



New Zealand
Crime and Victims

survey

HELP CREATE SAFER COMMUNITIES

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Social wellbeing and perceptions of the criminal justice system

Cycle 2 (October 2018 –
September 2019)

Contents

List of figures	3
List of tables.....	6
Acknowledgements	7
Executive Summary	8
Key findings	9
1 How to read this report	11
1.1 The NZCVS.....	11
1.2 Uncertainty of estimates.....	11
1.3 Rounding	12
1.4 Comparison of estimates by population groups.....	12
2 Social wellbeing	14
2.1 Social wellbeing by population groups.....	15
2.2 Social wellbeing and victimisation	18
3 Perceptions of crime and safety	22
3.1 Worry about being the victim of a crime	23
3.2 Feelings of safety at home and in the community at night	34
3.3 Issues facing communities	35
4 Perceptions of the criminal justice system	37
4.1 Confidence in the criminal justice system	38
4.2 How well parts of the criminal justice system are perceived to be doing.....	40
4.3 Trust in and fairness of the criminal justice system.....	46
4.4 Likelihood of contacting the Police	51
5 Values and purpose of the criminal justice system.....	55
5.1 Alignment with the criminal justice system.....	55
5.2 Aims of the criminal justice system.....	57
5.3 Views on offending.....	59
6 Experiences with the criminal justice system.....	61
6.1 Victimization by contact with the criminal justice system	65
7 Conclusions	67
Appendix 1: About NZCVS	70
Appendix 2: Other NZCVS reports and future reporting	72

List of figures

Figure 2.1: Indicators of social connectedness and social trust for New Zealand adults, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)	15
Figure 2.2: Percentage of adults who meet socially at least once per week, by ethnicity, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)	16
Figure 2.3: Percentage of adults who have high or very high trust in most people, by ethnicity, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)	16
Figure 2.4: Percentage of adults who feel lonely a little or none of the time, by sexual orientation, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19).....	17
Figure 2.5: Percentage of adults who have high or very high trust in most people, by sexual orientation, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)	17
Figure 2.6: Percentage of adults who expect most people to take advantage of them a little or none of the time, by age, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19).....	18
Figure 2.7: Social connectedness of New Zealand adults, by victimisation in the previous 12 months, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19).....	19
Figure 2.8: Social trust amongst New Zealand adults, by victimisation in the previous 12 months, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)	20
Figure 3.1: Worry about being the victim of a crime amongst New Zealand adults, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)	24
Figure 3.2: Percentage of adults who worry all or most of the time about being the victim of a crime, by victimisation in the previous 12 months, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19).....	24
Figure 3.3: Victimization in the previous 12 months and worry about crime, by population groups, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)	25
Figure 3.4: Relationship between victimisation in the previous 12 months and worry about crime, by population groups, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19).....	26
Figure 3.5: Worry about being the victim of a crime and previous 12-month victimisation rate for New Zealand adults, by deprivation quintile, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19).....	26
Figure 3.6: Percentage of adults who worry about being the victim of a crime all or most of the time, by ethnicity, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)	27
Figure 3.7: Percentage of adults who worry about being the victim of a crime all or most of the time, by sexual orientation, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)	27
Figure 3.8: Percentage of adults who worry about being the victim of a crime all or most of the time, by ability to afford a non-essential \$300 item, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19).....	28
Figure 3.9: Percentage of adults who worry about being the victim of a crime all or most of the time, by region, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)	29
Figure 3.10: Percentage of adults who worry about being the victim of a crime all or most of the time, by problems observed in local area in the previous 12 months, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)	30
Figure 3.11: Population groups significantly more likely than the New Zealand average to worry all or most of the time about being the victim of a crime, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)	31

Figure 3.12: Percentage of adults who worry about being the victim of a crime all or most of the time, by frequency of meeting socially with family/whānau members, friends, colleagues, or neighbours, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)	32
Figure 3.13: Percentage of adults who worry about being the victim of a crime all or most of the time, by feelings of loneliness in the previous four weeks, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)	33
Figure 3.14: Percentage of adults who worry about being the victim of a crime all or most of the time, by how often they expect most people to take advantage of them, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)	33
Figure 3.15: Feelings of safety in different scenarios amongst New Zealand adults, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)	34
Figure 3.16: Percentage of New Zealand adults who feel unsafe or very unsafe in their city or town centre at night, by region, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)	35
Figure 3.17: Problems in neighbourhood/local area experienced by New Zealand adults in the previous 12 months, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)	36
Figure 4.1: Confidence in the criminal justice system amongst New Zealand adults, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)	38
Figure 4.2: Confidence in the criminal justice system amongst New Zealand adults, by population group, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)	39
Figure 4.3: Confidence in the criminal justice system amongst New Zealand adults, by victimisation in the previous 12 months, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)	40
Figure 4.4: Views of how good a job different parts of the criminal justice system are doing amongst New Zealand adults, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)	41
Figure 4.5: Percentage of adults who think different parts of the criminal justice system are doing a good or excellent job, by victimisation in the previous 12 months, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)	42
Figure 4.6: Percentage of adults who think different parts of the criminal justice system are doing a good or excellent job, by ethnicity, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19) ...	43
Figure 4.7: Percentage of adults who think the Police are doing a good or excellent job, by ethnicity, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)	44
Figure 4.8: Percentage of adults who think the Police are doing a good or excellent job, by region, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)	45
Figure 4.9: Percentage of adults who think the Police are doing a good or excellent job, by deprivation quintile, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)	45
Figure 4.10: Percentage of adults who think the Police are doing a good or excellent job, by number of victimisation in the previous 12 months, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)	46
Figure 4.11: New Zealand adults' views of fairness by, and their level of trust in, different parts of the criminal justice system, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)	48
Figure 4.12: Percentage of New Zealand adults with high or very high trust in different parts of the criminal justice system, by victimisation in the previous 12 months, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)	49
Figure 4.13: Percentage of New Zealand adults who agree or strongly agree that New Zealanders are treated fairly by different parts of the criminal justice system, by victimisation in the previous 12 months, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)	50

Figure 4.14: New Zealand adults' views that people in New Zealand are treated fairly by the Police, by ethnicity, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)	51
Figure 4.15: New Zealand adults' likelihood of calling the Police to report a crime or incident they had witnessed, by age, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)	52
Figure 4.16: New Zealand adults' likelihood of calling the Police to report a crime or incident they had witnessed, by ethnicity, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)	53
Figure 4.17: New Zealand adults' likelihood of calling the Police to report a crime or incident they had witnessed, by region, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)	53
Figure 4.18: New Zealand adults' likelihood of calling the Police to report a crime or incident they had witnessed, by victimisation in the previous 12 months, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)	54
Figure 5.1: New Zealand adults' agreement with the criminal justice system, by ethnicity, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)	56
Figure 5.2: Percentage of adults whose feelings about what is right and wrong do not usually agree with the criminal justice system, by contact with the system in the previous 12 months, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19).....	57
Figure 5.3: New Zealand adults' views of the most important aims of the criminal justice system, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19).....	58
Figure 5.4: New Zealand adults' agreement with the criminal justice system, by views of the most important aims of the system, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)	59
Figure 5.5: New Zealand adults' views about what leads people to commit crime and whether people can change their lives and stay away from crime, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19).....	59
Figure 6.1: New Zealand adults' contact with the criminal justice system in the previous 12 months, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19).....	61
Figure 6.2: New Zealand adults' experiences with the criminal justice system in the previous 12 months, by form of contact with the system, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19).....	63
Figure 6.3: Percentage of adults who would say they were not treated fairly by the criminal justice system in the previous 12 months, by form of contact with the system, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)	64
Figure 6.4: Percentage of adults who would say they were treated fairly by the criminal justice system in the previous 12 months, by ethnicity, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19).....	65
Figure 6.5: Percentage of adults who experienced an incident of crime once or more in the previous 12 months, by contact with the criminal justice system in the previous 12 months, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)	66

List of tables

Table A1.1: Scope of crimes/offences covered in the NZCVS 70

Disclaimer

1. This report contains only information about people aged 15 years and above. The survey does not cover children younger than 15 years of age.
2. While all care and diligence has been taken in processing, analysing, and extracting data and information for this publication, the Ministry of Justice gives no warranty that it is error free and will not be liable for any loss or damage suffered by the use directly, or indirectly, of the information in this publication.
3. This report contains highly aggregated data. No identifiable personal data are included in the report.
4. Estimates measured in counts are rounded to the nearest thousand. Estimates measured in percentages are rounded to the nearest integer, except when it is deemed important to show more detail.



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NZCVS Project Team

Executive Summary

How much do New Zealanders connect with others and how much do they trust each other? How much do they worry about experiencing crime? What do they think of the criminal justice system? And, for those who came into contact with the criminal justice system, how was their experience? These are the key questions we seek to answer in this report, which draws results from the New Zealand Crime and Victims Survey (NZCVS) Cycle 2 (2018/19) in-depth module on social wellbeing and institutional trust.

In 2018, the Government established the Hāpaitia te Oranga Tangata – Safe and Effective Justice initiative¹ to guide a transformation of the criminal justice system. As New Zealand moves through a journey of reform, it is important to base decisions on evidence of the strengths and weaknesses of the system. The results of this report shed light on areas of the criminal justice system that could be improved and made fairer for all New Zealanders. They also provide baseline data for the Government to look back to after changes are made, to evaluate whether they were successful.

There are many positive insights inside this report. Most New Zealanders told us they feel safe and reported high levels of social connectedness and trust in others. Most adults who had recent contact with the criminal justice system said their experience was positive. Most New Zealanders believe the Police and groups that support victims are doing a good job, and they have a high level of trust in those agencies. However, they have less-positive views of the other components of the criminal justice system – judges, juries, probation officers, criminal lawyers, the prison service, and juries. Furthermore, there are some strong disparities in social wellbeing, feelings of safety, and perceptions and experiences of the criminal justice system for different groups within the population.

A key group that stands out in this report as having different experiences and perceptions to other New Zealanders are those who had been a victim of crime in the previous 12 months. Compared to other adults, recent victims of crime tended to have lower social wellbeing, feel less safe in their communities, and have less-positive views of criminal justice institutions. Adults who had recently attended court or a tribunal, or who had participated in a restorative justice conference, were also more likely to negatively rate their experience with the criminal justice system than those who had other forms of contact with the system.

Another theme running through this report is that of disparities in the views and experiences of New Zealanders across ethnic groups. People of New Zealand European ethnicity tend to report higher levels of social wellbeing than members of other ethnic groups, especially in terms of trust in other people. Pacific peoples and Indians tend to worry more about being the victim of a crime than other New Zealand adults. Māori and Pacific peoples are less likely than people of other ethnicities to agree that New Zealanders are treated fairly by the

¹ <https://www.safeandeffectivejustice.govt.nz/>

Police. And Māori, Chinese and Pacific adults are all less likely to feel that their values align with the criminal justice system than other adults. These findings support calls for the criminal justice system to better reflect the diverse values and needs of New Zealanders.²

This report spans five key topics, of which the key findings are summarised below.

Key findings

Social wellbeing

- 83% of adults meet socially at least once per week, and 55% have high or very high levels of trust in most people.
- Social wellbeing is not distributed equally across different groups that make up our society.
- Adults who have experienced more than one incident of crime in the previous 12 months tend to have lower levels of social wellbeing than those who have experienced only one incident or no incidents at all.

Perceptions of crime and safety

- Adults in some population groups tend to worry more often about being the victim of a crime than others. These differences do not necessarily relate to true differences in the rate of victimisation.
- One in five (20%) Pacific people worry all or most of the time about being a victim, compared to 1 in 20 (5%) New Zealand Europeans, while the difference in the actual experience of crime for these groups is small and not statistically significant (32% compared to 31%).
- Worry about crime is highly correlated with measures of social connectedness and social trust.

Perceptions of the criminal justice system

- 6% of New Zealanders are completely confident that the criminal justice system as a whole is effective, and a further 47% are fairly confident. Another 25% are neutral.

² Compare with:

- Chief Victims Advisor to Government. 2019. *Te Tangi o te Manawanui: Recommendations for Reform*. <https://chiefvictimsadvisor.justice.govt.nz/assets/Documents/Publications/Te-Tangi-Final-PDF.pdf>
- Hāpaitia te Oranga Tangata – Safe and Effective Justice. 2018. *Summit Playback*. <https://www.justice.govt.nz/assets/Documents/Publications/hapaitia-summit-playback.pdf>
- Te Uepū Hāpai i te Ora – Safe and Effective Justice Advisory Group. 2019. *Turuki! Turuki! Transforming our criminal justice system*. <https://www.safeandeffectivejustice.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/28ce04fd87/Turuki-Turuki-Report-Interactive.pdf>

- Adults who identify as bisexual (27%) and Māori (39%) are less likely to be fairly or completely confident in the criminal justice system than New Zealand adults overall (53%).
- The public views the Police and groups that support victims more positively than other parts of the criminal justice system, such as prisons and the parole board.

Values and purpose of the criminal justice system

- Not all New Zealanders agree their values are usually reflected in the criminal justice system. Half (51%) of New Zealand adults said their feelings about what is right and wrong usually agree with the criminal justice system and 41% said they sometimes agree.
- Māori (38%), Chinese (39%) and Pacific peoples (39%) are less likely than those of other ethnic groups to feel their values align with the criminal justice system.
- New Zealanders are divided in their views of whether crime is a choice, but there is a strong consensus that people who offend can go on to lead productive lives with the right effort and support.

Experiences with the criminal justice system

- More than one third (37%) of adults had contact with the criminal justice system in the previous 12 months, with one in five adults (21%) having been in a vehicle that was stopped by Police.
- One quarter (23%) of those adults who had contact with the criminal justice system said they had a very positive experience, and a further 43% said they had a positive experience.
- Those who attended court or a tribunal or attended a restorative justice conference are more likely to view their experience with the system negatively.

1 How to read this report

1.1 The NZCVS

The NZCVS is an ongoing household survey that collects information on adult New Zealanders' experiences of crime. Information is collected on both incidents reported to the Police and unreported incidents.

The key 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
- match survey data with relevant administrative records to reduce information gaps in the decision- and policy-making process.

The data presented in this report is based on the second cycle of the NZCVS, which collected responses in 2018/19. See Appendix 1 for more information on the NZCVS and see Appendix 2 for a full list of NZCVS reports.

Each cycle of the survey includes an in-depth module that changes each cycle. In Cycle 2, the module was on social wellbeing and institutional trust. It is this in-depth module that we examine in the current report.

1.2 Uncertainty of estimates

Because the NZCVS is a sample survey, it is subject to sampling error. Calculation of standard errors of the estimates is described in the NZCVS Cycle 2 Methodology report. Confidence intervals are constructed from the standard errors at the 95% level. Confidence intervals are provided as lines on graphs where suitable but are not appropriate for many of the graphs in this report, such as stacked bar charts.

All observations and graphs in the report are based on data tables available from the separate Excel document located on the Ministry of Justice website (see <https://www.justice.govt.nz/justice-sector-policy/research-data/nzcvs/resources-and-results/>). The margin of error around estimates are provided in those tables.

Please be aware that some estimates should be used with caution due to small sample size – this is clearly stated in relevant spreadsheets. As a rule, we advise using caution with all percentage estimates with the margin of error between 10 and 20 percentage points. All estimates with a margin of error higher than 20 percentage points are either suppressed or aggregated. They are also suppressed or aggregated if their underlying numerators or denominators have a relative sample error of more than 50%.

1.3 Rounding

Percentage estimates are rounded to the nearest integer, except when it is essential to recognise the smaller differences between the prevalence rates in different groups. In this case, we round the percentages to one decimal point. Percentages have been calculated from the unrounded figures, and so calculations using rounded figures may differ from those published.

1.4 Comparison of estimates by population groups




Information in this report is analysed for different subgroups of the adult population. There are three main population groupings by which data in this report is analysed: victimisation, demographics, and contact with the criminal justice system.

No formal statistical tests are used to compare estimates across population groups in this report. Most of the survey responses analysed in this report are of ordinal nature, i.e. they form categories with a natural order (e.g. responses ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”). For these types of responses, we tend to summarise at least two response categories. Stacking multiple response categories in a single graph comes at the cost of losing the ability to display confidence intervals for each category. However, the margin of error for all responses are provided in the data tables that accompany this report.

Where appropriate, confidence intervals (at the 95% level) are provided in graphs. When confidence intervals of two estimates are not overlapping, it can be concluded that there is a statistically significant difference. However, when the intervals do overlap, the difference is unlikely to be statistically significant. These patterns are highlighted using the following colour scheme.

Colour coding in graphs showing statistical significance

This report contains a large number of graphs to visualise key findings. In some graphs in which significance testing relative to the national average was carried out, the following colour scheme is used to highlight statistical significance.

	New Zealand average
	No statistically significant difference from the New Zealand average (at 95% confidence level)
	Statistically significant difference from the New Zealand average (at 95% confidence level)

Note: Statistical testing is based on overlapping confidence intervals and not formal tests, as described above.

2 Social wellbeing

- **83% of adults meet socially at least once per week, and 55% have high or very high levels of trust in most people.**
- **Social wellbeing is not distributed equally across different groups that make up our society.**
- **Adults who have experienced more than one incident of crime in the previous 12 months tend to have lower levels of social wellbeing than those who have experienced only one incident or no incidents at all.**

In this section we examine social connectedness (how connected individuals in society are to each other) and social trust (how much members of society trust each other). Maintaining strong social connections and a high level of trust in our society is important to many government institutions, not least those in the justice sector. Evidence suggests there is a strong negative impact of social connectedness³ and generalised trust⁴ on the rate of crime in a country. Moreover, evidence suggests that social capital has a stronger influence on reducing crime than “the justice system itself”.⁵ Both social connectedness and social trust form components of Treasury’s Living Standards Framework for measuring and analysing wellbeing.^{6,7}

Based on questions collected in the NZCVS Cycle 2 in-depth module, we have developed the following indicators of social wellbeing.

³ Stuart, B & Taylor, E J. 2019. The Effect of Social Connectedness on Crime: Evidence from the Great Migration. *The Review of Economics and Statistics*, 1–46. https://doi.org/10.1162/rest_a_00860

⁴ Halpern, D. 2005. *Social Capital*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

⁵ Hughes, T. 2020. *Justice, Wellbeing and Social Capital*. Discussion Paper No. 20/01 (p4). <https://treasury.govt.nz/sites/default/files/2020-02/dp20-01-justice-wellbeing-social-capital.pdf>

⁶ The framework is made up of 12 wellbeing domains as well as four capitals that support current wellbeing and also generate future wellbeing. Social connection is one of the wellbeing domains of the framework, while social trust forms part of social capital.

⁷ The Treasury. 2018. *Our People, Our Country, Our Future – Living Standards Framework: Background and Future Work*. <https://treasury.govt.nz/sites/default/files/2018-12/lstf-background-future-work.pdf>

Indicators of social connectedness

The percentages of adults who:

- find it easy or very easy to talk to someone about feeling down or a bit depressed
- felt lonely a little or none of the time
- meet socially once a week or more.

Indicators of social trust

The percentages of adults who:

- have high or very high trust in most people
- expect most people to take advantage of them a little or none of the time
- expect most people to be helpful all or most of the time.

The social wellbeing indicators for New Zealand adults are summarised in Figure 2.1. These results suggest most New Zealand adults exhibit high levels of social connectedness and social trust across all indicators.



Figure 2.1: Indicators of social connectedness and social trust for New Zealand adults, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)

Further research could investigate the link between the above measures of social wellbeing and trust in the criminal justice system, as well as offending and other outcomes related to the justice sector. In the section below, we examine differences in social wellbeing for adults who have and have not been a victim of crime in the previous 12 months. In section 3.1, we also show that poorer social wellbeing outcomes are related to a higher level of worry about victimisation.

2.1 Social wellbeing by population groups

Differences are clear in the social wellbeing indicators across ethnic groups and for people identifying with different sexual orientations.

In all social wellbeing indicators, New Zealand Europeans are the ethnic groups with the highest or second highest score. However, differences by ethnicity are only subtle for indicators of social connectedness (Figure 2.2). Differences in measures of social trust by ethnicity are stronger, with New Zealand Europeans and Chinese having the highest scores across all three indicators (Figure 2.3).

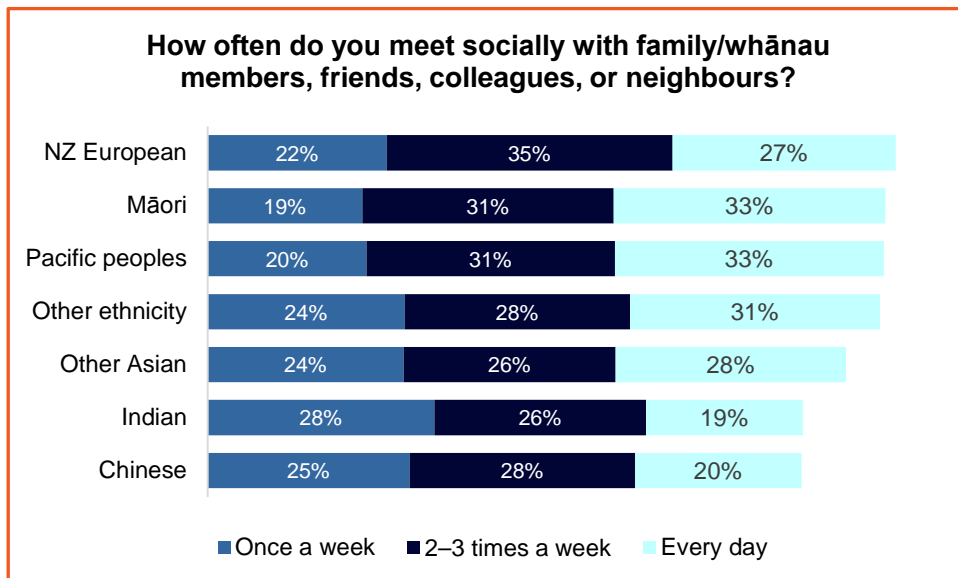


Figure 2.2: Percentage of adults who meet socially at least once per week, by ethnicity, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)

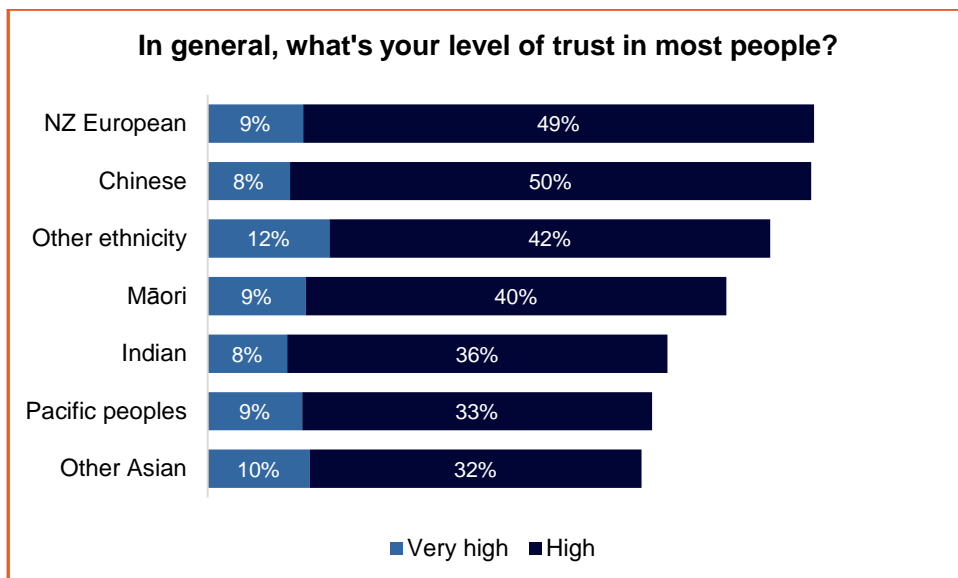


Figure 2.3: Percentage of adults who have high or very high trust in most people, by ethnicity, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)

There is little difference in how often people meet socially by sexual orientation, but all other indicators of social wellbeing have strong differences across these groups. Heterosexual or

straight adults, across all indicators, have the highest indicators of social wellbeing when comparing across people of different sexual orientations.

Adults who identify as bisexual are more likely to feel lonely than other adults (Figure 2.4). People who do not identify as heterosexual or straight have low levels of trust in others when compared to heterosexual adults, especially those who identify as bisexual (Figure 2.5).

