

COVID-19 Justice Sector Survey

Report 002 (21-27 April 2020)

This telephone survey provides information about how safe people feel and what crime and safety issues matter to them most. The report covers the following key topics:

- **Social connection**
- **Perceptions of safety**, including reasons why people feel unsafe
- **Experience of some types of crimes** (for example, fraud and cybercrime which 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 21 April and Monday 27 April** after interviewing **273** adult respondents (15 years old and above). These results are compared with the previous period (12 – 20 April) when **356** adults were interviewed.

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

95% (*91%*) of people say they have easy access to someone to talk to if they are feeling unsafe. But **2%** (*4%*) of people feel it is hard to find someone to talk to.

In the detailed findings we have **bolded** noticeable differences in results between the first and second surveys.

When people were interviewed, they were asked to think about the **seven days prior to the interview**.

Where available and appropriate, the report compares the current results with data collected by the New Zealand Crime and Victims Survey (NZCVS) between October 2018 and September 2019.

Key messages

Overall

The results of this second pulse survey are consistent by and large with the first pulse survey.

Notable findings from this survey are:

- The pattern of loneliness is roughly similar to levels prior to the lockdown.
- People are less worried about being a victim of crime than in the first survey. Compared with before the lockdown people much less worried about being a victim of crime.
- Nearly all people find the COVID-19 rules easy to understand and to follow.
- While the majority of people **78%** (81%) are not accessing their long-term investments, a greater proportion of those who do try are experiencing a problem **27%** (12%) with access.

Social connection

- Most people are connecting socially. For just over a quarter of people (*nearer a third in the previous survey*) of people though, loneliness is an issue¹. About **4%** (4%) of people feel lonely most of the time.
- Most people feel very safe but **1.8%** (1.6%) feel very unsafe at home.
- **27%** (28%) of people noticed a problem in their neighbourhood, most commonly dangerous driving and noisy neighbours.

Perceptions of safety

- While **89%** (77%) of people don't worry about being a victim of crime, only **1%** (3%) worry most or all of the time. **There is a noticeable 12 percentage points increase in the proportion of people who don't worry about being a victim of crime.**
- The most common problems were dangerous driving, **13%** (14%) and noisy neighbours, **7%** (8%).
- **95%** (91%) of people say they have easy access to someone to talk to if they are feeling unsafe. But **2%** (4%) of people feel it is hard to find someone to talk to.
- People would feel safer if:
 - There is more certainty about the future
 - COVID-19 is eliminated
 - A vaccine against COVID-19 is developed
 - They have work security and a stable income
 - Alert Level 4 is extended for a longer time
 - They can return to a normal life
 - There is greater visibility/greater presence of police to stop unreasonable behaviour.

Experiencing crime and reporting to Police

- An overwhelming majority of respondents did not experience property crime and personal non-violent crime. **5%** (6%) said they did experience a COVID-19 related scam. There is no significant difference with the numbers reported in the previous week.
- Only **4%** (0%) of incidents were reported to Police.

¹ It was erroneously stated that over a fifth of respondents reported that they have a feeling of loneliness. The error is fixed 14/05/2020.

Understanding and sticking to the COVID-19 rules

- An overwhelming **99%** (96%) of respondents say Alert Level 4 rules are either clear or very clear to understand and they know where they can go and what they can do. **97%** (92%) of people say it is easy for them to follow the rules. **This is a 5 percentage points increase from the previous week.**

Perception of the Criminal Justice System

- **79%** (78%) think that the criminal justice system response to the COVID-19 pandemic was good or excellent. However, **3%** (2%) said that the response was poor.
- Some people suggested that the criminal justice system could be doing better at this time. Most said that the criminal justice system should be tougher on those breaking the lockdown rules. Popular suggestions were to introduce instant fines for the lockdown offences and to strengthen road patrols.

