



New Zealand  
Crime and Victims **survey**

**HELP CREATE SAFER COMMUNITIES**

**Survey findings - Cycle 4 report**

***About NZCVS and Key Findings***

June 2022

Results drawn from Cycle 4 (2020/21) of the  
New Zealand Crime and Victims Survey

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5. Unfortunately, due to an error in data collection, this report does not include over 200 interviews from the Hawke's Bay area. Survey results were revised, amended and re-weighted to maintain accuracy and avoid bias.

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This report contains many graphs and infographics that help to visualise key facts and findings. Only those graphs that support the key findings are included. All observations and graphs in the report are based on the **data tables** that accompany this report, which are available on the [NZCVS resources and results web page](#).

If you are reading the report for the first time, it is recommended that you refer to “Cycle 4 Core report - Section 2 – About this report” to help with understanding and presentation of results.

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# Foreword



Kia ora koutou!

I am pleased to present the key findings report of the New Zealand Crime and Victims Survey (NZCVS) 2021.

Last year was the fourth year of the NZCVS data collection. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic we had to stop interviewing in the affected areas a few times. Still, 6,244 New Zealanders over the age of 15 were personally interviewed about their experience of crime in the last 12 months.

The NZCVS is New Zealand's only comprehensive source of data about victims of crime. Without this survey we would have much less reliable information on New Zealanders' experiences with crime. This is because only 25% of crime is reported to the Police. And that's why the NZCVS is so important. The results from the NZCVS help government agencies to create safer neighbourhoods and communities.

The survey's anonymised database now contains information received from almost 30,000 adults over four years. The increasing period of interviewing and number of respondents makes it possible to produce more accurate results and look at changes in the volume and structure of victimisation over time. In addition to previously collected data we now ask people about their experiences with the New Zealand Police. Analyses of these data will be reported by Police in separate report.

Behind each survey record there are real people with real problems, issues and experiences of crime in New Zealand. Of course, a survey like this cannot reflect the entire effects of these experiences across families, whānau and communities. We, therefore, need to ensure that we all honour those experiences by making use of the evidence collected here to monitor and improve the justice system and enhance the wellbeing of all New Zealanders.

Many people made this survey possible. Thank you to the Research and Evaluation team at the Ministry of Justice who designed and analysed it, government agencies, non-governmental organisations and academics who reviewed it and provided input. Thank you to CBG Public Sector Surveying for the hundreds of interviews and for their commitment and very professional contribution.

But most of all, thank you to the 6,244 people who told us the story of their experience of crime. The gift of insight you have given us during the uneasy time of the COVID-19 pandemic to help our community is very precious.

Ngā mihi

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andrew Kibblewhite'.

