

COVID-19 Justice Sector Survey

Report 009 (9 June – 15 June 2020)

This is the final weekly report of the COVID-19 Justice Sector Survey, a telephone survey informing 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 scams 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 9 June and Monday 15 June** after interviewing **287** adult respondents (15 years old and above). These results are compared with the previous survey periods. The total number of interviewed adults is **2642**.

Percentages for the current period (9–15 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, **94%** (*90%*).

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 ninth pulse survey are consistent, by and large, with the previous surveys. Notable findings from this survey are:

- An overwhelming majority of people **feel safe and very safe**, with **0.3% (1%)** feeling unsafe or very unsafe at home.
- The level of psychological distress among respondents is **significantly lower** in this last week of interviewing than that reported **during Alert Level 4**.
- The only offence type reported by more than 1% of respondents is **COVID-19 related scam, 3% (4%)**.
- For the first time since the first week of observations (mid-April) **no respondents reported crime they experienced to Police**.
- The proportion of people with concerns about participating in jury service at Alert Level 1 has been on a downward trend over the last three weeks, falling to **19% (24%)** over the last week.
- Some respondents (**6%**) would have concerns about participating in jury service even if COVID-19 was eliminated.

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, **97% (94%)**.
- Most respondents did not feel lonely at all or only a little of the time over the last week, **94% (90%)**.

Perceptions of safety

- An overwhelming majority of people feel safe and very safe, with **0.3% (1%)** feeling unsafe or very unsafe at home.
- Compared to the previous two weeks, fewer people **6% (12%)** 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 **15% (14%)** feeling unsafe or very unsafe.
- The most common neighbourhood problems were dangerous driving, **16% (17%)** and noisy neighbours, **12% (10%)**.
- The level of psychological distress among respondents is **significantly lower** than that reported **during Alert Level 4**.
- People say they will feel safer if there is/they have:
 - More home security/a safer neighbourhood (**18%**)
 - Financial and economic security (**15%**)
 - A greater police presence (**15%**)
 - Pandemic control/less exposure to virus/eradication of COVID-19 (**12%**)

Experiencing crime and reporting to Police

- An overwhelming majority of respondents did not experience property crime and personal non-violent crime. The only offence type reported by more than 1% of respondents is COVID-19 related scam, **3% (4%)**.

- For the first time since the first week of observations (mid-April) nobody reported crime they experienced to Police.

Perception of the Criminal Justice System

- A clear majority of respondents, **76% (77%)**, think that the criminal justice system response to the COVID-19 pandemic was good or excellent. This proportion has been markedly stable over the period of interviewing, varying within 73% - 77% for seven out of nine weeks of observation.
- Analysis of respondents' views on how to improve the justice system's response to COVID-19 demonstrates a clear and consistent shift in public opinion over the time of interviewing from policing and enforcement to system and services improvement.

Ability to access justice services

- An overwhelming majority of respondents did not need to access justice services. However, since the beginning of COVID-19 Alert Level 4, **8% (4%)** needed to contact Police, **3% (2%)** needed to contact legal services and **2%** (same as previous week) social service organisations.
- **81% (63%)** of those who contacted Police, **90% (100%)** of those who contacted legal services, and **100%** (same as previous week) of those who contacted social services believed that the contact helped them to be supported or feel safer.