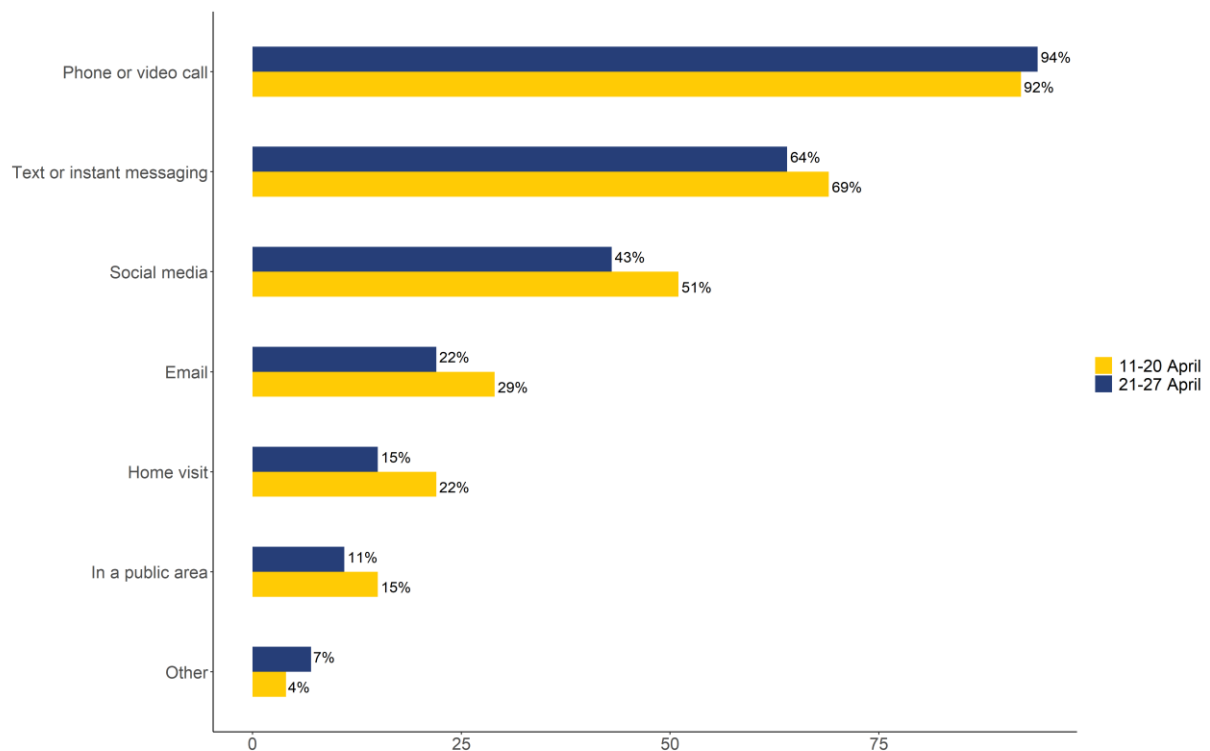
Detailed findings

Social connection

- **98%** had communicated with family, whānau or friends outside of their household, and most, **82%**, had communicated on at least four days out of the week. These proportions are unchanged compared with 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.

Figure 1: How did you communicate?



- For **91%** (90%) of respondents' communication with family, whānau and friends over the last week was either easy or very easy. Only **3%** (5%) of respondents reported that it was hard or very hard.