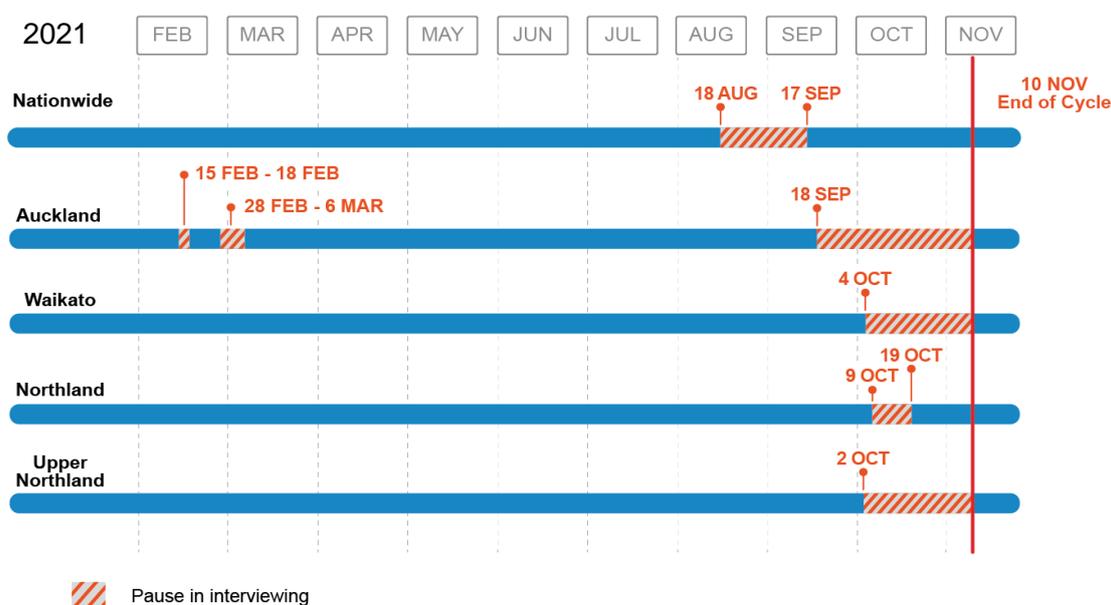
Andrew Kibblewhite

Secretary for Justice and Chief Executive

# Victimisation and COVID-19 in Cycles 3 and 4

Cycles 3 and 4 covered an unusual time in Aotearoa New Zealand because of the COVID-19 pandemic and associated alert level restrictions. New Zealanders faced various restrictions on their movements and social interactions – the strongest at Alert Level 4, which was in place nationwide from 25 March to 27 April 2020 and from 17 August to 31 August 2021.

In line with the public health recommendations, the NZCVS team suspended interviews during Alert Levels 3 and 4. This requirement resulted in multiple fieldwork interruptions during Cycle 4 (see chart below).



As a result, interviewing continued later into the year than planned and achieved a lower number of responses – 6,244 instead of the planned 8,000. This also affected the overall response rate, which, while still being high, was marginally reduced from 80% to 76%.

When interviewers returned to the field, precautions were made to ensure the safety of respondents and interviewers. This included pre-interview screening to identify household members who had COVID-like symptoms, those who were self-isolating, and those who worked in high-risk occupations. Interviewers also employed a set of enhanced health and safety measures recommended by the Ministry of Health, including sanitising of hands and equipment before and after an interview; body temperature control and wider wellbeing checks; thorough record-keeping; and keeping masks and gloves available. All interviewers undertook special COVID-related training. These efforts were important for maintaining a high response rate to the survey.

# Key findings

Topic	Key findings
<b>How much crime is there in New Zealand?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 29% of adults were victimised once or more in the previous 12 months. This level of overall victimisation has remained stable over time (from Cycle 1 to Cycle 4).</li> <li>• The three most common offence types in Cycle 4 were harassment and threatening behaviour; burglary; and fraud and deception. Together, these made up more than half of all offences (51%).</li> <li>• The proportion of households that experienced burglaries fell significantly, from 12.1% in Cycle 1 to 9.3% in Cycle 4. However, the number of burglary incidents increased compared to Cycle 3. This indicates a growing concentration of burglaries. Burglaries are the only offence type with a statistically significant change from Cycle 3.</li> </ul>
<b>Who is experiencing crime?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In Cycle 4, key population factors associated with a <b>higher likelihood of victimisation</b> when compared with the New Zealand average included:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <b>personal factors:</b> young adults (aged 15–29); bisexual; Māori; separated</li> <li>– <b>economic and household factors:</b> not employed and not actively seeking work; living in a one-parent-with-child(ren) household or multi-person household; renting government accommodation; being under high levels of financial pressure</li> <li>– <b>wellbeing factors:</b> having a moderate or high level of psychological distress; having low life satisfaction; having a low feeling of safety.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• There was only a small (2%) gap between Māori victimisation and the New Zealand average when age and derivation are accounted for. This finding supports the view that the different age structure and the different level of deprivation between Māori and the New Zealand average are key contributors to the higher likelihood of victimisation for Māori.</li> <li>• Disabled adults were significantly more likely to experience crime across personal offences and household offences when differences in average age are accounted for.</li> </ul>
<b>Sexual assault</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• About 2% of adults experienced sexual assault – ranging from threats and unwanted touching to forced sexual intercourse – in the previous 12 months. This figure did not change significantly from Cycle 1.</li> <li>• 11% of people with diverse sexualities (gay, lesbian, bisexual and others) were victims of sexual assault in the previous 12 months.</li> <li>• Young females were at high risk of sexual assault, with 9% of females aged 15–19 and 7% of females aged 20–29 affected in the previous 12 months.</li> </ul>
<b>Offences by family members</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• About 2% of New Zealand adults had experienced one or more offences by family members in the previous 12 months. This figure did not change significantly from Cycle 1.</li> <li>• Offending by intimate partners has decreased significantly between the previous year and current year; the decrease was driven by the rate of offending by current partners (as opposed to ex-partners).</li> <li>• Females were almost four times as likely as males to have experienced offending by an intimate partner and nearly twice as likely to have experienced offending by another family member.</li> </ul>