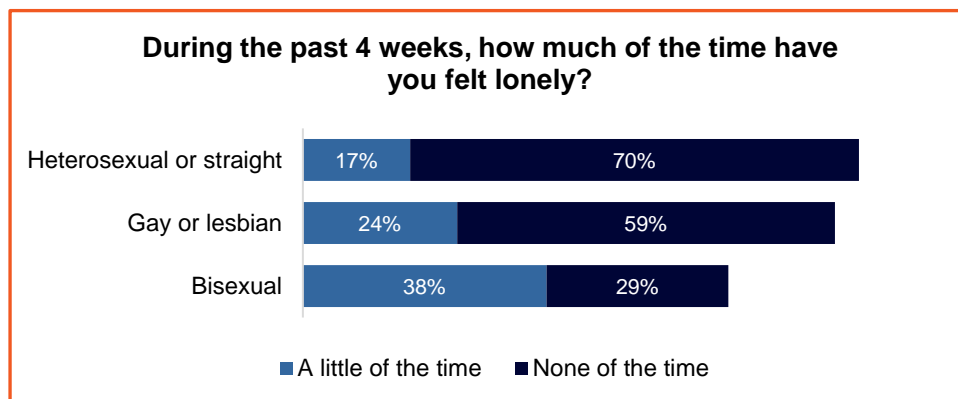


Figure 2.4: Percentage of adults who feel lonely a little or none of the time, by sexual orientation, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)

Note: The group of adults who identify with another sexual orientation is excluded due to high margin of error.

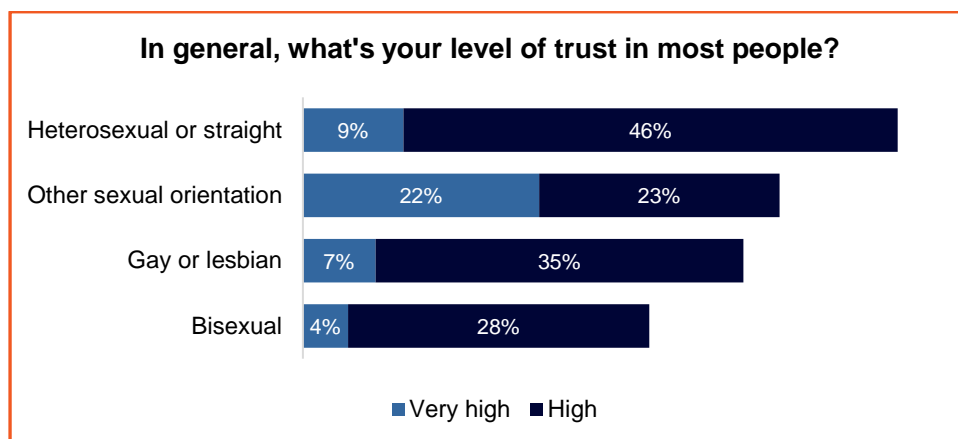


Figure 2.5: Percentage of adults who have high or very high trust in most people, by sexual orientation, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)

There are some differences in indicators of social trust by age, with younger people (except those aged 15–19) tending to have lower levels of social trust than older people. For example, Figure 2.6 shows that 75% of adults aged 60 years and over expect most people to take advantage of them a little or none of the time, compared to 54% of people aged 20–29 years.

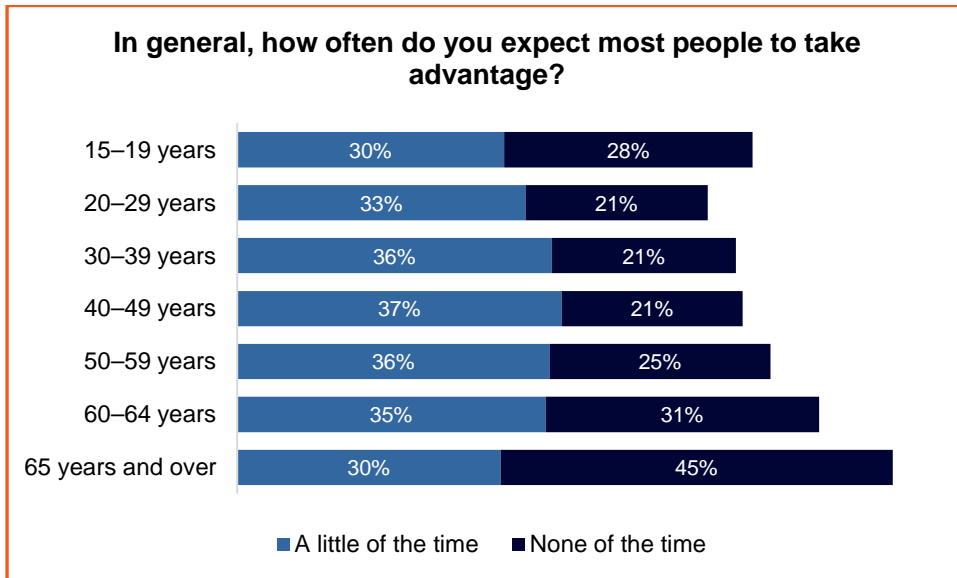


Figure 2.6: Percentage of adults who expect most people to take advantage of them a little or none of the time, by age, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)

2.2 Social wellbeing and victimisation

There is reason to believe that social wellbeing might affect an individual’s risk of being a victim, and vice versa. For example, being part of a well-connected community could be protective of victimisation. Also, experiencing a crime could reduce one’s general trust of others in society.

Figure 2.7 shows that two of three indicators of social connectedness tend to be poorer amongst adults who had experienced crime in the previous 12 months – particularly those who had experienced multiple incidents. However, this pattern is not observed for meeting socially once a week or more, which is slightly more common amongst victims than non-victims. Victims are more likely to feel lonely than non-victims and less likely to find it easy to talk to someone, despite being equally – if not more likely – to socialise at least once per week. This finding might indicate that, while strong relationships are protective of victimisation, spending time in social settings might increase an individual’s risk of victimisation.

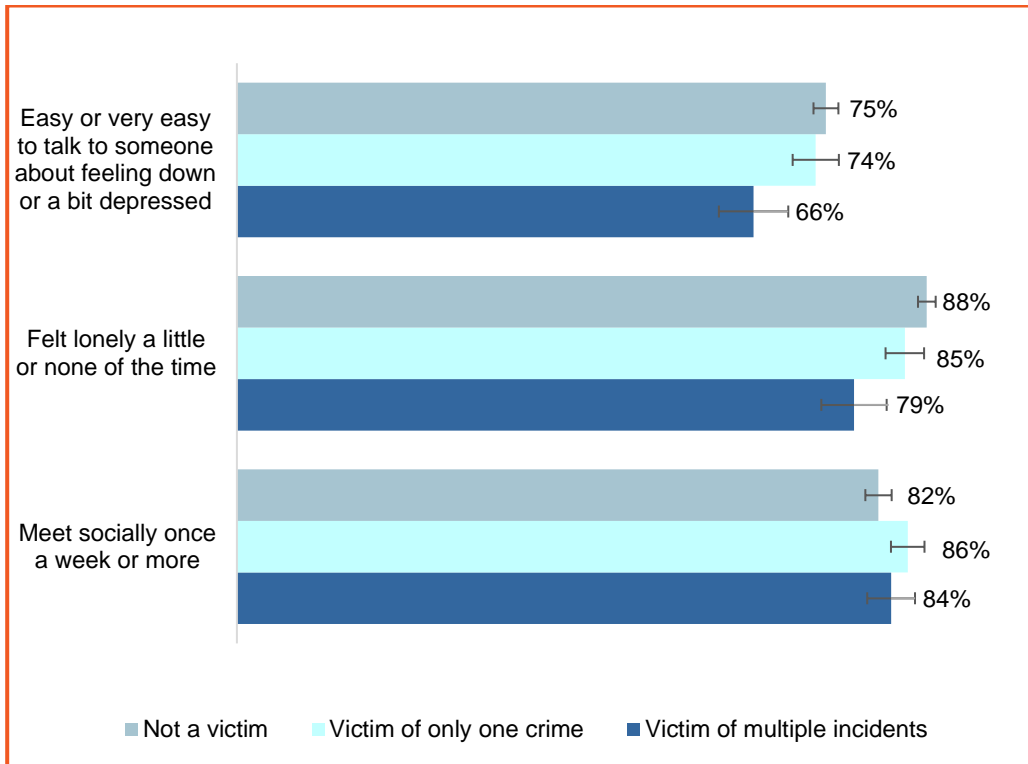


Figure 2.7: Social connectedness of New Zealand adults, by victimisation in the previous 12 months, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)

Figure 2.8 shows that all three measures of social trust are lower amongst victims than non-victims, especially for those who experienced multiple incidents in the previous 12 months.

The level of social trust among victims of one crime in the previous 12 months is closer to that of non-victims than repeat victims.

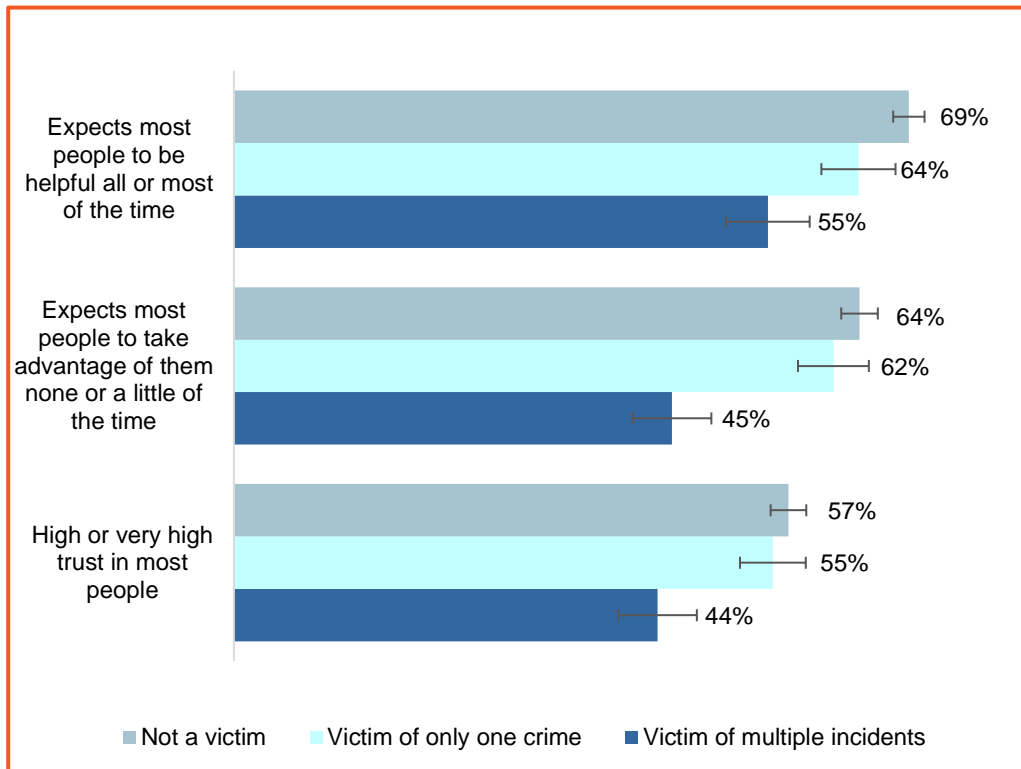


Figure 2.8: Social trust amongst New Zealand adults, by victimisation in the previous 12 months, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)

A previous study using data from Cycle 1 of the NZCVS found that repeat victims of crime were more likely to have experienced interpersonal violence or offences committed by family members.⁸ Hence, the relationship between repeat victimisation and poorer social wellbeing outcomes could be driven not only by the number of incidents experienced, but also by differences in the nature of the offending experienced.

Overall, results in this section indicate that most New Zealanders are socially connected and have a high level of trust in others. There is international evidence that New Zealand performs relatively well in these areas. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) reports that New Zealanders spend more time in social interactions, are more likely to have someone they can count on in times of need and have higher trust in others than the OECD average.⁹

⁸ Ministry of Justice. 2019. *New Zealand Crime and Victims Survey – Topical Report: Highly victimised people*. <https://www.justice.govt.nz/assets/Documents/Publications/HZTYUY-NZCVS-topical-report-2018-Highly-Victimised.pdf>

⁹ OECD. 2020. *How's Life? 2020: Measuring Well-being*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9870c393-en>.

Compared to other New Zealanders, measures of social wellbeing tend to be lower for people who had been a victim crime in the previous 12 months – especially if they had experienced more than one incident. In one exception to this finding, people who had been a victim of one or more crimes were as likely as other adults to meet socially at least once a week. Some ethnic minorities and people identifying with non-heterosexual sexual orientations also tended to have lower social wellbeing. Further research could attempt to understand why some groups have poorer social wellbeing than others, and what interventions could improve equality of these measures across the population.

3 Perceptions of crime and safety

- **Adults in some population groups tend to worry more often about being the victim of a crime than others. These differences do not necessarily relate to true differences in the rate of victimisation.**
- **One in five (20%) Pacific people worry all or most of the time about being a victim, compared to 1 in 20 (5%) New Zealand Europeans, while the difference in the actual experience of crime for these groups is small and not statistically significant (32% compared to 31%).**
- **Worry about crime is highly correlated with measures of social connectedness and social trust.**

A key objective of the criminal justice system is to keep communities safe.¹⁰ But ensuring communities *feel* safe is also important for their wellbeing and productivity. Safety is a wellbeing domain for New Zealand in the Treasury’s Living Standards Framework, which defines it as “People’s safety and security (both real and perceived) and their freedom from risk of harm, and lack of fear”.¹¹

The results in this section identify population groups who feel most vulnerable to crime. This sense of vulnerability could reflect an actual higher risk of crime, but it might also reflect other aspects of people’s lives. For example, an individual without the financial ability to afford insurance may feel poorly equipped to deal with the cost of their property being stolen or damaged, and therefore worry more about crime than those who could afford to insure or replace their property. Other factors such as the media can also affect feelings of safety.¹²

Worrying about crime can have negative impacts on a person’s quality of life. Fear of experiencing crime can lead individuals to change their behaviour to avoid the environments

¹⁰ One of the four strategic goals of the Ministry of Justice for 2018–2023 is to reduce crime, victimisation and harm. Ministry of Justice. 2019. *Statement of Intent 2018 to 2023*. <https://www.justice.govt.nz/assets/Documents/Publications/Ministry-of-Justice-statement-of-intent-2018-to-2023.pdf>

¹¹ The Treasury. 2018. *Our People, Our Country, Our Future – Living Standards Framework: Background and Future Work* (p5). <https://treasury.govt.nz/sites/default/files/2018-12/lsf-background-future-work.pdf>

¹² The Treasury. 2018. *Our People, Our Country, Our Future – Living Standards Framework: Background and Future Work*. <https://treasury.govt.nz/sites/default/files/2018-12/lsf-background-future-work.pdf>

where they feel more vulnerable.¹³ These avoidance behaviours are likely to have considerable impacts on quality of life. A study using New Zealand data found that fear of crime is linked to poorer mental and physical health outcomes after controlling for other factors, despite finding no such relationship between neighbourhood crime rates and those health outcomes.¹⁴ Moreover, changes in behaviour as a result of fear of crime can lead to negative consequences for neighbourhoods, including a breakdown in social order, even potentially leading to increased racial and class segregation.¹⁵

It is likely that experiencing crime results in increased fear of crime for an individual. However, changes in fear of crime over time, as measured by surveys, do not necessarily coincide with changes in the true rate of crime.¹⁶ A particularly important influence on perceptions of safety is the media.¹⁷ Hence, one way of reducing fear of crime in society may be through strategic communication of risk and reassurance information through media and other channels.¹⁸

3.1 Worry about being the victim of a crime

NZCVS respondents were asked “How often do you worry about being the victim of a crime?” The distribution of responses to this question is shown in Figure 3.1. Most adults worry about being a victim of a crime none of the time (40%) or a little of the time (33%). Only 3% of adults worry all the time about experiencing crime, and a further 5% worry most of the time, while 19% worry some of the time.

¹³ Grinshteyn, E. 2013. *Causes and Consequences of Fear of Crime: The Impact of Fear of Crime on Behavioural Health Outcomes and Behavioural Health Treatment among Adolescents*. Doctoral dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, United States.

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/7pw3175w>

¹⁴ Pearson, A L & Breetzke, G D. 2013. The Association Between the Fear of Crime, and Mental and Physical Wellbeing in New Zealand. *Social Indicators Research* 119(1): 281–294.

¹⁵ Cordner, G. 2010. *Reducing Fear of Crime: Strategies for Police*.

<https://cops.usdoj.gov/RIC/Publications/cops-p173-pub.pdf>

¹⁶ Cordner, G. 2010. *Reducing Fear of Crime: Strategies for Police*.

<https://cops.usdoj.gov/RIC/Publications/cops-p173-pub.pdf>

¹⁷ Curiel, P C & Bishop, S R. 2018. Fear of crime: the impact of different distributions of victimisation. *Palgrave Communications* 4: 1–8.

¹⁸ Cordner, G. 2010. *Reducing Fear of Crime: Strategies for Police*.

<https://cops.usdoj.gov/RIC/Publications/cops-p173-pub.pdf>

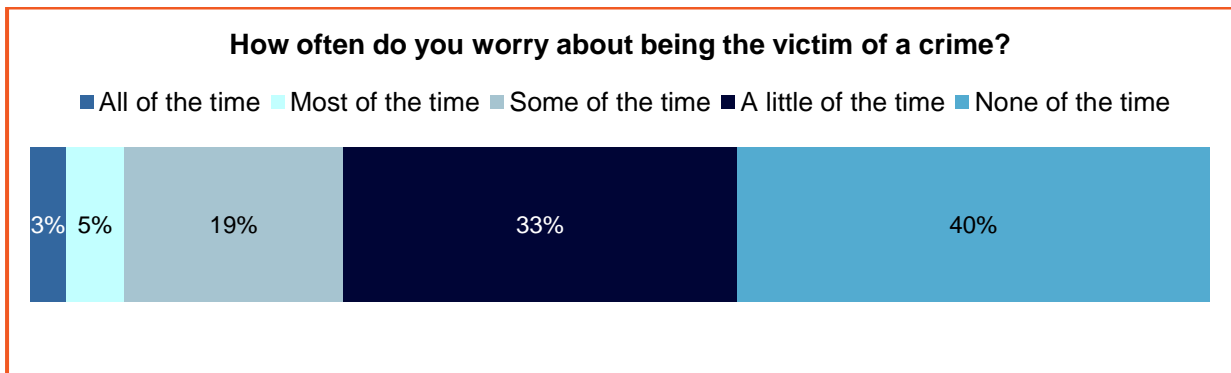


Figure 3.1: Worry about being the victim of a crime amongst New Zealand adults, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)

Worry about being a victim compared to the actual rate of victimisation

Figure 3.2 shows that respondents who were the victim of a crime in the previous 12 months are generally more likely to worry about crime all or most of the time than those not affected by crime, especially if they experienced multiple incidents. Nonetheless, more than half (60%) of even those adults who had experienced multiple crimes in the previous 12 months told us they spend little to no time worrying about being the victim of a crime.

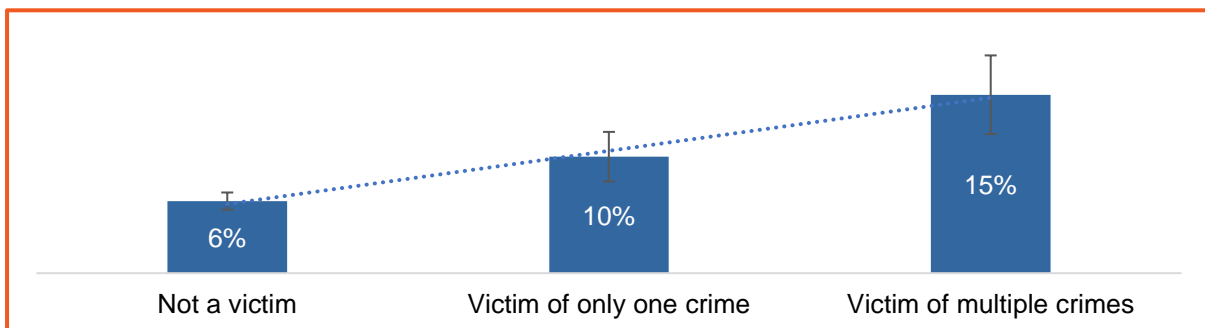


Figure 3.2: Percentage of adults who worry all or most of the time about being the victim of a crime, by victimisation in the previous 12 months, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)

Note: The dotted line represents a linear trend line.

Worry about being the victim of a crime appears to be somewhat, but not strongly, related to the true rate of victimisation across different demographic groups (Figure 3.3). For example, adults aged 65 and older are less likely to be victimised than the average New Zealand adult and are also less likely to worry all or most of the time about being the victim of a crime. However, some population groups stand out for worrying much more than others about being a victim, even though they are not more likely to have experienced crime. For example, Pacific peoples are four times as likely (20%) to worry all or most of the time about being a victim of crime than New Zealand Europeans (5%), while they are not significantly more likely to be a victim of crime (32% compared to 31%). Similarly, women are also more likely to worry all or most of the time about crime (10%) than men (6%) but are no more likely

to have been a victim of crime in the previous 12 months (32% compared to 31%). Worry about crime and actual victimisation is plotted by demographic groups in Figure 3.4, showing a weak positive relationship.

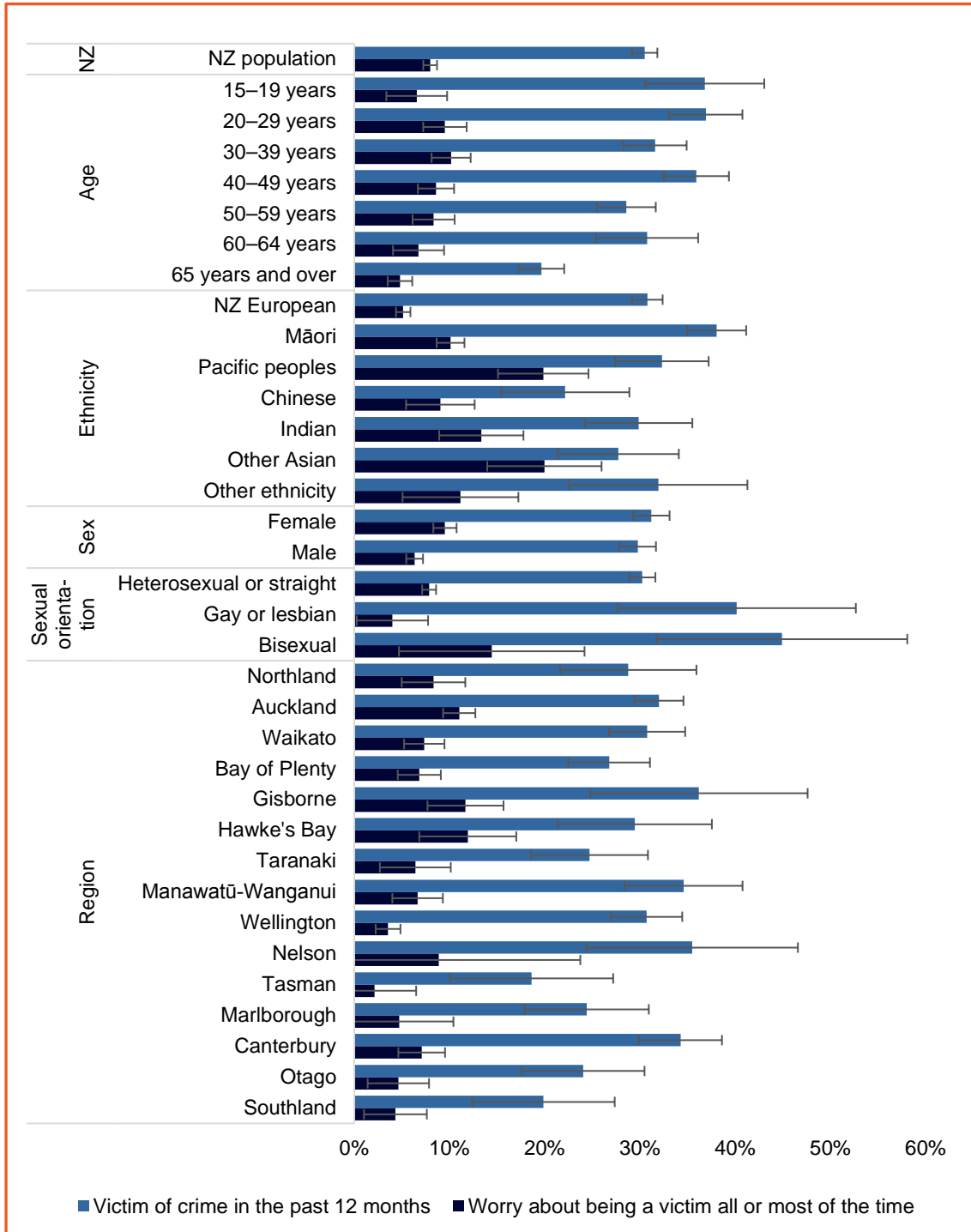


Figure 3.3: Victimization in the previous 12 months and worry about crime, by population groups, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)

Note: The West Coast region and the group of adults who identify with another sexual orientation are excluded due to high margin of error.

