Make it about us:

Victim-survivors' recommendations for building a safer police response to intimate partner violence, family violence and sexual violence in Aotearoa New Zealand

Report written by The Backbone Collective and Hohou Te Rongo Kahukura

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Report authors

Deborah Mackenzie (The Backbone Collective) and Sandra Dickson (Hohou Te Rongo Kahukura) were lead authors for this report, with oversight from both organisations and other contributing organisations. We also acknowledge significant contributions from Daysha Tonumaipe'a (The Backbone Collective), Bex Fraser (Hohou Te Rongo Kahukura), and Fariya Begum, Rejeena Thankachan and Silvana Erenchun Perez (Shama).

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Survey participants

The Backbone Collective and Hohou Te Rongo Kahukura would like to say a huge "thank you" to the victim-survivors who took part in our police survey. We appreciate the courage and energy it takes, especially in light of your experiences of violence and abuse, to participate; to reflect on and share the often-distressing responses you received from police. Your recommendations for improving the police response to family violence and sexual violence are invaluable. We sincerely hope that our report brings much needed improvements to how the NZ Police responds to victim-survivors in the future.

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Te Puna Aonui
Responding, healing, strengthening

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Our advisory group

We are very grateful to our advisory group who gave specialist feedback on our survey questions; provided context on experiences of particular population groups, for better understanding; and helped shape recommendations. Our advisory group consisted of: Waikato Women's Refuge Te Whakaruruhau; Shama Ethnic Women's Trust; disability advocate Debbie Hager; sexual violence expert Kathryn McPhillips; and family violence experts Ruth Busch and Neville Robertson.

Foreword

Bex Fraser (they/them) is a non-binary transmasculine survivor, and Tauiwi Lead Trainer for Takatāpui and Rainbow violence prevention and response organisation Hohou Te Rongo Kahukura.

It was women's writing that first helped me understand what had gone so terribly wrong in my life. In my twenties, I worked my way through feminist readings that spelt out how girls were socialised to speak less, be less active and be afraid of the dark. I devoured writing that explained why I couldn't seem to find my feet as a manager, why men around me were so comfortable interrupting me and why the bank would write letters to my husband, when I was the one earning money.

And it was women's writing that taught me that the childhood abuse I experienced wasn't my fault, and that explained the social attitudes that encouraged men on the street to comment on my clothes, breasts, thighs, hair and smile.

I experienced violence in the way that a girl and a young woman does, and it was women's research and writing that helped me make sense of those experiences and to work against them.

The Backbone Collective is an organisation that brings together the voices of women and children who have survived violence and abuse, so that systems that support them can be changed. It is work grounded in the experiences of hundreds of women. Their reports have brought about change.

But almost ten years ago I realised that 'woman' didn't fit me, as a gender. I am a person who doesn't fit the story, body or being of a woman. A non-binary person. A trans person. So what about my experiences of violence? Do they have a place with women's stories and advocacy? What about being raised as a girl-child? What about being a young person in a body that everyone around me told me was a woman's body? A body that was hurt, the way that women's bodies sometimes are? Do the scars on my body count, as part of women's stories? I'm not a woman, but what about those parts of my story?

And what about trans women? Women who do fit the stories, bodies and beings of a woman, but who often have early childhoods and periods of time in their lives where society didn't recognise who they were, or where their bodies didn't match what people expect women to look like. What about these women?

Despite the hyped-up fear over trans people in women's spaces, the intersection of women's advocacy and trans experiences of violence is a simple one to navigate. Trans people like me do not dilute a collective women's voice; we simply illuminate the similarities and differences between us, so we will be able to see more clearly what the issues are, and what the possible solutions might be. Trans women's stories mean we are able to grasp a fuller picture of what being a woman means. As part of all women's stories, their narratives are a gift.

The Backbone Collective has realised this, and the survey which this report draws on is fully trans inclusive. This is a landmark change for non-binary and trans people. Where our experiences of reporting to police after violence are similar to those of women, we will be able to tell those stories. And where our experiences differ, we can start to understand why. If there are times when our genders are treated more respectfully than women are, we will be able

to take a stance alongside women to advocate. And when there are times when we are treated worse, we will have allies alongside us, understanding that we need change, too.

And sometimes we will be able to see those similarities and differences in the story of a single person, who may be treated differently before and after transition. We stand to learn so much about how our police systems treat victim-survivors.

It is thanks to the unity of women's activism and trans collective action that this report is able to articulate what we need from services after we have experienced violence. This time, my whole self will be in the story, and my trans whānau will be with me.

Key findings and recommendations

Our ground-breaking survey of women, trans and non-binary people suggests victim-survivors of family, partner and/or sexual violence are looking for urgent help from police to be safe. Overwhelmingly, they are not receiving what they need. Recent police involvement has made many victim-survivor survey participants less safe – mostly due to inadequate police action, or concerns not being taken seriously. Poor police responses were particularly likely for trans and non-binary people, wāhine Māori and disabled people. These state failures to ensure and uphold victim-survivor safety stem from systemic, structural, legal, organisational, cultural, and educational causes. To ensure all victim-survivors are safe and their rights upheld, police and those working in the wider justice system must be trained, resourced and held to account to centre the needs of victim-survivors. This means listening to them, respecting them and upholding their mana.

Victim-survivors overall were more likely to say police involvement made things worse for them than better; over half of those who said things were worse were more frightened after contact with the police.

Nine out of every ten trans & non-binary victim-survivors who said police involvement made things worse, were more frightened after contact with the police.

We were told:

Police involvement often made victim-survivors and their children less safe and made their situation worse. Police inaction which offered few or no consequences emboldened the abuser.

Our recommendations include taking action with consequences for the abuser, such as police more often considering using their statutory powers including arrest, enforcing no contact bail conditions and Police Safety Orders to ensure the safety of victim-survivors and children.

Some victim-survivors do not contact police, even when they experience ongoing violence and abuse, often because they fear that doing so may make them less safe. There are also specific barriers for particular communities, including victim-survivors in Takatāpui and Rainbow communities.

In addition to ensuring police practice increases safety for all victim-survivors, our recommendations include police strengthening ties to marginalised communities, and victim-survivors having the option to report abuse to support workers who are independent of the police force.

Victim survivors who contact police do so because they need help urgently and hope police will protect them – often contacting the police is their 'last resort'. This means without a victim-centred police response, victim-survivors can be left in greater danger, feeling hopeless and without support or options.

Our recommendations include creating a national specialist family violence policing unit with respected expertise in centring victims.

The first response from police impacts on a victim-survivor's likelihood of contacting them again. A poor police response stops the victim-survivor from contacting police in the future. Nearly a third of all participants said police took the side of their abuser.

As well as a specialist unit, our recommendations include ensuring all police are trained in responding to and assessing risk in family violence and sexual violence situations, to ensure all responses are safe and appropriate.

However, some victim-survivors did report the police taking actions which made victim-survivors and children safer, demonstrating the potential for change.

Altogether, our recommendations represent an important systems approach for the New Zealand Police to take action so that these positive experiences become those of all victim-survivors of family violence and sexual violence

Who we heard from

Our online survey received responses from **599** victim-survivors of family, partner or sexual violence, living throughout Aotearoa New Zealand, aged between 16 and 80+ years, from a range of socio-economic backgrounds and ethnicities (18% Māori, 5% Pasifika, 4% Asian, 61% Pākehā/NZ European, 14% ethnicities other than those already listed). The survey design included women, trans and non-binary participants; and participants included 523 women, 139 of whom disclosed they are sexuality diverse (i.e. described themselves with a term that signalled they were lesbian, asexual, bisexual, pansexual, Takatāpui or another term to signal not being straight); and 76 trans and non-binary people, including both transfeminine and transmasculine people. Sexuality diverse women and trans and non-binary people were most likely to describe themselves as bisexual (46%). For the purposes of reporting, the 384 women who did not disclose they were sexuality diverse or trans are the "Backbone sample".

Many participants reported having at least one disability including 39% of women in the Backbone sample, 60% of sexuality diverse women and 78% of trans and non-binary people. Most participants in the Backbone sample (79%), nearly half (47%) of sexuality diverse women and 29% of trans and non-binary people indicated they have children.

Participants were most likely to say that the person who hurt them and/or their children was a man. However, significant numbers of trans and non-binary people (27%) and sexuality diverse women (13%) said the person who abused or assaulted them was a woman.

Some victim survivors do not contact police even when they experience ongoing violence and abuse

There were 205 victim-survivors who had not had NZ Police involvement: 97 women in the Backbone sample, and 67 sexuality diverse women and 41 trans and non-binary people (the HTRK sample).

Victim-survivors must weigh up the perceived risks versus benefits of contacting the police for their specific context. The participants who had not contacted the police said they were:

- Worried the police would treat them badly (two thirds of women without police contact in the Backbone sample, 86% of sexuality diverse women and 74% of trans and non-binary people).
- Embarrassed or ashamed about what happened to them (over half of all those who did not contact the police).
- Afraid it would make their situation worse (37% of women in the Backbone sample, 25% of sexuality diverse women and 49% of trans and non-binary people).
- Afraid the police would not believe them (37% of women in the Backbone sample, 42% of sexuality diverse women and 44% of trans and non-binary people).

- Unsure if what happened to them was a crime (33% of women in the Backbone sample, 38% of sexuality diverse women and 49% of trans and non-binary people). Most participants who didn't know that what had happened to them was a crime described experiencing forms of violence and abuse included in the Crimes Act.

Police involvement can be ongoing and victim-survivors call because they need help urgently and hope police will protect them

There were 394 participants who had involvement with police after family and/or sexual violence, including 287 women in the Backbone sample, and 72 sexuality diverse women and 35 trans and non-binary people (the HTRK sample). For around half of survey participants their involvement with police had been within the last two years.

Three quarters of all participants in the Backbone and HTRK samples who had police contact said they reported the violence or abuse to police themselves.

Overwhelmingly, victim-survivors contact police because they want the violence and abuse to stop; they are scared, they need protection for themselves and/or their children and they want police to use their statutory powers to help make them safe. Many also want the person who used violence and abuse to be held to account in some way.

Many victim-survivors from both samples said they hoped police would use their unique statutory powers to physically protect them from violence and abuse. Hopes included:

- The abuser would be kept away from them (62% of women in the Backbone sample, 54% of sexuality diverse women and 72% of trans and non-binary people).
- Police involvement would scare the abuser and stop the violence (51% of women in the Backbone sample, 48% of sexuality diverse women and 40% of trans and non-binary people).
- The abuser would be arrested/prosecuted and sentenced (46% of women in the Backbone sample, 38% of sexuality diverse women and 48% of trans and non-binary people). Fewer Māori than non-Māori participants across both samples hoped the abuser would be arrested/prosecuted and sentenced.

75% of participants in the Backbone sample had police involvement on multiple occasions and over one third (37%) had police involvement five or more times. 63% of participants in the HTRK sample had multiple contacts, and nearly one in four victim-survivors (23%) had police involvement five or more times. Trans and non-binary people were most likely to have only one experience of police involvement (40%).

Police first response impacts on a victim-survivor's likelihood of contacting them again

Over a third of trans and non-binary people (37%), over a quarter of sexuality diverse women (28%) and 15% of women in the Backbone sample rated their first contact with NZ Police as very poor.

Only 3% of trans and non-binary victim-survivors gave their first contact with NZ Police a very good rating, compared with 17% of women in the Backbone sample and 18% of sexuality diverse women.

One quarter of women in the Backbone sample, 32% of sexuality diverse women and 40% of trans and non-binary people said their first experience with police stopped them from contacting police in the future.