<b>Lifetime experience of sexual assault and intimate partner violence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• About 35% of females and 12% of males had experienced sexual assault in their lifetime. Sexual assault started at a younger age, with 18% of adults aged 15–19 affected so far during their lives.</li> <li>• About 23% of females and 10% of males who have ever had a partner had experienced intimate partner violence in their lifetime.</li> <li>• Disabled adults were at elevated risk of having experienced sexual assault or intimate partner violence during their lifetime, especially when controlling for age (45%).</li> </ul>
<b>Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on victimisation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The overall victimisation level has remained stable before and during the COVID-19 pandemic across all victimisation measures.</li> <li>• Prevalence rates for burglaries, household property damage and overall household offences significantly reduced since the start of the pandemic.</li> </ul>
<b>Reporting to the Police</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overall, 25% of all victimisation incidents were reported to the Police (no significant difference with the previous cycles).</li> <li>• Only 8% of sexual assaults and 9% of fraud and cybercrime incidents were reported to the Police.</li> <li>• Only 15% of incidents perceived to be driven by discrimination towards the victim's sexuality were reported to the Police.</li> </ul>
<b>Distribution of crime</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In Cycle 4, 38% of victims experienced two or more victimisations within the previous 12 months. These victims experienced the majority (73%) of all victimisations. Just over 2% of adults experienced 39% of all victimisations.</li> <li>• There was a significant increase in repeat burglaries in Cycle 4 (63% compared with 40% for the previous year).</li> <li>• Offences by family members were the most repeated type of offence. Repeat victims of offences by family members (40%) experienced 79% of all offences by family members.</li> </ul>
<b>Crime scene and consequences</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Almost half of personal offence incidents (49%) involved a male offender and a female victim. This proportion increases to 52% for interpersonal violence, 69% for offences by family members and 73% for sexual assault.</li> <li>• One in 11 incidents (9%) resulted in injury. This proportion increases to 21% for interpersonal violence offences, 29% for offences by family members and 49% for non-sexual assaults.</li> </ul>
<b>Perceptions of safety</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Females and disabled people were significantly more likely to feel unsafe in general and when with family or whānau.</li> <li>• Those separated or divorced, and those living in a one-parent-with-child(ren) household were significantly less likely to feel safe.</li> <li>• Adults who were not employed and not actively seeking work were twice as likely to have felt unsafe when with family or whānau.</li> </ul>

For the full list of findings, see Appendix 1: Key Findings.

# Executive summary

Welcome to the Cycle 4 (2020/21) survey findings report of the annual New Zealand Crime and Victims Survey (NZCVS).

The NZCVS is the most comprehensive source of data on adult (aged 15 and older) victims of crime in Aotearoa New Zealand. Because only about 25% of crime is reported to the Police, the NZCVS provides the only data on the true nature and volume of crime in New Zealand.

The survey also provides rich information on the experiences of victims of crime, and how they were affected.

Since it was established in 2017, the NZCVS has dramatically increased knowledge and understanding of crime and victimisation and is widely used by key government agencies and non-governmental organisations to support better policy development and interventions.

Because of the consistent methodology used by the NZCVS across all four cycles, we are now able to compare four years of data representing almost 30,000 interviews with New Zealanders about their experiences of crime. This allows us to analyse changes in the levels of crime and victimisation since the beginning of the NZCVS data collection in March 2018 with higher accuracy.

This report is focused on significant findings and trends which may inform policy development and strategic decisions in the justice sector. More information is available from statistical data tables supporting the report. Additionally, pooling the sample from all four years makes possible a richer analysis covering experiences of victims in smaller population groups. For example, this report reveals deeper information about the victimisation of disabled people.

While this report mostly replicates the structure of the previous annual report, some topics are significantly extended. In particular, a deeper dive into perceptions of safety and their association with victimisation is provided, and for the first time data related to controlling and coercive behaviour is described – a response to new questions introduced in Cycle 4. Finally, a high-level comparative analysis of victimisation before and during the COVID-19 pandemic is performed.