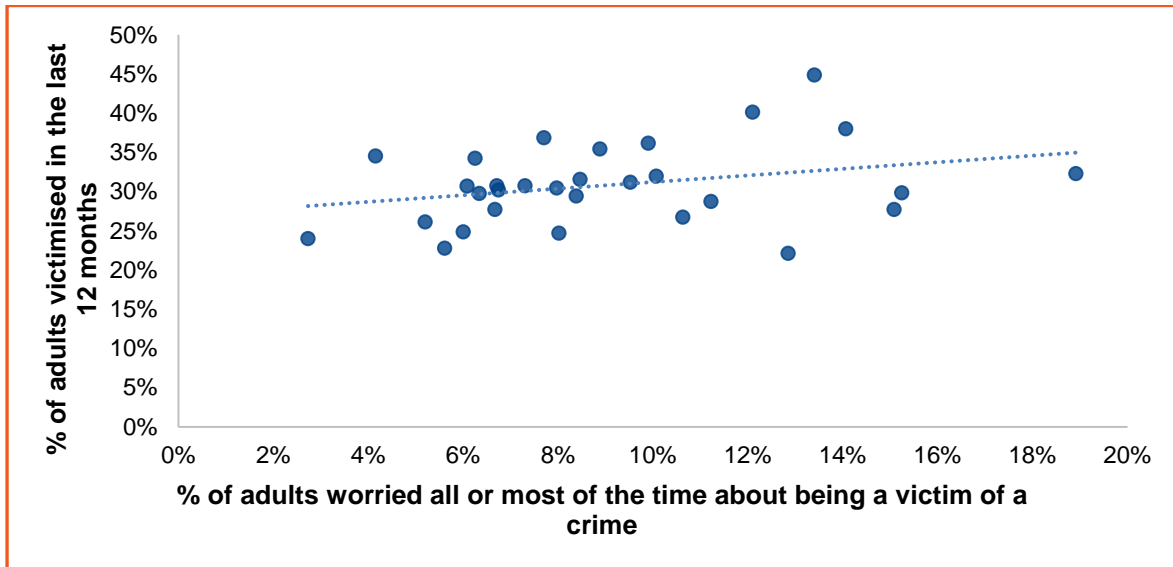


Figure 3.4: Relationship between victimisation in the previous 12 months and worry about crime, by population groups, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)

Note: The dotted line represents a linear trend line. The population groups plotted in this figure are those presented in Figure 3.3.

We also find that people living in more deprived areas are both more likely to worry all or most of the time about being a victim, and more likely to be the victim of a crime. We measure deprivation of the areas in which people live using the New Zealand Index of Deprivation 2013 (NZDep2013). This index estimates area deprivation using information from the 2013 census and captures the deprivation level of the area in which someone lives, and not of the individual themselves. NZDep2013 is divided into quintiles: the least deprived 20% of areas in New Zealand make up quintile 1, while the most deprived 20% of areas make up quintile 5.

Figure 3.5 highlights the relationship between victimisation and worry about crime by area-level deprivation. Adults residing in more deprived areas are both more likely to have experienced crime and more likely to worry all or most of the time about experiencing crime than adults in less deprived locations.

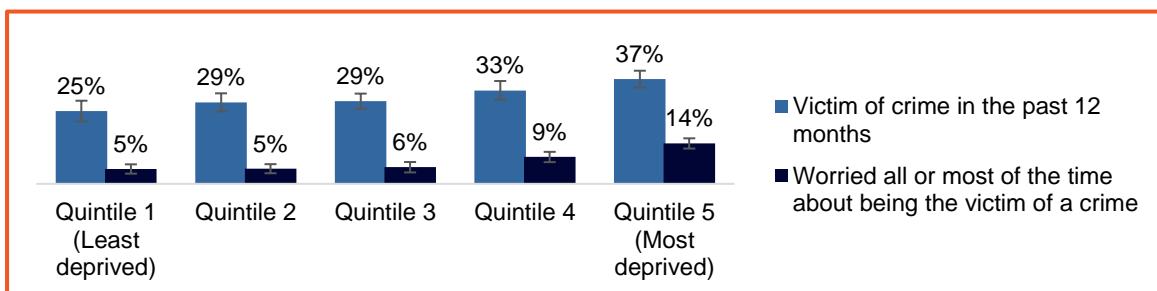


Figure 3.5: Worry about being the victim of a crime and previous 12-month victimisation rate for New Zealand adults, by deprivation quintile, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)

Differences in worry about crime across population groups

The extent to which adults worry about crime varies by ethnicity, with Pacific peoples (20%) and those of Asian ethnicity (14%) being the most likely to worry all or most of the time compared to 8% of New Zealand adults overall (Figure 3.6). New Zealand European adults (5%) are the least likely ethnic group to worry as often about being a victim.

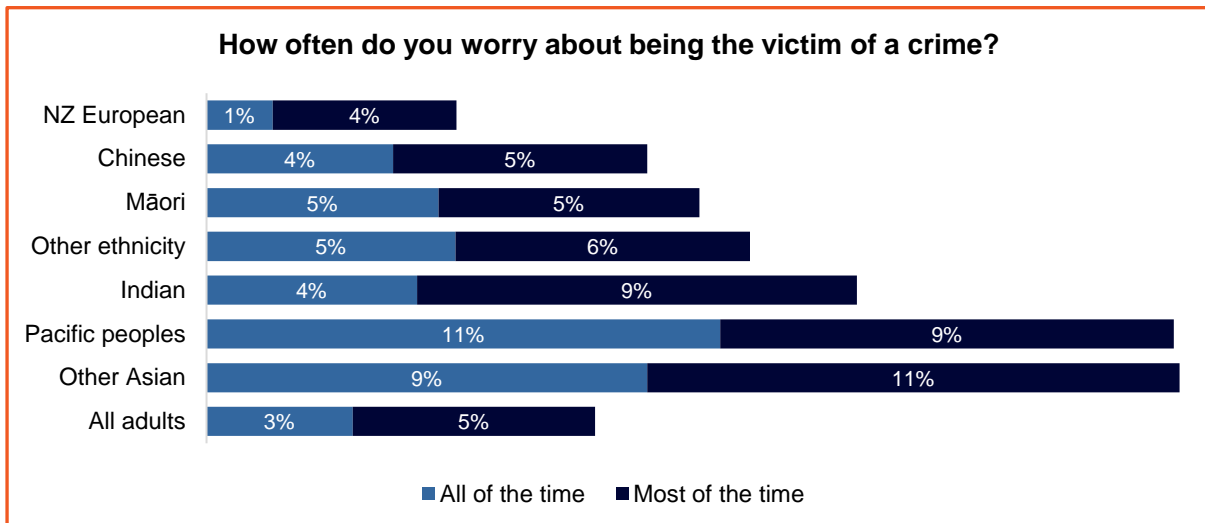


Figure 3.6: Percentage of adults who worry about being the victim of a crime all or most of the time, by ethnicity, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)

Adults who identify as bisexual (14%) are more likely to worry about being the victim of a crime all or most of the time than both heterosexual adults (8%) and adults who are gay or lesbian (4%). This result is consistent with a higher actual rate of victimisation amongst adults who identify as bisexual (45%) than heterosexual adults (30%) (see Figure 3.3). However, the victimisation rate for gay or lesbian adults (40%) is higher than for heterosexual adults (30%), despite this group showing relatively lower worry about crime.

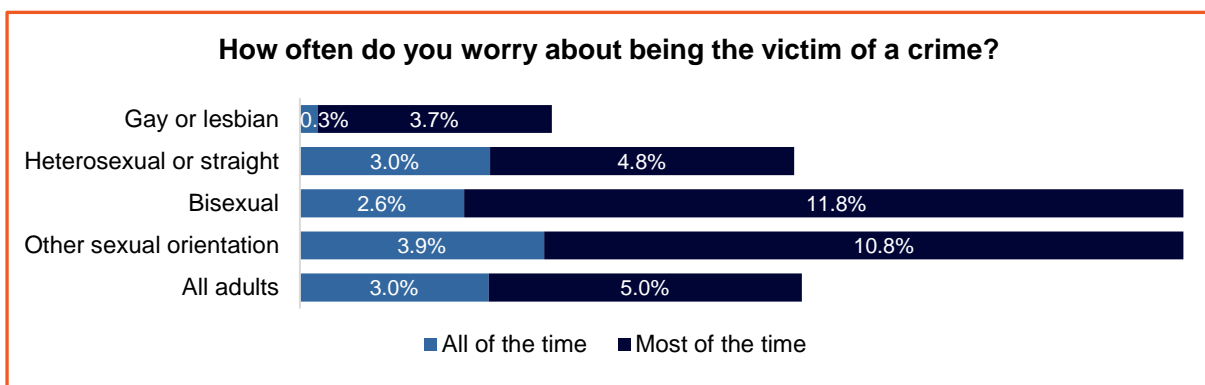


Figure 3.7: Percentage of adults who worry about being the victim of a crime all or most of the time, by sexual orientation, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)

Note: The group of adults who identify with another sexual orientation is excluded due to high margin of error.

We also found a relationship between financial pressure and the frequency of worrying about being a victim. One measure of financial pressure in the NZCVS is measured by asking respondents about their ability to afford an attractive but non-essential item for \$300. Those adults who could not afford the item are more than twice as likely to worry all or most of the time about experiencing crime (14%) than adults who were not at all limited in their ability to purchase the item (6%) (Figure 3.8). Those facing the most financial distress also tend to experience more crime, particularly household offences (see the NZCVS Cycle 2 Key findings report).

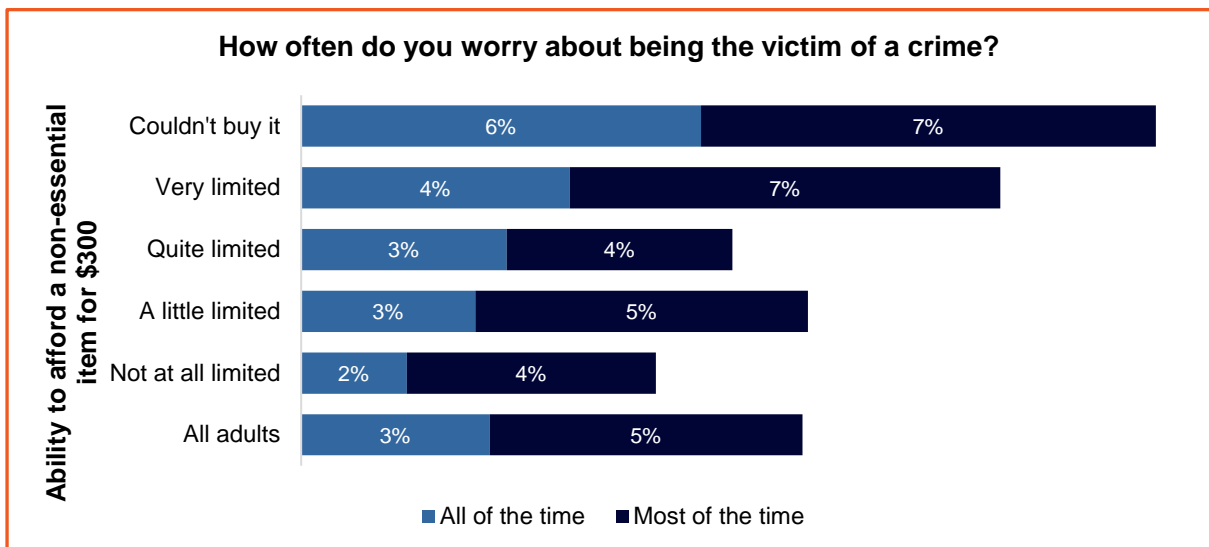


Figure 3.8: Percentage of adults who worry about being the victim of a crime all or most of the time, by ability to afford a non-essential \$300 item, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)

We find reasonable evidence of regional variation in worry about crime. In the Hawke's Bay, Gisborne and Auckland regions, one in ten adults (10%) said they worry about being the victim of a crime all or most of the time, while in Wellington less than 4% of adults worry as often (Figure 3.9). Gisborne and Auckland are the regions experiencing the highest levels of household crime (25% and 24%, respectively). While the proportion of adults who worry all or most of the time about being the victim of a crime is lower in Wellington (4%) than in any other region, the Wellington region does not have the lowest rate of household crime (19%). Generally, there appears to be some relationship between worry about crime and the rate of the population experiencing personal offences across regions, but there are many outliers to this relationship.

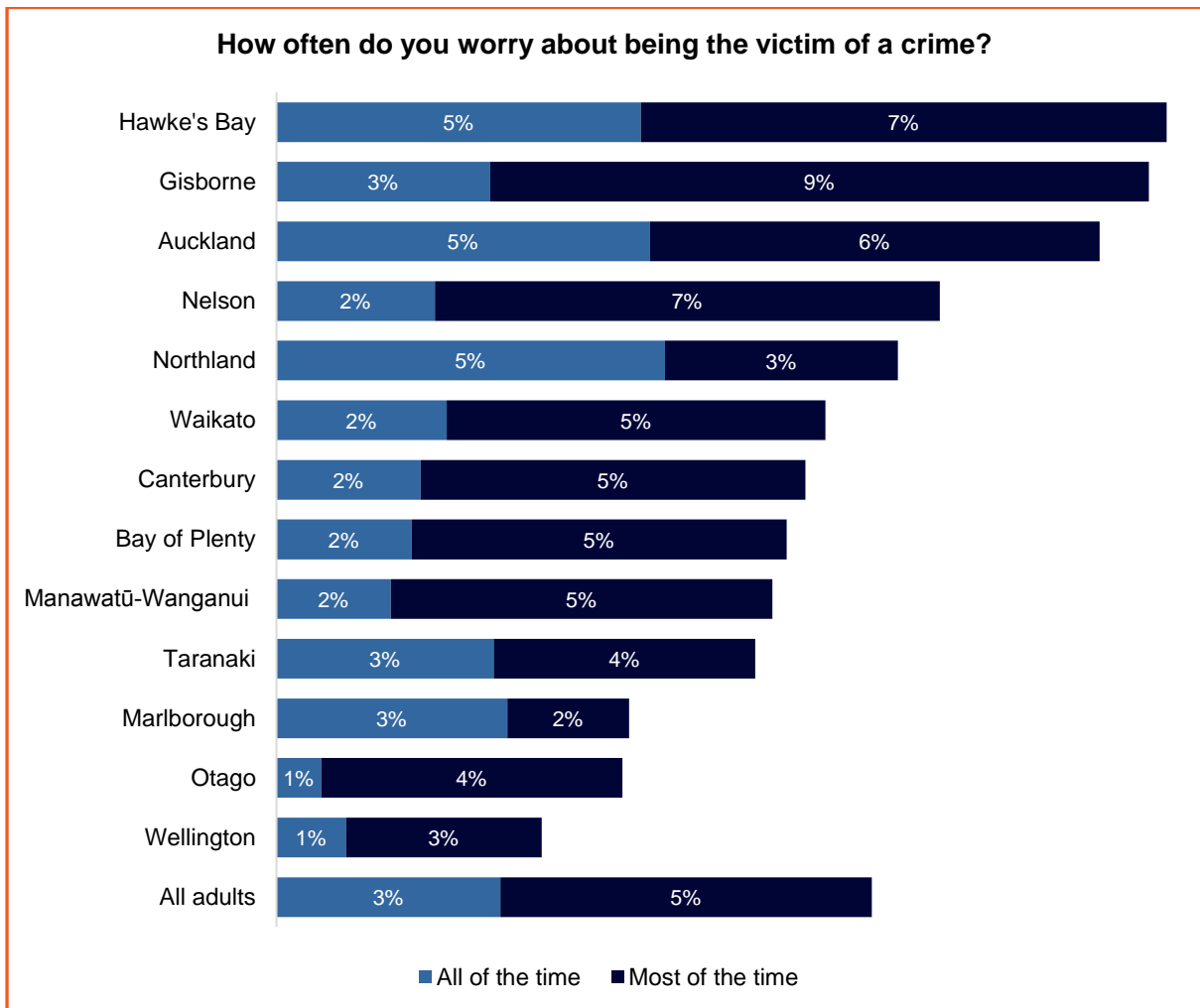


Figure 3.9: Percentage of adults who worry about being the victim of a crime all or most of the time, by region, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)

Note: Data for the West Coast region has been suppressed due to high margin of error.

Adults who said there had been a problem in their neighbourhood or local area in the previous 12 months are more likely to worry all or most of the time about being the victim of a crime (Figure 3.10). Those who reported assaults (19%), harassment (17%) or people being drunk in a public place (15%) in their neighbourhood were most likely to worry all or most of the time about experiencing crime. In comparison, only 5% of adults who did not report any issue in their neighbourhood were worried all or most of the time about being a victim. It is important to keep in mind that, while being aware of local issues of crime is likely to increase worry about experiencing crime, fearing crime could also increase the extent to which someone perceives things happening in their community as a problem.

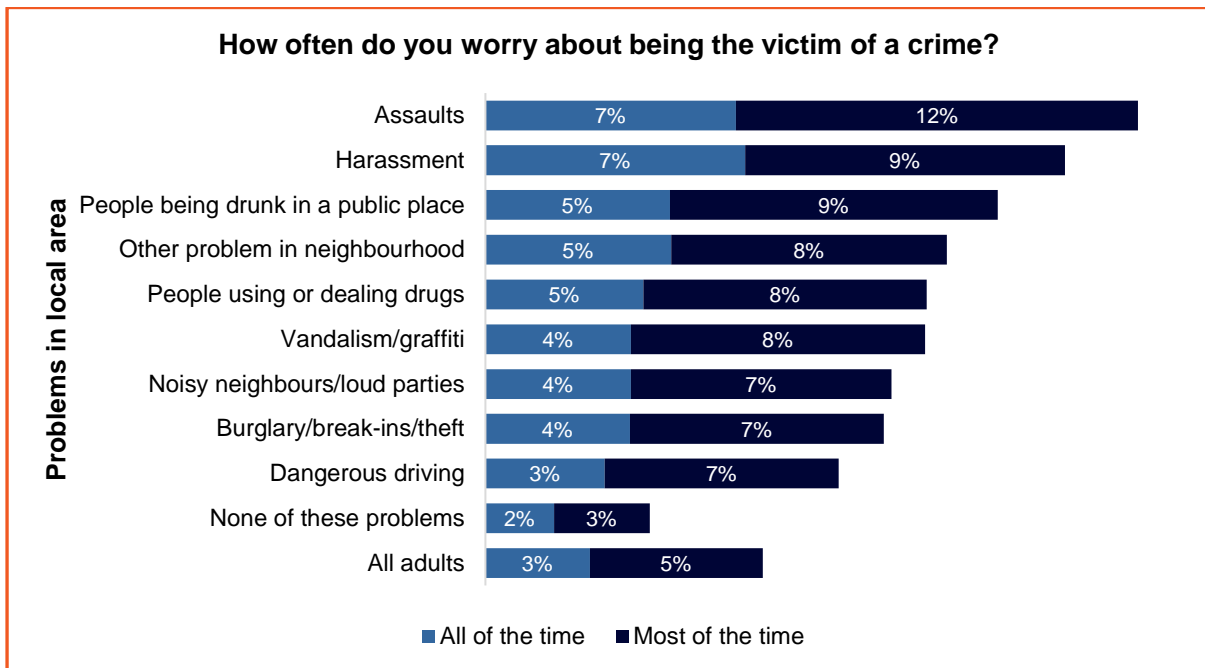


Figure 3.10: Percentage of adults who worry about being the victim of a crime all or most of the time, by problems observed in local area in the previous 12 months, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)

Figure 3.11 shows population groups that worry about being the victim of a crime all or most of the time significantly more than New Zealand adults overall (8%). The population groups used for analysis align with those analysed in the NZCVS Cycle 2 Key findings report.¹⁹ Population groups that were statistically significantly more likely to worry about being the victim of a crime include:

- Asians (except Chinese and Indian), Pacific peoples, and Indians
- adults who live in a household with four or more children and those living in a sole-parent household
- adults showing a moderate or high level of psychological distress, those who feel relatively unsafe, those who had been a victim of multiple crimes in the previous 12 months, and those who have low life satisfaction
- adults living in government-owned accommodation, those not employed and not seeking work, those not employed and engaging in home and caring duties, and those facing high financial pressure
- adults living in the most deprived areas according to NZDep2013 and those living in the Auckland region.

¹⁹ Refer to the NZCVS Cycle 2 Key findings report for more information.

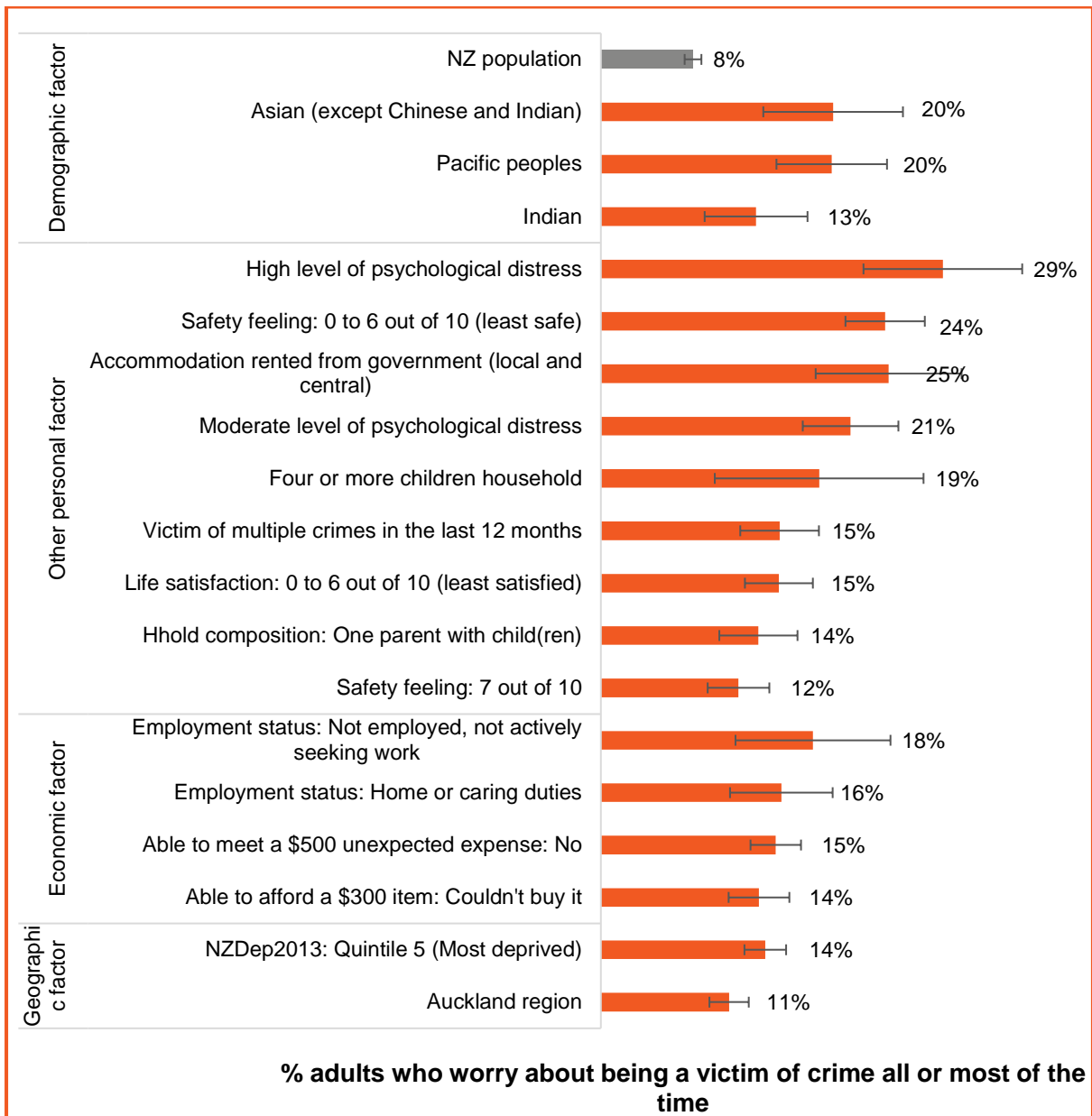


Figure 3.11: Population groups significantly more likely than the New Zealand average to worry all or most of the time about being the victim of a crime, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)

Worry about crime and social wellbeing

We could expect that social capital would protect people from the fear of crime, since an individual's feelings of safety could be influenced by the extent to which they feel supported by others and trust in other people.²⁰ Indeed, the results in Figure 3.12 to Figure 3.14 suggest that adults with poorer social connectedness or social trust are more likely to worry

²⁰ Hughes, T. 2020. *Justice, Wellbeing and Social Capital*. Discussion Paper No. 20/01. <https://treasury.govt.nz/sites/default/files/2020-02/dp20-01-justice-wellbeing-social-capital.pdf>

all or most of the time about being the victim of a crime. However, we cannot conclude that these relationships are causal because there could be other factors that affect both social wellbeing and feelings of safety.

Adults who meet socially more often are generally less likely to worry all or most of the time about being the victim of a crime (Figure 3.12), and the lonelier a person had felt in the previous four weeks, the more likely they were to worry all or most of the time about being the victim of a crime (Figure 3.13). While these results indicate that feeling socially isolated may lead to increased worry about experiencing crime, there could be other factors that explain this relationship. For example, it could be that individuals who worry often about crime are more likely to have experienced a crime, and that experience also made them feel lonelier. More research is needed to disentangle the relationships between social connection, victimisation, and perceived safety.