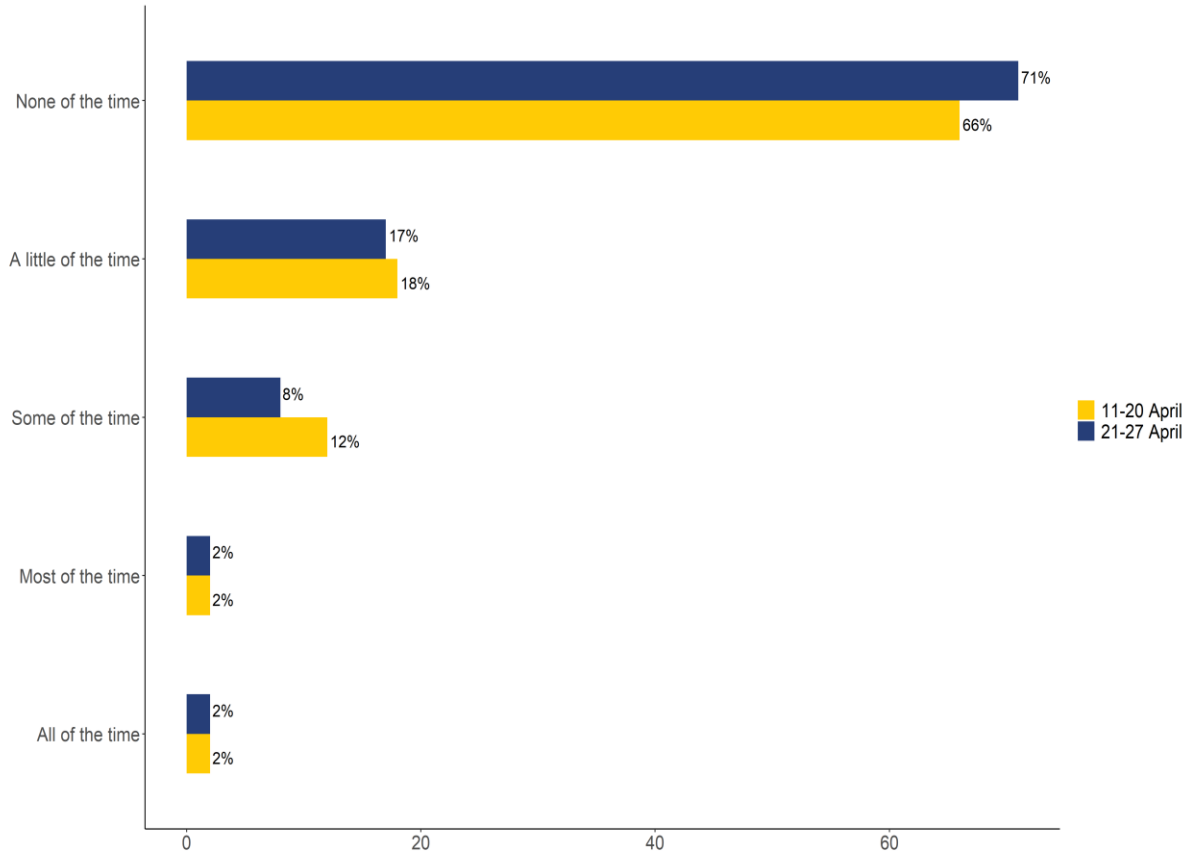
Loneliness

- Almost three quarters of respondents, **71%** (66%) did not feel lonely at all over the last week, while a further **17%** (18%) felt lonely a little of the time. However, **4%** (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.

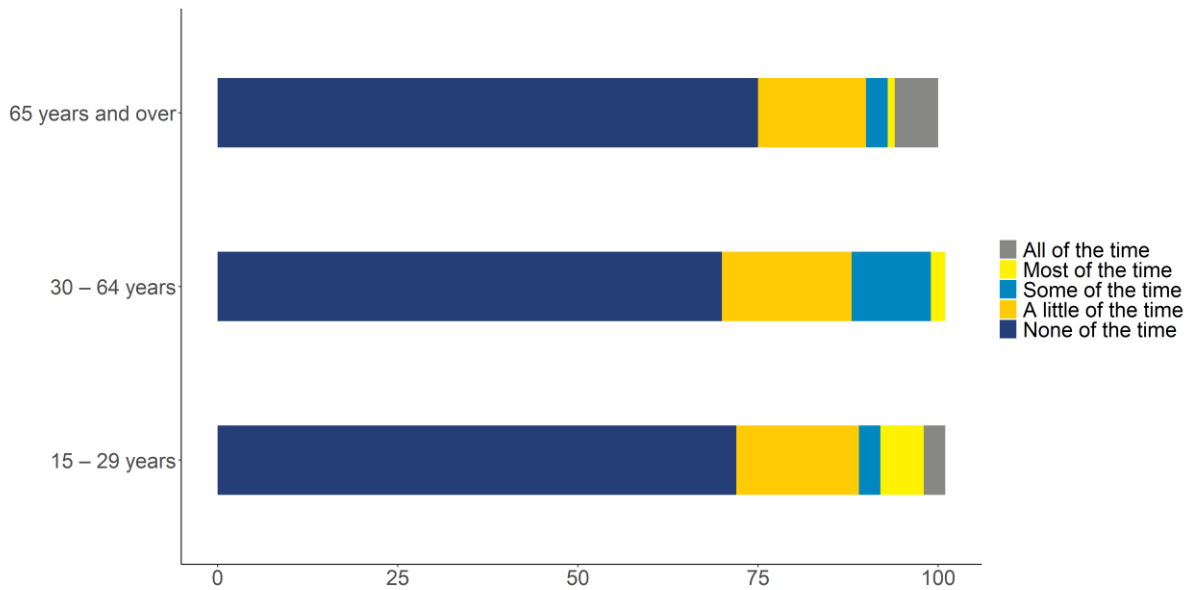
- The proportion of those feeling lonely all or most of the time increases to **8%** (14%) among people with no access to internet. **However, it is 6 percentage points less than a week ago.**

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



- **4%** 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.