Jury trials

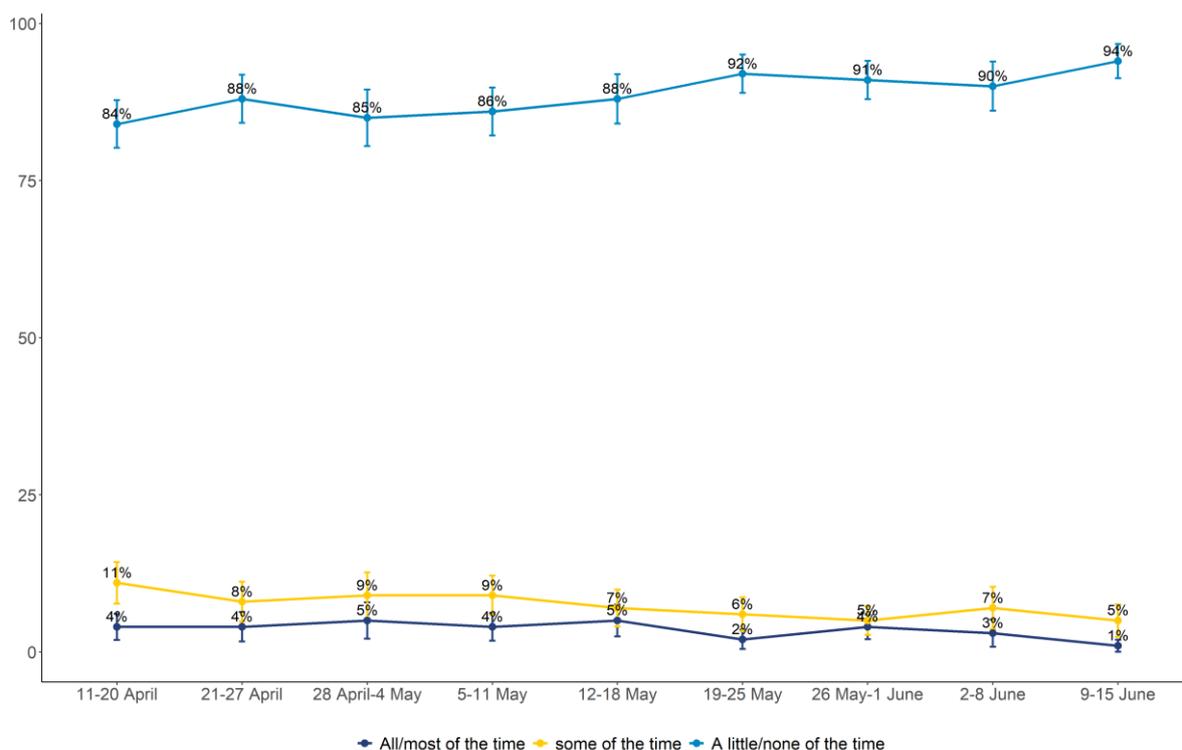
- The proportion of people with concerns about participating in jury service at Alert Level 1 has been on a downward trend over the last three weeks, falling to **19% (24%)** over the last week.
- **12% (11%)** of people have concerns about participating in jury service due to the COVID-19 situation at Alert Level 2 and **6%** would have concerns about participating even if COVID-19 was eliminated.

Detailed findings

Social connection and loneliness

- For **97%** (94%) of respondents, communication with family, whānau and friends over the last week was either easy or very easy. Only **1%** (2%) 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, **94%** (90%). A further **5%** (7%) of people felt lonely some of the time and **1%** (3%) 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 three 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 **0.3%** (1%) of respondents feel unsafe or very unsafe at home and only **1%** (2%) 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 **2%** (3%), and a much higher

proportion, **15%** (14%), 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

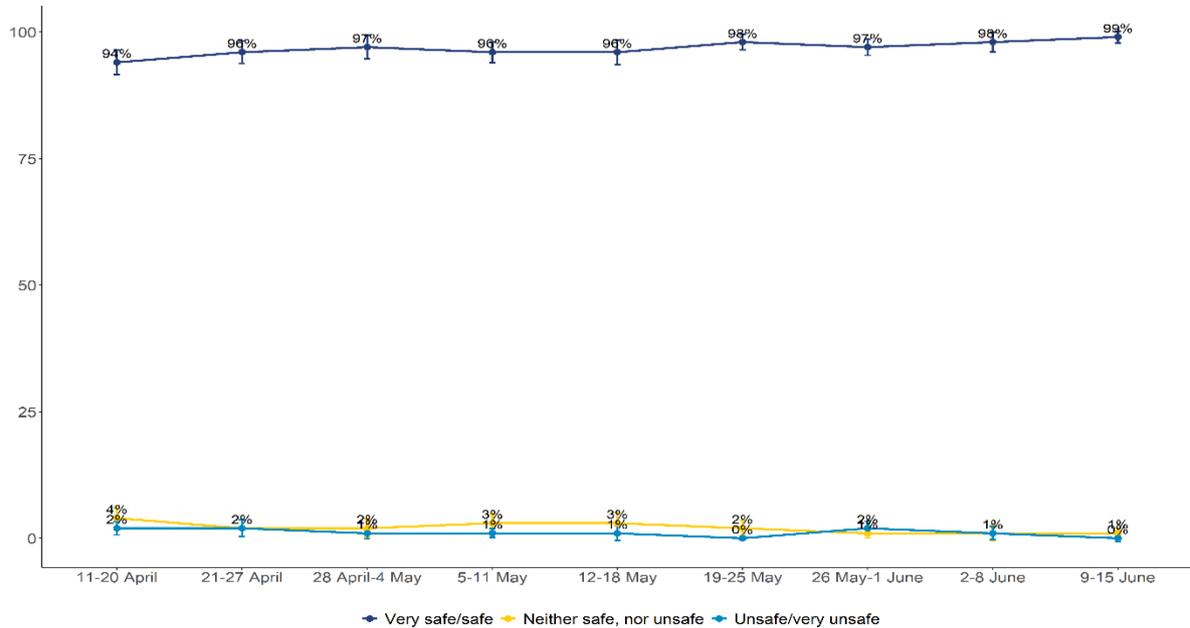
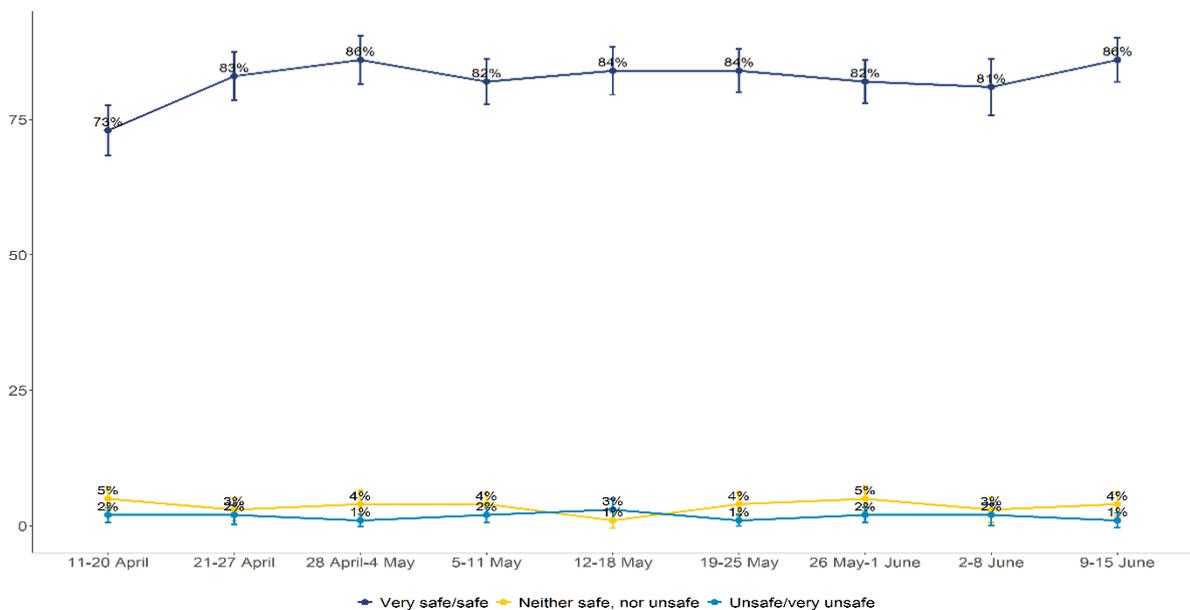