Participants who said their first contact stopped them contacting the police in the future said the reporting process was traumatic and police minimised the violence and abuse; failed to take action, and enabled the abuser; blamed the victim; or treated victim-survivors badly due to their level of distress and/or gender including overt transphobia.

Police actions which made victim-survivors safer

Close to four in ten women in the Backbone sample (39%) and sexuality diverse women (37%), but only 15% of trans and non-binary people said police involvement made them a little or a lot safer.

Sometimes police took helpful actions including acting promptly, removing and arresting the abuser, following up by issuing Police Safety orders, enforcing no contact bail conditions or keeping the abuser in custody and returning children to their mother's care.

Some participants said police officers showed compassion, understanding about family and sexual violence and were supportive or provided practical support. Participants often mentioned that more experienced police seemed to understand their context better, and provide more respectful responses.

Victim-survivors appreciated police actions that made them safer including:

- Listening to and believing them
- Acting swiftly
- Arresting, charging, removing, catching or issuing a Police Safety Order against the abuser
- Providing information and referral to support services
- Women officers trained in domestic violence being present
- Ensuring their safety and that of their children

Victim-survivors with children said that police action that resulted in no contact between the children and the abuser made the children (and the participant) much safer.

When children had positive interactions with police (calm, reassuring, friendly and kind communication, validating the child's experiences, keeping the children informed and taking action to remove the abuser), children were more likely to trust police and have confidence in their ability to keep them safe.

Poor police responses were common, particularly for Māori, trans and non-binary people and disabled people

Unfortunately, participants described high levels of a range of unhelpful responses from police. Many regretted calling police because police had taken little or no action, and the police response was harmful to the victim-survivor.

Based on their recent experience with police just half the participants in the Backbone sample, 46% of sexuality diverse women and 26% of trans and non-binary people said they probably would contact police again.

Most participants had experienced bias or mistreatment from police (63% of women in the Backbone sample and 60% of sexuality diverse women and 79% of trans and non-binary people), based on a range of factors but most commonly, across both samples, because of being a victim-survivor and/or their gender.

Trans and non-binary people, wāhine Maori and disabled people were far more likely to say the police treated them very poorly and far less likely to say police used helpful behaviours. For example, trans and non-binary participants were three times as likely to say police made fun of them than sexuality diverse women and women in the Backbone sample. Wāhine Māori in the Backbone sample were less likely than non-Maori participants to say the police listened to them (40% vs 54%) and treated them with respect and dignity (37% vs 50%). Disabled participants were three times more likely to be accused of being mentally unwell by police than non-disabled participants.

Victim-survivors in both samples who said they were racially profiled, experienced the use of racist language or racist attitudes or said police ignored or failed to understand their ethnicity and culture were overwhelmingly Māori and Pasifika people.

Overall, nearly half of participants (44%), said police minimised the violence and abuse and 30% said police took the side of the abuser.

Only about a half of sexuality diverse women and women in the Backbone sample, and a third of trans and non-binary people said the police believed them.

Close to a quarter of women participants but just one in eight trans and non-binary people said police understood family and sexual violence.

Sometimes police provided additional support to victim-survivors. A third of women in the Backbone sample, a quarter of sexuality diverse women and 20% of trans and non-binary people said police connected them with other support services. A small number of women but no trans and non-binary people said police stayed with them until they felt safe/other services arrived.

Police responses did not meet victim-survivors' specific hopes

For most victim-survivors who said they hoped police involvement would keep the abuser away from them, stop the abuser hurting them and/or prevent the abuser from having any contact with them in the future, police involvement did not achieve those hopes.

The hopes of victim-survivors had little to no correlation with (or likely impact on) action taken by the police. For example, whether victim-survivors hoped for an arrest or a warning or not, the rate at which police took that action remained the same.

Arrest rates of abusers were low overall (24% of women in the Backbone sample, 13% of sexuality diverse women and 12% of trans and non-binary people reported abuser arrest). Despite being less likely to hope for arrest, wāhine Māori in the Backbone sample (37%) were more likely to say the abuser was arrested than tauiwi women (22%).

Half of participants were given a reason by police for not arresting the abuser. Police reasons mostly indicated lack of arrest was due to poor police approaches to and understandings of family violence and sexual violence, including: victim blaming and/or not believing victim-survivors, or choosing not to pursue arrest based on police perceptions of an unlikely prosecution.

Police Safety Orders were not made in most cases.

Many victim-survivors hoped that the person who hurt/abused them or their child/ren would be connected with social support services when they called the police. However, this hope was realised in only 2% of cases across participants.

Police involvement often made victim-survivors and their children less safe and made their situation worse

Of great concern was that police involvement made many victim-survivors less safe, especially trans and non-binary people, wāhine Māori and disabled participants. One in four women in the Backbone sample, 29% of sexuality diverse women and 51% of trans and non-binary people said police involvement made them *less* safe.

Victim-survivors were far more likely to say police involvement made no difference to their children's safety or their children were made less safe than they were to say their children had been made a little or a lot safer after police involvement.

Victim-survivors reported that when police take no action, children are made less safe.

Victim-survivors were also more likely to say police involvement made things worse for them than better. More than a third of women in the Backbone sample (37%), 44% of sexuality diverse women and close to two thirds of trans and non-binary people (62%) said things were either much worse or a bit worse after police contact.

Of victim-survivors who said police involvement made things worse, nearly all trans and non-binary people (90%), two-thirds of sexuality diverse women (67%) and over half of Backbone participants (58%) said they were more frightened after contact with the police.

Nearly a third (32%) of women in the Backbone sample, 29% of sexuality diverse women and 50% of trans and non-binary people said police involvement made things a bit worse or much worse for their children.

Only about a third of women participants in both samples but just 20% of trans and non-binary people said the police had made things better for them.

Over a quarter of women in the Backbone sample, close to one third of sexuality diverse women and 42% of trans and non-binary people who said police involvement made things worse for them were threatened or harmed by associates of the abuser.

A significant number, particularly trans and non-binary people, were punished or banished by their friends/family/whānau /community and some were made less safe as their information was shared with the wider community or the abuser.

Of those who said police involvement had made things worse for them, one third of participants in the Backbone sample and 15% of the sexuality diverse women and trans and non-binary people said Family Court professionals now saw them as a trouble maker/making up the abuse/seeking revenge as a result of police involvement. Some said a notification was made to Oranga Tamariki about their children and some said they lost access to their children.

One third of trans and non-binary people (32%) also reported being "outed" as trans or non-binary without their consent and 21% had their sexuality "outed" without their consent.

Poor police responses involving little action emboldened the abuser

Chillingly, most participants said police involvement had ***not*** disrupted the abusive behaviour, but had made the abuser more abusive. Many participants said police took no action towards the abuser.

Nearly half of Backbone participants and trans and non-binary people, and close to four in ten sexuality diverse women (38%) said involving the police showed the abuser that they could get away with using violence or abuse. Abusers were emboldened by police involvement which involved little or no police action, which put the victim-survivor in greater danger. In some cases, police inaction also reduced support from people around the victim survivors because there was a perception that if the police were not taking it seriously, victim-survivors did not need or deserve support.

Victim-survivors described police responses that supported the abuser and resulted in violence and abuse escalating as the abuser saw they could get away with using violence and/or retaliated for police involvement. For many participants this was a result of police failing to take action in response to the violence and abuse including failing to arrest, prosecute, respond to breaches of orders, or discouraging victim-survivors from making a statement. In about a third of cases in both samples, abusers used police involvement to further harm the victim-survivor by taking revenge on them for contacting police or making out to police the victim-survivor was abusive/violent and presenting themselves as the victim, particularly for women in the Backbone sample.

Recommendations:

Survey participants made a variety of practical suggestions for changes they believe would improve police responses to victim-survivors, children and perpetrators of family violence and sexual violence, which have been incorporated into our recommendations.

Recommended police actions to improve the police response to family violence and sexual violence

Honour the need for change

To recognise the current police response and culture is not working for victim-survivors but an improved police response could make a substantial difference to victim-survivor safety and prevent further violence and abuse:

1. Meet quarterly with the report writers to discuss the findings, recommendations and recommendations' implementation.
2. Share the report and its findings with relevant police staff and trainers.
3. Consult with Te Pūkotahitanga - the Tangata Whenua Ministerial Advisory Group to discuss the findings of this report and how to prioritise an appropriate police response to tangata whenua who experience family, whānau and sexual violence that is governed and led by, and for, tangata whenua in the best interests of their whānau, hapū, iwi.

To understand and eliminate the differences between family violence and sexual violence policies and implementation and practice on the ground:

4. Resource a wide investigation into the perceived barriers to implementation of current NZ Police policies.
5. Establish an advisory group of representatives from community organisations who work with family and sexual violence victim-survivors to consult regarding policy and training developments.
6. Engage victim-survivors in future design of NZ Police family violence and sexual violence policy and trainings.

In order to both acknowledge the past and look to the future:

7. Acknowledge the impacts of historical police culture on community perceptions and contemporary police culture, particularly in relation to racism, misogyny, ableism, homophobia, biphobia and transphobia, including bullying.
8. Develop skills and recruit staff appropriate for contemporary Aotearoa that is increasingly ethnically and culturally diverse, increasingly aware of disabilities, including neurodivergence, and increasingly accepting of sexuality and gender diversity.

Establish a specialist family violence police unit

To ensure expertise in responding to family violence is resourced, supported, readily available and respected:

9. Set up a national specialist family violence policing unit with teams in all police districts.
10. Develop workforce pathways for officers with commitment to working in family violence and sexual violence areas that acknowledge the specialist and demanding nature of the work.
11. Develop professional development and equitable renumeration rates for officers specialising in family violence and sexual violence.
12. Develop relationships and competencies across police family violence and sexual violence teams, in particular to build recognition and increase effective responses to intimate partner sexual violence and child sexual abuse in family violence contexts.

13. Build police responses based on the eight best practice responses to victim-survivors including:
    - Understand family and sexual violence and the tactics of people who use violence and abuse
    - Understand that psychological harm is violence
    - Put victim-survivor safety at the centre of everything police do
    - Take family and sexual violence seriously
    - Understand the impact of the violence or abuse on victim-survivors
    - Believe victim-survivors
    - Understand that victim-survivors cannot always do the things police want them to do because that might make them less safe
    - Understand and respond to victim-survivor specific needs relating to their culture, religion, disability, sexuality and gender

To ensure victim-survivors have access to support and advocacy to improve their safety independent of the police:

14. Resource independent advocates to work alongside police when responding to family violence and sexual violence.
15. With community guidance, identify gaps inside police-community collaborations, and allocate resources to meet those gaps to ensure all victim-survivors have access to specialist support.
16. Encourage training in police-community collaborations in working with disabled, ethnic, and Rainbow and Takatāpui victim-survivors.
17. Establish places alternative to police stations to report family violence and sexual violence staffed by specialists who are not police officers.

To ensure police processes are serving the needs of Māori and diverse communities:

18. Increase the use of Te Reo Māori by police officers.
19. Employ enough specialist women police officers to adequately cover victim-survivor need for such.
20. Ensure access to Diversity Liaison officers for Takatāpui and Rainbow victim-survivors.
21. Ensure access to Ethnic Liaison Officers and interpreters to assist understanding and support where their presence could be of benefit.
22. Establish Police Liaison Officers with expertise in the needs and accommodations required for disabled people. Ensure that police have access to trained NZSL interpreters, supported decision making advocates and others required to ensure accessibility.
23. Increase police resources to respond to family violence and sexual violence in rural and small urban areas.