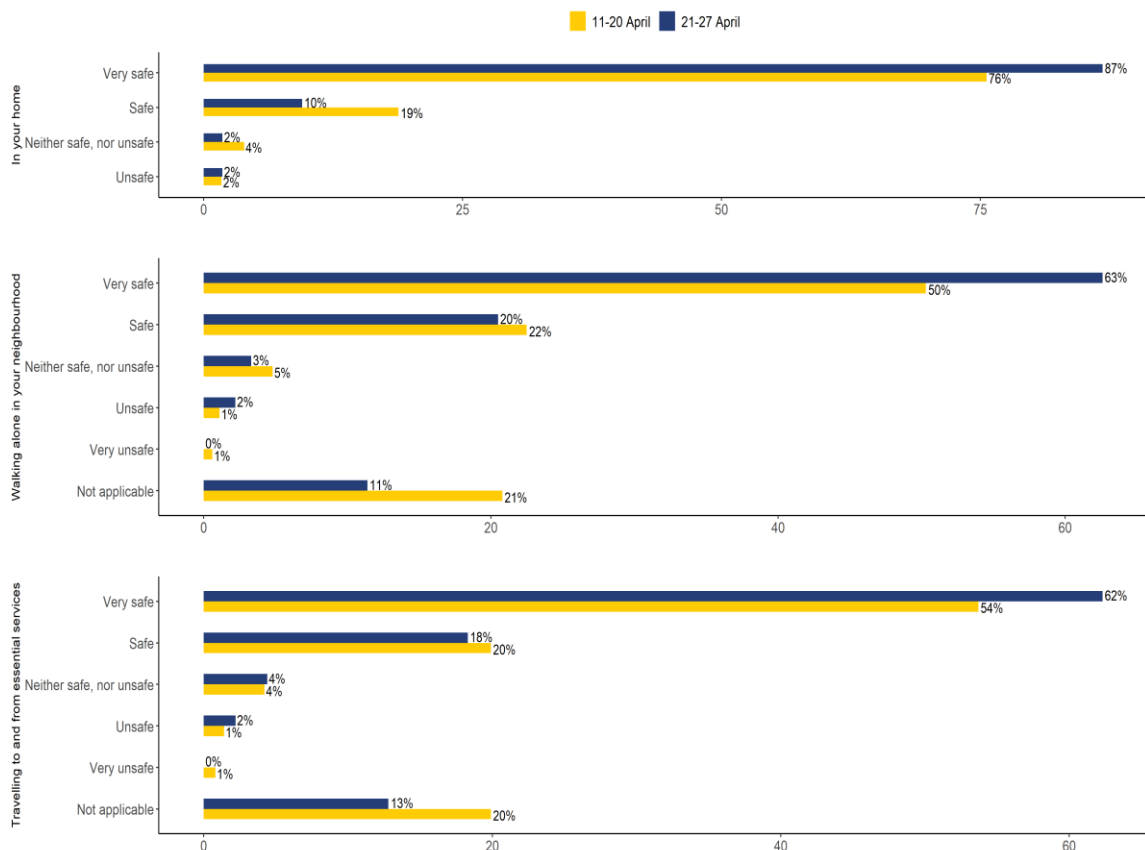
Figure 3: How often people feel lonely over the previous seven days (by age groups)



Perceptions of safety

- **1.8% (1.7%)** of respondents feel unsafe or very unsafe at home, **2.2% (1.7%)** while walking alone in their neighbourhood and **2.2% (2.2%)** when travelling to or from essential services. Most often people feel unsafe because of the risk of infection by COVID-19.

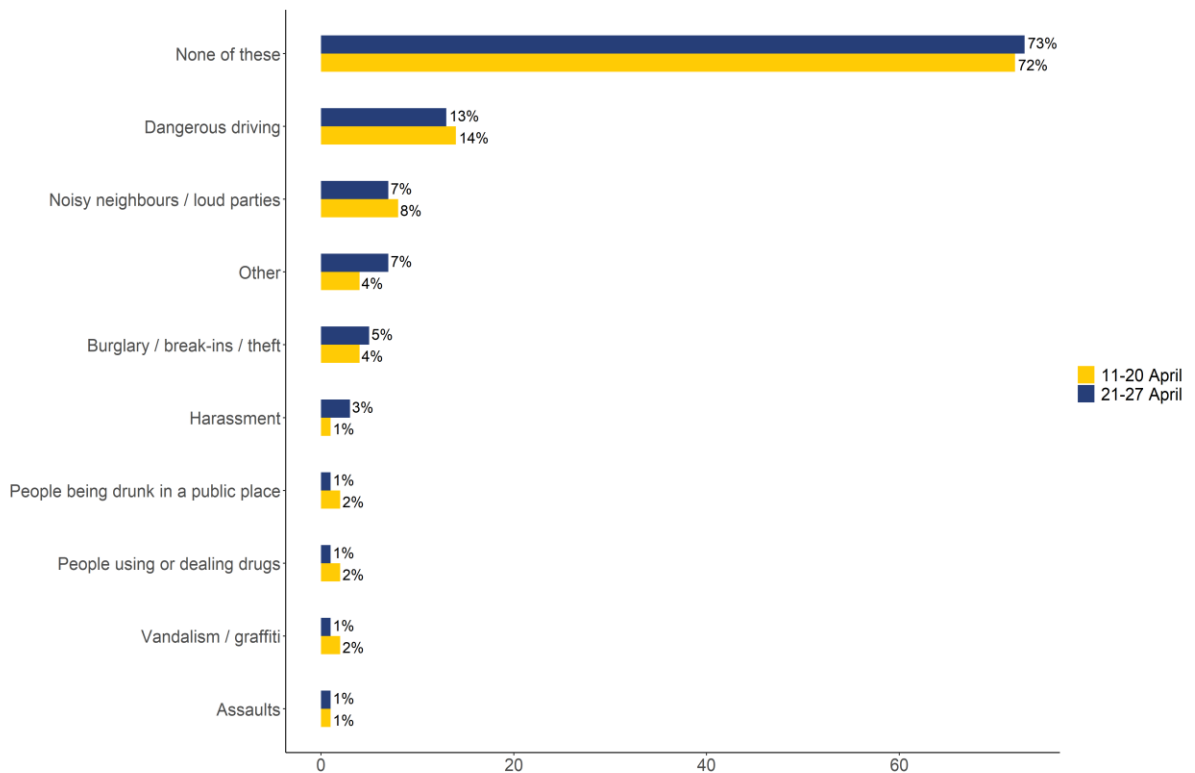
Figure 4: How safe or unsafe people feel