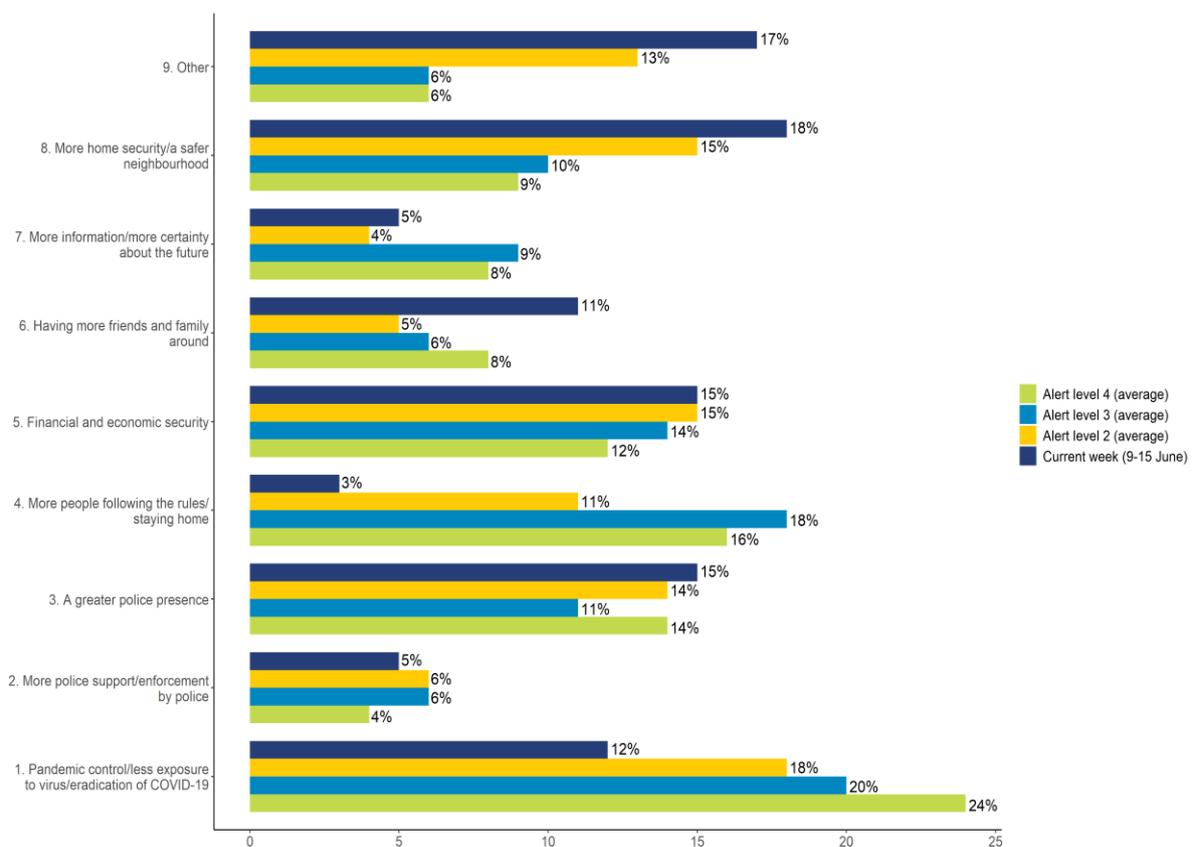
Figure 3: How safe or unsafe people feel in their neighbourhood