Create a victim-survivor-centred approach

To centre the needs, safety and wellbeing of victim-survivors and children:

24. Listen to and believe victim-survivors and children, treat them well and allocate more officer and staff time to family violence and sexual violence cases.
25. Prioritise victim-survivor safety - act swiftly, remove the abuser, involve victim-survivors in risk assessments and prioritise children's safety.
26. Use police statutory powers including arrest, enforcing no contact bail conditions and Police Safety Orders to respond actively to abusers to protect victim-survivors and children and prevent further abuse, regardless of Family Court matters or orders in place.
27. Provide access to paramedic or medical support and community support workers if needed.
28. Use a trauma and violence informed response.
29. Resource and provide tools for victim-survivors such as phones, and services to identify and remove stalking apps and devices.

30. Improve police waiting areas and interview rooms to ensure they are safe, accessible, welcoming and warm for all victim-survivors, including children.
31. Provide victim-survivors with access to safe and appropriate accommodation if needed.
32. Apply a perpetrator focus that upholds the safety of victim-survivors and children including prioritising actions which prevent an abuser having contact with the victim-survivor and children.

To ensure police and court processes serve the needs of the victim survivor:

33. Improve existing police roles to better respond to the needs and safety of victim-survivors as set out in this report including:
    - Front counter staff
    - 111 call takers
    - Attending police officers
    - Detectives
    - Prosecutors
    - Forensic teams
    - Child protection teams
    - Family harm teams
    - Adult sexual assault teams
    - Crisis assessment teams.

34. Improve evidence gathering techniques for family violence and sexual violence to improve the likelihood and success of prosecution.
35. Develop processes to ensure victim-survivors have the information they need set out in easy to understand and portable formats that explain police processes, their rights, and likely steps and stages.
36. Keep victim-survivors regularly updated on case developments and outcomes.
37. Uphold victim-survivors' privacy and only share their information with others with their express consent – enhancing victim-survivor control over these processes is the antidote to victimisation.
38. Share information with the Family Court if requested by the victim-survivor.

To ensure police processes are serving the needs of diverse communities:

39. Be respectful of diverse identities and experiences including practicing cultural safety, ensuring accommodations for disabled victim-survivors, and asking about sexuality and gender identity and using correct names, titles, genders, and relationships.
40. Attend and prioritise training and skills development in working with diverse victim-survivors to assist with recognising violence in specific contexts.
41. Provide accessible information for diverse communities about their options, including pathways for help and alternatives to criminal justice system responses.
42. Prioritise connections and referrals to safe and specialist community organisations, particularly those communities currently under-served by family and sexual violence services (ethnically diverse communities, disabled communities, Takatāpui and Rainbow communities).

Establish specialist training for police

To ensure all police responses to family violence and sexual violence are safe and appropriate:

43. Ensure all police have a thorough understanding of family violence and sexual violence – types and dynamics of violence and of abuse, including experiences of women and children, Māori, Pasfika and Asian people, ethnic people, disabled people and Takatāpui and Rainbow people; abuser behaviours, attitudes and range of backgrounds; and the impact of violence and abuse on victim-survivors and children including trauma related responses.

44. Ensure officer training includes improving the safety of children, including taking allegations of abuse seriously.
45. Provide training for officers on how to undertake risk assessments for the primary aggressor that consider the wider context and are informed by how abusers generally behave, and ensure this training includes assessing for diverse relationships, sexualities, and genders, and an understanding of unconscious bias regarding ethnicity.
46. Ensure trainings on family violence and sexual violence are informed by specific communities and reflect the experiences and needs of victim-survivors including Māori, Pasifika and Asian people, disabled people, ethnic people, Takatāpui and Rainbow people.
47. Ensure training is available for all police who might come into contact with victim-survivors, including front counter staff/111 call takers, front-line police, family harm co-ordinators, child protection, and sexual assault teams.
48. Train both Diversity Liaison Officers and Ethnic Liaison Officers in family violence and sexual violence, to allow them to act as safe bridges to police inside their communities.

Promote the importance of the right response every time

To codify the improvement of police response to family violence and sexual violence:

49. Improve staff understanding of the existing police family violence policy and adult sexual assault policy and expectation around implementation.
50. Improve police record keeping and internal police communication within teams and districts about family violence and sexual violence.
51. Establish a national monitoring system to track police responses at a local level to highlight good and poor practice, and provide specialist input to improve practice where necessary.
52. Resource an independent victim-survivor organisation to undertake yearly audits of police responses to family violence and sexual violence and allow diverse victim-survivor voice to inform monitoring and evaluation.

To ensure police responses to family violence and sexual violence are consistently coordinated with appropriate responses from other non-police responders:

53. Work with other organisations to enhance protection for victim-survivors and children.
54. Work with community organisations to enhance referral of abusers to social services to address the violence and abuse, mental health issues and/or drug and alcohol issues.

Introduction

Everyone in Aotearoa, New Zealand has a right to be safe and live without fear or violence. Unfortunately, for many women and trans and non-binary people, that right is not realised, nor is it protected or restored when they are victims of family violence and/or sexual violence. These crimes are heavily gendered, both in terms of who perpetrates and who is victimised. Current research shows that women and trans and non-binary people are more likely than cis men to experience family violence and sexual violence and, when they do, it is most likely to be perpetrated by a man. In addition, women, trans and non-binary people are more likely to targeted for violence if[1] they are Māori[2], Pasifika, from migrant or refugee communities, disabled[3], and/or sexuality diverse, particularly bisexual[4].

The New Zealand Police (the police) and our laws have vital roles to play to uphold our society's firm understanding that family violence and sexual violence are not OK; that they are criminal acts which will not be tolerated and will be punished. We rely on the police to enact the protections against family violence and sexual violence in our legislation, and to respond safely and appropriately to serve the needs of victim-survivors. The police are expected to play the important and unique role of both protecting victim-survivors and the wider public and also helping to hold perpetrators/abusers to account through the criminal justice system. They are uniquely resourced with statutory authority and powers to achieve these two outcomes.

Both internationally and locally, researchers, policy makers and community advocates recognise that listening and responding to the voice of lived experience is critical in ensuring that our system responds in the safest and best way possible to family and sexual violence. Victim-survivors hold valuable insights about system responses, and increasingly, this is valued inside New Zealand government strategic thinking[5]. To date victim-survivors have not been widely consulted about police responses to family and sexual violence. However, help-seeking may perversely put victim-survivors at risk of further harm from systemic racism, misogyny, ableism, transphobia, biphobia and/or homophobia. The Backbone Collective (Backbone) and Hohou Te Rongo Kahukura (HTRK) recognise both the value of lived experience and the importance for victim-survivors that the police response is safe and does not

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[1] See for example:
Ministry of Justice (2023) New Zealand Crime and Victims Survey. Key findings – Cycle 5 (2021/22). NZ: MoJ.
Ministry of Justice (2022) New Zealand Crime and Victims Survey. Cycle 4 (2021/22) survey findings. NZ: MoJ.
Ministry of Justice (2020) New Zealand Crime and Victims Survey, Experience of Crime by Sexual Orientation, Cycle 1 and Cycle 2, March 2018 – September 2019. NZ: MoJ.
Triggs, S., Mossman, E., Jordan, J., and Kingi, V of the Crime and Justice Research Centre, Victoria University of Wellington (2009) Responding to sexual violence Attrition in the New Zealand criminal justice system. NZ: Ministry of Women (Manatū Wāhine)

[2] Wilson, D., Mikahere-Hall, A., Sherwood, J., Cootes, K., & Jackson, D. (2019). E Tū Wāhine, E Tū Whānau: Wāhine Māori keeping safe in unsafe relationships. NZ: Taupua Waiora Māori Research Centre, AUT

[3] Hager, D. (2017) Not inherently vulnerable: An examination of paradigms, attitudes and systems that enable the abuse of dis/abled women. Doctoral dissertation, University of Auckland.
Te Kāhui Tika Tangata Human Rights Commission (2021) Whakamanahia Te Tiriti, Whakahaumarutia te Tangata (Honour the Treaty, Protect the Person): Violence and abuse of tāngata whaikaha Māori in Aotearoa New Zealand Evidence and recommendations December 2021. NZ: TKTT-HRC

[4] Dickson, S. (2016) "Doing our best for LGBTIQ survivors", in Good Practice Responding to Sexual Violence. NZ: TOAH-NNEST.
Dickson, S. (2016) Building Rainbow communities free of partner and sexual violence. NZ: Hohou Te Rongo Kahukura.
Veale J., Byrne J., Tan K., Guy S., Yee A., Nopera T. & Bentham R. (2019) Counting Ourselves: The health and wellbeing of trans and non-binary people in Aotearoa New Zealand. NZ: Transgender Health Research Lab, University of Waikato. See: www.countingourselves.nz/2018-survey-report

[5] See: Te Aorerekura: National Strategy to Eliminate Family Violence and Sexual Violence (2021).

cause further harm. Therefore, we undertook to gather experiences of police responses and recommendations for an improved response from women and trans and non-binary victim-survivors. With support and input from our advisory group, we built and released an online survey to gather as many victim-survivor experiences and recommendations as possible[6].

This report details responses from 599 victim-survivors and provides valuable insights about why victim-survivors do not contact police; what they hope will happen when they do contact police; and the impacts on victim-survivors, their children and the person who hurt them (the abuser) of the actions police took. We explore the ways in which victim-survivors are treated by police, and discuss responses that are helpful and harmful. We present victim-survivors' recommendations about how to improve police responses, specific police roles, information sharing and other practical help police could offer. We also present victim-survivors' thoughts on training needs for the police workforce in order for police to respond safely and effectively to family violence and sexual violence, and to diverse groups of victim-survivors. Suggestions for improving the structural and cultural context of the NZ Police are provided. We have included a final chapter which identifies and describes ethnic women's experiences of the police response as shared by social workers from our advisory group member Shama Ethnic Women's Trust.

Victim-survivors participated in this survey in high numbers and shared incredibly detailed answers. They clearly valued the opportunity to share their experiences and suggestions. For sexuality diverse women, and trans and non-binary people, this is the most comprehensive material about police responses to family and sexual violence in Aotearoa to date.

We believe victim-survivors have 'opted in' to this survey in these ways because they want a system that responds better not only to them and their children, but also to every other victim-survivor who may need help in the future. We are committed to centring and honouring the diverse voices of victim-survivors, so this is not a short report. We have deliberately included over two hundred anonymised quotes to highlight the themes that emerged from our analysis. Some themes come through in multiple chapters of the report; we believe this repetition serves as a reminder of the importance of these themes. Victim-survivors shared sobering and distressing experiences of police failure to protect them and to hold abusers to account. These failures often led to further system failure as a result. Participants have shown incredible bravery and generosity in sharing their experiences, and we hope that police and Te Puna Aonui respond positively and constructively to the findings and recommendations in this report.

[6] Our advisory group consisted of Waikato Women's Refuge Te Whakaruruhau, Shama Ethnic Women's Trust, Debbie Hager – disability advocate, Kathryn McPhillips – sexual violence expert and Ruth Busch and Neville Robertson – family violence experts.

Chapter 1: Background and Approach

Background

In 2019, 60% of victim-survivors responding to a Backbone survey[7] said they had reported violence and abuse to the Police. However, many said their experience with police was poor, including officers who: did not believe them; minimised the risk these women faced; did not arrest the offender; and/or judged/blamed them for being victims. Participants made recommendations to improve services for victim-survivors, although these recommendations were not specific to the police. Similarly, in 2021 Backbone released another survey[8] for victim-survivors to guide the development of the Government's National Strategy to Eliminate Family Violence and Sexual Violence[9], and responses again highlighted the need for improved police response to victim-survivors.