- People will feel safer if:
 - There is more certainty about the future
 - COVID-19 is eliminated
 - A vaccine against COVID-19 is developed
 - They have work security and a stable income
 - Alert Level 4 is extended for a longer time
 - They can return to a normal life
 - There is greater visibility/greater presence of police to stop unreasonable behaviour.
- More than a quarter of respondents, **27% (28%)** noticed a problem in their neighbourhood or local area. The most common problems were dangerous driving, **13% (14%)** and noisy neighbours, **7% (8%)**.

Note that issues with noisy neighbours and dangerous driving were also seen as problems for New Zealanders before the lockdown: 29% of NZ adults in the 2018/2019 NZCVS said they had an issue with noisy neighbours in their neighbourhood or local area in the last 12 months, and 38% had an issue with dangerous driving.

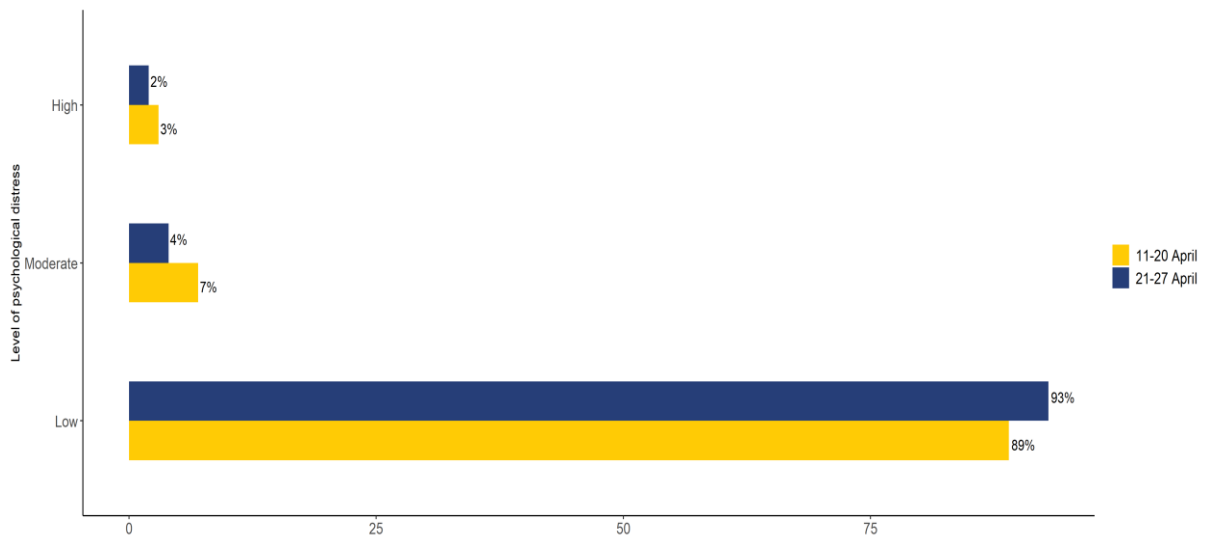
Figure 5: Problems in the neighbourhood / local area over the past 7 days



- **89% (77%)** did not worry at all about being the victim of a crime. **This is 12 percentage points up from the previous week.** **7% (13%)** worried a little of the time. Only **1% (3%)** worried about being a victim of crime most or all of the time. These results indicate that during the Level 4 period adult New Zealanders are less worried about crime than usual, with 40% of adults worrying none of the time, 33% a little of the time and 8% worrying all or most of the time in the 2018/2019 NZCVS.
- **95% (91%)** said it would be easy or very easy to talk to someone if they felt unsafe or fearful, while only **2% (4%)** think it would be hard or very hard.
- Some respondents reported feeling signs of psychological distress². However, **93% (89%)** of respondents demonstrated low level of psychological distress. This is consistent with the NZCVS data where 88% of respondents had low level of psychological distress.