- Most often people feel unsafe because of general uncertainty caused by COVID-19, **30%** (19%). However, a high proportion of respondents who did not feel safe reported “Other” reasons for feeling unsafe **52%** (53%). Among these other reasons, most respondents cited reasons related to being in an unsafe neighbourhood/environment and gang activity.

- Only a small proportion of respondents feel unsafe or very unsafe while using public transport **2%**, and only **6%** (**12%**) feel unsafe or very unsafe when in the city or town centre, a considerable decrease compared to the previous 2 weeks.
- The most common things that people say would make them feel safer at this time include:
 - More home security/a safer neighbourhood (**18%**)
 - Financial and economic security (**15%**)
 - A greater police presence (**15%**)
 - Pandemic control/less exposure to virus/eradication of COVID-19 (**12%**)
- As the COVID-19 alert levels have reduced from Alert Level 4 through to Alert Level 1, the need for “Pandemic control/less exposure to virus/eradication of COVID-19”, “More people following the rules/staying home” and “More information/certainty about the future” has reduced markedly. Whereas, the need for “Home security/a safer neighbourhood”, “Financial and economic security” and “Other” varied solutions 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, **30%** (**29%**), noticed a problem in their neighbourhood or local area. The most common problems were dangerous driving, **16%** (**17%**) and noisy neighbours, **12%** (**10%**). **These proportions have remained relatively steady throughout different alert levels.**
- 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 AL4		21-27 April AL4		28 April-4 May AL3		5-11 May 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 levels (AL) 2 and 1)

Problems	12-18 May AL2		19-25 May AL2		26 May-1 June AL2		2-8 June AL2		9-15 June AL1		NZCVS 2018/19	
	%	MoE (±)	%	MoE (±)	%	MoE (±)	%	MoE (±)	%	MoE (±)	%	MoE (±)
Noisy neighbours / loud parties	13	3.97	11	3.43	12	3.42	10	3.99	12	3.79	29	1.62
Vandalism / graffiti	3	2.00	2	1.63	3	1.65	2	1.98	3	2.13	11	0.96
Burglary / break-ins / theft	2	1.59	3	1.84	6	2.42	4	2.64	7	2.88	23	1.45
Assaults	1	1.24	2	1.38	3	1.65	1	1.26	2	1.52	7	0.8
Harassment	1	1.24	1	0.88	2	1.35	1	1.26	1	1.18	6	0.68
People using or dealing drugs	4	2.23	2	1.38	5	2.30	3	2.17	5	2.41	14	1.06
People being drunk in a public place	3	2.00	4	2.03	7	2.58	4	2.64	5	2.41	16	1.23
Dangerous driving	13	3.97	15	3.91	15	3.73	17	4.97	16	4.25	38	1.52
Other	8	3.30	6	2.70	7	2.63	2	1.78	5	2.58	4	0.65
None of these	73	5.26	71	5.01	68	4.88	71	6.01	70	5.33	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