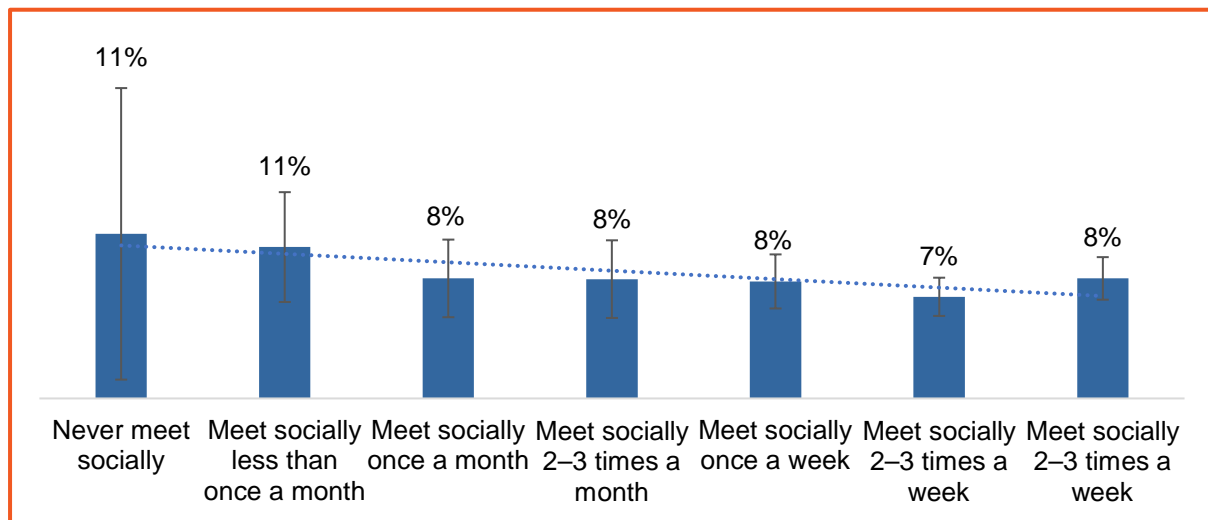


Figure 3.12: Percentage of adults who worry about being the victim of a crime all or most of the time, by frequency of meeting socially with family/whānau members, friends, colleagues, or neighbours, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)

Note: The dotted line represents a linear trend line.

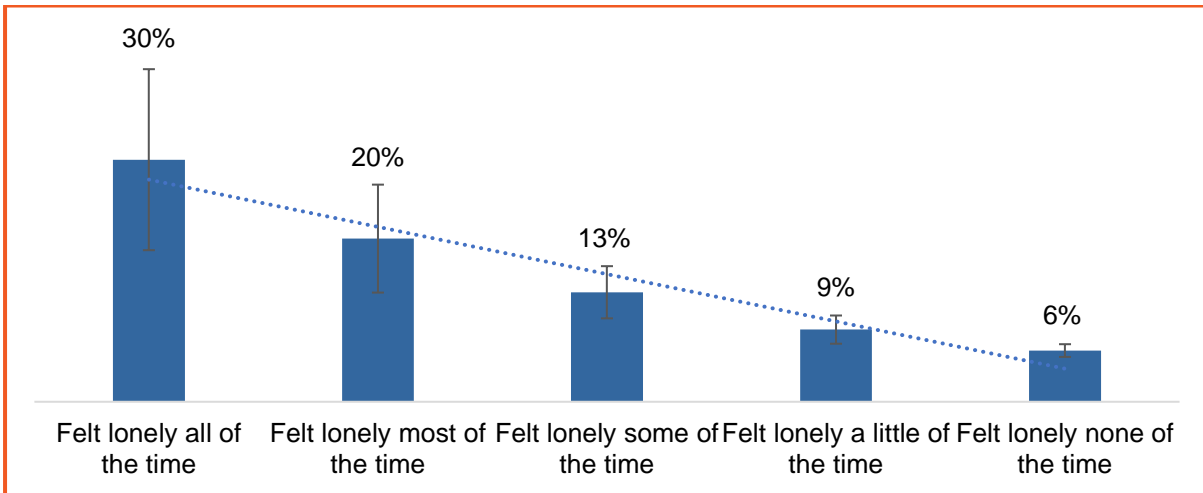


Figure 3.13: Percentage of adults who worry about being the victim of a crime all or most of the time, by feelings of loneliness in the previous four weeks, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)

Note: The dotted line represents a linear trend line.

We would expect that people who have less trust in others around them also feel more worried about experiencing crime. Not surprisingly, a strong relationship emerges between one’s expectation that most others will take advantage of them and how often one worries about being the victim of a crime (Figure 3.14).

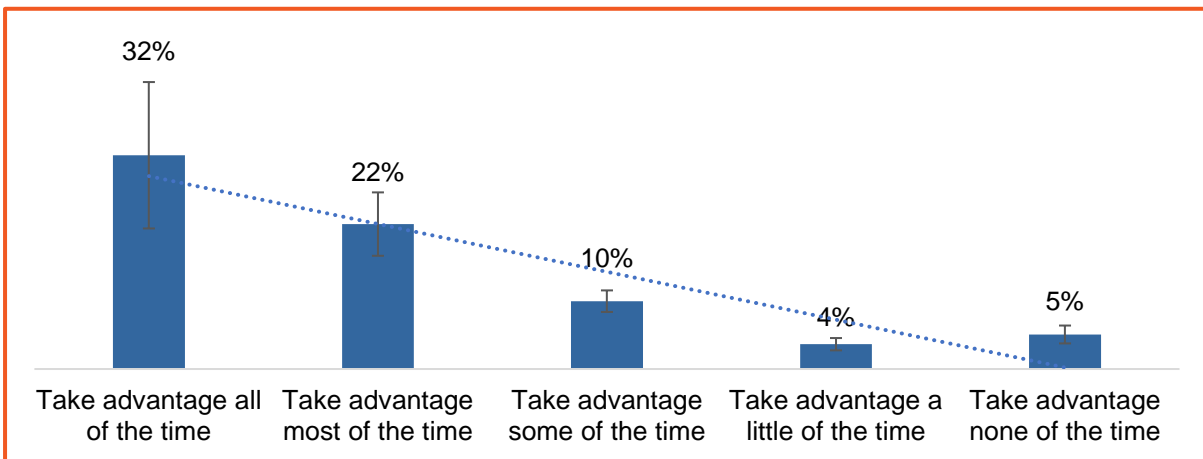


Figure 3.14: Percentage of adults who worry about being the victim of a crime all or most of the time, by how often they expect most people to take advantage of them, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)

Note: The dotted line represents a linear trend line.

The findings in this section show that, whilst most adults in New Zealand rarely worry about being the victim of a crime, some population groups are much more likely to spend time worrying that they could be a victim. Worry about crime is highly correlated with levels of social connectedness and social trust.

3.2 Feelings of safety at home and in the community at night

The results in Figure 3.15 show that most (88%) adults feel safe or very safe at home by themselves at night. Adults are less likely to feel as safe walking alone in their neighbourhood after dark (63%), waiting for or using public transport at night (53%), or in their city or town centre at night (51%). People who had experienced crime in the previous 12 months are generally more likely to feel unsafe or very unsafe in the above scenarios.²¹

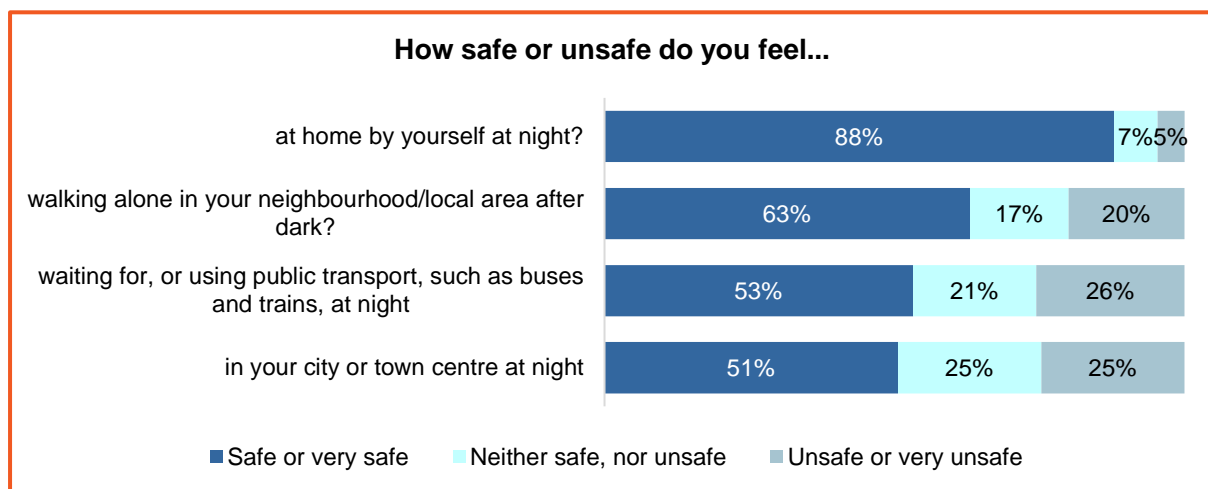


Figure 3.15: Feelings of safety in different scenarios amongst New Zealand adults, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)

The first three scenarios in Figure 3.15 were asked about in the 2014 New Zealand General Social Survey. Results from the survey were broadly similar, with 86% of adults feeling safe or very safe at home by themselves at night, 61% feeling safe or very safe walking alone in their neighbourhood after dark, and 50% feeling safe waiting for or using public transport at night.²²

Further research could investigate how feelings of safety in different situations varies for people who have experienced different forms of victimisation. For example, do people who have experienced crimes such as burglary or offences committed by family members feel less safe in their homes at night than adults who have not had the same experiences?

Figure 3.16 demonstrates that the percentage of people who feel unsafe or very unsafe in their city or town centre at night varies by region. The rate at which people feel unsafe or very unsafe in their city or town centre at night is particularly low in the West Coast region

²¹ For more details, see the data tables that accompany this report.

²² Statistics New Zealand. 2015. *New Zealand General Social Survey: 2014*. <http://archive.stats.govt.nz/~media/Statistics/Browse%20for%20stats/nzgss/HOTP2014/nzgss-2014-tables.xls>

(9%), Otago (13%) and Marlborough (15%), while the percentage of adults who feel unsafe or very unsafe at night in Gisborne (38%) and Northland (34%) appear to be much higher than for other regions. However, estimates for some regions are based on relatively small sample sizes.

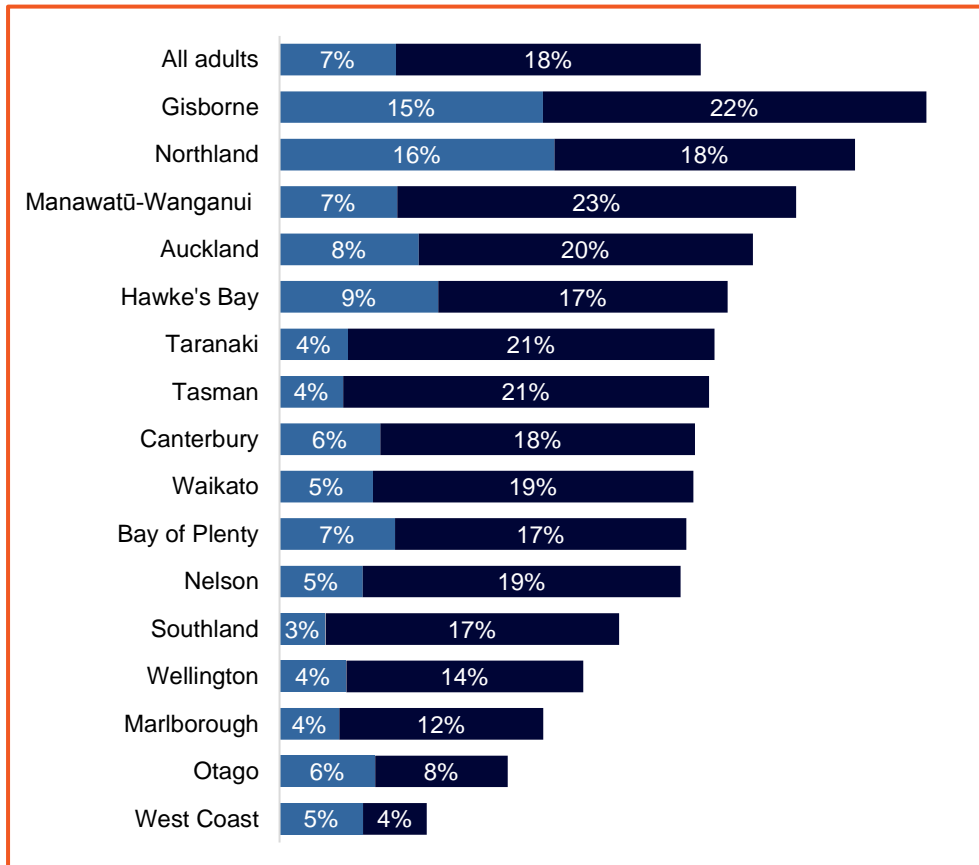


Figure 3.16: Percentage of New Zealand adults who feel unsafe or very unsafe in their city or town centre at night, by region, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)

3.3 Issues facing communities

Respondents to the NZCVS were asked if any of a series of issues had been a problem in their local neighbourhood during the previous 12 months. Figure 3.17 summarises the percentage of adults who consider each issue to be a problem in their neighbourhood or local area.²³ Dangerous driving is the most common concern, with more than a third of adults (38%) saying it is a problem where they live. The next most common concern is noisy neighbours/loud parties (29%), followed by burglary/break-ins/theft (23%). Alcohol and other drugs are also a common issue, with 16% of adults worried about people being drunk in a

²³ For respondents living in an urban area, their neighbourhood is the area within 15 minutes' walk of their home. For those living in rural area, their local area is the area within 10 minutes' drive of their home.

public place and 14% concerned that people were using or dealing drugs. More violent issues of assault (7%) and harassment (6%) were not as common.

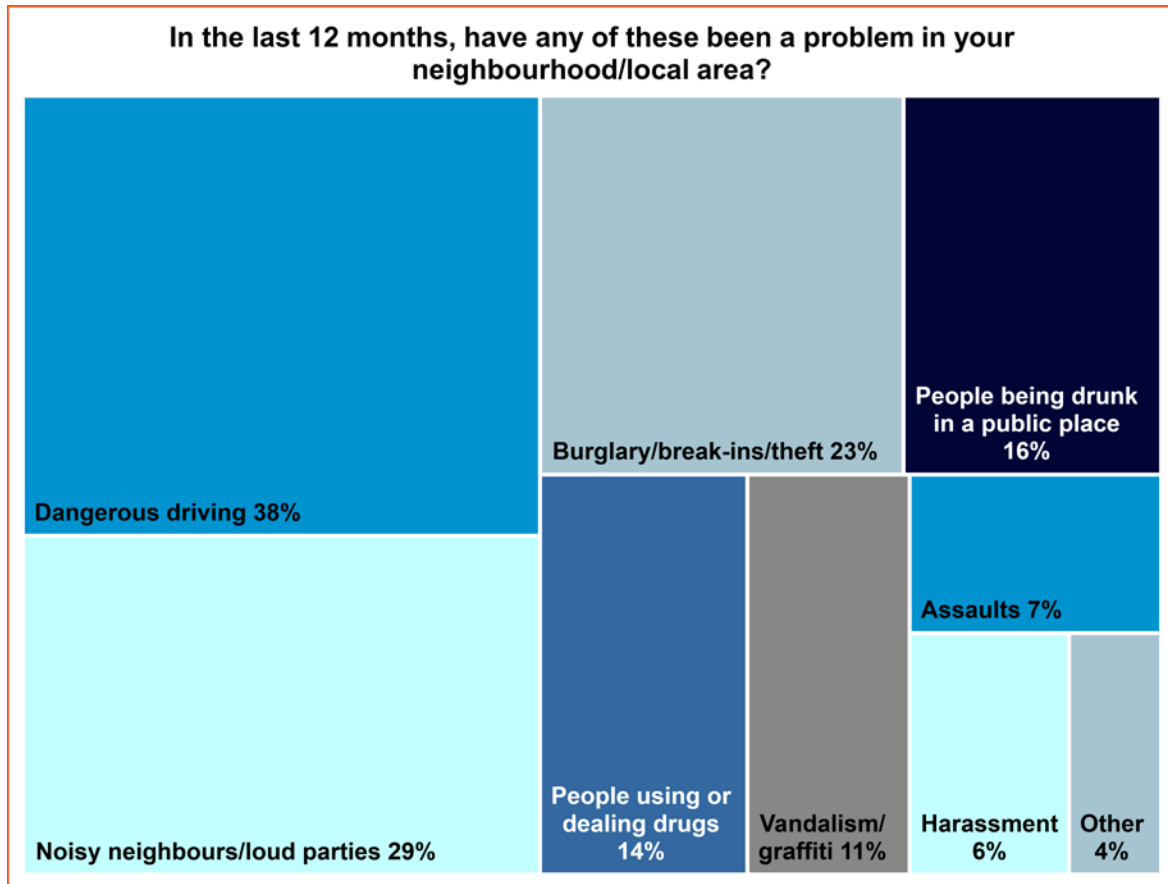


Figure 3.17: Problems in neighbourhood/local area experienced by New Zealand adults in the previous 12 months, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)

Slightly more than one third (37%) of the population say they do not have any of the above problems in their neighbourhood or local area.

4 Perceptions of the criminal justice system

- **6% of New Zealanders are completely confident that the criminal justice system as a whole is effective, and a further 47% are fairly confident. Another 25% are neutral.**
- **Adults who identify as bisexual (27%) and Māori (39%) are less likely to be fairly or completely confident in the criminal justice system than New Zealand adults overall (53%).**
- **The public views the Police and groups that support victims more positively than other parts of the criminal justice system, such as prisons and the parole board.**

This section of the report examines a number of perceptions that the public have of the criminal justice system. These measures capture public sentiment and cannot be considered performance measures of the different parts of the system. Trust in government institutions is important for the wellbeing of society. *Civic engagement and governance* is one of the wellbeing domains in the Treasury's Living Standards Framework, in which it is described as people's "engagement in the governance of their country, how 'good' New Zealand's governance is perceived to be and the procedural fairness of our society".²⁴

Public trust and confidence in the criminal justice system is essential to its performance. The criminal justice system can only operate effectively if society trusts and has confidence in it.²⁵ Victims, in particular, will only come forward to report crime if they trust the system will keep them safe, provide justice and treat them fairly.²⁶

In 2018, the Government established Hāpaitia te Oranga Tangata, a cross-sector initiative set up to guide the transformation of the New Zealand criminal justice system. This programme has undertaken considerable engagement with the public in order to learn what aspects of the criminal justice system are not working for them.

²⁴ The Treasury. 2018. *Our People, Our Country, Our Future – Living Standards Framework: Background and Future Work* (p25). <https://treasury.govt.nz/sites/default/files/2018-12/lstf-background-future-work.pdf>

²⁵ Indermaur, D & Roberts, L. 2009. Confidence in the criminal justice system. *Trends and Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice*, No. 387. Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology. <https://aic.gov.au/publications/tandi/tandi387>

²⁶ McGregor, K. 2019. Putting victims at the heart of the criminal justice system. *Practice: The New Zealand Corrections Journal* 7(1): 8–10.

Hāpaitia te Oranga Tangata supported a number of reports released in 2019 that concluded, in general, that New Zealand’s criminal justice system is failing victims, offenders, and Māori.²⁷ A similar conclusion can be drawn from the following sections of this report, as it can be seen that victims of crime, people who have recently attended court or a tribunal as a defendant, and Māori all tend to hold less favourable views of the justice system than the average New Zealander.

4.1 Confidence in the criminal justice system

6% of New Zealand adults are completely confident that the criminal justice system as whole is effective, and 47% are fairly confident (Figure 4.1). One quarter (25%) of New Zealanders are neutral, and 23% are not very confident or not at all confident in the effectiveness of the system.

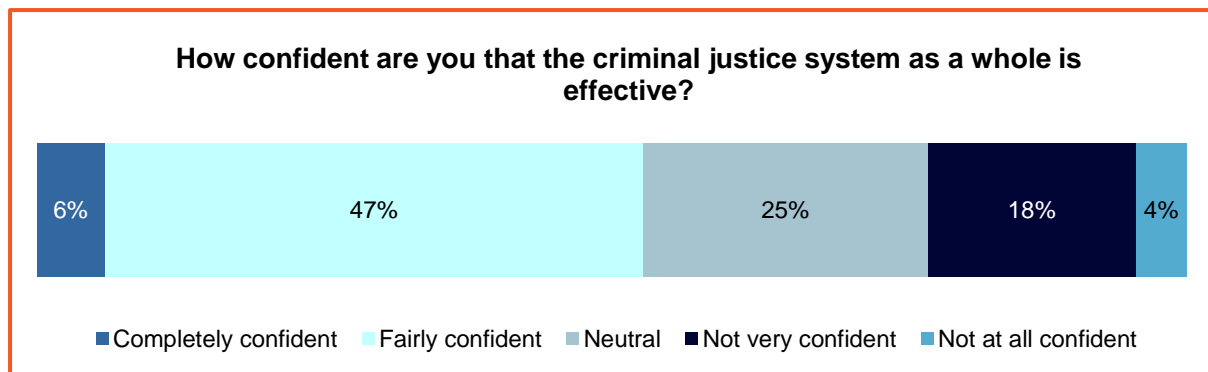


Figure 4.1: Confidence in the criminal justice system amongst New Zealand adults, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)

Differences in the level of confidence in the criminal justice system by broad population groups are shown in Figure 4.2. For most population groups shown only 5% to 7% of adults are completely confident that the criminal justice system as a whole is effective. In exception, 14% of those of Indian ethnicity and 19% who are Asian (excluding Chinese and Indian) are completely confident.

Only 27% of adults who identify as bisexual and 39% of Māori are completely or fairly confident in the criminal justice system, compared to 53% of New Zealand adults overall. We also found that victims of more than one incident of crime in the previous 12 months tend to be less likely to be confident in the criminal justice system than victims of no or only one incident (Figure 4.3).