² 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 6: The level of psychological distress

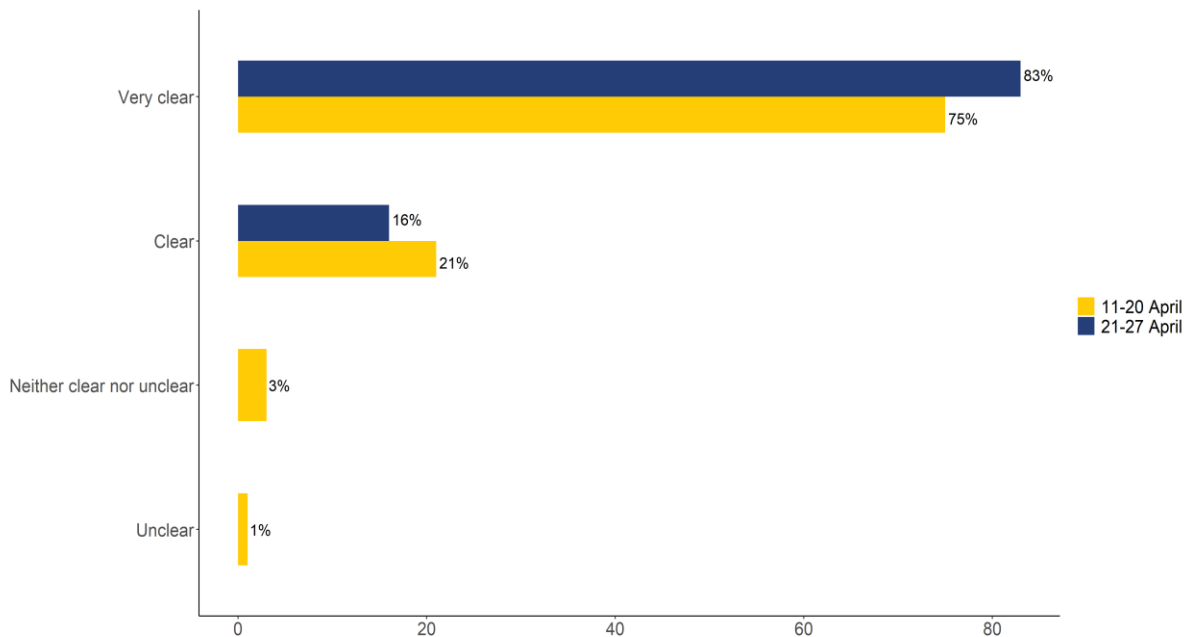


- Respondents were asked (in a free format) what may improve their feeling of safety. Most often (in no particular order) people mentioned more certainty, elimination of COVID-19, work security/stable income, extension of level 4 for longer time, return to normal life, more visible police presence and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

Understanding and sticking to COVID-19 rules

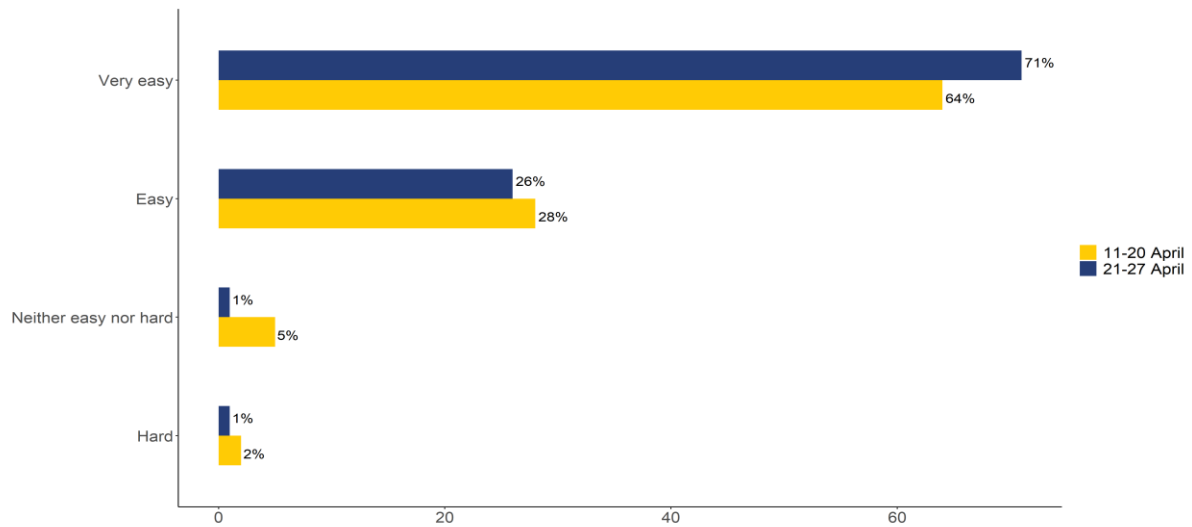
- A vast majority of respondents, **99%** (96%) said that it is either clear or very clear where they can go and what they can do during the current COVID-19 Alert Level (Level 4). Only 1% of respondents found the rules unclear or very unclear.