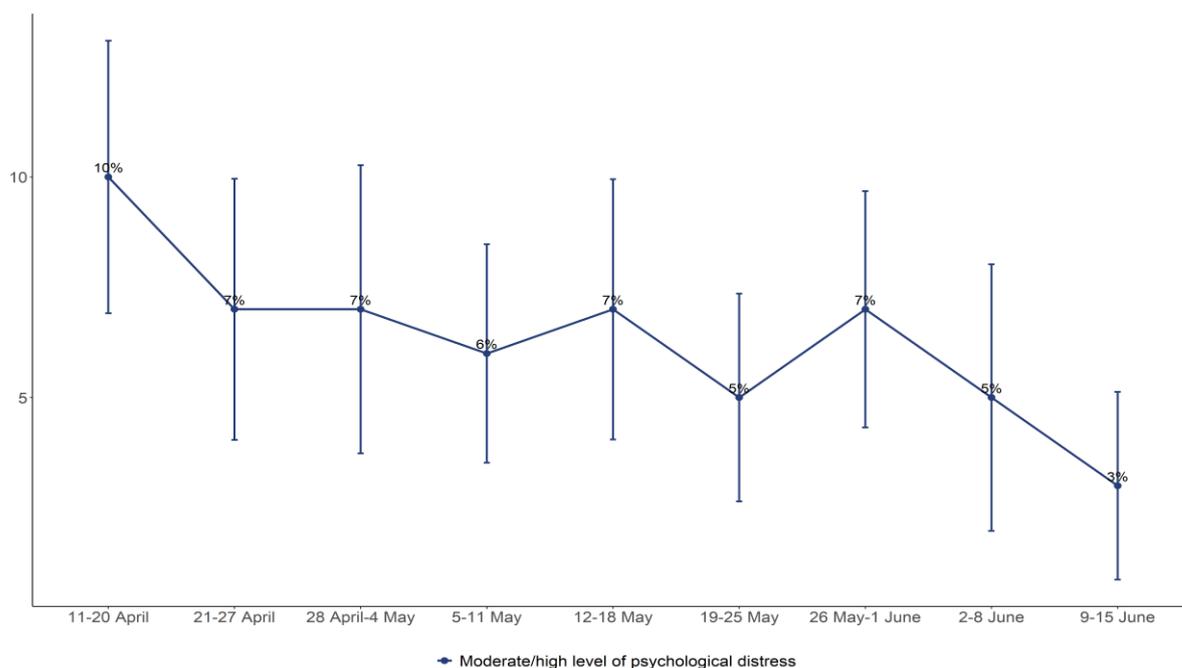
- **79% (84%)** did not worry at all about being the victim of a crime. **14% (11%)** worried only a little of the time. **1%** worried about being a victim of crime most or all of the time. The results from this and previous weeks indicate that **during the COVID-19 response period adult New Zealanders 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 distress¹. However, **97% (95%)** of respondents demonstrated a low level of psychological distress. **This represents a**

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

substantial increase in the proportion of respondents experiencing a low level of psychological distress when compared to Alert Level 4.

- The proportion of respondents with a low level of psychological distress is also relatively higher than the proportions reported in NZCVS (2018/19) data, where 88% of respondents had a low level of psychological distress.

Figure 5: The level of psychological distress

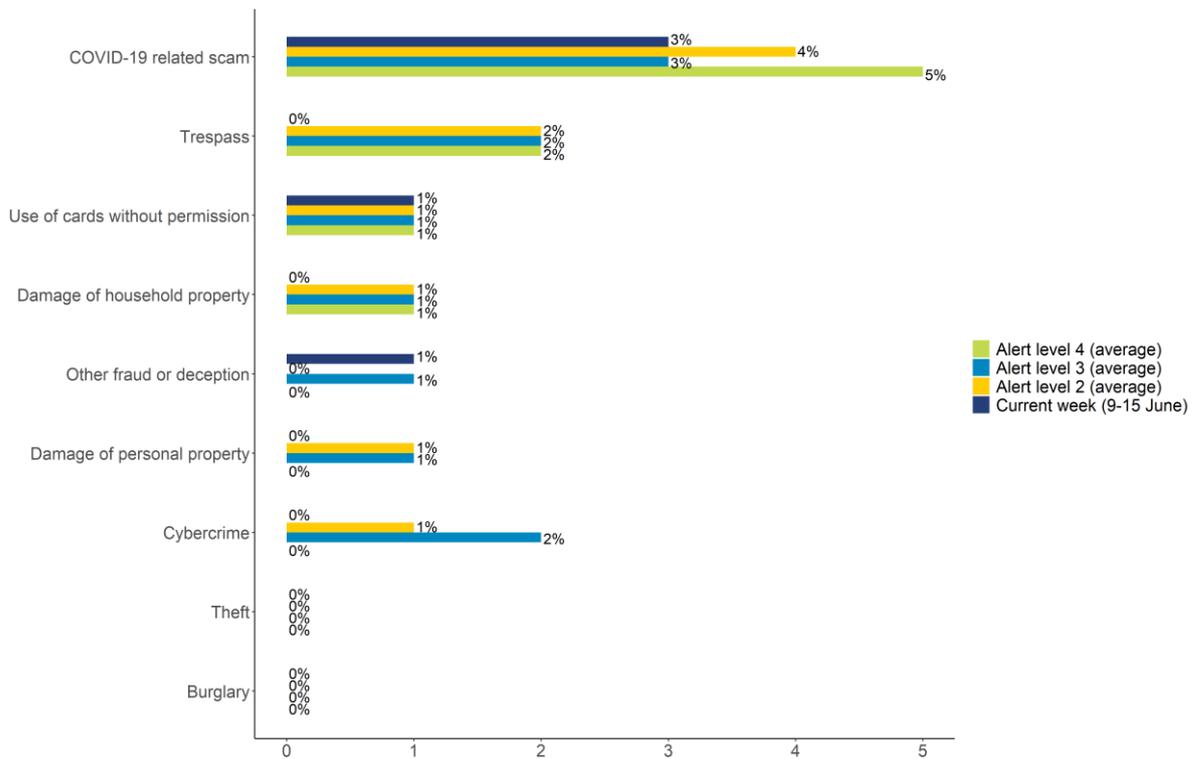


Experiencing crime and reporting to Police

- An overwhelming majority of respondents did not experience property crime and personal non-violent crime. The only offence type reported by more than 1% of respondents was COVID-19 related scam, **3% (4%)**. Experience of crime by specific offence types is presented in the chart below.