As NZ Police invest in new initiatives to improve the response to victim-survivors of family violence and sexual violence in communities around New Zealand, Backbone believes it is critical that any changes are driven by the needs of victim-survivors. Backbone therefore approached the Strathlachlan Fund seeking support to find out more from women victim-survivors about their experiences with the police and their recommendations for an improved police response. Backbone was also keen to hear from sexuality diverse women, trans and non-binary victims-survivors for this project, recognising there was a need to understand specific experiences inside Takatāpui and Rainbow communities, so approached specialist organisation Hohou Te Rongo Kahukura to work together in developing the survey questions, reaching Takatāpui and Rainbow victim-survivors, and analysing the survey results.

Hohou Te Rongo Kahukura gratefully accepted this opportunity to collaborate to meaningfully highlight the experiences of sexuality diverse women, trans and non-binary victim-survivors. Te Aorerekura acknowledges that discrimination, stigma and exclusion are important context for violence towards people in Takatāpui and Rainbow communities, who are more likely to experience intimate partner violence (IPV), other family violence, and sexual violence, including LGBT+ women being four times more likely than women overall to be targeted for sexual violence[10].

However, seeking legal remedies to IPV, family violence or sexual violence for people in Takatāpui and Rainbow communities is challenging due to significant distrust of the police. Reporting may require a victim-survivor to come out or disclose aspects of their relationship, body or gender history, which may not feel safe or desirable. Concerns include fears or experiences of: explicit discrimination; not feeling like violence is taken seriously; practices which have failed to identify perpetrators; and misgendering and deadnaming of trans and non-binary victim-survivors. The specific cultural context of racism and colonisation also means Takatāpui and Rainbow people who are tangata whenua, Pasifika or from ethnic communities face additional barriers to engaging with the police[11].

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7 The Backbone Collective (2020) Victim-Survivor Perspectives on Longer-Term Support After Experiencing Violence an Abuse A report prepared for the Ministry of Social Development. NZ.

8 The Backbone Collective (2021) Victim-Survivor Feedback on The Government's National Strategy and Action Plans to Eliminate Family and Sexual Violence: A report prepared for the Joint Venture Business Unit. NZ.

9 Te Aorerekura: National Strategy to Eliminate Family Violence and Sexual Violence. (2021).

10 Ministry of Justice (2023) New Zealand Crime and Victims Survey. Key findings – Cycle 5 (2021/22). NZ: MoJ. Cycle 5 includes trans people for the first time. LGBT+ includes trans people and those who identified as gay, lesbian, bisexual or having another sexual identity.

11 Dickson, S. (2016) "Doing our best for LGBTIQ survivors", in Good Practice Responding to Sexual Violence. NZ: TOAH-NNEST.

In addition, there is a lack of specific information and specific services bridging to the police for people in Takatāpui and Rainbow communities experiencing family violence or partner violence.

For these reasons, HTRK was keen to uplift the experiences and voices of Takatāpui and Rainbow victim-survivors who did not seek help from the police, as well as those who did. We were also concerned about specific, systemic concerns about police treatment of trans and non-binary people more broadly, including police failing to use correct names or pronouns/genders, and police violence[12]. In one large New Zealand study, almost one in ten trans and non-binary people reported being harassed or assaulted by police for being trans or non-binary[13].

These and related concerns have led to calls from Te Kāhui Tika Tangata Human Rights Commission for the police to address their treatment of trans people more broadly[14]. This report therefore explores the responses of trans and non-binary participants as a group.

About Us

The Backbone Collective

Backbone was launched in March 2017 to enable women to safely and anonymously tell the Government, others in authority, and the public about how the 'system' responded to them when they experienced violence and abuse, and how they need it to respond for them to be safe and rebuild their lives. Backbone is an independent organisation and a registered charity with the New Zealand Charities Commission. Our purpose is to contribute to the continuous improvement of the response system in New Zealand so that it works well to support and protect women and their children when they experience violence and abuse. We run online surveys to collect anonymous feedback from women survivors (service users) about different parts of the response system. We share reports about the findings of these surveys with recommendations for how the system can work more safely.

Dickson, S. (2016) Building Rainbow communities free of partner and sexual violence. NZ: Hohou Te Rongo Kahukura.

Veale J., Byrne J., Tan K., Guy S., Yee A., Nopera T. & Bentham R. (2019) *Counting Ourselves: The health and wellbeing of trans and non-binary people in Aotearoa New Zealand. NZ: Transgender Health Research Lab, University of Waikato*. See: www.countingourselves.nz/2018-survey-report

Pihama, L., Green, A., Mika, C., Roskrudge, M., Simmonds, S., Nopera, T., Skipper, H., & Laurence, R. (2020) Honour Project Aotearoa. NZ: Te Kotahi Research Institute

Bal, V., and Divakalala, C. (2022) Community is Where the Knowledge is: the Adhikaar Report. NZ:Adhikaar Aotearoa.

12 See for example the 2022 Indepdendent Police Conduct Authority report: "Excessive use of force and inadequate post-injury care in Counties Manukau Custody Unit" available on the IPCA website

13 Veale J., Byrne J., Tan K., Guy S., Yee A., Nopera T. & Bentham R. (2019) Counting Ourselves: The health and wellbeing of trans and non-binary people in Aotearoa New Zealand. NZ: Transgender Health Research Lab, University of Waikato. See: www.countingourselves.nz/2018-survey-report

14 Walton, F. (2022) "Human Rights Commission urges police to address treatment of transgender people" 13 July 2022, NZ: RNZ.

Hohou Te Rongo Kahukura

Hohou Te Rongo Kahukura is a charitable trust with a focus on building Takatāpui and Rainbow communities free of family, partner and sexual violence. We operate with a Te Tiriti structure, are survivor-led and include people with many different sexuality, gender, ethnicity, class and disability identities. We also include allies who support Takatāpui and Rainbow belongings.

We carry out collaborative research and community development projects and offer in-person and online training – Rainbow Safe – to support specialist violence response agencies to become safe places for Takatāpui and Rainbow survivors to ask for help. We also run healthy relationships programme Club Kahukura, and the Rainbow Wellbeing Network for professionals and volunteers working in social services and healthcare. Our website kahukura.co.nz has resources for Takatāpui and Rainbow survivors, their friends and family/whānau, and violence response and prevention kaimahi.

Hohou Te Rongo Kahukura currently receives disclosures and requests for support from Takatāpui and Rainbow survivors because there is no specialist funded service in Aotearoa. We are not currently funded for this work and can only respond within voluntary capacity.

Survey Design

We set out to design an advanced online survey that could gather experiences (quantitative and qualitative) throughout Aotearoa New Zealand from as many women, trans and non-binary victim-survivors of family violence and/or sexual violence as possible, in an anonymous and safe way. We used reliable survey software provided through Alchemer (formerly Survey Gizmo) to create the survey. We wanted to give participants the opportunity to share detailed experiences on the police response, and their ideas for how to improve that response, so we included a mix of open text options and drop-down questions.

The survey was comprehensive and had two pathways; one for victim-survivors who *had* police involvement regarding their experience of family violence and/or sexual violence, and one for those who had *not* had police involvement. Police involvement could be from a victim-survivor contacting the police themselves, or from someone else contacting the police, including without the victim-survivor's knowledge and/or against their wishes.

For survey participants who had had contact with the NZ Police after experiencing violence and abuse, the survey was designed to record their voice on:

- Why they called the police (reporting behaviours/motivations)
- **Hopes**: what actions/responses they want the police to take (expectations/needs/best practice)
- **Reality**: what response they received from police – including interactions with officers, outcome of call out (arrests, police safety orders, warnings, prosecutions etc.), responses to children, cultural understandings, any perceived listening and prioritisation, any referrals to other services, any discrimination, and any resulting safety
- **Turning hopes into reality**: what improvements in police responses could be made to help victim-survivors and children be safer (different system or processes, training of officers, processes for information sharing and keeping, arrest policies, prosecution policies, other ideas).

For survey participants who had not called police, the survey sought to find out more about why they had not done so, what barriers were present and what police responses they would like. (This analysis is the subject of Chapter 2).

The survey questions were based on Backbone and Hohou Te Rongo Kahukura experiences of supporting victim-survivors, and tested and refined with our advisory group to ensure the survey was inclusive and used intersectional language and approaches. The advisory group provided valuable input on the survey questions and design during a one-day workshop and via email. The survey was then tested by five diverse victim-survivors and their feedback incorporated into our final design.

The survey included four compulsory questions upfront designed to screen for participant eligibility. To take part in the survey participants were required to:

- Either choose one of the following options to describe their gender: woman, non-binary, Takatāpui, trans woman, trans man, or questioning/unsure; or introduce another (non-survey-listed) descriptor for their gender
- Be aged 16+
- Currently live in Aotearoa New Zealand and/or to have done so at the time the violence and/or abuse happened; and
- Have experienced family violence and/or sexual violence (please see glossary and terminology section).

Safety for participants

At every stage of the survey development, analysis and write up of findings, the safety of victim-survivors has been at the forefront of our approach. We built features into our survey to provide a survey experience that was clear, provided comprehensive information about how the collected data would be used, who would have access to it and what would happen to it. To help participants make an informed choice about whether or not to participate, we included information up front providing an overview of what the survey would cover and why and in what order we were asking those questions. In recognition that the survey was long and asked participants to reflect on experiences that could be distressing, we built a 'save and continue' button into the survey design and encouraged participants at regular stages throughout the survey to use this function. Furthermore, an anonymous survey provides a safe way for victim-survivors to share their experiences, greatly reducing the risk that they will experience retaliation from the person who hurt them, their community or any state agencies they might have interactions with.

To further protect participants, where we have included quotes in this report, we have used multi-ethnicity groupings (Māori; Pākehā; Pasifika; Asian: Another ethnicity)[15] rather than specific identities (e.g. Pasifika rather than Samoan). We have indicated sexuality and gender identities where known but we have not included region, age or disability status, and we have not included quotes which describe details of the person who harmed the participant, or names of places, people or organisations which might be identifying. We have also not included quotes where there is only one person with the identity markers selected. These precautions are safeguards to ensure participant safety and confidentiality while we seek to uplift the voices of diverse victim-survivors.

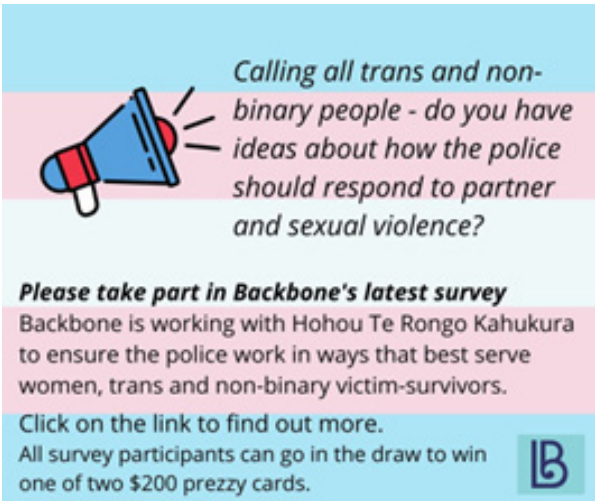
15 Another ethnicity refers to participants who identified as MELAA (Middle Eastern, Latin American, and/or African), other European and those from specific ethnic backgrounds inside other countries and those who used the 'other' option to describe their ethnicity.

Survey dissemination

The survey went live on 1 September 2022. The survey link was distributed through a number of channels via Backbone and Hohou Te Rongo Kahukura networks, including newsletters to members, on Facebook (including paid Facebook advertising), in email correspondence to social services organisations throughout the country and through media coverage to promote the survey to sexuality and gender diverse people[16]. As an incentive to attract participants, a prize draw of two $200 Prezzy Cards was available which participants who completed the survey could opt into.