Figure 7: Clarity of the rules for the current COVID-19 Alert Level



- Furthermore, **97%** (92%) of respondents said it was easy or very easy for them to stick with the rules. **This is 5 percentage points higher than a week ago.** Only **1%** (2%) said it was hard or very hard to stick with the rules.

Figure 8: Ease of following the rules at the current COVID-19 Alert Level

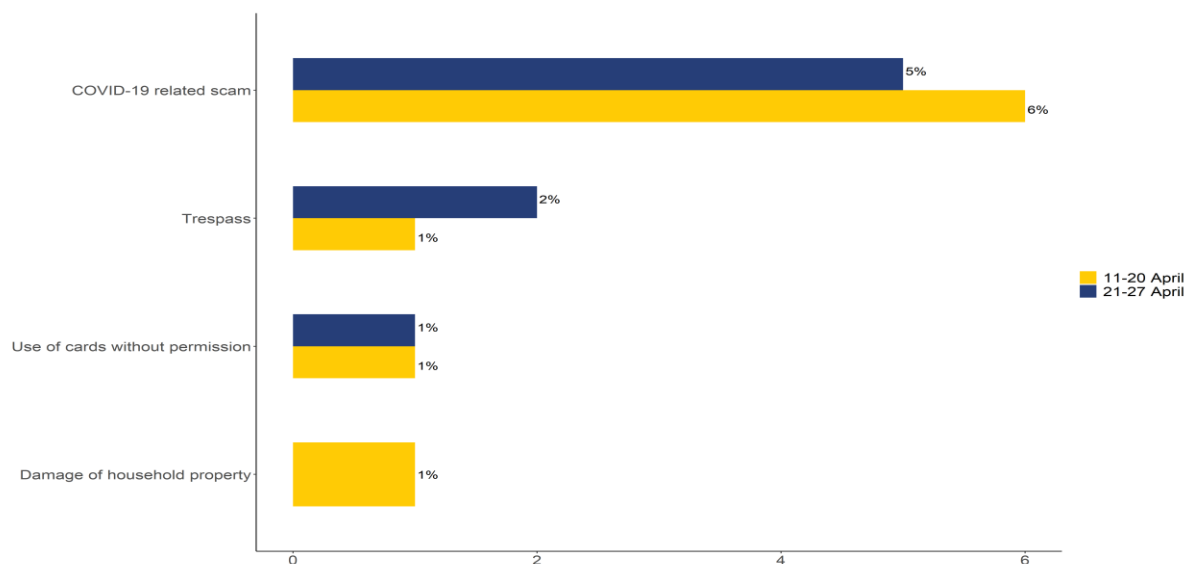


- The reasons some people gave about why it was difficult for them to stick with the rules included: boredom, being separated from the rest of the family, lack of social contact, having to keep children at home, and observing those who violate the rules. Some people mentioned difficulties related to their physical disability.

Experiencing crime and reporting to Police

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

Figure 9: Percent of respondents experiencing non-violent crime over the last 7 days



Notes:

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

- Only **4% (0%)** of the crimes experienced by respondents were reported to Police.