²⁷ <https://safeandeffectivejustice.govt.nz/about-this-work/situation-now>

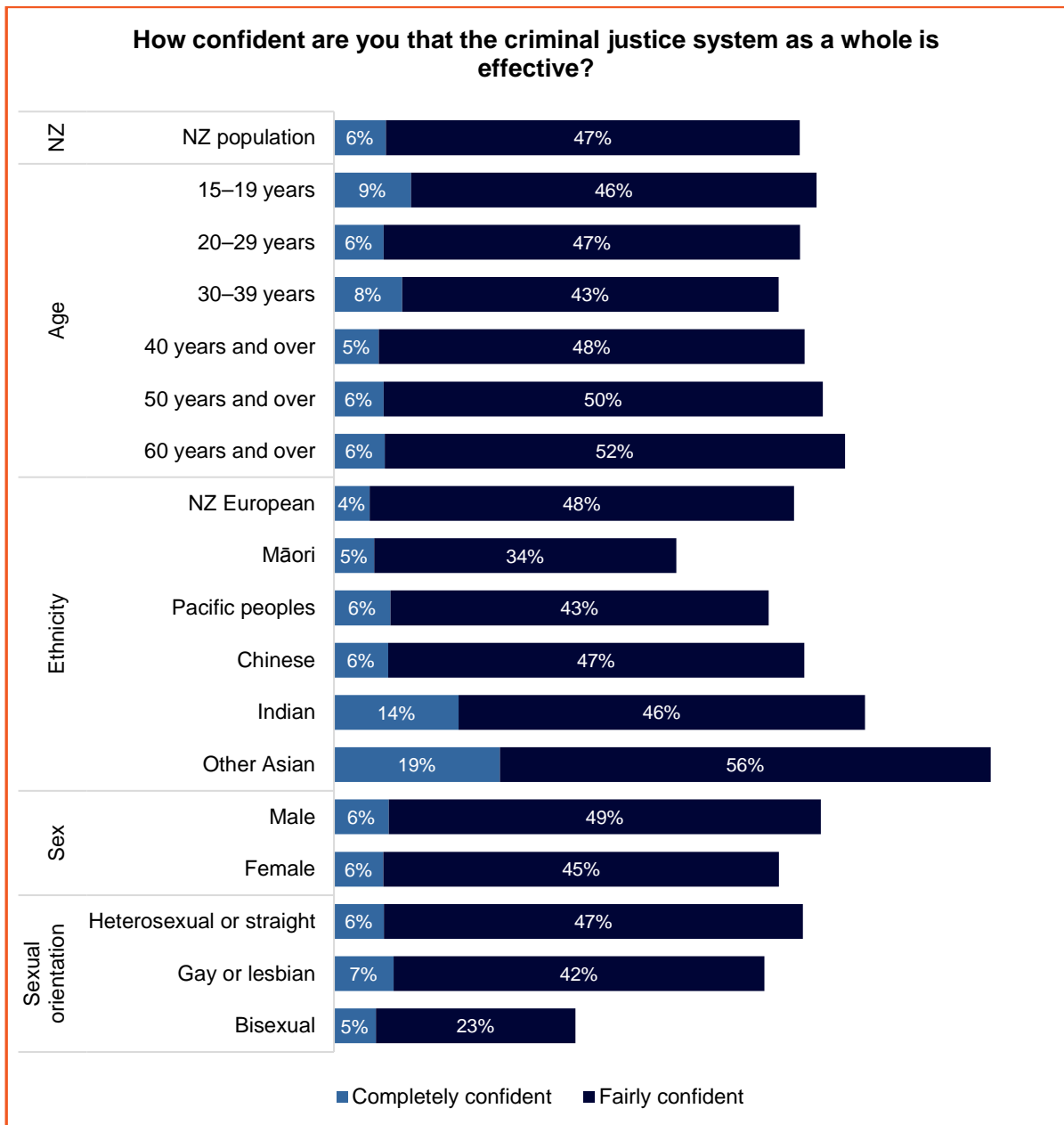


Figure 4.2: Confidence in the criminal justice system amongst New Zealand adults, by population group, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)

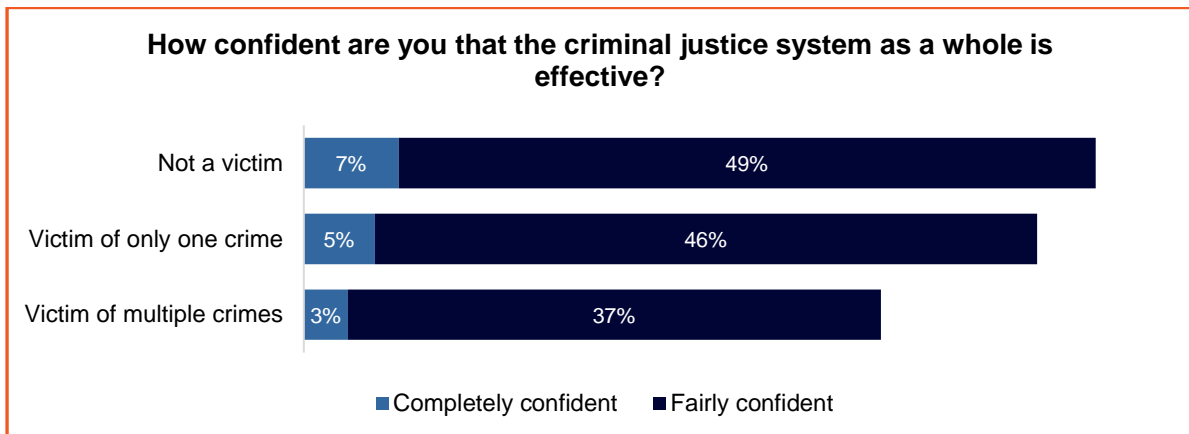


Figure 4.3: Confidence in the criminal justice system amongst New Zealand adults, by victimisation in the previous 12 months, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)

4.2 How well parts of the criminal justice system are perceived to be doing

NZCVS respondents were asked how good a job they think different groups in the criminal justice system are doing. The public tend to think groups that provide services for victims (e.g., Women’s Refuge, Rape Crisis, Victim Support) and Police are doing a better job than other parts of the criminal justice system – judges, juries, probation officers, criminal lawyers, the prison service, and juries (Figure 4.4).

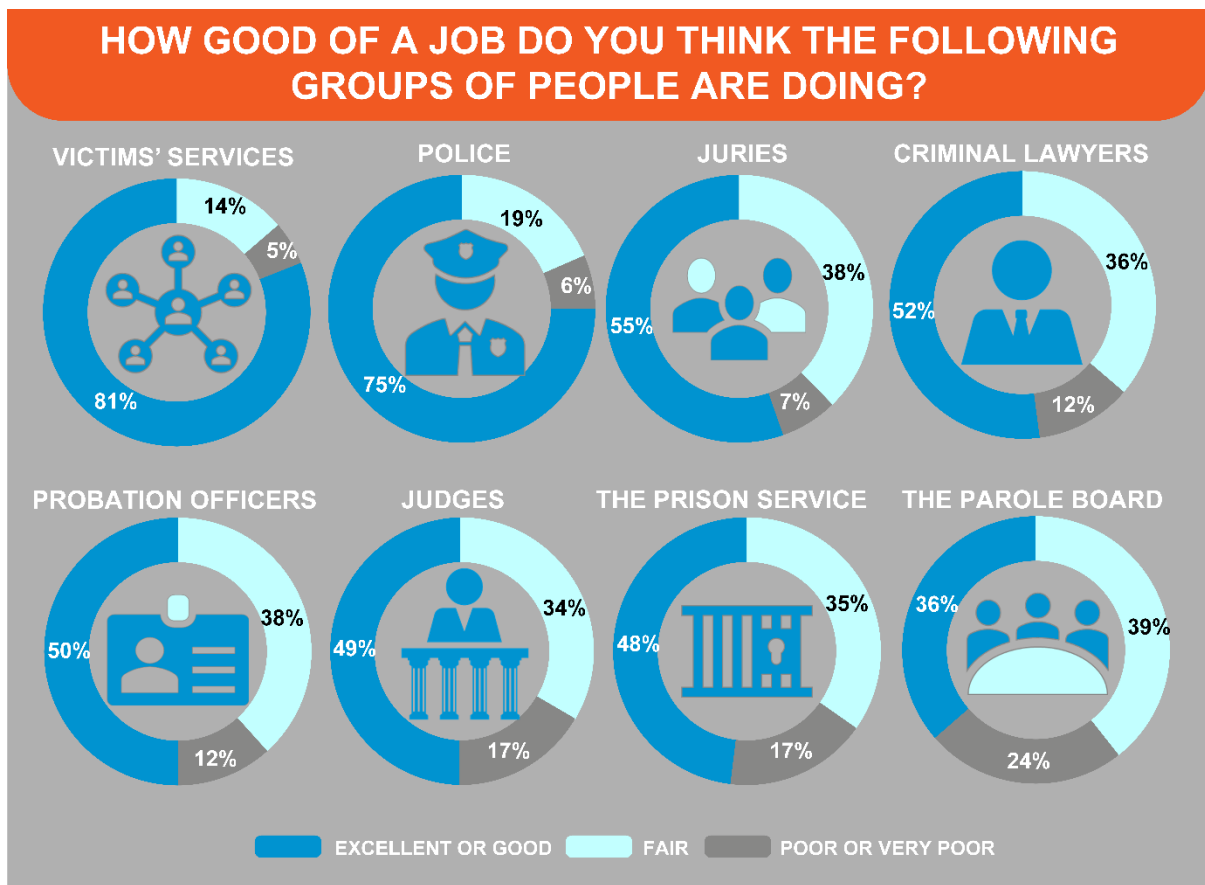


Figure 4.4: Views of how good a job different parts of the criminal justice system are doing amongst New Zealand adults, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)

The finding that public perceptions of the justice system decrease from Police through courts and corrections is consistent with previous New Zealand and international studies, and potentially relates to public knowledge and direct experience with the different components.^{28,29} A previous New Zealand study found a strong relationship between an individual's perceived knowledge of components of the criminal justice system and their trust and confidence in that part of the system.³⁰ We show evidence in section 6 below that our sample has more direct experience with the Police than other parts of the criminal justice

²⁸ Paulin, J, Searle, W & Knaggs T. 2003. *Attitudes to Crime and Punishment: A New Zealand Study*. <https://www.justice.govt.nz/assets/Documents/Publications/attitudes-crime-punishment.pdf>

²⁹ Indermaur, D & Roberts, L. 2009. Confidence in the criminal justice system. *Trends and Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice*, No. 387. Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology. <https://aic.gov.au/publications/tandi/tandi387>

³⁰ Colmar Brunton. 2013. *Public perceptions of crime – survey report*. https://thehub.swa.govt.nz/assets/documents/42866_public-perceptions-of-crime_0.pdf

system. Media portrayals of the criminal justice system are likely to have more influence on public perceptions in parts of the system that are less visible, such as prisons.³¹

Another possibility is that members of the public tend to align with the view that the criminal justice system should emphasise reduction of crime rather than prioritising legal process, and that these views align better with the Police than the courts and judiciary.³²

Figure 4.5 shows that adults who experienced multiple incidents of crime in the previous 12 months tend to have less favourable views of each component of the criminal justice system than adults who experienced no crime or a single incident.

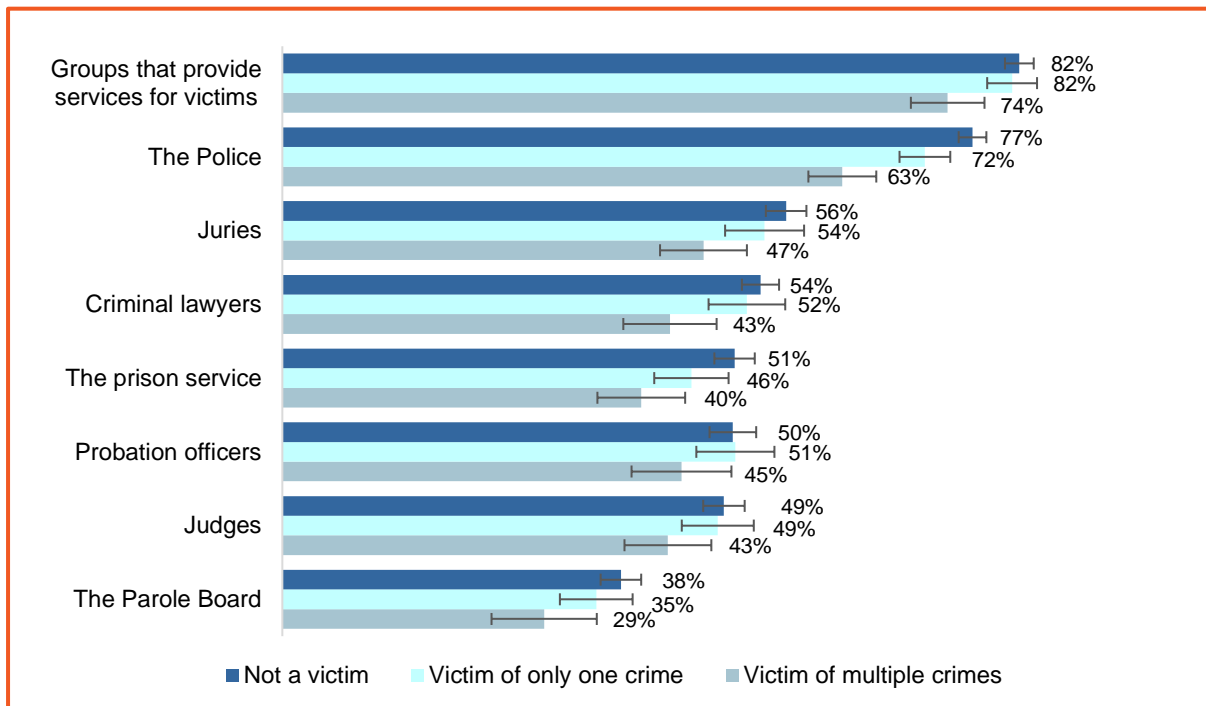


Figure 4.5: Percentage of adults who think different parts of the criminal justice system are doing a good or excellent job, by victimisation in the previous 12 months, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)

We also find that Māori are less likely to think each part of the criminal justice system is doing a good or excellent job than New Zealand adults overall, though the difference is relatively small and not statistically significant for some parts of the system (Figure 4.6). The differences are statistically significant across views of the Police, criminal lawyers, judges and juries.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

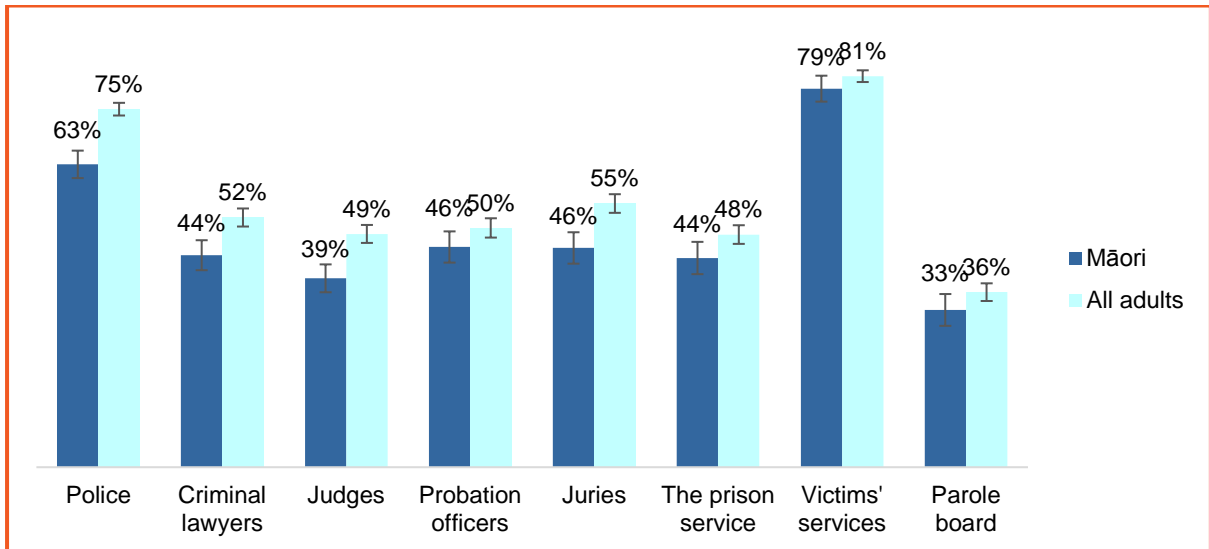


Figure 4.6: Percentage of adults who think different parts of the criminal justice system are doing a good or excellent job, by ethnicity, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)

Views of the Police in different population groups

In this section we focus on New Zealanders' views of the Police by population groups. Breakdowns of views of other parts of the criminal justice system can be found in the data tables accompanying this report.

We showed above that most adults (75%) think the Police are doing a good or excellent job, while Māori are somewhat less likely to hold this view (63%) (Figure 4.6). Figure 4.7 illustrates views of how good a job the Police are doing across all ethnic groups. These results are broadly consistent with the 2018/19 New Zealand Police Citizens' Satisfaction Survey, which found that Pacific, Māori and 'other' ethnicities were significantly more likely to report low trust and confidence in the Police.³³

³³ Gravitas Research and Strategy Ltd Research. 2019. *New Zealand Police Citizen's Satisfaction Survey. Report for 2018/19.* <https://www.police.govt.nz/sites/default/files/publications/citizen-satisfaction-survey-report-2019.pdf>

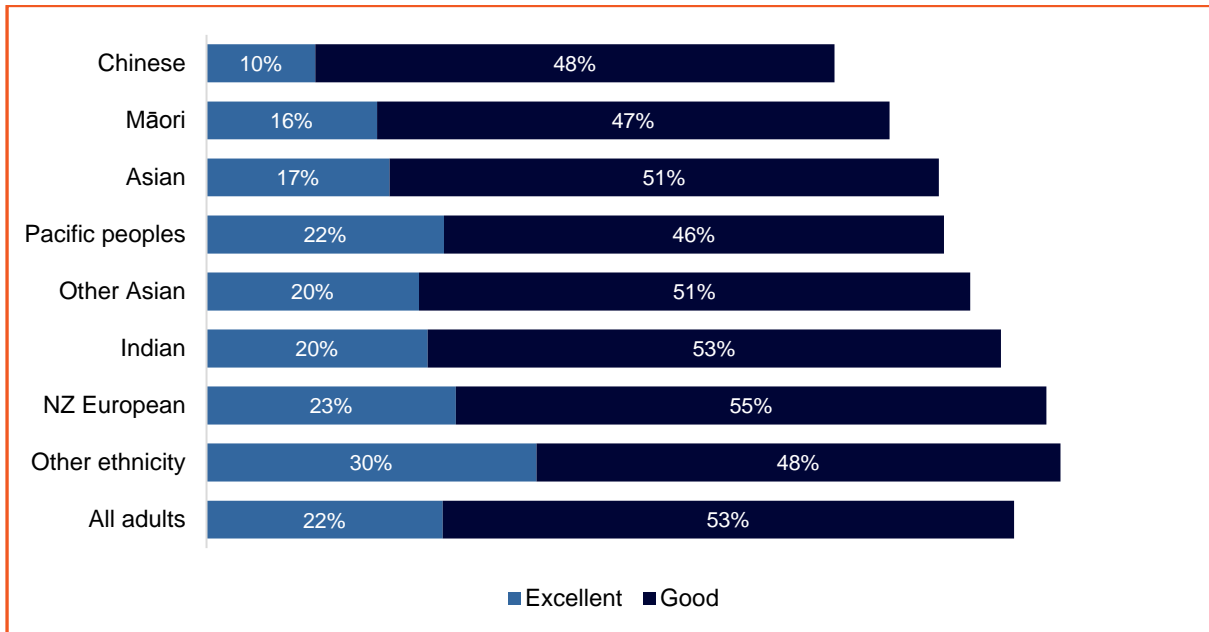


Figure 4.7: Percentage of adults who think the Police are doing a good or excellent job, by ethnicity, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)

Across all regions, most adults think the Police are doing a good or excellent job (Figure 4.7). Favourable views of the Police are highest in Otago (86%) and lowest in Northland (64%). Figure 4.8 shows there is a very slight tendency for people living in more deprived areas to have less favourable views of how good a job the Police are doing than those living in less deprived areas.

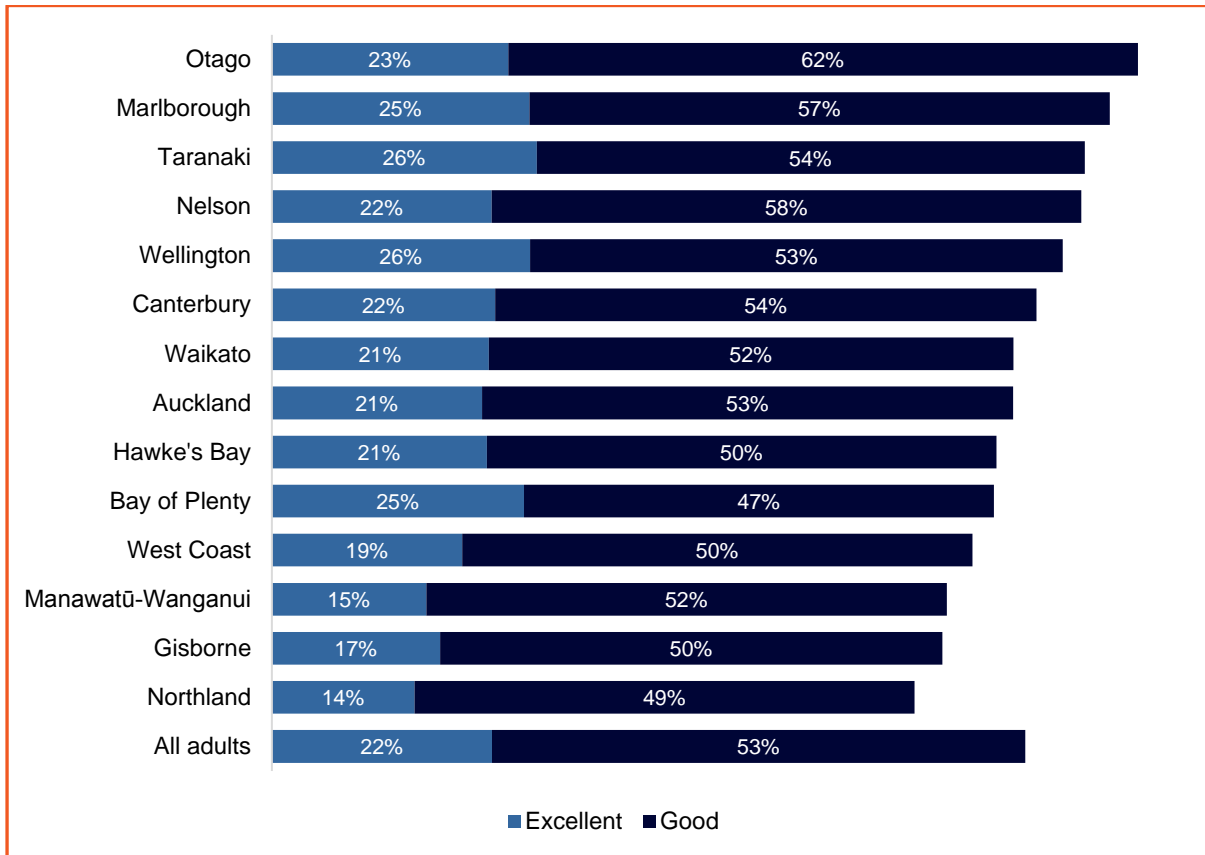


Figure 4.8: Percentage of adults who think the Police are doing a good or excellent job, by region, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)

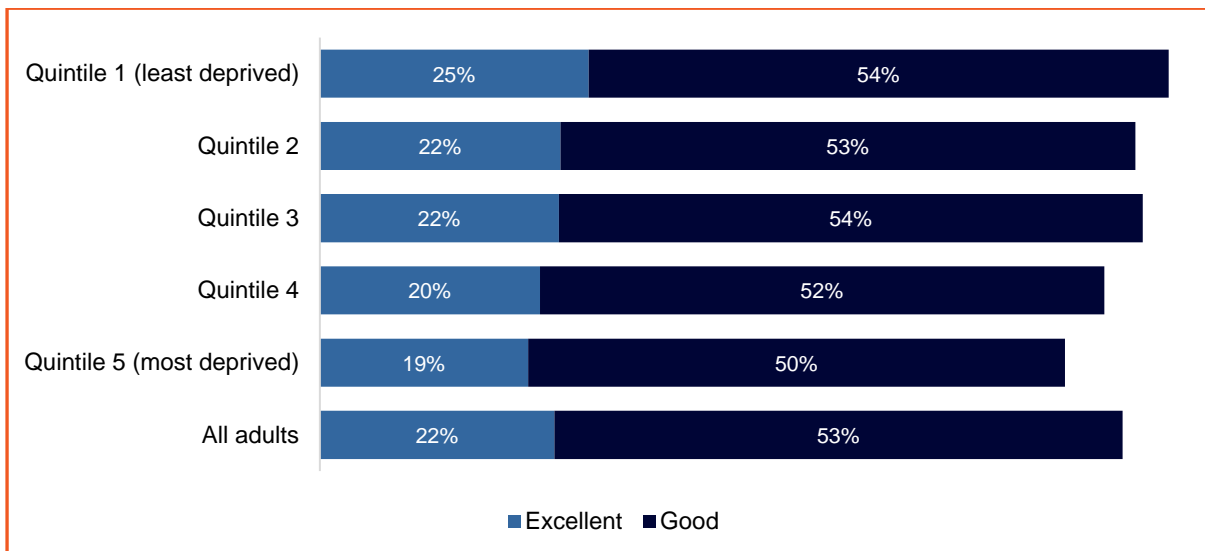


Figure 4.9: Percentage of adults who think the Police are doing a good or excellent job, by deprivation quintile, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)

The more incidents of crime someone had experienced in the previous 12 months, the less likely it is that they think the Police are doing a good or excellent job (Figure 4.9). Still, the

majority (63%) of respondents who were repeatedly victimised in the previous 12 months think the Police are doing a good or excellent.