The report consists of ten sections. **Sections 1 and 2** briefly describe the NZCVS and provide information about the report itself. We strongly recommend reading these sections as they are key to understanding the report language and enabling correct interpretation of the survey results.

**Section 3: “How much crime is there in New Zealand?”** provides a high-level snapshot of victimisation and crime in New Zealand, using four different measures. It also compares the levels of victimisation across NZCVS cycles 1–4 (2018–2021).

Apart from burglaries, which fell significantly between Cycles 1 and 4, there were no other statistically significant changes in individual offence types.

**Section 4: “Who is experiencing crime?”** describes the level of victimisation across different demographic and socio-economic groups both for Cycle 4 and over time. This section also analyses the demographic factors associated with victimisation both in Cycle 4 and using pooled data across all four years.

The level of victimisation is compared across factors including age, sex, marital status, ethnicity, deprivation and disability, as well as the intersections of some of these characteristics. For example, the analysis found that in every NZCVS cycle, the proportion of Māori who were victimised is higher than any other ethnic group. However, after considering differences in age and deprivation, the gap in victimisation between Māori and the New Zealand average over four NZCVS cycles reduced from statistically significant (7%) to not statistically significant (2%). In contrast, after accounting for age differences, disabled people were significantly more likely to experience crime than the New Zealand average.

The analysis also revealed that females who were separated or divorced at the time of the survey were significantly more likely to be victimised, while males who were married, in a civil union, or in a de facto relationship were significantly less likely to be victimised.

**Section 5: “Sexual violence and violence by family members”** provides comprehensive information about population groups at particularly high risk of sexual assault or offences by family members, and the relationship of offenders to victims.

Sexual assault and offences by family members each affected about 2% of New Zealand adults within the previous 12 months. These rates are consistent between Cycle 1 and Cycle 4. The results show that some groups within our population face high levels of sexual assault or offences by family members, identifying where resources can be targeted.

For example, groups at very high risk of sexual assault included people with diverse sexualities (11%), particularly people identifying as bisexual (16%), and young females aged 15–19 (9%) and 20–29 (7%). Around two thirds (63%) of sexual assaults were perpetrated by an intimate partner, family member or someone known to the victim.

Groups at very high risk of offences by family members included those who were separated (11%), identified as bisexual (9%), or lived in a one-parent-with-child(ren) household (9%).

Almost three-quarters (73%) of offences by family members were perpetrated by intimate partners. Yet, offending by intimate partners significantly decreased from the previous year.

Newly added questions in Cycle 4 revealed that 13% of adults had a partner, ex-partner, or family or whānau member exhibiting a controlling behaviour within the 12 months prior to the interview, while 18% of adults had experienced a negative impact because of a partner, ex-partner, or family or whānau member’s behaviour or reaction.

**Section 6: “Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on victimisation”** provides high-level analysis of changes in victimisation after the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

While no changes were observed for overall levels of victimisation and for personal offences, prevalence rates for household offences, and specifically for burglaries and household property damage, significantly reduced. We also identified a wide range of population groups

with significantly reduced prevalence rates of household offences and burglaries. More observations, however, are needed to identify drivers behind these changes.

**Section 7: “Reporting to the Police”** analyses data about reporting incidents to the Police. This section looks into whether an incident was reported to the Police and analyses why some incidents were not reported.

Overall, 25% of victimisations were reported to the Police (no significant difference between Cycle 4 and the previous cycles). Motor vehicles theft (80%) had the highest likelihood of being reported to the Police, while cybercrime offences were mostly not reported (98%).

Over the four cycles, only 8% of sexual assaults and 9% of fraud and cybercrime were reported to the Police.

Overall, the most common reason for not reporting victimisations to the Police in Cycle 4 was “too trivial/no loss or damage/not worth reporting” (45% of incidents). Some of the most common reasons for not reporting offences by family members were “private/personal/family or whānau matter” (38%), “dealt with matter myself/ourselves” (29%), and “shame/embarrassment/further humiliation” (24%). Almost one in five offences by family members (17%) were not reported to the Police because victims “didn’t want to get offender into trouble”.