The survey was open for 8 weeks and closed on 31 October 2022.

Examples of social media ads inviting participants.



16 See for example Johnston, K. (2022) "Transgender, non-binary abuse victims asked for experiences with police". 19 September 2022 NZ: Stuff

Survey analysis: a dual approach

Survey responses were divided into two samples, based on self-reporting of gender and sexuality identities, to ensure a specialist lens for analysis and reporting: the Backbone sample and the HTRK sample. The Backbone sample (384 responses) includes participants who chose the 'woman' option to describe their gender and who also either chose 'straight' to describe their sexuality or did not provide sexuality information. The HTRK sample (215 responses) includes all those within the survey's target population who gave gender responses other than 'woman' (trans and non-binary people) as well as those who did choose the 'woman' option and who also chose one of the following to describe their sexuality: lesbian, asexual, bisexual, pansexual, Takatāpui or another term to signal not being 'straight'.

Participants were asked to describe their gender with a selection of set options, and the ability to self-identify using their own words if they wished. The options were: Woman; Man; Non-binary; Takatāpui; Trans woman; Trans man; Don't know/Questioning/Unsure; I use another term. We did not offer 'cis woman' as an option, as 'cis' is not always understood outside of specific Rainbow, urban, younger, Pākehā and middle-class contexts. As well as trans and non-binary people, we were also seeking responses from women who belonged to diverse ethnic, location, age and class contexts, most of whom were not part of organised Takatāpui and Rainbow communities. Based on free-text answers we believe trans women participants have self-identified as 'trans woman', 'transfeminine' or another term in these survey responses. Our analysis assumes all trans women have self-identified, given that participants were voluntary, anonymous and knew the experiences and voices of trans and non-binary people were a key focus of the project.

Therefore, the final report weaves findings from both the Backbone and HTRK samples together, allowing us to highlight differences between our samples and issues specific to certain groups of participants.

The breakdown of our survey sample is shown below:

Table 1: Breakdown of survey sample

Cohorts	Number of participants	Sample
Straight women	371	Backbone sample
Women who did not provide their sexuality	13	Backbone sample
Women with diverse sexualities	139	HTRK sample
Trans and non-binary people	76	HTRK sample
Total Survey sample	**599**	

Throughout this report, when referring to distinct groups, we use specific terms relevant to that group, such as trans and non-binary people, or Māori participants. In some places we reflect on meaningful differences in experiences of police response for participants from different gender, sexuality, ethnicity and disability cohorts, as well as different police experiences for those experiencing different types of violence. The report also includes quotes from victim-survivors with different lived experiences, highlighting the themes that emerged from survey responses from participants with many intersections of identity.

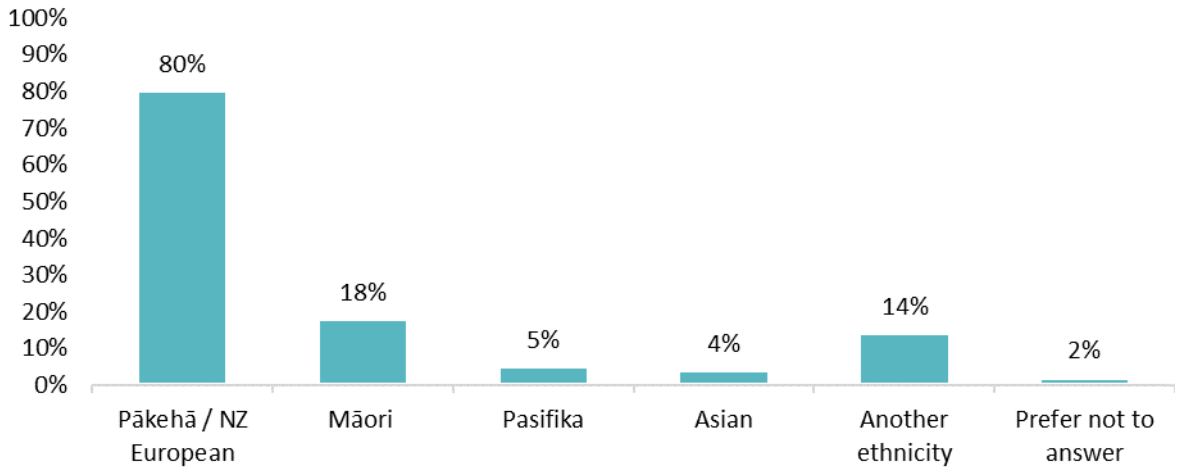
Survey sample size and broad demographics

We received 599 valid responses from victim-survivors that have been used to create the following report.

Survey responses came from throughout Aotearoa New Zealand, from participants in both rural and urban environments, from a range of socio-economic backgrounds[17]. Around one in every five survey participants identified with two or more ethnicities (slightly more for the HTRK sample, although otherwise the samples were similar in ethnicity demographics).

We heard from victim-survivors from many ethnicities although the majority (80%) identified at least one of their ethnicities as Pākehā/NZ European, while 18% identified as Māori[18]. Overall, 61% of survey participants solely marked Pākehā and no other ethnicity. In the Backbone sample, 242 participants (63%) solely marked Pākehā and no other ethnicity. In the HTRK sample 122 participants (57%) solely marked Pākehā and no other ethnicity. The proportion of responses from Pasifika and Asian victim-survivors was lower than the proportion of Pasifika and Asian people in the national population.

Figure 1: Survey sample by ethnicity (742 responses from 598 respondents[19] ; percentages do not equal 100%)



Note: 'Another ethnicity' includes participants who identify as MELAA (Middle Eastern, Latin American, and/or African), other European and those from specific ethnic backgrounds inside other countries not already included in the multi-ethnic categories as explained previously.

Participants were aged between 16 and 80+ with the highest proportion of participants aged 26 - 55 years, and the HTRK sample being significantly younger than the Backbone sample. Overall, two thirds of participants have children (either dependent or over 16) but there are differences in numbers of participants who have never had children between our samples: only 20% of the Backbone sample have never had children, compared to 53% of

17 Participants were asked to Imagine a scale ranging from 1 to 5 stars that represents all people living in Aotearoa New Zealand. At the bottom (1 star) are those who are seriously struggling and don't have enough to make ends meet. At the top (5 stars) are the wealthiest - they have more than enough. They were asked to select where they fit on this scale.

18 Participants were able to select more than one ethnicity. Therefore, the percentages do not total 100%. We had 742 responses to the ethnicity question. Participants who selected 'Māori' and other ethnicities have been coded as Māori for attributing ethnicity to quotes, and in comparisons of Māori and tauiwi cohorts throughout the report.

19 One participant did not answer the ethnicity question.

the sexuality diverse women in the HTRK sample and 70% of the trans and non-binary people in the HTRK sample. Many participants, particularly in the HTRK sample (64%) but also in the Backbone sample (39%), reported living with health conditions or a disability.

For more detailed demographic information, see Appendix 1 (Backbone sample) and Appendix 2 (HTRK sample).

Police involvement

In total, around two thirds of our survey particpants had involvment with police that related to their experience of family violence and/or sexual violence. However, the HTRK sample was reasonably evenly balanced between those who had police contact, and those who did not, while 75% of the Backbone sample had had contact with the police, as shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Numbers of participants with and without police involvement

	Backbone sample women	Sexuality diverse women	Trans and non-binary people	Total participants
No Police Involvement [20]	97	67	41	**205**
Police involvement	287	72	35	**394**

Participants who reported police involvement were asked how long ago their most recent or significant experience of police involvement was regarding family violence or sexual violence[21]. Around half of these participants, in both samples, experienced relatively recent police involvement, i.e. within the previous two years; and around one fifth of both samples said they had experienced police involvement within the previous six months (since March or April 2022). These findings mean our results provide useful current insights on the police response to victim-survivors of family violence and sexual violence. Just over a quarter of both the Backbone sample and the HTRK sample said they experienced police involvement more than five years ago.

Gender of abuser

Regardless of whether participants had experienced police involvement or not, we asked them in open text to name the gender of the person who hurt them and/or their children. There were no differences in gender of abuser between those who had police involvement and those who did not.

Most participants reported the person who hurt them and/or their children was a man/male[22] , although there were some differences between our samples which are outlined below. Importantly, the harmful and transphobic narrative that trans people, especially women, are more likely to be abusers was not supported by this research. No participants reported abuse from a trans woman.

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20 If participants said they were unsure if police were involved they were included in the 'No police involvement' cohort. This included one Backbone participant and four HTRK participants.

21 Of those who had experienced police involvement, 278 (of a possible 287) Backbone participants and 105 (of a possible 107) such HTRK participants answered this question.

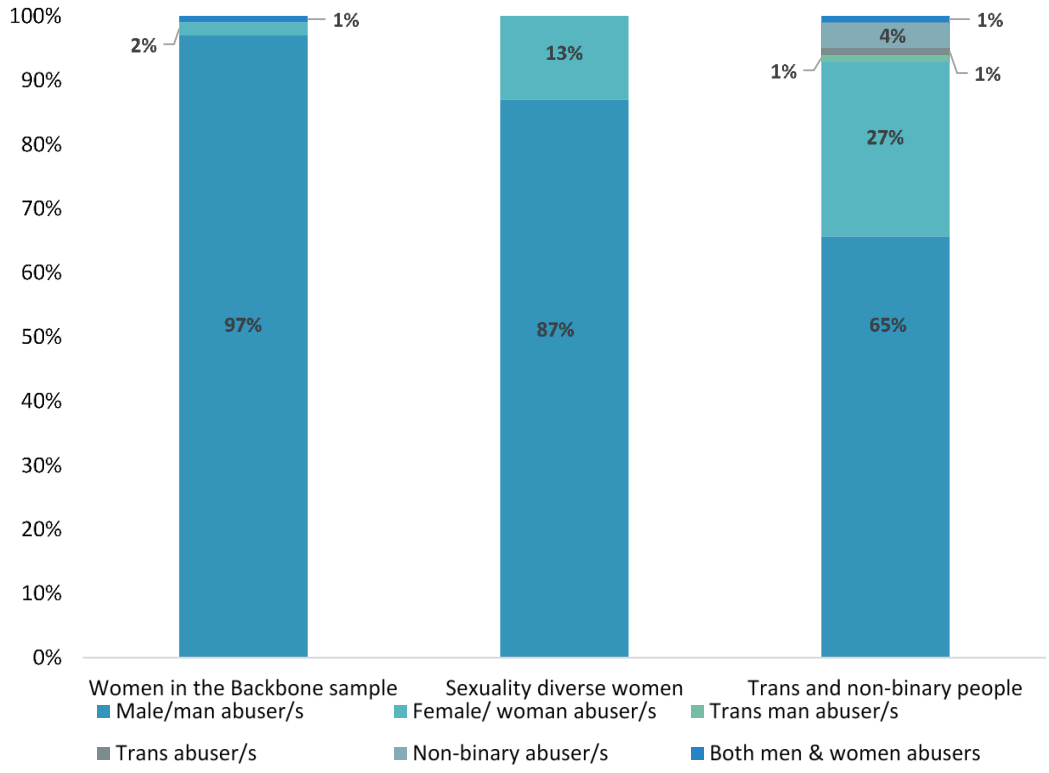
22 The terms 'man' and 'male' are used interchangeably throughout this section and reflect the different labels survey participants used in their responses.

The overwhelming majority of people who abused and/or hurt victim-survivors in the Backbone sample were described as male, men or similar (97%)[23]. Women were the abuser in 2% of responses, and Backbone participants said they were abused by both men and women in 1% (n=2) of the responses[24].