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



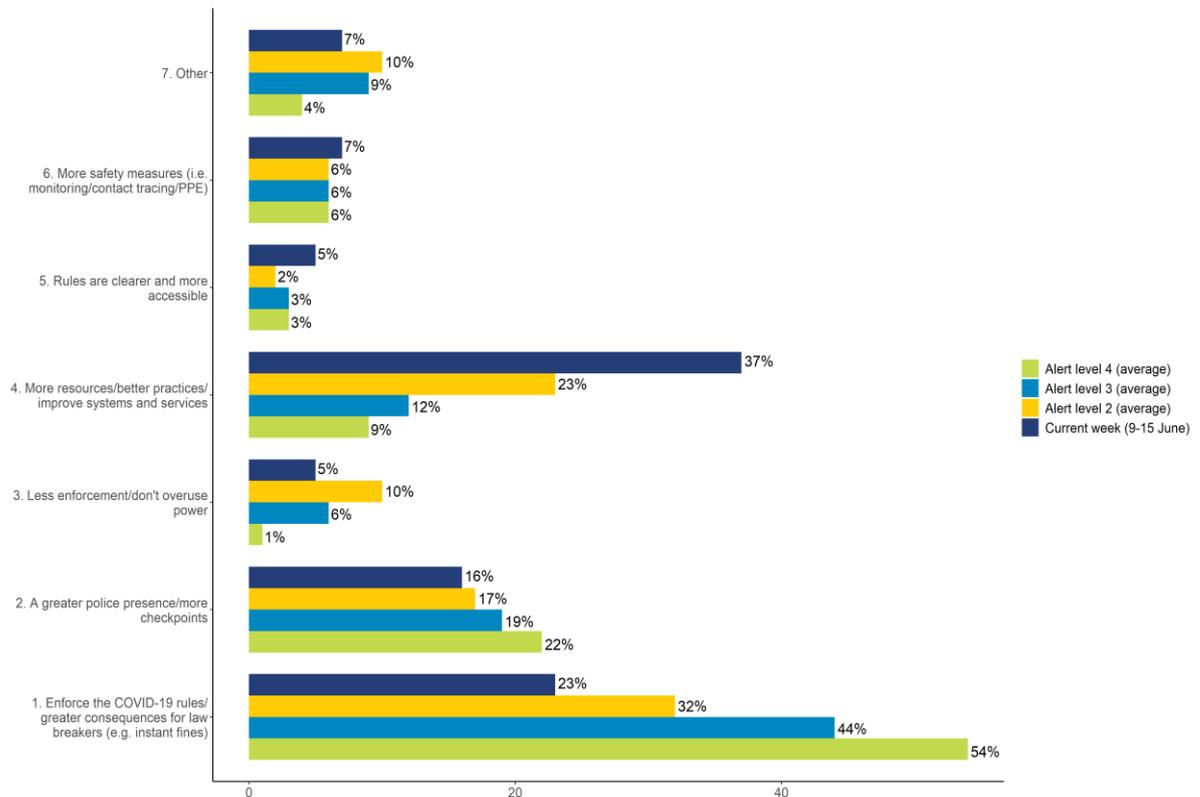
Note: This survey does not ask about violent crime including family violence due to potential risk for respondents.

- For the first time since the first week of observations (mid-April), no respondents reported crime they experienced to Police. This is 18 percentage points lower than a week ago and 29 percentage points lower than two weeks ago. It may reflect the fact that only scam and fraud type crime was reported this week. We know from NZCVS that fraud belongs to offence types with a very low rate of reporting to Police.

Perception of the criminal justice system

- A clear majority of respondents, **76% (77%)**, think that the criminal justice system response to the COVID-19 pandemic was good or excellent. This proportion has been markedly stable over the period of interviewing, varying between 73% - 77% for seven out of nine weeks of observation. The proportion of people who perceive the criminal justice system response to the COVID-19 pandemic as poor or very poor continues to be extremely low, **2% (1%)**. This proportion never exceeded 4% during the entire observation period.
- 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. The most frequent response is “More resources/better practices/improve systems and services”, **37%**, which is 14 percentage points higher than a week ago (23%). The graph below demonstrates a clear and consistent shift in public opinion from policing and enforcement to system and services improvement over time.