**Section 8: “Distribution of crime”** provides data about victims who experienced more than one crime incident.

Just 2% of New Zealand adults experienced almost 40% of all victimisations. More than a third of victims (38%) were victimised more than once within the 12 months prior to the interview. These victims experience almost three-quarters (73%) of all victimisations. The above numbers are very stable and did not change significantly between Cycle 1 and Cycle 4. Offences by family members were the most concentrated type of offence. Repeat victims (40%) experienced the vast majority (79%) of all offences by family members.

Young adults (aged 15–29), Māori, disabled adults, adults with diverse sexualities, adults living in a one-parent-with-child(ren) household and some other population categories were significantly more likely to be highly victimised.

Notably, burglary saw a significant increase in the proportion of repeat victimisations – 63% compared to 40% in Cycle 3 and 47% in Cycle 1.

**Section 9: “Crime scene and consequences”** describes the location of crime and some of the consequences of crime for victims like injuries and time taken off work.

Almost three-quarters of all victimisations (71%) took place either in residential areas or online/over the phone compared to the other areas investigated (public area, community area, business/retail area). In contrast, one-third (33%) of sexual assaults and 18% of interpersonal violence incidents occurred in business/retail areas.

One in eleven incidents (9%) resulted in injury. This proportion increases to 21% for interpersonal violence offences, 29% for offences by family members and 49% for non-

sexual assaults. Every tenth incident resulted in time taken off work by a victim. This proportion increases to 18% for vehicle offences, 20% for offences by family members and 22% for offences by ex-partners.

Almost half of all personal offences (49%) are male-against-female offences. This proportion increases to 52% for interpersonal violence, 69% for offences by family members and to 73% for sexual assault.

**Section 10: “Perceptions of safety”**, which we significantly extended in this report, focuses on public perceptions of safety.

At a high level, there were no significant changes in the overall feeling of safety over the four NZCVS cycles – more than three-quarters of adults (78%) reported their overall feeling of safety as high (8 or more out of 10). On the other hand, 11% of adults reported feeling less safe (0 to 6 out of 10). This proportion is reduced to 6% for people aged 65+.

An overwhelming majority (95%) of adults felt safe when with their family or whānau (8 or more out of 10). Population groups who felt less safe when with family or whānau included bisexual adults, Māori, those separated or divorced, disabled adults, those not employed and not actively seeking for work, and those with a high level of psychological distress.

Victims were more concerned about safety than non-victims. Furthermore, victims of multiple crimes were more concerned about their safety than victims of only one crime, and highly victimised people had the highest level of safety concern.

Some population groups felt less safe than others. They include females, those separated or divorced, disabled adults, those living in a one-parent-with-child(ren) household, those experiencing high levels of financial pressure and those living in more deprived areas.

**Appendix 1** offers a detailed list of key findings in a tabular format for readers’ convenience. Each group of key findings is referred to a relevant section of the report.

**Appendix 2** provides a brief methodology overview. For the detailed survey methodology, please refer to the standalone [NZCVS Cycle 4 methodology report](#).

This survey findings report is designed to present the most notable results. Every year, the NZCVS key findings reports are followed by topical reports providing in-depth analysis of prioritised topics. We also release methodological reports and data tables for those keen to explore the survey data further. Professional researchers and statisticians are invited to apply for unit-level data analysis in Stats NZ’s Integrated Data Infrastructure.

Behind the numbers and figures within this report are the real stories of New Zealanders. Those who shared their stories with us have helped us to build a comprehensive picture of the extent of victimisation in Aotearoa New Zealand. Their stories have the potential to guide decision-makers to target prevention efforts and support services for victims of crime.

# Acknowledgements

Te Tāhū o te Ture/the Ministry of Justice acknowledges and thanks the following people and organisations for their valuable contribution to the New Zealand Crime and Victims Survey (NZCVS), Cycle 4 (2020/21).

## Survey participants

We would like to thank the 6,244 New Zealanders who gave their time to take part in the survey and share their stories.

## Service provider

We appreciate the work of CBG Health Research Ltd. Their interviewing and data management services made this survey possible.

## Contributors

All writing and analysis for this report was performed by Dr Michael Slyuzberg, Dr Tadhg E Daly, Tianying Chu and Kimberley Turrell. All authors were employed by the Ministry of Justice Research and Evaluation team at the time of publication.