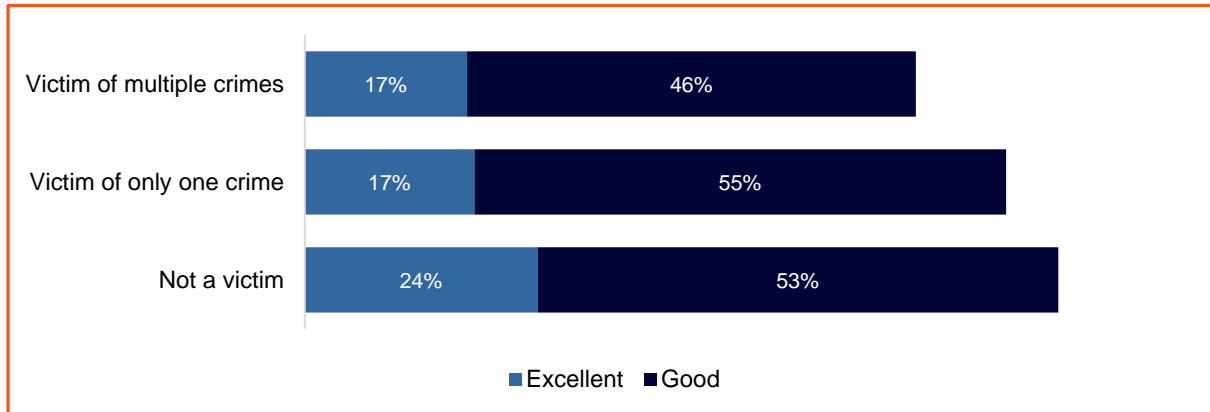


Figure 4.10: Percentage of adults who think the Police are doing a good or excellent job, by number of victimisation in the previous 12 months, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)

4.3 Trust in and fairness of the criminal justice system

NZCVS respondents were asked about their level of trust in different groups within the criminal justice system, and to what extent they agree or disagree that New Zealanders are treated fairly by those groups. As discussed above, trust in institutions has an important influence on a society's crime rate.³⁴ Trust in the criminal justice system also tends to correlate with the level at which members of society trust one another.³⁵

Societal trust in the criminal justice system is essential to its functioning. In order for victims to report crime, they need to have trust in the criminal justice system and believe that it will treat them fairly.³⁶

In general, the patterns across responses to these questions are similar to those in the previous section on how good a job the different parts of the criminal justice system are doing. That is, groups that provide services for victims and the Police tend to be more trusted and more likely to be seen as fair than other components of the criminal justice sector (Figure 4.10). Differences in the views of different parts of the system are strong. For

³⁴ Frieling, M. 2018. *Living Standards Series Discussion Paper 18/04: The Start of a Conversation on the Value of New Zealand's Social Capital*. <https://treasury.govt.nz/sites/default/files/2018-02/dp18-04.pdf>

³⁵ Hughes, T. 2020. *Justice, Wellbeing and Social Capital*. Discussion Paper No. 20/01. <https://treasury.govt.nz/sites/default/files/2020-02/dp20-01-justice-wellbeing-social-capital.pdf>

³⁶ McGregor, K. 2019. Putting victims at the heart of the criminal justice system. *Practice: The New Zealand Corrections Journal* 7(1): 8–10.

example, 80% of New Zealand adults have a high or very high level of trust in victims' services, while only 39% have as high trust in the parole board.

It is important to emphasise that these results reflect perceptions of the public and should not be interpreted as performance measures. It is also important to bear in mind that most New Zealand adults have had no recent contact with the criminal justice system (see section 1.3).

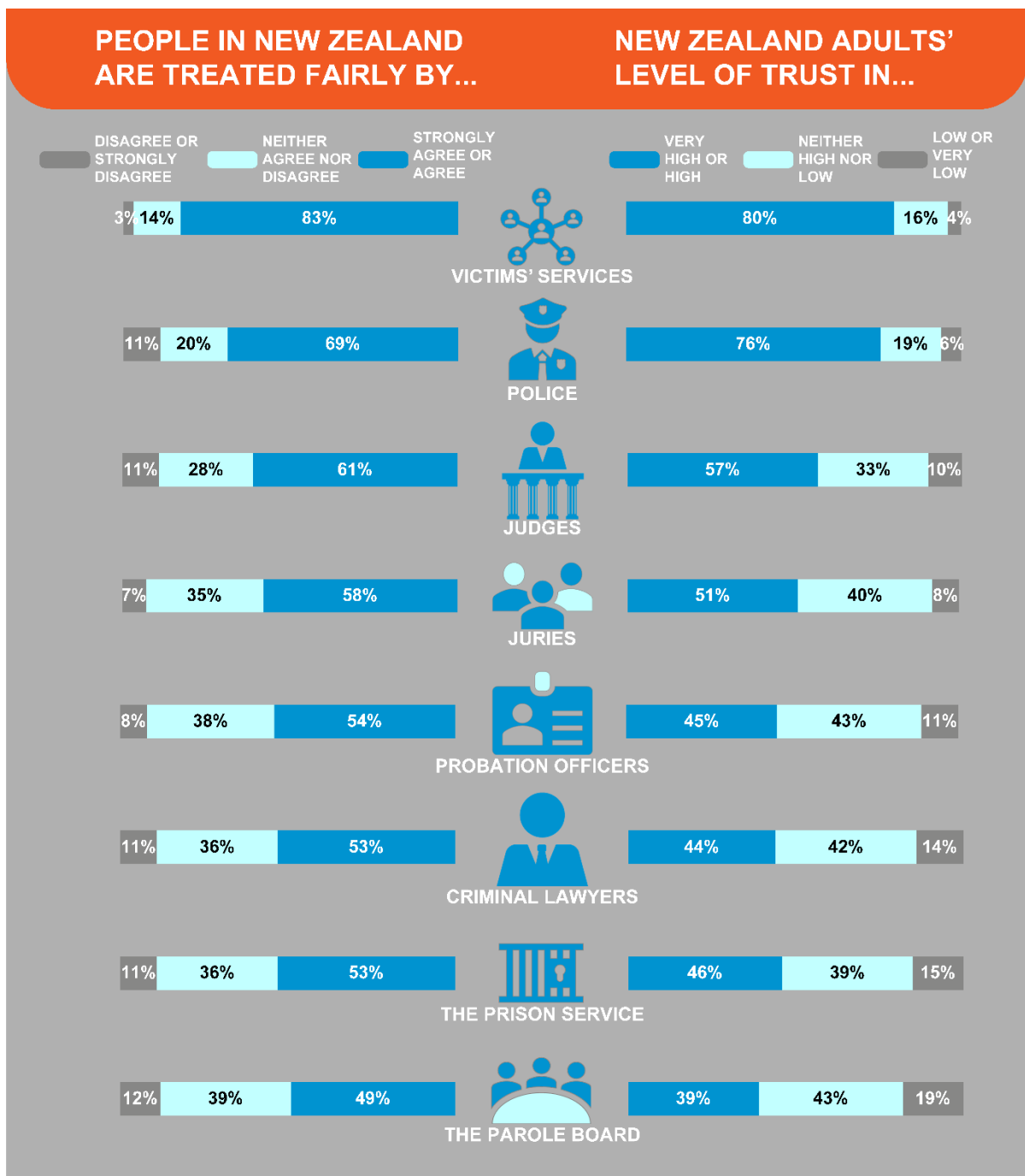


Figure 4.11: New Zealand adults' views of fairness by, and their level of trust in different parts of the criminal justice system, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)

Trust in each component of the criminal justice system tends to be lower among adults who had experienced multiple crimes in the previous 12 months than non-victims (Figure 4.11). This result is important given that the trust of victims in the criminal justice system is

essential to them coming forward to report incidents that have happened to them.³⁷ Views of fairness of the criminal justice system exhibit the same pattern by victimisation (Figure 4.13).

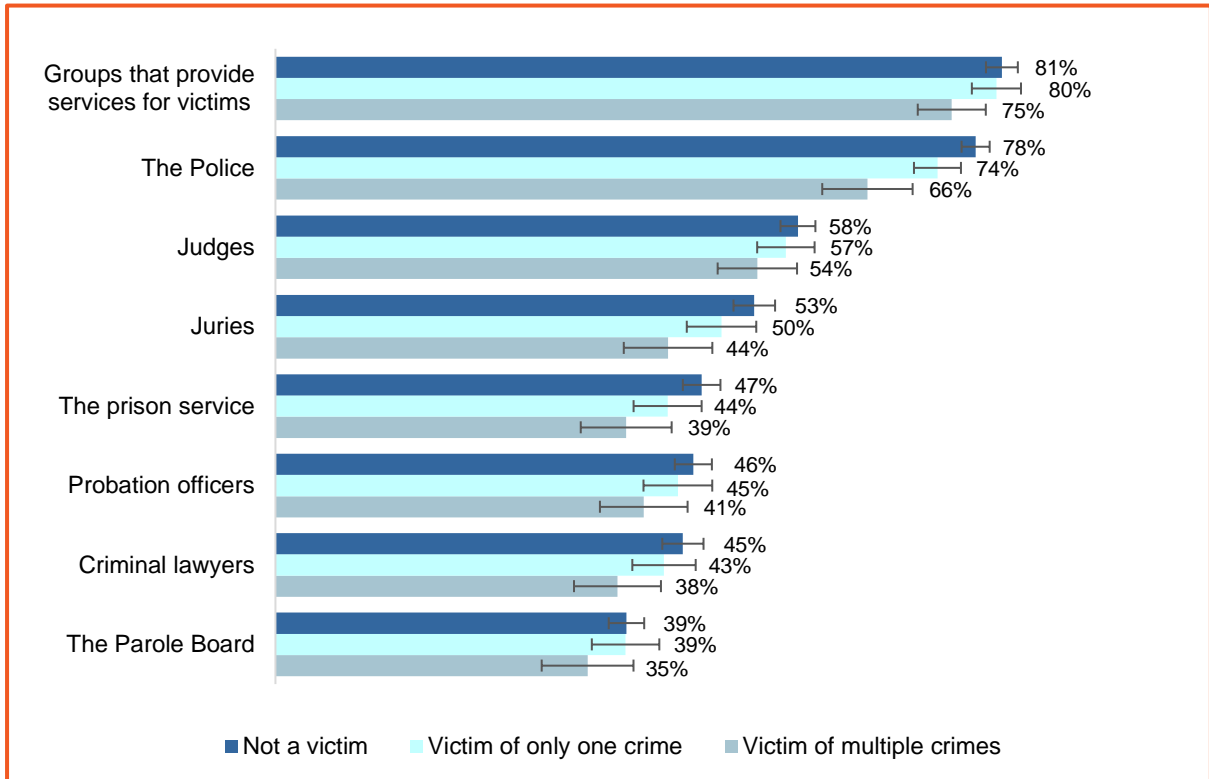


Figure 4.12: Percentage of New Zealand adults with high or very high trust in different parts of the criminal justice system, by victimisation in the previous 12 months, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)

³⁷ McGregor, K. 2019. Putting victims at the heart of the criminal justice system. *Practice: The New Zealand Corrections Journal* 7(1): 8–10.

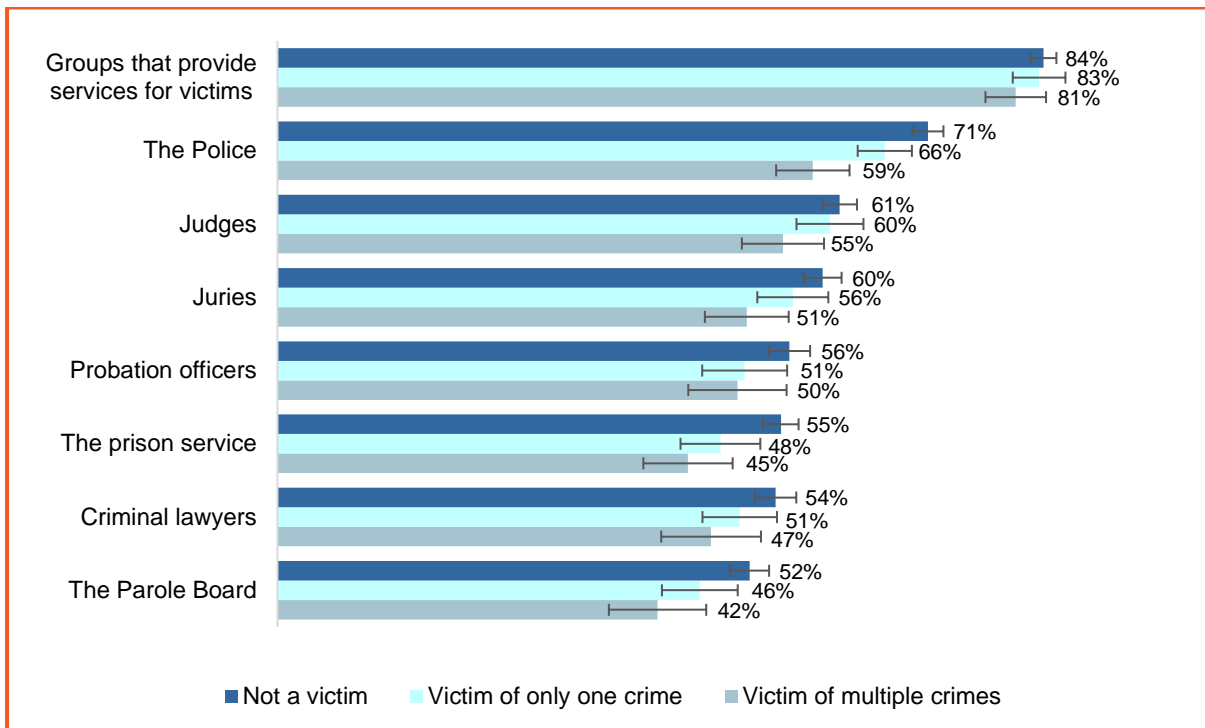


Figure 4.13: Percentage of New Zealand adults who agree or strongly agree that New Zealanders are treated fairly by different parts of the criminal justice system, by victimisation in the previous 12 months, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)

There are differences in views of how fair the criminal justice system is by ethnicity. To show this, we provide views by ethnicity of how fairly people are treated by the Police in Figure 4.13. More than two thirds (69%) of New Zealand adults agree or strongly agree that people in New Zealand are treated fairly by Police. However, Māori (46%) and Pacific peoples (52%) are less likely than other ethnic groups to agree or strongly agree that people in New Zealand are treated fairly by the Police.

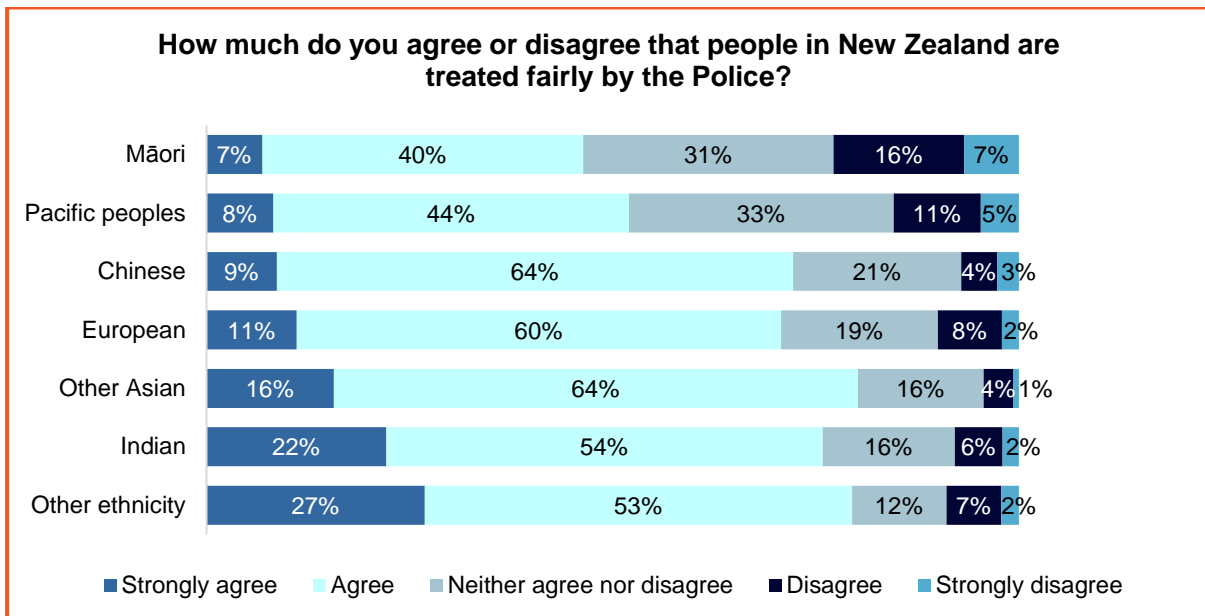


Figure 4.14: New Zealand adults' views that people in New Zealand are treated fairly by the Police, by ethnicity, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)

4.4 Likelihood of contacting the Police

The above sections showed that most adults believe the Police are doing a good job, and they have a high degree of trust and confidence in the institution. In this section we confirm that if they experienced or witnessed an incident, most adults say they would call the Police to report it.

Younger people are less likely to say they would be 'very likely' to contact the Police if they witnessed a crime or incident than older people (Figure 4.14). The NZCVS Cycle 2 Key findings report also found that the actual reporting rate for 15–19-year-old victims of crime was significantly lower than for New Zealand adults overall. However, there was not the same tendency for older adults to be relatively more likely to have reported crime to Police than adults overall.

The variation in likelihood of contacting the Police by age is interesting because no similar relationship between age and other views of the Police is observed. There is only a weak relationship between age and level of trust in the Police, with older people tending to have slightly more trust in the Police. However, we did show in section 2.1 that younger adults tend to have less trust in others than older adults. More research may be required to understand why younger people are less likely to say they would contact the Police if a situation occurred.

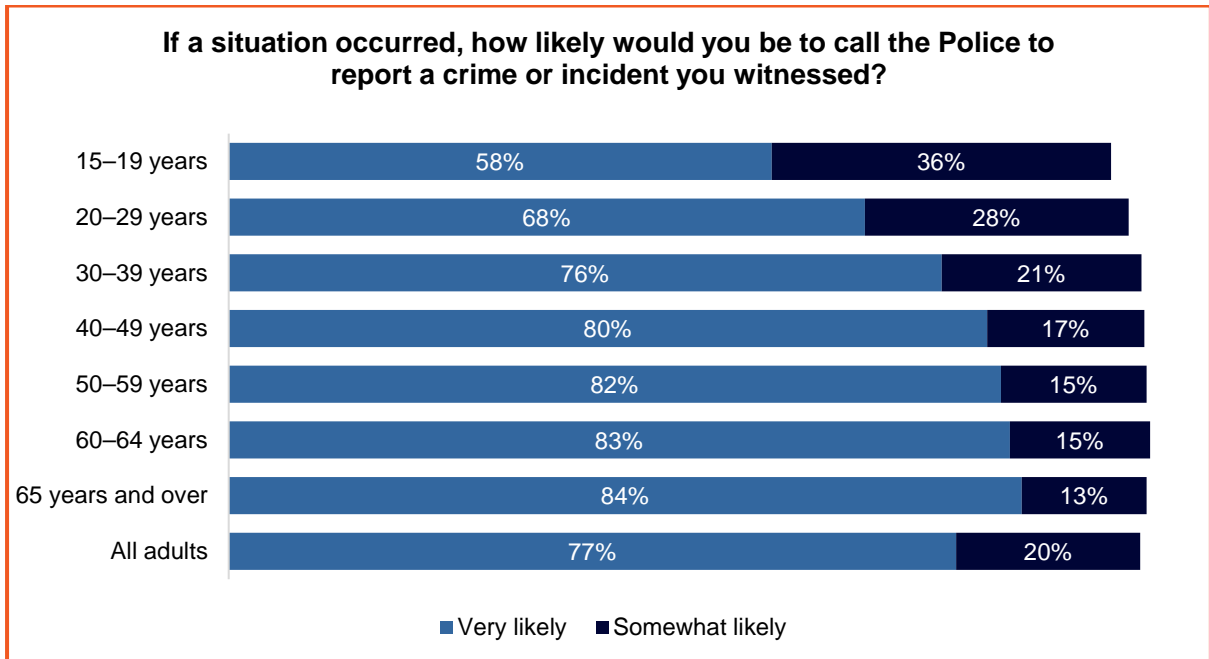


Figure 4.15: New Zealand adults' likelihood of calling the Police to report a crime or incident they had witnessed, by age, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)

There is little variation in the likelihood of reporting an incident to the Police by ethnicity or across regions (Figure 4.15 and Figure 4.16). However, consistent with the findings that Māori are less likely to have a high level of trust in the Police than New Zealand Europeans, a statistically significantly lower proportion of Māori (68%) say they would be very likely to call the Police than New Zealand Europeans (77%). Nonetheless, the likelihood of contacting the Police to report an incident appears to be more stable by ethnicity and region than views of how good a job the Police are doing (see section 4.2).

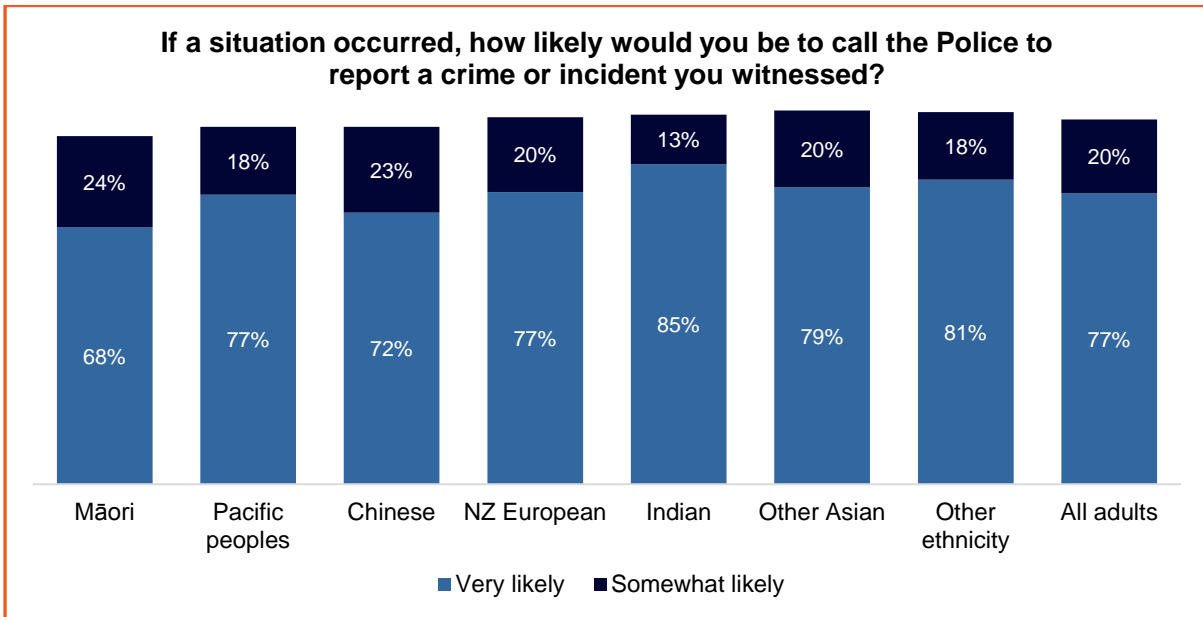


Figure 4.16: New Zealand adults' likelihood of calling the Police to report a crime or incident they had witnessed, by ethnicity, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)

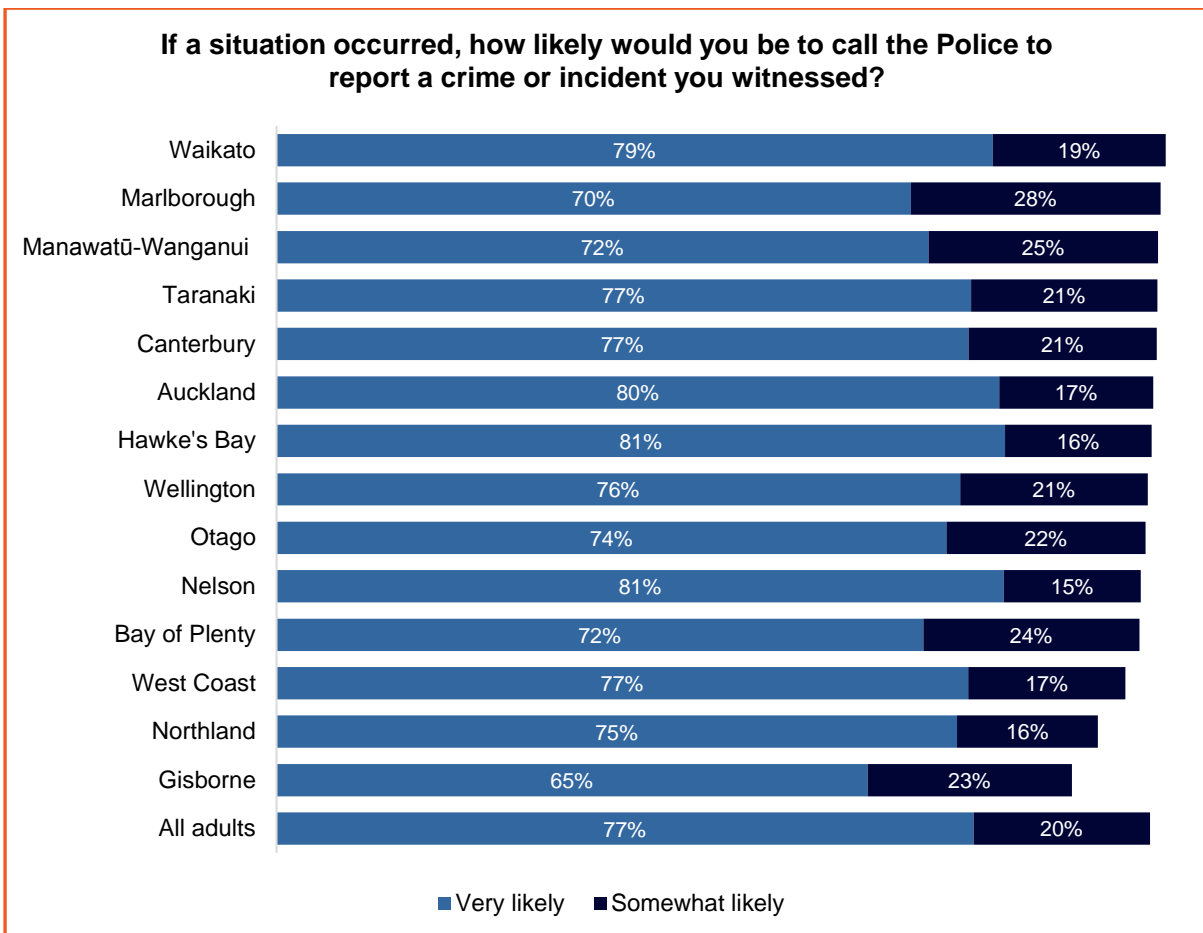


Figure 4.17: New Zealand adults' likelihood of calling the Police to report a crime or incident they had witnessed, by region, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)

There is little difference in how likely individuals said they would be to call the Police to report a crime, by whether they had experienced crime in the previous 12 months (Figure 4.17).