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



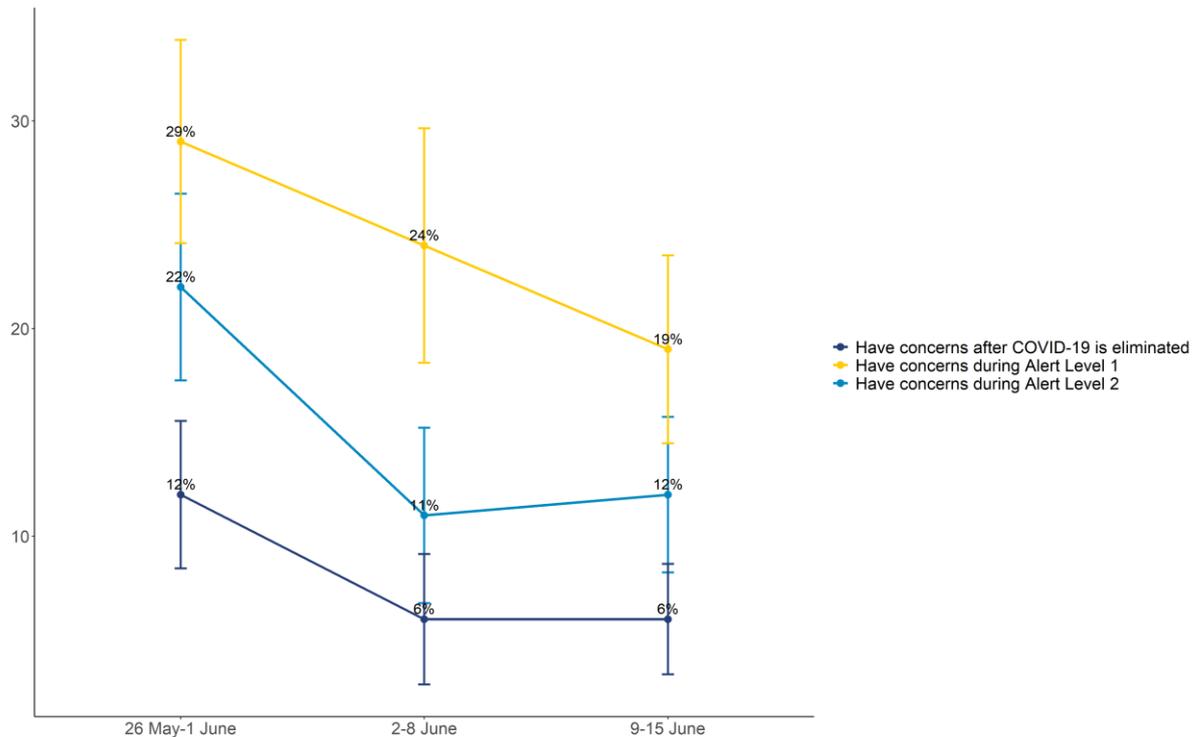
Ability to access justice services

- 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 surveys prior to the Alert Level 2 and therefore the answers have limited comparability. Note that only a small proportion of respondents reported a need to contact justice services. Therefore, **the numbers reported below are too small to make robust conclusions.**
- An overwhelming majority of respondents did not need to access justice services. However, since the beginning of COVID-19 Alert Level 4, **8% (4%)** needed to contact Police, **3% (2%)** needed to contact legal services and **2%** (same as previous week) social service organisations. Only one person reported a need to access courts.
- Of those 22 people who needed to contact Police, 21 (**95%**) were able to do so. Only one person was unable to get in touch with Police. This respondent did not provide a reason for this.
- All 11 people who needed to contact a court or legal service were able to do so.
- Of 7 people who needed to contact social services, 6 were able to do it. One person mistakenly thought that the service was closed due to lockdown. The reasons for this person being unable to contact social service are not clear.
- **81% (63%)** of those who contacted Police, **90% (100%)** of those who contacted legal services, and **100%** (same as previous week) of those contacted social services believed that the contact helped them to be supported or feel safer.

Jury trials

- The proportion of people with concerns about participating in jury service at Alert Level 1 **has been on a downward trend over the last three weeks**, falling to **19%** (24%) over the last week.
- The proportion of people concerned about participating in a jury service due to the COVID-19 situation at Alert Level 2 remained stable at **12%** (11%) compared to the previous week.
- More people continue to have concerns about participating in the jury service at Alert Level 1 than at Alert Level 2, but the difference this week is not statistically significant.
- **6%** 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, with no difference on the previous week.