## External experts

We are grateful for the support, guidance and advice of the experts who contributed to the project. Our special thanks go to Phyllis Anscombe (Ministry of Justice), Sara Bishop (Ministry of Justice), Juliana Brown (New Zealand Police), Susan Campbell (New Zealand Police), Lauren Cloutman (New Zealand Police), Ariarne Davy (Ministry of Justice), Mark Gordon (Ministry of Justice), Professor Ian Lambie, ONZM, Chief Science Advisor for the Justice Sector, New Zealand Government, Rajas Kulkarni (Te Puni Kokiri), Adam O'Neill (Statistics New Zealand), Rebecca Parish (Ministry of Justice), Steve Peter (Oranga Tamariki – Ministry for Children), Deb Potter (Ministry for Women), Kate Preston (Ministry of Justice), Anna Render (Ministry of Justice), Pam Southey (Ministry of Justice), Dr Sarah Tapper (Ministry of Justice), Dr Nichola Tyler (Victoria University of Wellington), Ashleigh Walker (Joint Venture Business Unit), Anton Youngman (Ministry of Justice), for reviewing the report, and to our colleagues from the Ministry of Justice for their ongoing help and support.

*NZCVS Project Team*

# 1 About the NZCVS

The New Zealand Crime and Victims Survey (NZCVS) is a nationwide, face-to-face, annual, random-sample survey. Adults who are aged 15+ and living in private dwellings are interviewed about experiences of crime they had in New Zealand over the previous 12 months. This includes incidents reported to the Police and unreported incidents.

## 1.1 Survey objectives

The key research objectives of the NZCVS are to:

- measure the extent and nature of reported and unreported crime across New Zealand
- understand who experiences crime and how they respond
- identify the groups at above-average risk of victimisation
- facilitate a better understanding of victims' experiences and needs
- provide a measure of crime trends in New Zealand
- provide timely and adequate information to support strategic decisions
- significantly shorten the period between data collection and reporting compared with previous victimisation surveys
- match survey data with relevant administrative records to reduce information gaps in the decision- and policy-making process.

## 1.2 Survey scope

The NZCVS delivers the best estimate currently available about a wide range of personal and household offences that are not captured elsewhere. However, it still does not report the total amount of crime in New Zealand. This is because the NZCVS is a sample survey<sup>1</sup> subject to sampling errors, and it does not cover every type of crime (see [NZCVS Cycle 4 methodology report](#) for more details).

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<sup>1</sup> A sample survey means that not every adult gives information about their experiences; it's not a census of the population. Also, not all survey respondents may want to talk about their experiences, remember the incidents that they have experienced, and/or provide accurate information about incidents (deliberately or due to imperfect recall).

**Table 1.1 Scope of crimes/offences covered in the NZCVS**

Scope	Description
<b>Covered in the NZCVS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>personal offences, either reported to the Police or not, where the survey respondent was the victim of the crime</li> <li>household offences, either reported to the Police or not, where the survey respondent's household was offended against</li> </ul>
<b>Not covered in the NZCVS<sup>a</sup></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>manslaughter and murder</li> <li>abduction</li> <li>crimes against children (aged 14 and under)</li> <li>traffic offences</li> <li>"victimless crime" where a victim cannot be identified (eg, drug offences)</li> <li>commercial crime/white-collar crime/crimes against businesses or public-sector agencies</li> <li>crimes against people who do not live in permanent private dwellings</li> <li>crimes against people living in institutions<sup>b</sup></li> </ul>

<sup>a</sup> Particular groups of offences are excluded from the NZCVS, including those that are not directly experienced by an interviewee (eg, manslaughter, murder), have a very small sample size not supporting meaningful statistical analysis (eg, abductions), have additional legal restrictions for data collection (eg, crimes against children, crimes against people living in institutions) or require development of different survey tools (eg, crimes against businesses).

<sup>b</sup> Those living in care facilities, prisons, army barracks, boarding schools and other similar institutions or non-private dwellings are excluded from the NZCVS sampling and interviewing process.