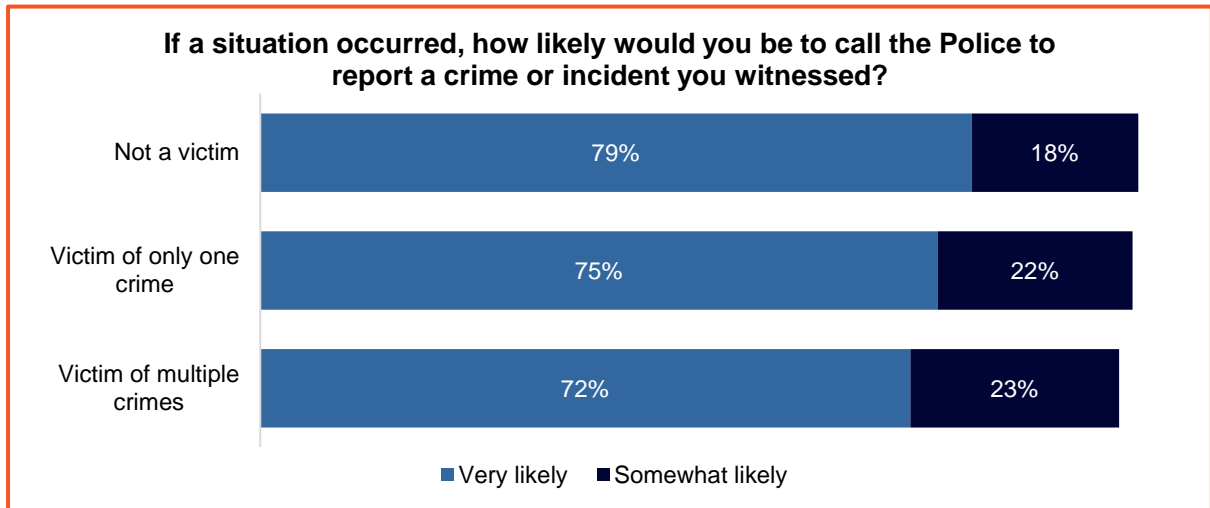


Figure 4.18: New Zealand adults' likelihood of calling the Police to report a crime or incident they had witnessed, by victimisation in the previous 12 months, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)

The analysis in this section tests the attitudes of New Zealanders rather than actual behaviour around reporting to Police. It is important to highlight that, despite finding that most people (77%) say they would be very likely to contact the Police if a situation occurred, the NZCVS Cycle 2 Key findings report estimates that only one quarter (25%) of crime is reported to Police.

One potential factor related to this gap in attitudes and actual behaviour could be that many offences (35%) are not thought of as crime by those who experienced them, but rather as something wrong (19%) or just something that happens (16%) (see the NZCVS Cycle 2 Key findings report). Education campaigns about what is a crime could be an important tool to improving the rate of reporting crime to the Police.

5 Values and purpose of the criminal justice system

- **Not all New Zealanders agree their values are usually reflected in the criminal justice system. Half (51%) of New Zealand adults said their feelings about what is right and wrong usually agree with the criminal justice system and 41% said they sometimes agree.**
- **Māori (38%), Chinese (39%) and Pacific peoples (39%) are less likely than those of other ethnic groups to feel their values align with the criminal justice system.**
- **New Zealanders are divided in their views of whether crime is a choice, but there is a strong consensus that people who offend can go on to lead productive lives with the right effort and support.**

Hughes (2020) discusses that the New Zealand justice system is more sensitive to majoritarian concerns than the needs of minorities, despite the justice service dealing with a relatively small portion of society.³⁸ Te Uepū Hāpai i te Ora – Safe and Effective Justice Advisory Group concluded that there is a need for the criminal justice system to better reflect the diverse needs of New Zealanders.³⁹ The results here seem to confirm those conclusions.

5.1 Alignment with the criminal justice system

Around half of New Zealand adults (51%) said their feelings about what is right and wrong usually agree with the criminal justice system, and another 41% said they sometimes agree. On the other hand, 8% of adults said their feelings about what is right and wrong did not usually agree with the criminal justice system.

Māori are the ethnic group least likely to feel their values aligned with the criminal justice system (38%), and the most likely to feel their values did not align (13%) (Figure 5.1). Chinese and Pacific peoples are also less likely to feel that their values agree with the

³⁸ Hughes, T. 2020. *Justice, Wellbeing and Social Capital*. Discussion Paper No. 20/01. <https://treasury.govt.nz/sites/default/files/2020-02/dp20-01-justice-wellbeing-social-capital.pdf>

³⁹ Te Uepū Hāpai i te Ora – Safe and Effective Justice Advisory Group. 2019. *He Waka Roimata: Transforming Our Criminal Justice System*. https://www.safeandeffectivejustice.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/7efb12cccb/teupureport_hewakaroimata_2.pdf.

criminal justice system than adults of most other ethnic groups. These results bring into question the extent to which the criminal justice system equally reflects the values of majority and minority groups in New Zealand. Voices at the 2018 Criminal Justice Summit, organised by Hāpaitia te Oranga Tangata, said New Zealand’s criminal justice system, adopted from Britain following colonisation, is overly punitive and does not reflect the values of our country.⁴⁰

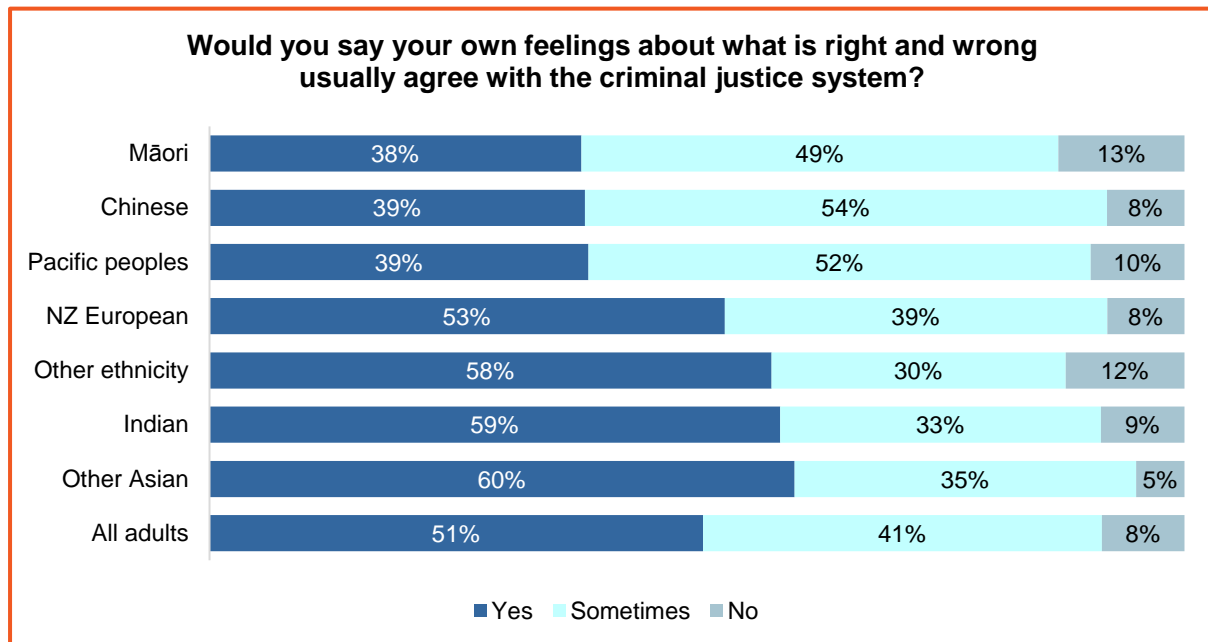


Figure 5.1: New Zealand adults’ agreement with the criminal justice system, by ethnicity, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)

Figure 5.2 illustrates that people who are dealt with by the criminal justice system are less likely to feel that their values are reflected in the criminal justice system than other New Zealanders. In particular, adults who had attended court or a tribunal as a defendant in the previous 12 months (29%) were more than three times as likely as adults overall (8%) to say their feelings about what is right and wrong do not usually agree with the criminal justice system. Those who had attended court or a tribunal as a victim in the previous 12 months (17%) were also significantly more likely to feel that the justice system does not align with their feelings about what is right and wrong.

⁴⁰ Hāpaitia te Oranga Tangata – Safe and Effective Justice. 2018. *Summit Playback*. <https://www.justice.govt.nz/assets/Documents/Publications/hapaitia-summit-playback.pdf>

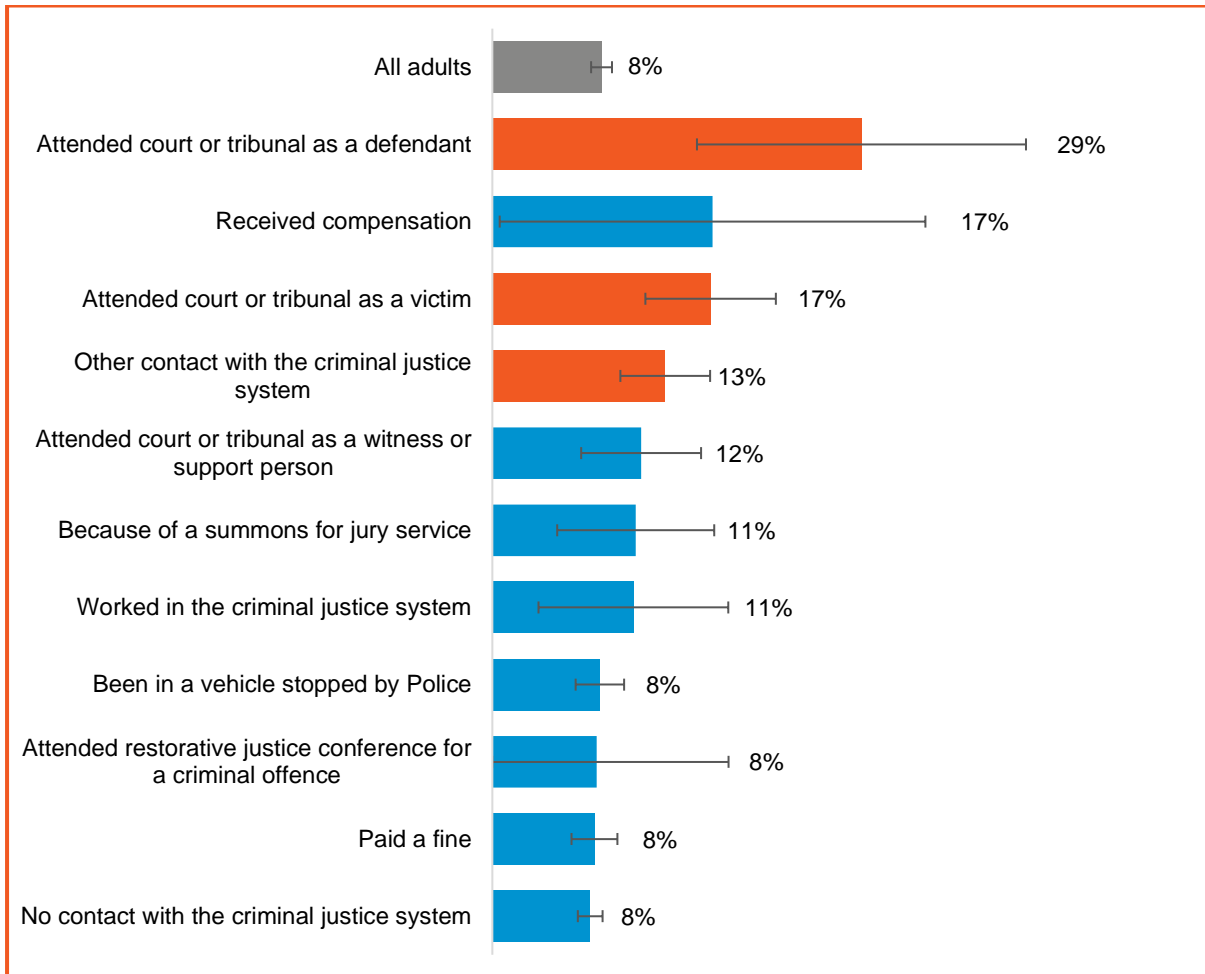


Figure 5.2: Percentage of adults whose feelings about what is right and wrong do not usually agree with the criminal justice system, by contact with the system in the previous 12 months, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)

5.2 Aims of the criminal justice system

New Zealanders' views of the most important aims of the criminal justice system are shown in Figure 5.3. The majority of New Zealanders agree that the criminal justice system should prioritise helping offenders not to reoffend (64%), preventing people from committing crime in the first place (62%), and punishing those who have committed crime (57%). Because respondents could select up to three of the five aims, each aim had a relatively high probability of being selected.

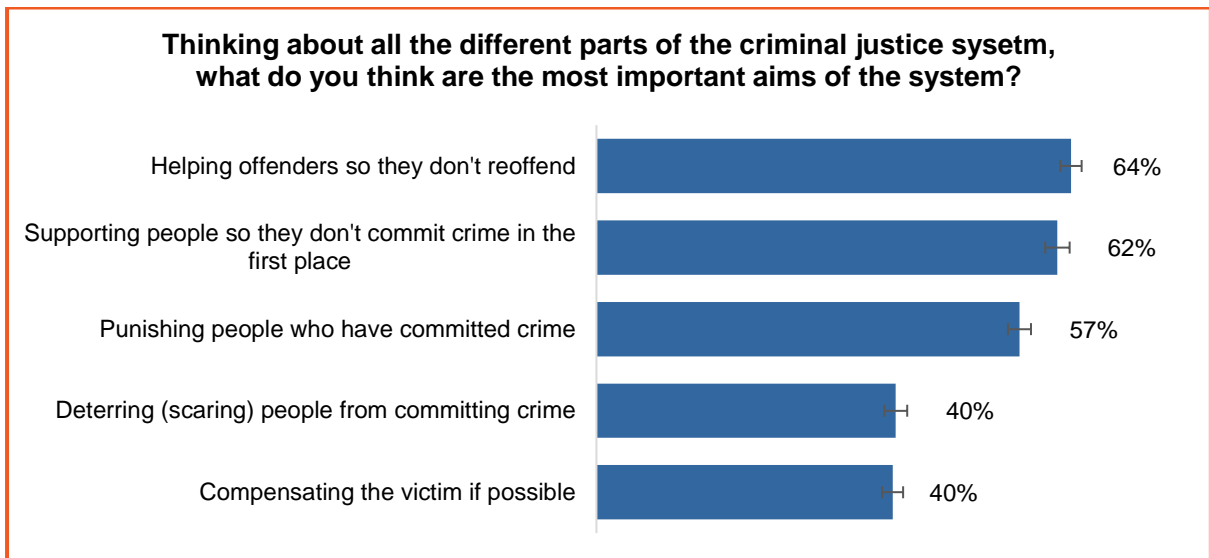


Figure 5.3: New Zealand adults' views of the most important aims of the criminal justice system, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)

Note: Respondents could select up to three aims.

Despite the Criminal Justice Summit hearing that the criminal justice system is overly punitive, and that this is particularly disconnected from Māori views,⁴¹ there is no statistically significant difference between the proportion of Māori (54%) who selected punishment as one of the key aims of the criminal justice system, compared to 56% for New Zealand European adults (56%) or adults overall (57%). Pacific peoples, on the other hand, are significantly less likely than adults overall to support punishment as a key aim of the criminal justice system (45%), while Asian people are significantly more likely (65%).

We also find no significant variation in views of the most important aims of the criminal justice system by whether someone had experienced a crime in the previous 12 months, even when concentrating on those people who had experienced multiple incidents of crime. Whether people feel that their values usually agree with the criminal justice system did not vary much by their views of the most important aims of the system (Figure 5.4).

⁴¹ Hāpaitia te Oranga Tangata – Safe and Effective Justice. 2018. *Summit Playback*. <https://www.justice.govt.nz/assets/Documents/Publications/hapaitia-summit-playback.pdf>

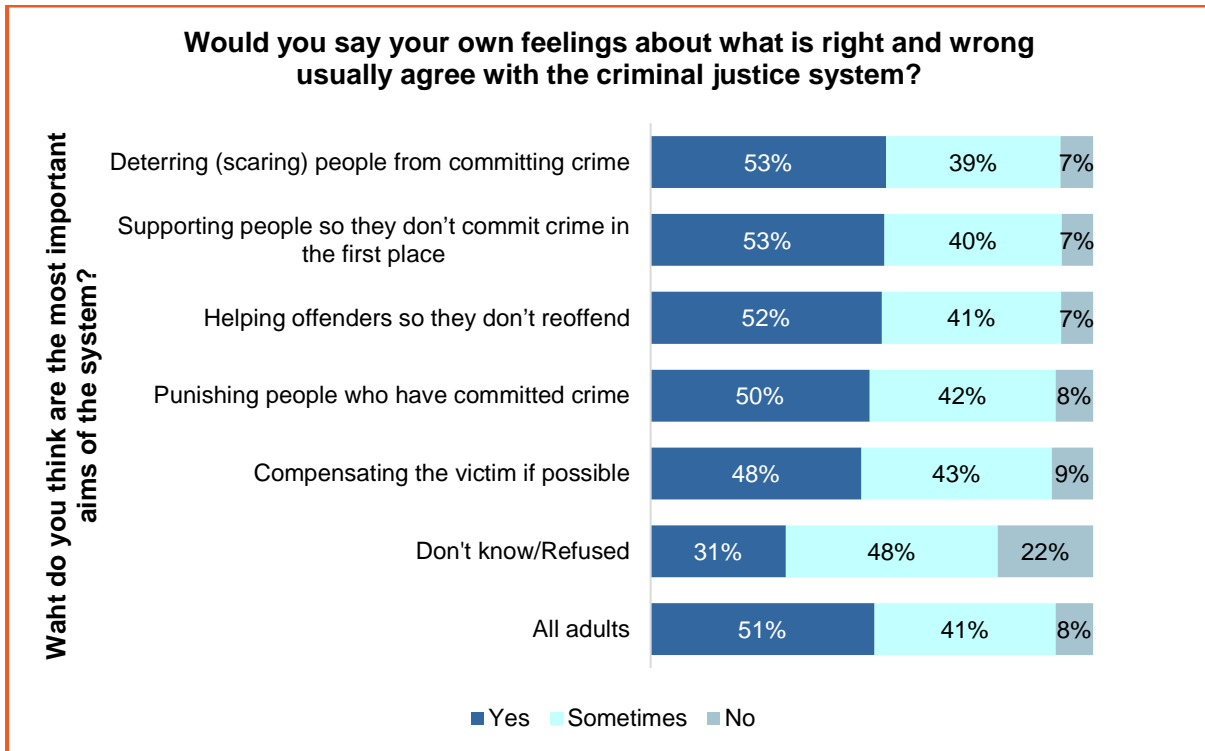


Figure 5.4: New Zealand adults' agreement with the criminal justice system, by views of the most important aims of the system, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)

Note: Respondents could select up to three aims of the criminal justice system.

5.3 Views on offending

New Zealanders are divided in their views of the statement “Crime is a choice – a person’s social circumstances are not to blame”. Half (50%) of New Zealand adults agree or strongly agree that committing a crime is a choice and not driven by the person’s social circumstances (Figure 5.5). A further 18% of New Zealand adults neither agree nor disagree with the statement, and almost one third (32%) disagree or strongly disagree.

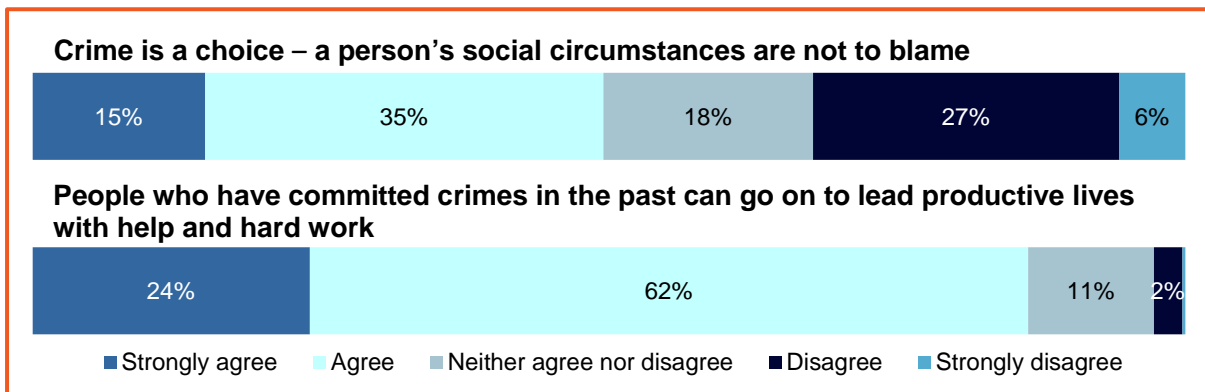


Figure 5.5: New Zealand adults' views about what leads people to commit crime and whether people can change their lives and stay away from crime, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)

On the other hand, most (86%) New Zealand adults agree or strongly agree that “people who have committed crimes can go on to lead productive lives with help and hard work”. In fact, fewer than 3% of New Zealanders disagree or strongly disagree with the statement.

6 Experiences with the criminal justice system

- More than one third (37%) of adults had contact with the criminal justice system in the previous 12 months, with one in five adults (21%) having been in a vehicle that was stopped by Police.
- One quarter (23%) of those adults who had contact with the criminal justice system said they had a very positive experience, and a further 43% said they had a positive experience.
- Those who attended court or a tribunal or attended a restorative justice conference are more likely to view their experience with the system negatively.

Respondents to the NZCVS who had come into contact with the criminal justice system in the previous 12 months were asked for information about their experience. This feedback is summarised in the current section of this report, shining light on how positive or negative the experience was for different people, and how fairly they felt they were treated.

More than one third (37%) of adults told us they had contact with the criminal justice system in the previous 12 months (Figure 6.1). The most common form of contact was being in a vehicle that was stopped by Police (21%), followed by paying a fine (12%). 8% had attended court or a tribunal as either a witness or support person (2.7%), as a victim (2.6%), due to summons for jury service (2.1%) or as a defendant (1.0%).

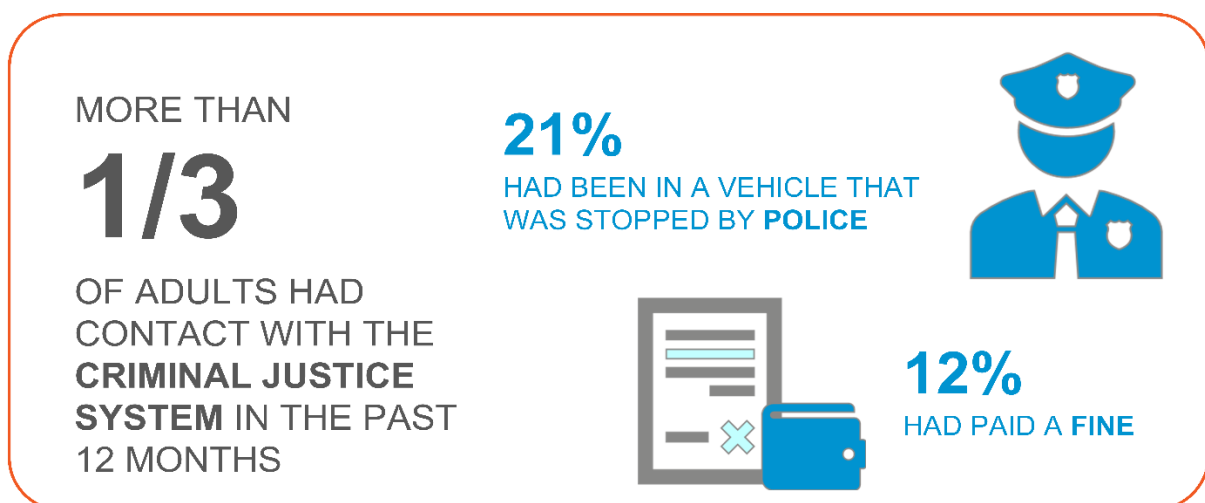


Figure 6.1: New Zealand adults' contact with the criminal justice system in the previous 12 months, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)

The results in this section may be skewed due to sample selection of the NZCVS. For example, the survey does not interview people who are in prison, so this part of the population is not represented.