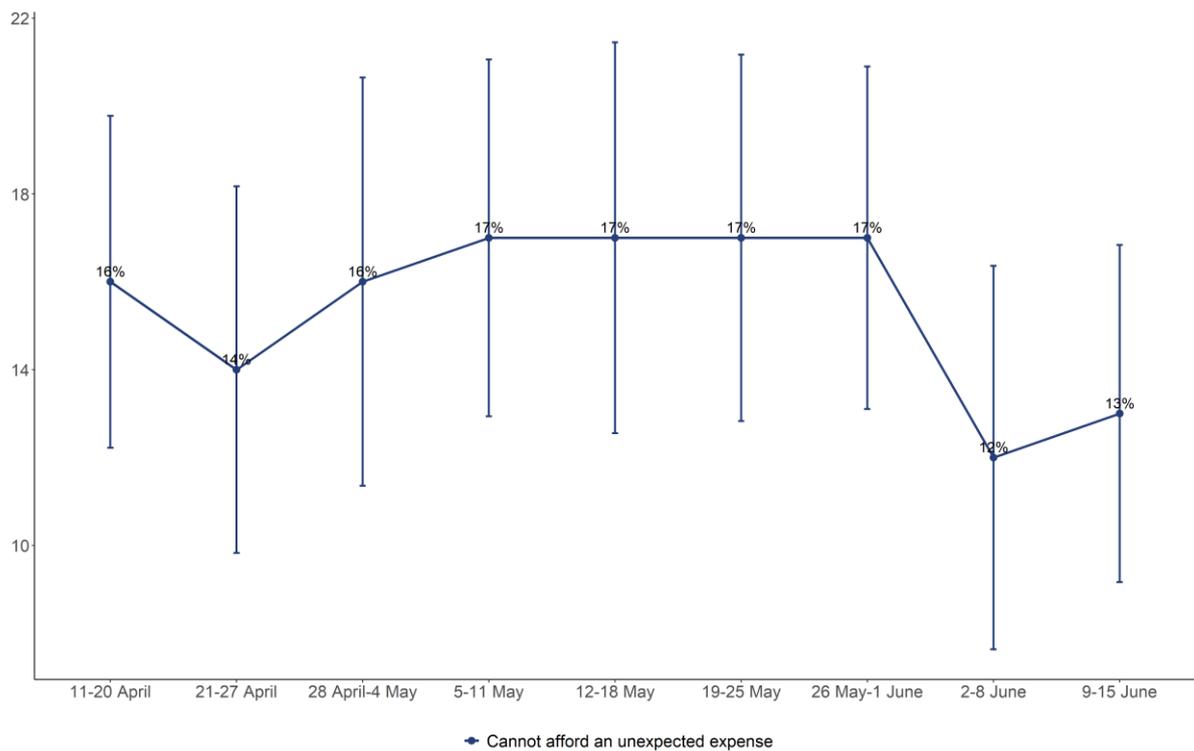
Figure 8: Concerns about participating in jury service due to the COVID-19 situation



Financial pressure

- **86%** (87%) of respondents said they could afford an unexpected expense of \$500 in the next week without borrowing money, while **13%** (12%) 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

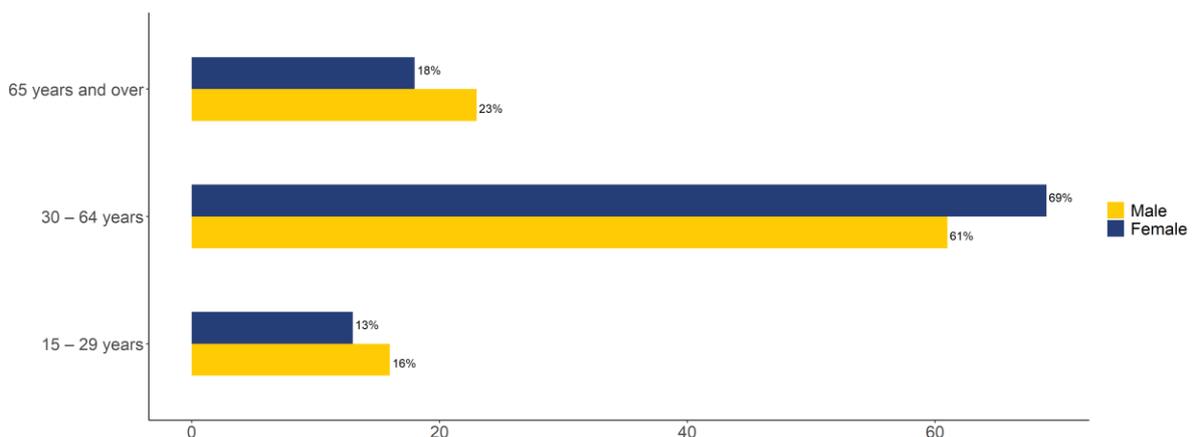


- In addition, **65%** (64%) of respondents did not attempt to access any long-term investments they held. Of those who attempted to access long term investments, **83%** (92%) did not experience any problem doing so.

Demographics

287 adult (15 years and above) New Zealanders were interviewed in the week between **Tuesday 9 June and Monday 15 June**. The group consisted of 46% male respondents and 54% female respondents. 14% of the respondents were between 15-29 years old, 65% between 30-64 years old and 20% 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 82%). 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 16, 2020

Sector Group

Research and Evaluation Unit