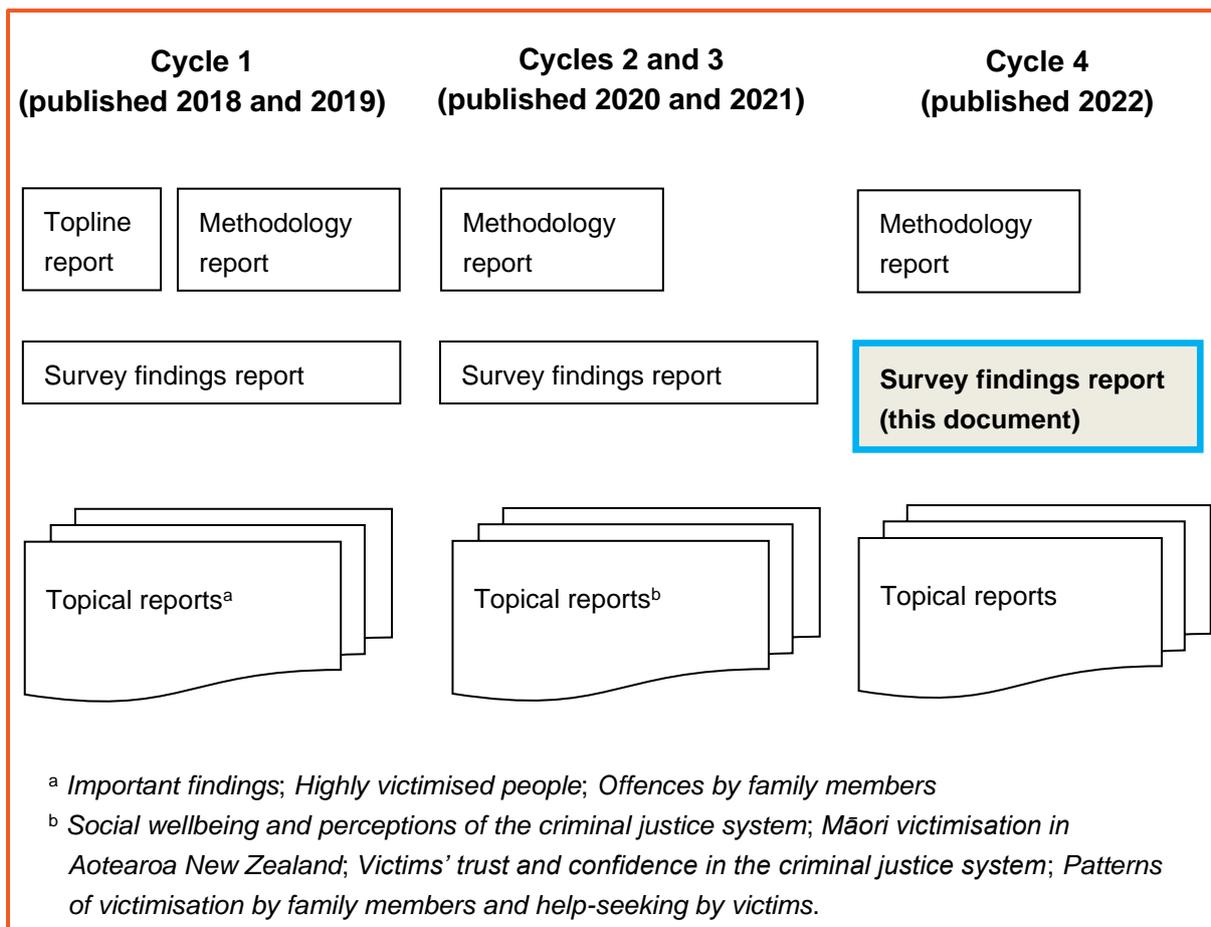
## 1.3 Reporting survey results

A number of resources, including previous annual and topical reports, tables, and infographics, are already available on the [Ministry of Justice website](#).

This report is part of the annual NZCVS reporting framework presented in Figure 1.1. The current report is based on the fourth year of interviewing (Cycle 4).

The fifth year of interviewing is underway and will be followed by another annual report in 2023.

The NZCVS is incorporated into the Stats NZ Integrated Data Infrastructure (IDI) from 2018. This makes it possible to analyse the NZCVS data linked to administrative datasets.



**Figure 1.1 NZCVS reporting framework**

**Note:** Topline reports were not produced for Cycles 2, 3 and 4 due to resource limitations.