Overall, one quarter (23%) of those adults who had contact with the criminal justice system in the previous 12 months had a very positive experience, and a further 43% had a positive experience and 25% had a neutral experience. On the other hand, the experience was negative for 7% and very negative for 3% of those who had contact. However, as is shown in Figure 6.2, people who had different types of contact with the criminal justice system, especially those who had attended court or a tribunal or attended a restorative justice conference, are more likely to view their experience with the system negatively.

Adults who had been stopped in a vehicle by Police were most likely to have had a very positive experience (25%). Of those adults who had attended a restorative justice conference, a relatively large proportion of people (24%) say they had a very positive experience with the system and a relatively high proportion (33%) told us they had a negative or very negative experience. This result compares to a 2011 study by the Ministry of Justice which found that 51% of victims who had attended a restorative justice conference said they were very satisfied with the experience, and only 5% were very dissatisfied.⁴²

Contact with the criminal justice system through the courts was relatively skewed towards negative experiences. This was especially the case for those who attended court or a tribunal as a defendant, with 27% saying their experience of the system was negative or very negative. 20% of adults who attended court or a tribunal as a victim and 21% of those who attended court or a tribunal as a witness or support person had a negative or very negative experience of the criminal justice system.

⁴² Ministry of Justice. (2011). *Victim satisfaction with restorative justice: A summary of findings*. <https://www.justice.govt.nz/assets/Documents/Publications/Restorative-Justice-Victim-Satisfaction-Survey-Summary-of-Findings.pdf>

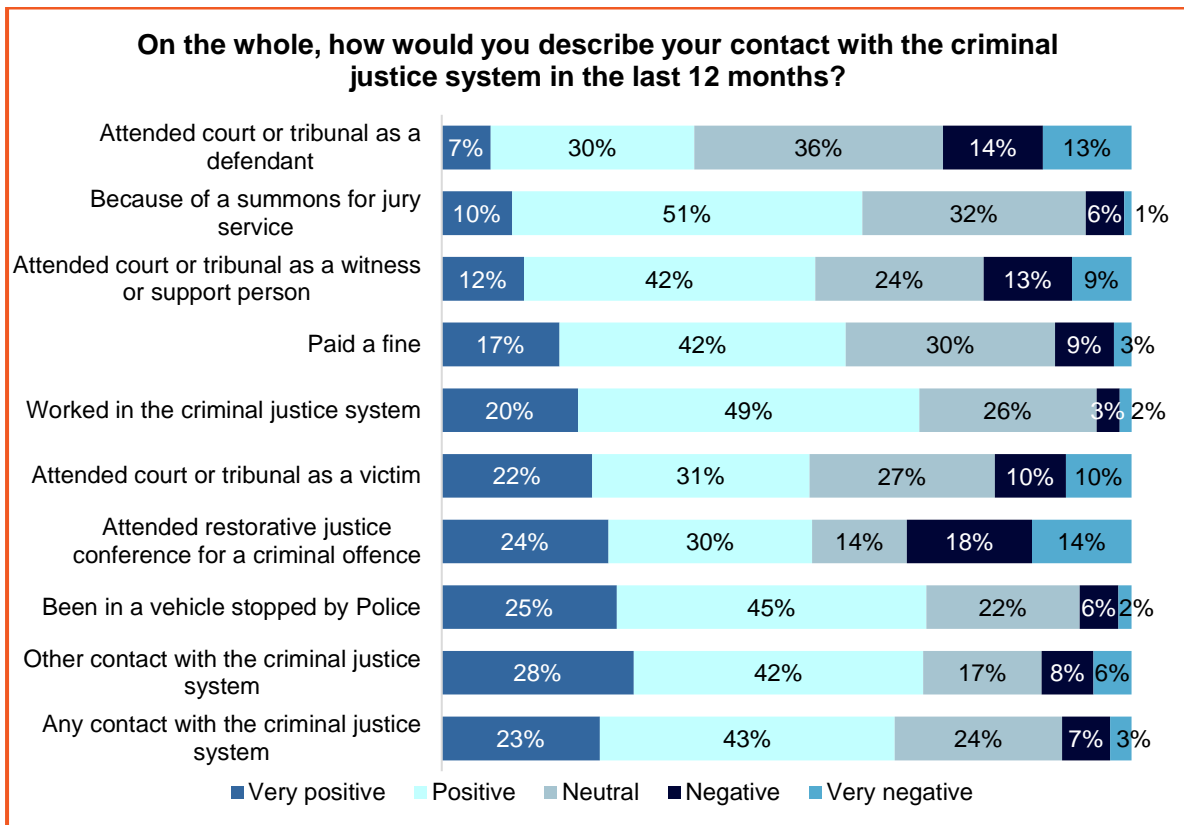


Figure 6.2: New Zealand adults' experiences with the criminal justice system in the previous 12 months, by form of contact with the system, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)

Respondents who had been in contact with the criminal justice system in the previous 12 months were also asked whether they would say they were treated fairly. Few adults who worked in the criminal justice system (6%), were summoned for jury service (8%), or had been in a vehicle that was stopped by Police (9%) said they were not treated fairly by the criminal justice system (Figure 6.3). In comparison, those who attended court or a tribunal as a defendant (30%), a witness or support person (24%) or as a victim (21%) and those who attended a restorative justice conference (25%) were more likely to say they were treated unfairly by the system. However, there is a high level of uncertainty around estimates in these groups, as shown by the large confidence intervals, especially for adults who had attended a restorative justice conference for a criminal offence.

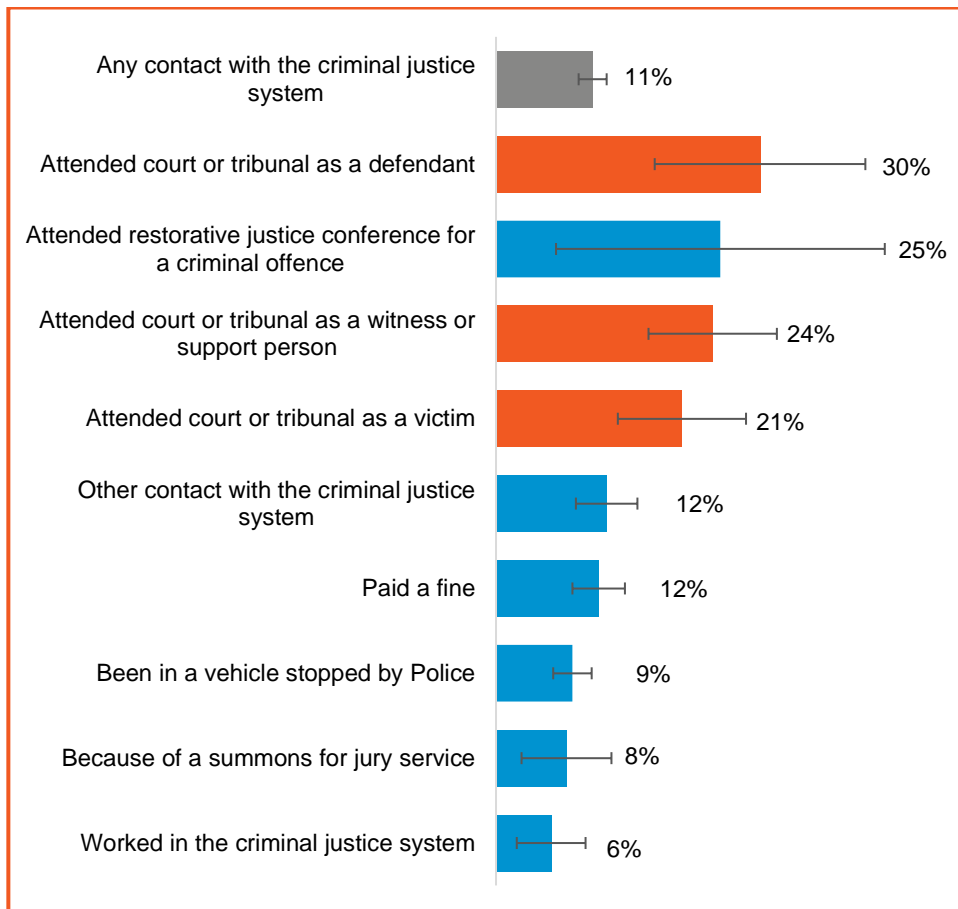


Figure 6.3: Percentage of adults who would say they were not treated fairly by the criminal justice system in the previous 12 months, by form of contact with the system, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)

Note: The group of adults who received compensation is suppressed due to high margin of error.

Some ethnic groups were more likely to think they were not treated fairly by the criminal justice system than others (Figure 6.4). Figure 6.4 shows that only Pacific peoples (22%) were statistically significantly more likely to say they were not treated fairly by the criminal justice system than adults overall who had come into contact with the criminal justice system (11%). Both Pacific peoples and Maori (16%) adults were statistically significantly more likely to say they were not treated fairly by the criminal justice system than New Zealand Europeans (9%).

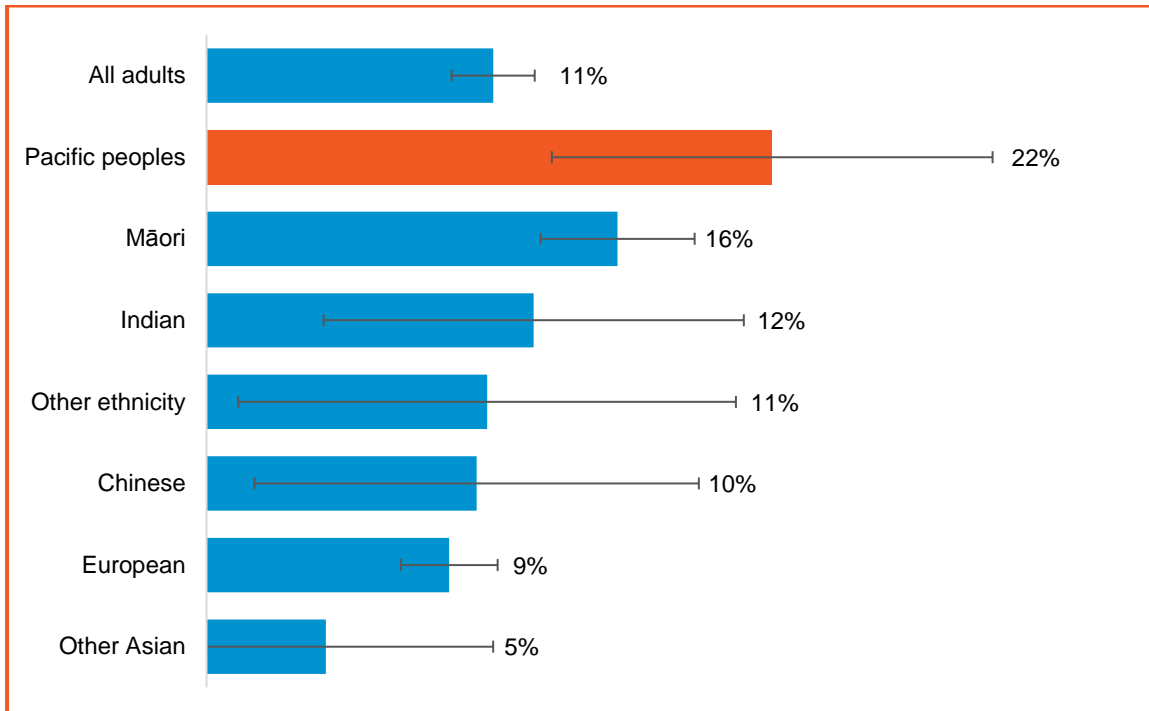


Figure 6.4: Percentage of adults who would say they were not treated fairly by the criminal justice system in the previous 12 months, by ethnicity, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)

6.1 Victimisation by contact with the criminal justice system

The NZCVS Cycle 2 Key findings report revealed that 30% of New Zealand adults had experienced one or more incidents of crime in of the previous 12 months. Figure 6.5 illustrates that there is significant variation in the proportion of adults who had experienced crime in the previous 12 months by forms of contact with the criminal justice system.

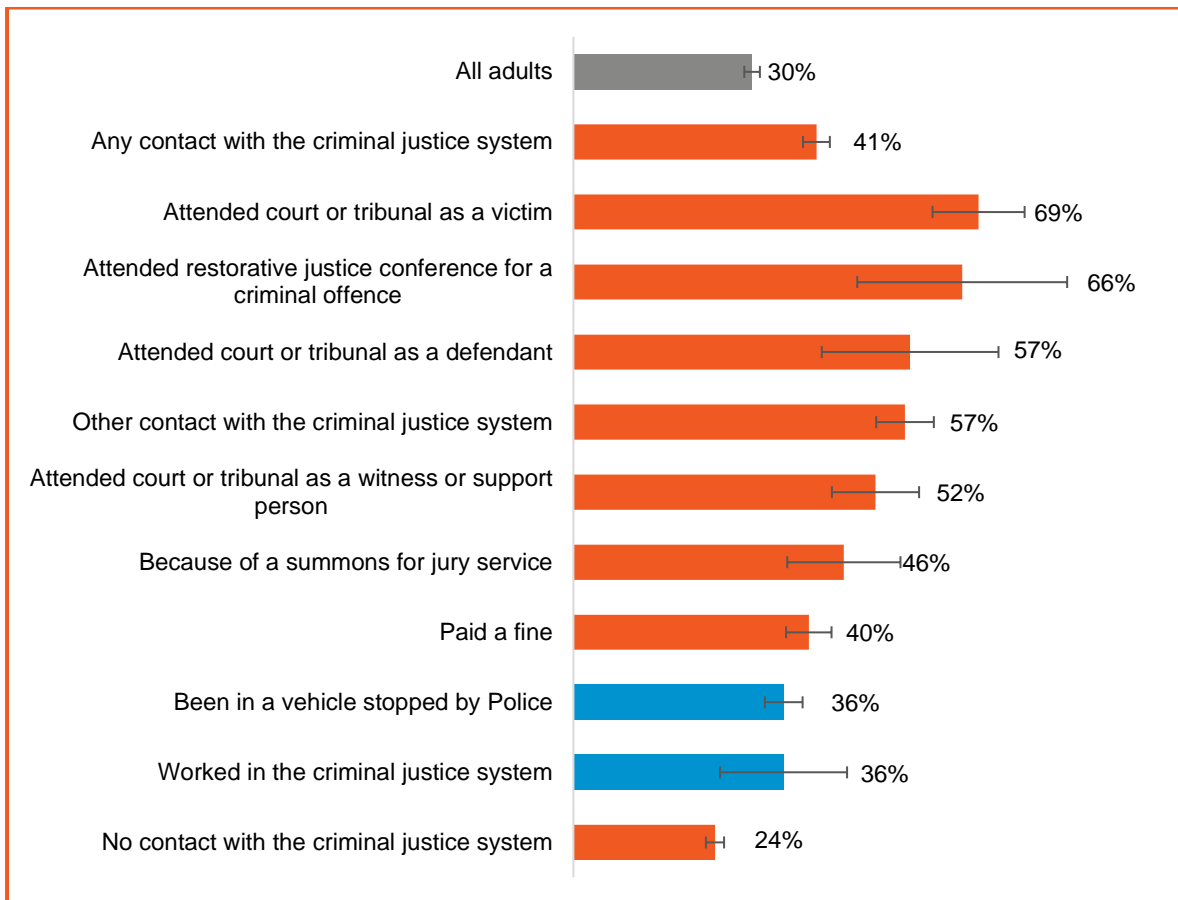


Figure 6.5: Percentage of adults who experienced an incident of crime once or more in the previous 12 months, by contact with the criminal justice system in the previous 12 months, NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19)

Note: The group of adults who received compensation is excluded due to high margin of error.

Not surprisingly, the victimisation rate for adults who attended court or a tribunal as a victim (69%) or attended a restorative justice conference (66%) is relatively high. But we also see that the victimisation rate for those who attended court or a tribunal as a defendant (57%) or who had paid a fine (40%) is significantly higher than for New Zealand adults overall (30%).

Individuals who had attended court or a tribunal as a witness or support person (52%), or because of summons for jury service (46%) are significantly more likely to have experienced an incident of crime than adults overall (30%). Though individuals who had been in a vehicle stopped by Police (36%) or who worked in the criminal justice system (36%) have a slightly higher rate of victimisation than the national average (30%), these differences are not statistically significant.

Adults who had no contact with the criminal justice system in the previous 12 months (24%) are significantly less likely to have experienced an incident of crime in the same period than adults overall (30%). These results indicate clearly that people who have contact with the criminal justice system are overrepresented as victims of crime.

7 Conclusions

The narrative in this report flows from how well New Zealanders are connected and trust in each other, to how safe they feel, what they think of the criminal justice system, and what their experiences of it are like. Across all these areas, we conclude that things are going well for most adult New Zealanders. However, the views and experiences of some population groups stand out as being less positive.

Most New Zealanders are well connected with each other and have trust in others. Yet, these forms of social wellbeing are not as strong among people who had experienced crime in the previous 12 months, especially those who had experienced multiple incidents. Measures of social wellbeing are also unequal across ethnic groups – social wellbeing tended to be higher for New Zealand Europeans than people of other ethnic groups.

The majority of New Zealanders have little worry about being the victim of a crime. But those who had experienced crime in the previous 12 months were more likely to worry about being a victim, as were adults of lower socioeconomic groups and some ethnic groups (Pacific peoples and Indians).

Public perceptions of the Police and groups that support victims (e.g., Women’s Refuge, Rape Crisis, Victim Support) are mostly favourable, while views of other criminal justice system agents such as judges, prisons, and the parole board tend to be more negative. Victims, adults who had recent contact with the criminal justice system, and Māori and Pacific peoples tend to have less favourable perceptions of the criminal justice system than other New Zealanders.

Around half of New Zealand adults (51%) say their feelings about what is right and wrong usually agree with the criminal justice system, and another 41% say they sometimes agree. On the other hand, 8% of adults say their feelings about what is right and wrong do not usually agree with the criminal justice system. The sense of agreement with criminal justice system values tended to be lower for Māori, Pacific peoples and Chinese than other ethnic groups. These results support findings of Te Uepū Hāpai i te Ora that the criminal justice system does not reflect the values of all New Zealanders, and their calls for the Government to adopt a new vision for the system that is based on strong shared values.^{43,44}

⁴³ Te Uepū Hāpai i te Ora – Safe and Effective Justice Advisory Group. 2019. *He Waka Roimata: Transforming Our Criminal Justice System*.
https://www.safeandeffectivejustice.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/7efb12cccb/teupureport_hewakaroimata_2.pdf

⁴⁴ Te Uepū Hāpai i te Ora – Safe and Effective Justice Advisory Group. 2019. *Turuki! Turuki! Transforming our criminal justice system*.
<https://www.safeandeffectivejustice.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/28ce04fd87/Turuki-Turuki-Report-Interactive.pdf>

In this regard, a belief that emerges in this report as shared by most New Zealand adults is that individuals who have committed crime can go on to lead productive lives with help and hard work.

Most people who had been in contact with the criminal justice system in the previous 12 months told us their experience was positive. However, individuals who had been through the court system or a restorative justice system were more likely to report having a negative experience than those who had contact with other parts of the system.

Many of the findings in this report echo the voices of those at the 2018 Criminal Justice Summit who said that our current criminal justice system is failing the needs of the public, and especially those of people who experience crime, people who offend, and Māori.⁴⁵ Te Uepū Hāpai i te Ora has recommended a number of steps to address these challenges. Some of these recommendations could address the disparities highlighted in this report, for example:

- co-designing justice services for Māori with Māori
- empowering and supporting people who are harmed by crime
- challenging racism and systemic bias within the justice system and our society
- redesigning justice processes to improve fairness and align the system with transformative justice values.

The Chief Victims Advisor to the Government has called for improvements to the system through partnership and co-design and improving procedural justice.⁴⁶ Policies to reflect inclusive values in society are also discussed in a Treasury discussion paper titled *Justice, Wellbeing and Social Capital*.⁴⁷

The results analysed in this report merely touch the surface of the data available in the NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19) module on social wellbeing and institutional trust. There are more questions to be analysed, more breakdowns possible, and more sophisticated research that could be done to better understand the relationships drawn out in this report.

For example, further research could look at the relationship between fear of crime and aspects of New Zealand communities such as ethnic diversity and socioeconomic status.⁴⁸ Or researchers might study the relationship between New Zealanders' level of trust in the

⁴⁵ Hāpaitia te Oranga Tangata – Safe and Effective Justice. 2018. *Summit Playback*.

<https://www.justice.govt.nz/assets/Documents/Publications/hapaitia-summit-playback.pdf>

⁴⁶ Chief Victims Advisor to Government. 2019. *Te Tangi o te Manawanui: Recommendations for Reform*. <https://chiefvictimsadvisor.justice.govt.nz/assets/Documents/Publications/Te-Tangi-Final-PDF.pdf>

⁴⁷ Hughes, T. 2020. *Justice, Wellbeing and Social Capital*. Discussion Paper No. 20/01. <https://treasury.govt.nz/sites/default/files/2020-02/dp20-01-justice-wellbeing-social-capital.pdf>

⁴⁸ Compare with Brunton-Smith, I & Sturgis, P. 2011. Do neighbourhoods generate fear of crime? An empirical test using the British Crime Survey. *Criminology* 49(2): 331–369. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-9125.2011.00228.x>

criminal justice system and their fear of crime.⁴⁹ The NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19) will be available to researchers in the Stats NZ Integrated Data Infrastructure (IDI) later this year, linking it to a number of other administrative datasets.

⁴⁹ Compare with Singer, A J, Chouhy, C, Lehmann, P S, Walzak, J N, Gertz, M & Biglin, S. 2019. Victimization, Fear of Crime, and Trust in Criminal Justice Institutions: A Cross-National Analysis. *Crime & Delinquency* 65(6): 822–844. <https://doi.org/10.1177/001128718787513>

Appendix 1: About NZCVS

The NZCVS is a nationwide, face-to-face, annual, random-sample survey asking New Zealand adults living in private dwellings and aged 15 and over about incidents of crime they experienced in New Zealand over the previous 12 months. This includes both incidents reported to the Police and unreported incidents.

The second cycle of the NZCVS was undertaken between October 2018 and September 2019 and achieved 8038 interviews. The response rate was 80%, which means that the survey results are representative.

While the NZCVS delivers the best estimate available about a wide range of personal and household offences that are not captured elsewhere, it still does not report the total amount of crime in New Zealand. This is because the NZCVS is a sample survey⁵⁰ subject to sample errors; also, it does not cover every type of crime that someone might experience (see Table A1.1).

Table A1.1: Scope of crimes/offences covered in the NZCVS

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

* 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.

⁵⁰ A sample survey means that not every New Zealander gives information about their experiences; it's not a census of the population. Also, not all 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).

The NZCVS is a new survey with some significant improvements in design compared with its predecessors such as New Zealand Crime and Safety Survey (NZCASS). In particular, the NZCVS:

- has a larger annual sample
- uses a different approach to coding offences that is more consistent with the Police approach
- applies a much lower level of data imputations
- covers additional offence types (e.g., fraud, cybercrime, trespass)
- employs a different approach for collecting data from highly victimised people (allowing similar incidents to be reported as a group).⁵¹

These differences mean that direct comparison of NZCVS results with its predecessor NZCASS is potentially misleading, even within similar offence types. More detail about how the NZCVS was conducted in 2018 can be found in the NZCVS Cycle 2 Methodology report.

⁵¹ Partial list.

Appendix 2: Other NZCVS reports and future reporting

A number of resources are already available on the Ministry of Justice website to help access the results from the NZCVS, interpret findings, and understand the research.

The technical aspects of the research are discussed in detail in the methodology report available from <https://www.justice.govt.nz/justice-sector-policy/research-data/nzcvs/resources-and-results/>

The NZCVS Cycle 2 (2018/19) core report (the most comprehensive, full size report) is available from <https://www.justice.govt.nz/justice-sector-policy/research-data/nzcvs/resources-and-results/>

Other products from NZCVS Cycle 1 (2018) and Cycle 2 (2018/19) are available from the same page, including topline reports, key findings, infographics and data tables.

NZCVS data (only those records obtaining respondents' consent) is now incorporated in the Stats NZ Integrated Data Infrastructure (<https://www.stats.govt.nz/integrated-data/integrated-data-infrastructure/>).

An overview of important findings from the NZCVS Cycle 1 (2018) is available at <https://www.justice.govt.nz/assets/Documents/Publications/NZCVS-topical-report-Important-findings-Cycle-1-2018-v1.1-fin.pdf>

A topical report focused on highly victimised people and offences against adults by family members from Cycle 1 (2018) is available from <https://www.justice.govt.nz/assets/Documents/Publications/HZTYUY-NZCVS-topical-report-2018-Highly-Victimised.pdf>

A topical report focused on offences against adults by family members from Cycle 1 (2018) is available from <https://www.justice.govt.nz/assets/Documents/Publications/9ZU3Q-NZCVS-topical-report-Offences-by-family-members-Cycle-1-2018.pdf>

Additional documents are also available from <https://www.justice.govt.nz/justice-sector-policy/research-data/nzcvs/resources-and-results/>

If you have any feedback or questions about NZCVS results, please email us on nzcvs@justice.govt.nz