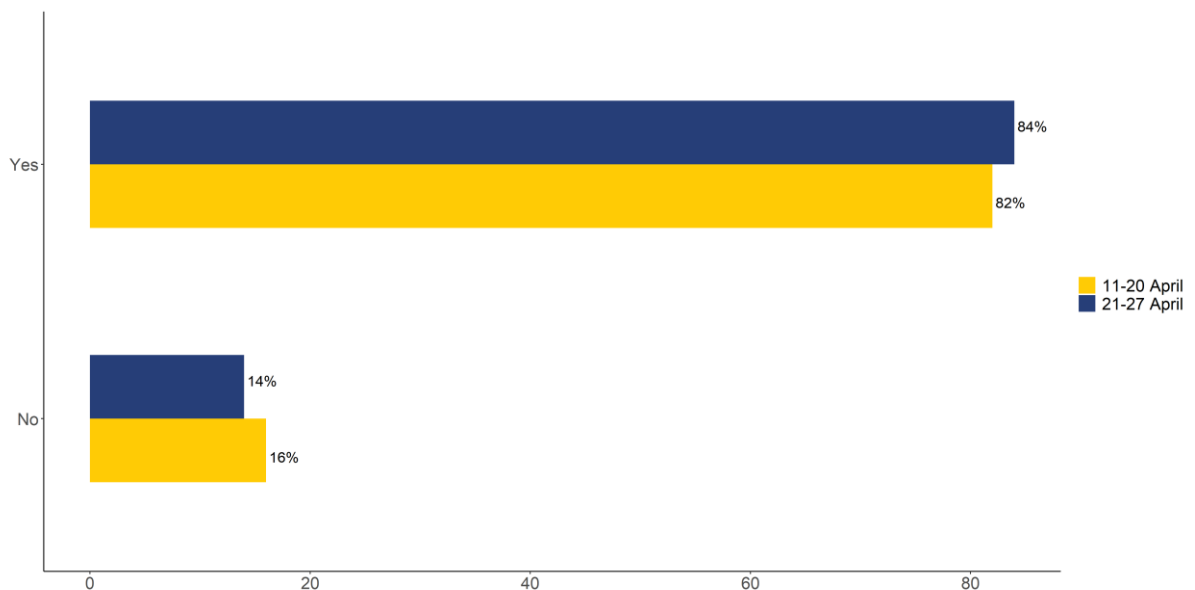
Perception of the criminal justice system

- A significant majority of respondents, **79% (78%)** think that the criminal justice system response to the COVID-19 pandemic was good or excellent. However, **3% (2%)** said that the response was poor.
- Respondents were asked (in a free format) what, if anything, the criminal justice system could be doing better at this time. Most responses to this question suggested that the criminal justice system should be tougher on those breaking the lockdown rules. A popular suggestion was to introduce instant fines for the lockdown offences and strengthen the road patrols.

Financial pressure

- **84% (82%)** of respondents said they could afford an unexpected expense of \$500 in the next week without borrowing money, while **14% (16%)** could not. Note: New Zealand Crime and Victims Survey, Cycle 2 (October 2018 – September 2019) reported 78% of adults could afford an unexpected expense of \$500 in the next week without borrowing money, and 20% could not.

Figure 10: Percent of respondents experiencing financial pressure

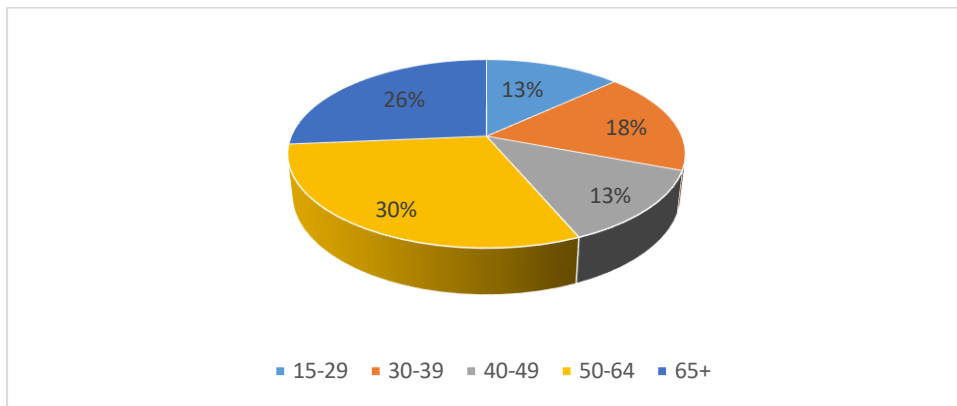


- In addition, **78% (81%)** of respondents did not attempt to access any long-term investments they held. Of those who attempted to access long term investments, **27% (12%)** experienced a problem doing so. **This is 15 percentage points higher than a week ago.**

Demographics

273 adult (15 years and above) New Zealanders were interviewed in the week between **Tuesday 21 April and Monday 27 April**. The group consisted of 44% of male respondents and 56% of female respondents. The age breakdown is presented in the following chart.

Figure 11: Age of respondents



Survey methodology

COVID-19 Justice Sector Survey is a phone survey (CATI - Computer Assisted Telephone Interviews) with weekly reporting. The survey interviews people who have taken part in the New Zealand Crime and Victims Survey (NZCVS) and have said they are happy to participate in future research.

NZCVS is using a random nation-wide sample. The proportion of people 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 resulting in 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.

April 28, 2020

Sector Group

Research and Evaluation Unit