More than three quarters of participants in the HTRK sample said the person who hurt them was a man/male (79%) although there were significant differences between sexuality diverse women victim-survivors, and trans and non-binary victim-survivors. Sexuality diverse women of all sexualities were far more likely to have male abusers (87%) than other abusers. Nearly two thirds of trans and non-binary people (65%) also reported male abusers. This included trans women, trans men and non-binary people with a range of sexualities.

However, about one in five (18%) of all HTRK participants said the person who hurt or abused them was a woman. This included 13% of sexuality diverse women and over one in four (27%) trans and non-binary people. Women abusers were also reported by people identifying with the full range of sexuality identities. A very small minority of trans and non-binary victim-survivors reported abuse from another trans person. No sexuality diverse women, and no straight women (in the Backbone sample), reported violence or abuse from a trans or non-binary person.

Figure 2: Gender of abuser as reported by victim-survivors, by victim-survivor group (n=577; Due to rounding the total for trans and non-binary people is less than 100%.)



23 There were 365 responses to this question from the 384 total participants in the Backbone sample. Of these women, 360 identified as being 'straight' and 5 either did not answer the sexuality question, or selected 'prefer not to answer'. Participants used the terms male, male-cis, man, m, boy, woman, female, female child to describe the gender of the person who hurt or abused them. There were 212 responses from the 215 total participants in the HTRK sample who used the following terms to describe the gender of the person who hurt them: man, male, cis man, cis male, cisgender male, woman, cisgender female, cis woman, female, non-binary, trans, trans man, group of men and women.

24 It is unclear from the responses if these two participants experienced violence and abuse from males and females on one occasion or if these participants were referring to experiences of violence and/or abuse at different times in their life.

Participants who indicated their children had experienced violence and/or abuse were asked the gender of the person who had abused or hurt their children. Overwhelmingly the gender of the person who hurt participant's children was male. Of the 77 responses to this question by women in the Backbone sample, 75 (97%) said the abuser of their child/ren was a male/man, one said a woman and one said a child hurt their child. In the HTRK sample, of the 22 responses to this question, all 15 sexuality diverse women (100%) and four trans and non-binary people (57%) said the abuser of their children was male. The other three trans and non-binary people (43%) said the abuser of their children was female.

For those who had police contact, women in the Backbone sample overwhelmingly reported male abusers across all violence contexts of intimate partner violence, other family violence and sexual violence, including violence towards children. The context was different for sexuality diverse women, and particularly for trans and non-binary people. Both these samples included participants who reported female abusers within intimate relationships, within families and within non-familial sexual violence contexts. However, male abusers were still more commonly reported by every group for every form of violence.

Relationship context of violence experienced by survey participants

Only survey participants who had police involvement were asked to name the relationship context of the violence and abuse they had experienced (so we do not have this data for participants who reported no police involvement). Those with police involvement were asked to select an option from a drop-down list to describe the relationship in which the violence and abuse had occurred on the occasion that police were involved (most recent or significant). There were some differences in the contexts of violence and abuse between the Backbone sample and the HTRK sample, as shown in Table 3 below, and discussed here.

The Backbone sample

Nearly three quarters (73%) of participants in the Backbone police-involvement sample, discussing the most recent or significant event for which police were involved, reported violence or abuse perpetrated on themselves by an intimate partner or ex-partner, and 19% reported violence or abuse by an intimate partner or ex towards a child. Not shown in Table 3 below: nearly three quarters (73%) of those reporting this form of violence towards a child also said they themselves had experienced violence or abuse from an intimate partner or ex[25]. A smaller number of participants reported police involvement due to violence perpetrated by family or whānau member/s (sibling, parent, extended whānau) towards themselves or their child (12%) and 13% said police were involved about non-familial sexual violence (NFSV) towards them or their child. Some participants (22%) selected more than one context in which the violence and abuse happened[26].

HTRK sample

Responses in the HTRK sample were different from the Backbone sample in that higher rates of participants reported forms of violence other than IPV. They also differed between sexuality diverse women and trans and non-binary people. Half of sexuality diverse women (50%) had police involvement on this occasion relating to violence or abuse perpetrated by an intimate partner or ex-partner, compared with one in four (26%) of trans and non-binary people. Half of trans and non-binary people (49%) and one in five sexuality diverse women (20%) said police were involved about non-familial sexual violence or abuse towards them.

One third of trans and non-binary people (34%) and 17% of sexuality diverse women said police involvement was due to violence from a family or whānau member who was not an intimate partner. Trans and non-binary people, more than three-quarters of whom reported at least one disability, were more likely to have had police involvement due to violence and abuse from a carer. Smaller numbers of participants in the HTRK sample had police involvement due to violence towards children.

Twenty-one participants offered more context about police involvement via free text. Notable in these responses were descriptions of sexual violence in the forms of historical child sexual abuse, sexual violence towards children or themselves from partners or ex-partners (9% of all participants). In addition, several trans and non-binary people described experiencing violence, including property damage from strangers, acquaintances and in flatting situations[27].

Throughout this report we will reflect on any differences in terms of responses from police or recommendations for better police practice between the participants from these different relationship context cohorts. When we talk about family violence and sexual violence more generally throughout this report we intend family violence to include intimate partner violence. When we discuss differences between relationship contexts in which violence and abuse occur as part of our analysis we refer to family violence as relating to violence and abuse perpetrated by family or whānau member/s (sibling, parent, extended whānau) other than intimate partners.

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25 There is a high correlation between intimate partner violence, and violence and abuse towards children. Police report that in approximately 70 percent of family units where IPV exists, the children are also direct victims/survivors of some form of violence (Murphy et al (2013) "Understanding connections and relationships: Child maltreatment, intimate partner violence and parenting" NZ: NZ Family Violence Clearing House.

26 There were 39 participants in the Backbone sample who provided more detail in an open text box. Of these participants, 56% had also selected a type of violence or abuse from the drop-down list provided. The remaining 44% described the context of the relationship and these have been included in the percentages above. There were four participants who selected 'other' but did not provide more information. Many of the participants who left comment in the 'other' option detailed the types of violence and abuse they or their children had experienced.

27 These participants described violence and abuse from people close to them in other parts of the survey.

(Intimate partner violence - IPV, family violence - FV, non-familial sexual violence - NFSV).

Table 3: Relationship context of violence or abuse police were responding to on most recent or significant occasion (n=380)

Relationship context of violence or abuse	Backbone sample women n= 275	Sexuality diverse women n= 70	Trans an non-binary people n= 35
Violence or abuse from my intimate partner or ex towards me	73%	50%	26%
Violence or abuse from my intimate partner or ex towards a child	19%	7%	3%
Violence from a family or whānau member (not an intimate partner) towards me	9%	17%	34%
Violence from a family or whānau member (not an intimate partner) towards a child	3%	9%	3%
Violence or abuse from a carer	1%	1%	9%
Sexual violence or abuse towards me by someone who is not an intimate partner or family or whānau member (NFSV)	10%	20%	49%
Sexual violence or abuse towards a child by someone who is not a family or whānau member (NFSV)	3%	1%	3%
Other - please tell us more	15%	19%	26%

Limitations

Both lead writers for this project are Pākehā cis women, with differing sexuality and disability identities. The survey tool was collaboratively developed and reviewed by our advisory group and diverse survivors connected to Hohou Te Rongo Kakukura and Backbone. Survey findings were analysed within the writing team, workshopped with our advisors and reviewed by survivors connected with Hohou Te Rongo Kahukura, enabling us to position those themes into context for different victim-survivor groups (e.g. trans and non-binary, disabled, Māori, ethnic and migrant and those experiencing non-familial sexual violence).

Backbone and Hohou Te Rongo Kahukura understand that online surveys have limitations as information gathering tools. They require victim-survivors to have access to a safe device and internet connection, trust in sharing personal stories and potential participants may face language or communication barriers. To partly address these limitations, and the potentially small number of responses we would receive from some population groups, we asked advisory group member Shama Ethnic Women's Trust to identify and describe ethnic women's experiences[28] of the police response as shared with social workers. This information is included in this report in Chapter 10.

We recognise that we heard from fewer Pasifika, Asian and MELAA (Middle Eastern, Latin American, African) participants than Aotearoa New Zealand population levels, and so we sincerely hope this report can be used by victim-survivor groups to advocate for further, targeted specialist research[29]. As the differences we have identified in this report between different cohorts highlight, we need to recognise the diverse experiences of both violence and help-seeking for different victim-survivor populations.

While we would like to report on differences between police districts throughout our report, it is not clear that where survey participants currently live is where they lived when the police were involved therefore, we cannot report regional differences in actions police took with confidence.

28 The Ministry for Ethnic Communities defines ethnic communities as Asian, African, Continental European, Latin American and Middle Eastern.

29 Taken from 2018 Census data see Stats NZ (n.d.) "Pacific Peoples Ethnic Group" webpage

Glossary and terminology

The following terms used throughout this report are defined as follows:

Family Violence (FV) involves coercive and controlling behaviour and can include psychological abuse (including financial), physical abuse, and/or sexual abuse and is perpetrated by family or whānau member/s (sibling, parent, extended whānau) or an intimate partner or former intimate partner. Throughout this report 'family violence' includes intimate partner violence.

Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) relates to violence and abuse (including sexual violence and child sexual abuse) that occurs within an intimate partner (ex) relationship including with a:

- Partner or ex-partner
- Someone the victim-survivor were/are dating
- The other parent of their child/ren whom they were never in a relationship with.

Sexual violence (SV) includes anything sexual done to someone without their consent. It includes unwanted touching or kissing, rape, being forced to do sexual acts you don't want to do, attacks on sexual parts of your body, being forced to watch pornography and having sexual images of yourself distributed to others without your consent.

Non-Familial Sexual Violence (NFSV) relates to sexual violence/abuse perpetrated by someone who is not an intimate partner, an ex-partner, or a member of someone's family or whānau.

Victim-survivor is the person who experienced/was subject to an act or series of acts of family violence from one or more of the following:

- Their partner or ex-partner
- Someone they were/are dating
- The other parent of their child/ren whom they were never in a relationship with
- Another family or whānau member.

OR the person who experienced/ was subject to sexual violence from anyone.

Abuser is the person who used violence and/or abuse against the victim-survivor.

Whānau refers to a person's self-defined support networks.

Tauiwi participants are survey participants who are non-Māori.

Takatāpui and Rainbow is the umbrella term we use to describe people whose innate sex characteristics, gender identity or expression, or sexuality differ from majority, binary norms. Takatāpui and Rainbow communities include people with innate sex characteristics that do not fit normative medical or social ideas for male or female bodies; people who have a gender identity that does not match the sex they were assigned at birth, including people who do not fit typical binary gender norms; and/or people who are not heterosexual. Takatāpui is an ancient Māori term to embrace culture, spirituality, and connection to ancestors, as well as diverse sex characteristics, gender identities and expressions, and sexualities[30].

30 Elizabeth Kerekere (2017) "Part of the Whānau: The Emergence of Takatāpui Identity – He Whāriki Takatāpui". Doctoral Thesis, Victoria University of Wellington.

Rainbow relationships are any relationships that include at least one person from the Rainbow community. This definition is wider than 'same-sex' relationships as abuse towards asexual, bisexual and trans people in different-gender relationships includes biphobia and transphobia.

Gender, or gender identity, is the deeply felt internal sense of being masculine/male, feminine/female, a mixture of both, or neither. Gender is individual and self-determined and may be the same as, or different from, the sex you are assigned at birth by doctors. When your gender aligns with the sex you were assigned at birth, you are cisgender or cis, which just means "same."

