The proportion of people who have concerns about participating in jury service at Alert Level 1 fell by five percentage points to **24%** (29%), but this difference was not statistically significant. Results from this week indicate that significantly more people would have concerns about participating in the jury service at Alert Level 1 than at Alert Level 2.
- **6%** (12%) of respondents said that, due to the COVID-19 situation, they would have concerns about participating in the jury service even after COVID-19 is eliminated.

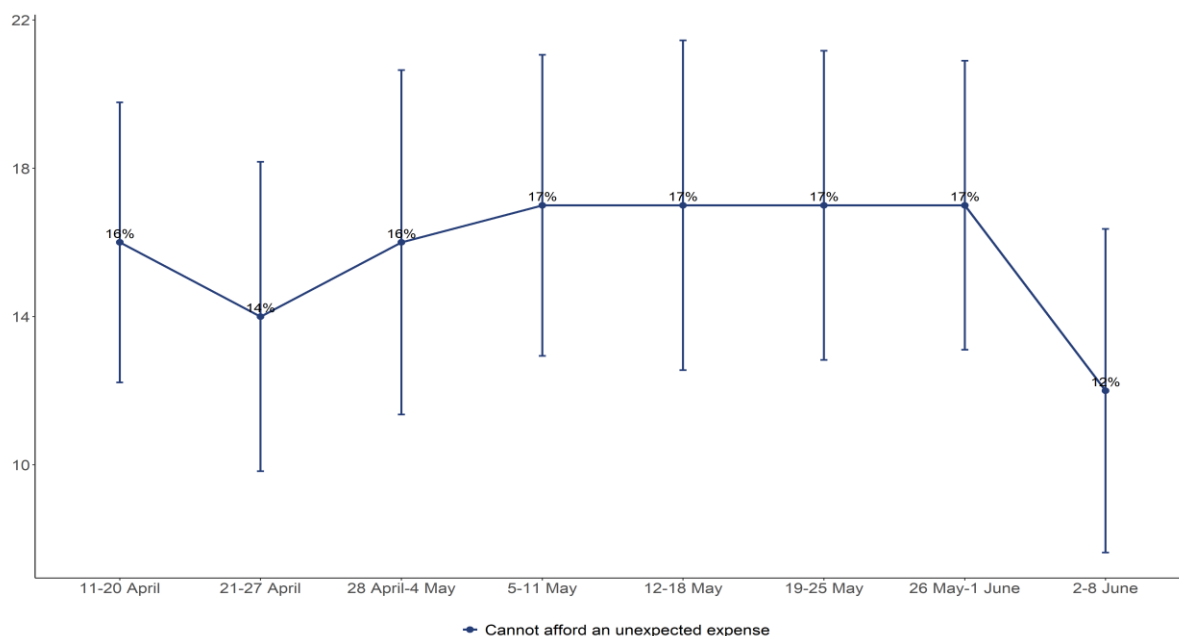
Figure 8: Concerns about participating in jury service due to the COVID-19 situation



## Financial pressure

- **87% (81%)** of respondents said they could afford an unexpected expense of \$500 in the next week without borrowing money, while **12% (17%)** could not. These levels are reasonably stable over the observation period (the difference is not statistically significant), and consistent with NZCVS 2018/2019 results.

**Figure 9: Percent of respondents experiencing financial pressure**

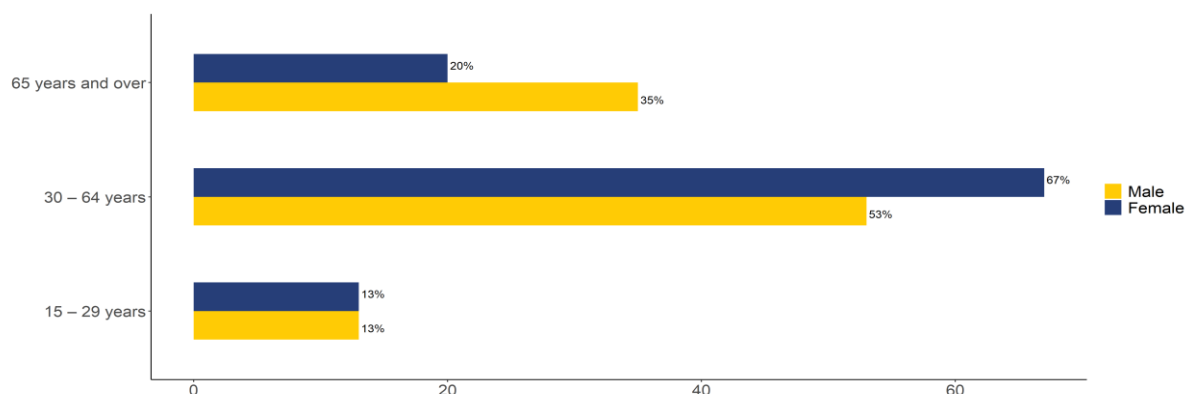


- In addition, **64% (68%)** of respondents did not attempt to access any long-term investments they held. Of those who attempted to access long term investments, **92% (88%)** did not experience any problem doing so.

## Demographics

219 adult (15 years and above) New Zealanders were interviewed in the week between **Tuesday 2 June and Monday 8 June**. The group consisted of 43% male respondents and 57% female respondents. 13% of the respondents were between 15-29 years old, 60% between 30-64 years old and 26% are 65 years and older. The breakdown of the respondents by sex and age is presented in the following chart.

**Figure 10: 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 80%). 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.

**June 9, 2020**

**Sector Group**

**Research and Evaluation Unit**