Trans and non-binary people is an umbrella phrase for people whose gender does not match with the sex they were assigned at birth. Though common terms, identity words mean different things to different people, as language is changing all the time. Like cisgender people, trans and non-binary people are diverse in many ways. A trans woman, or a woman who was assigned as a boy at birth, may simply describe herself as a woman. A trans man, or a man who was assigned as a girl at birth may simply describe himself as a man. Not all cis people use the adjective 'cis' and not all trans people use the adjective 'trans'. Some non-binary people do not describe themselves as trans and/or they use other words such as 'genderfluid' or 'gender diverse'. There are also Indigenous and ethnic specific terms for gender diversity which may be preferred, such as Takatāpui, whakawahine, tangata ira tane and ira tangata.

Cisnormativity describes the common assumption that a person's gender is always determined by their sex assigned at birth. (When your gender aligns with the sex you were assigned at birth, you are cisgender or cis, which just means "same.") Cisnormativity is related to the belief that cisgender identities are better than transgender identities, or even that trans people are not real. Cisnormativity creates the systemic invisibility or lack of acknowledgment of gender diversity. Transphobia describes more overt acts of violence towards trans people and/or the idea of transgender, motivated by negative beliefs about what it means to be trans or non-binary.

One of the most common forms of discrimination towards trans and non-binary people is **misgendering** or referring to a trans person using an incorrect name, title or pronoun. Using someone's old name is called **deadnaming**. For example, trans women being referred to as men, mister or he; trans men being referred to as women, miss or she; and non-binary people being referred to in binary gendered ways rather than non-binary and the pronoun of their choice. Being consistently misgendered is harmful for trans and non-binary people's sense of themselves and has significant negative impacts on mental health. In the context of responses to violence and abuse, it may also mean trans women are stopped from accessing protections and services available for other women.

Sexuality diverse women is an umbrella term for women who do not identify themselves as heterosexual. This may include women who describe themselves as lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, asexual, gay, queer and/or other terms. Sexuality in this context simply relates to who someone is attracted to, and ways that attraction works for them. Sexuality may be fluid or change over time for many people.

Heteronormativity describes the common assumption that heterosexuality or attraction to those of the "opposite" gender is normal[31]. Heteronormativity is related to the belief everyone is or should be heterosexual, so heterosexual relationships are normal and therefore superior. **Homophobia** describes more overt acts of violence towards people and markers of non-heterosexual identities, motivated by negative beliefs about what it means to be gay, lesbian,

31 The word "opposite" is in quotations because it misrepresents gender diversity and is an example of cisnormativity or treating trans identities, especially non-binary identities, as less valid or real. We use "different" instead, to refer to relationships between people of different genders.

bisexual or another non-heterosexual identity. This includes assumptions and acts which treat people who are not heterosexual as oversexed, predatory and deviant. **Biphobia** describes overt acts of violence, motivated by negative beliefs about people who feel attractions and may have relationships over their lifetime with people of diverse genders. This includes assumptions and acts which treat bisexual and other people attracted to more than one gender as confused, promiscuous or deceitful.

Cisnormativity, transphobia, heteronormativity, homophobia and biphobia all affect the way gender-diverse and sexuality diverse people are treated by society, including inside community organisations, families and relationships. Discrimination and stigma may also be internalised. All are important for understanding abusive behaviour inside Rainbow relationships, sexual violence towards Takatāpui and Rainbow people, and improving responses to family violence and sexual violence for those in Takatāpui and Rainbow communities.

The lack of specific funded services for Takatāpui and Rainbow victim-survivors of family violence, intimate partner violence and sexual violence in Aotearoa New Zealand is an example of cisnormativity and heteronormativity.

SECTION 1

SURVEY FINDINGS

Chapter 2: Victim-survivors with no police contact

This chapter discusses responses from 97 victim-survivors in the Backbone sample, and the 108 victim-survivors in the HTRK sample who have not had or don't know if they have had police involvement. This includes responses from 41 trans and non-binary victim-survivors (54% of trans and non-binary participants) and 67 sexuality diverse women victim-survivors (48% of sexuality diverse participants)[32].

Forms of violence and abuse experienced

We asked survey participants who had not had police involvement to select from a list of drop-down options the forms of violence and abuse they had experienced (see Table 4 for the options list). We understand that victim-survivors may have experienced multiple forms of violence and abuse throughout their lifetime from multiple abusers. However, participants were asked to focus on just **one person** who has used violence or abuse against them and/or their children (the person that seemed most relevant to them) while they answered the survey questions. Therefore, the participants may have experienced more types of violence in their lifetime than shown in Table 4.

Participants were able to select as many options as they wanted and an 'other' open text option was available to describe experiences in more detail.

Participants who had not had police involvement were not asked about the context of violence, so responses may include partner violence, non-familial sexual violence, and violence that may have been experienced inside their family of origin when they were a child, including child sexual abuse.

It was common for participants to say they had experienced more than one type of violence and abuse, fitting with typical patterns of coercive control rather than the idea of one-off acts of violence or abuse. Overall, participants reported an average of more than three forms of abuse per person. However, some participants in both samples experienced only one form of abuse, and where this was the case, it was most likely to be sexual abuse or sexual assault in both samples.

The experience of psychological/emotional abuse and/or coercive control was extremely common for survey participants (nearly three quarters of all participants who had not had police involvement) as shown in Table 4 below. Furthermore, many were isolated from friends, family or faith groups, some experienced reproductive coercion, experienced litigation abuse and some had their medications or devices related to their health condition withheld by the abuser. While these acts of abuse are not currently recognised as criminal acts in Aotearoa New Zealand, they are included in the Family Violence Act and provide grounds for obtaining a Protection Order and are relevant to the consideration and granting of Care of Children Act orders[33].

Of significance is that many of the participants without police involvement experienced an act/s of violence and/or abuse that *are* included in the Crimes Act and are therefore acts of abuse that police could respond to and potentially provide immediate protection and/or prosecution.

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32 Where there are differences between the responses of sexuality diverse women and trans and non-binary people, these are discussed and highlighted in tables, figures and commentary.

33 See the Family Violence Act 2018 on the NZ legislation website

Of those without police involvement, over half of women in the Backbone sample and nearly two thirds of participants in the HTRK sample had experienced sexual abuse or assault. Nearly half of women in the Backbone sample and more than a third of people in the HTRK sample indicated they had experienced physical violence. Many had property destroyed by the abuser, experienced social media/online abuse, said their children experienced violence from this abuser and/or said the abuser harmed their pets.

There were nine participants who provided open comment about the violence and abuse they had experienced. These responses included stalking, abduction and threats to kill, using legal and court processes to continue the abuse and psychological abuse, verbal abuse, dragging and shoving, and physical threats.

For the HTRK sample without police involvement, sexuality diverse women and trans and non-binary people reported some differences in experiences of violence and abuse. As shown in Table 4 below, trans and non-binary people reported the highest rates of social media/online abuse. This figure should be understood in the context of increasing transphobia online[34]. Trans and non-binary people also reported higher rates of experiences of destroying property, with-holding medication or devices, psychological abuse and physical violence compared with sexuality diverse women.

Sexuality diverse women without police involvement reported the highest rates of sexual abuse or assault (70% compared to 54% of trans and non-binary people and 53% of the Backbone sample). All asexual women and three-quarters of bisexual and pansexual women without police involvement reported experiencing sexual assault. For trans and non-binary victim-survivors, rates of sexual assault were similar across different genders, but sexuality made a difference. Bisexual and asexual trans and non-binary people reported the highest rates of sexual assault (75%), followed by just under two-thirds of pansexual trans and non-binary people (63%).

Women in the Backbone sample without police involvement were more likely to experience financial abuse (39%) than particpants in the HTRK sample (24%).

Table 4: Forms of violence and abuse experienced by participants with no police involvement (n=205)

Forms of violence and abuse	Backbone sample women n= 97	Sexuality diverse women n= 67	Trans and non-binary people n= 41
Psychological or emotional abuse/coercive control (e.g. name calling, constraint, mind games, passport or visa control, being prevented from connecting with community, being outed without my consent)	74%	69%	78%
Sexual abuse or assault (unwanted touching or kissing, rape, being forced to do sexual acts you don't want to do, being forced to watch pornography, having sexual images of yourself distributed to others without your consent)	53%	70%	54%

34 See, for example, the work of the Disinformation Project, tracking the impact of recent visit from British anti-trans spokes person Kellie-Jay Keen-Minshull aka Posie Parker: Hattotuwa, S., Hannah, K. and Taylor, K. (2023) Transgressive transitions: Transphobia, community building, bridging, and bonding within Aotearoa New Zealand's disinformation ecologies March-April 2023. The Disinformation Project. () Transphobia online has been on the rise for some time.

Isolation from my family, friends or faith groups	46%	33%	37%
Physical violence	44%	36%	44%
Financial abuse (including dowry abuse and/or theft by a partner or carer)	39%	25%	22%
Destroying property	24%	16%	32%
Social media/online abuse (abusive or unwanted text/email/Facebook etc. messages, online stalking/hacking/sharing of images without consent)	19%	18%	39%
Violence against my child/ren (including physical, sexual, verbal or psychological abuse)	16%	8%	10%
Reproductive coercion (e.g. hiding contraceptive pills, refusing to use a condom, forcing me to have an abortion – or banning me from having one)	12%	8%	5%
Litigation/legal abuse (using the court process to further harass me)	12%	6%	5%
Harming pets	9%	12%	12%

Reasons for not contacting the police

There are many reasons why victim-survivors may not contact police when either they or their child/ren experience family violence and/or sexual violence, including choosing to protect themselves and their children from further and escalating abuse. For Takatāpui and Rainbow victim-survivors, not contacting the police might also be due to specific concerns and barriers around fears and earlier experiences of discrimination, stigma and exclusion related to their sexuality or gender[35].

Participants were asked to select from a wide-ranging list of drop-down options which included 27 possible reasons for not contacting police. The options encompassed considerations around their safety, the response they might receive from the police and impacts for themselves, their children, community or the abuser. Overall, trans and non-binary people on average reported more reasons for not contacting the police per person (5.7) than sexuality diverse women (4.7) and women in the Backbone sample (4.8)[36].

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35 See for example:
Dickson, S. (2016) "Doing our best for LGBTIQ survivors", in Good Practice Responding to Sexual Violence. NZ: TOAH-NNEST.
Dickson, S. (2016) Building Rainbow communities free of partner and sexual violence. NZ: Hohou Te Rongo Kahukura.
Veale J., Byrne J., Tan K., Guy S., Yee A., Nopera T. & Bentham R. (2019) Counting Ourselves: The health and wellbeing of trans and non-binary people in Aotearoa New Zealand. NZ: Transgender Health Research Lab, University of Waikato. See: www.countingourselves.nz/2018-survey-report
Ministry of Justice. 2020. New Zealand Crime and Victims Survey, Experience of Crime by Sexual Orientation, Cycle 1 and Cycle 2, March 2018 – September 2019, Wellington: Ministry of Justice.

36 There was only one drop-down option that was not selected by any of the participants in the Backbone sample. That option is "Worried I would lose my children because of my sexuality or gender'. A later question in the survey asked participants why they were worried police might treat them badly and 19% of participants in the Backbone sample said it was because of their gender. All Backbone sample participants identify as women. There was just one option that was not selected by any participant in the HTRK sample - 'I didn't speak English well enough.'

Space was provided for participants to give more detail about their reasons in an 'other' open text option and 24 participants in the Backbone sample and 15 in the HTRK sample did so.

The dropdown options shown in Table 5 can be grouped into themes which provide a comprehensive picture as to why victim-survivors are not contacting police when they experience violence and abuse. Those themes are discussed below Table 5.

Table 5: Reasons for not contacting the Police for survey participants with no police involvement (n=200)

Reasons for not contacting the Police	Backbone sample women n=94	Sexuality-Diverse women n=65	Trans & non-binary people n=41
I felt embarrassed or ashamed about what happened to me	52%	60%	49%
I did not think they could help	45%	43%	51%
Calling police would make things worse and/or less safe	37%	25%	49%
I did not think the police would believe me	37%	42%	44%
I didn't know what happened to me was a crime	33%	38%	49%
My experience was not serious enough to contact the police	33%	48%	39%
I was worried that my friends/family/whānau /community would react badly	31%	25%	24%
I was scared of what would happen to the person who abused/hurt me	26%	22%	32%
I didn't know the police could help	25%	25%	32%
I did not trust the police	21%	23%	44%
I was worried that my friends/family/whānau /community would punish or banish me	21%	17%	20%
I did not want police to have my personal information or share it with other agencies	16%	17%	7%
The person who hurt me threatened to hurt me or my child/ren if I contacted the police	13%	6%	0%
I was afraid that I would lose my children or have less access to them	13%	6%	5%
I was worried it would impact my work	11%	11%	15%
I had earlier bad experiences with the police	10%	12%	15%
I didn't want Oranga Tamariki (CYFS) to become involved	9%	8%	12%

A police officer is mates with, or related to, the person who used violence or abuse	6%	2%	2%
Other people like me have been hurt by police	6%	12%	29%
My family socialise with the police	4%	2%	5%
I did not want to come out [37]	4%	2%	20%
I was afraid of being charged for failing to protect my child/ren	3%	5%	2%
Don't know/hard to say	3%	2%	0%
I was worried that I would have my visa or resident permit cancelled and have to leave the country	2%	3%	2%
I didn't speak English well enough	2%	0%	0%
I was scared of coming to the attention of the immigration services	1%	2%	2%
I was involved in activity that I did not want the police to know about	1%	6%	5%
I worried I would lose my children because of my sexuality or gender	0%	2%	2%
Prefer not to answer	1%	0%	2%

Victim-blaming myths

Over half the participants in both samples said they did not contact police because they felt embarrassed or ashamed about what happened to them. This was highest for sexuality diverse women (60%), followed by women in the Backbone sample (52%), then trans and non-binary people (49%).

Experiences of family violence and sexual violence place a heavy burden on victim-survivors, often including feelings of shame, embarrassment and guilt about what has happened to them. These feelings are largely the result of victim-blaming myths that circulate at every level of society including the media, popular culture, statutory responses to family violence and sexual violence, and the ways violence is understood in communities and within whānau and families[38].

In addition, Takatāpui and Rainbow victim-survivors are often trying to name experiences of violence which do not fit 'mainstream' understandings of family, partner and sexual violence. For example, New Zealand's protection around sexual harm allows people to report harm regardless of gender or sexuality. However, existing legal definitions of 'rape', the most used colloquial term for sexual violation, require penetration of a vagina by a penis. This does not fit experiences of women experiencing sexual harm from a woman; men experiencing sexual harm from other men; the experiences of many trans and intersex victim-survivors[39].

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37 There were four participants in the Backbone sample who selected one of their reasons for not contacting police as being because they 'did not want to come out'. These participants all identified as women and three identified as being heterosexual/straight. One participant preferred not to answer the question about sexuality.

38 McDonald, E., (2020), Rape myths as barriers to fair trial process: comparing adult rape trials with those in the Aotearoa Sexual Violence Court Pilot, University of Canterbury.
For domestic abuse myths see Shine's "Myths and Facts" webpage

39 McDonald, E., Byrne, J., & Dickson, S. (2017). "The significance of naming harm for trans women: Defining rape in

Even for trans women, bisexual women and other sexuality diverse women experiencing violence from male partners, violence takes specific shape inside societal beliefs and practices which treat Takatāpui and Rainbow bodies, lives and relationships as less worthy and important than cis, heterosexual bodies, lives and relationships. This means cisnormativity and heteronormativity all help shape victim-blaming for Takatāpui and Rainbow victim-survivors in multiple ways – through the cultural scaffolding of discrimination, stigma, exclusion and violence towards Takatāpui and Rainbow people; through how violence is understood and excused inside Takatāpui and Rainbow communities; and through how Takatāpui and Rainbow people understand relationships and violence for themselves, which includes internalised stigma. Importantly, victim-survivor responses to this stigma may include not wanting Takatāpui and Rainbow communities to be seen negatively, which might include wanting to protect a partner from judgement – even when that person is behaving abusively.

Lack of clarity about acts of violence as crimes

For some participants the experience of violence and ongoing abuse made it difficult to make sense of their experiences and/or contact police.

> *I was so under his control contacting the police didn't even occur to me.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

Minimisation of violence and abuse at community and personal levels make it harder for victim-survivors to understand their experience and seek help, often thinking that their experience is not really that bad, or not bad enough[40]. One third of participants in the Backbone sample and just under one half of participants in the HTRK sample (44%) said their experience was not serious enough to contact the police. Of these participants, over a third (35%) in the Backbone sample had experienced physical violence, 48% had experienced sexual abuse or assault and 13% said their property was destroyed by the abuser. In the HTRK sample, almost one third (30%) had experienced physical violence, 64% had experienced sexual abuse or assault and 15% said their property was destroyed by the abuser.

Violence in same-gender relationships, if it is recognised at all, is often minimised as less serious, or more 'equal' than men's violence towards women. Rainbow relationships are frequently framed as less important or more frivolous than relationships between cis, heterosexual people. Trans people and bisexual people are also often seen as 'deceitful' about their identities if others assume they are cis, straight or lesbian/gay, and violence is therefore excused towards them when they share their identities with partners or others.

The minimisation of family violence and sexual violence can also impede victim-survivors' and their supporters' understanding of the criminal nature of the violence and abuse they have experienced thereby impacting on their decision to involve police. Of those who had no police involvement, one third of the participants in the Backbone sample, over one third (38%) of sexuality diverse women, and half of trans and non-binary participants (49%) said that they didn't know what happened to them was a crime. However, 84% of participants in the Backbone sample and 93% of participants in the HTRK sample who didn't know what had happened to them was a crime had experienced forms of violence and abuse included in the Crimes Act. This included sexual abuse or sexual assault, hysical violence, harming pets or social media/online abuse as shown in Table 6 below[41].

Aotearoa New Zealand". Representing trans, 104-34.,
McDonald, E. (2019) "Gender neutrality and the definition of rape: challenging the law's response to sexual violence and non-normative bodies", University of Western Australia Law Review Vol 45(2): 166.

40 See The Backbone Collective (2020) Victim-Survivor Perspectives on Longer-Term Support After Experiencing Violence and Abuse A report prepared for the Ministry of Social Development. NZ. Page 65.

41 Social media/online abuse is somewhat legislated against in Aotearoa New Zealand under the Harmful Digital Communications Act 2015 and the Harassment Act 1997. However, both these Acts are not considered fit for purpose by family violence and sexual violence advocates for responding to online abuse/stalking in family violence and sexual violence contexts. For a thorough discussion, see: Thorburn, N. & Jury, A. (2019) Relentless, not Romantic: Intimate Partner Stalking in

Table 6: Forms of violence and abuse included in Crimes Act experienced by survey participants with no police involvement who did not understand they were crimes (n=76)[42]

Forms of violence	Backbone Sample women n=31	Sexuality diverse women n=25	Trans and non-binary people n=20
Sexual abuse or assault	52%	64%	55%
Physical violence	35%	32%	30%
Social media/online abuse	16%	24%	40%
Destroying property	13%	12%	25%
Harming pets	10%	16%	10%
Violence against my child/ren	52%	8%	10%

Concerns about the police response

Contacting the police requires victim-survivors to weigh up the perceived risks versus benefits of potential police responses for their specific context. As with victim-blaming, Takatāpui and Rainbow victim-survivors may have additional identity-related concerns.

Contacting police might makes things worse and/or less safe

Of serious concern is that over a third of participants (37%) in the Backbone sample, one quarter of sexuality diverse women (25%) and half of trans and non-binary people (49%) said they did not contact police because they thought it would make their situation worse and/or less safe. One participant was told by her lawyer not to go to police as it would make her situation worse. In addition, victim-survivors in the HTRK sample, particularly trans and non-binary people, expressed specific concerns about how the police would treat them.

Lack of trust in police

For some participants a lack of trust in the police response to family violence and sexual violence prevented them from contacting the police. One fifth of participants in the Backbone sample, one quarter of sexuality diverse women (23%) and nearly half of trans and non-binary people (44%) reported they did not trust the police. Over a third of participants in the Backbone sample (37%) and slightly more participants in the HTRK sample (43%) said they did not think the police would believe them.

Just under one in three (29%) of trans and non-binary people said other people like them have been hurt by police; much higher than for sexuality diverse women (12%) or women in the Backbone sample (6%).

Aotearoa New Zealand. NZ: National Collective of Independent Women's Refuge Inc, Ngā Whare Whakaruruhau o Aotearoa. page. 119 for a thorough discussion.

Ill treatment or neglect of animals is a crime – see Animal Welfare Act 1999 on the NZ Legislation website

42 Four participants in the Backbone sample who said they did not understand the violence and abuse was a crime experienced both physical violence and sexual abuse/assault.

A small number of participants in both samples (10% of Backbone participants and 13% of HTRK participants) indicated they had earlier bad experiences with police which stopped them contacting the police after violence and abuse.

> *The police have only ever hurt the people I care about and never helped the right people.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

> *Police had not responded well to others i know of so i don't have evidence of their trustworthiness or effectiveness in dealing with this, and not just making things worse. I am middle class, and the violence i have experienced is easy to hide and disbelieve.* ***Pākehā queer woman***

> *While they might be able to help, I think they're more likely to help cis white men like my abuser rather than a Queer trans person like me.* ***Another ethnicity, gay trans man***

A number of participants explained they did not contact police because they did not believe they would be made safer or that the abuser would be held accountable. Some explained that they felt police action was unlikely due to a lack of evidence.

> *Too hard to prove with evidence let alone without.* ***Wahine Māori (straight)***

Others explained that the stress of reporting the violence to police would come at too high a cost for them and they just wanted to move on.

> *I just wanted to move on and I knew that I wouldn't be able to do that going to police.* ***Wahine Māori (straight)***

Others were concerned that police were unlikely to understand the severity and impact of the violence and abuse, and would believe the abuser rather than the victim-survivor; or that the abuser had resources and power which would make police action unlikely. One participant in the HTRK sample said they would not be believed because of who their abuser was in their community. Some described child sexual abuse or other forms of child abuse which they felt would not have been well understood or responded to by police.

> *I knew that if I reported the rape it would be stressful and I likely wouldn't have a positive outcome as he was a romantic partner. I didn't think they would care or do anything about the psychological abuse and I didn't think I'd be believed.* ***Pākehā sexuality diverse woman***

> *My ex is manipulative and they would believe his lies.* ***Wahine Māori (straight)***

> *The abuser earns a lot of money and have access to the best lawyers.* ***Another ethnicity straight woman***

> *I was too young to consider it and the person who sexually abused me was a family member.* ***Pasifika bisexual woman***

For some participants, their own or the abuser's relationship with police prevented them from contacting police regarding the violence and abuse they, or their children, had experienced. A small number of participants said a police officer is mates with, or related to, the person who used violence or abuse and some said that their family socialise with the police. Other participants commented that they felt the impact on the abuser would be minimal, including because successful prosecutions were unlikely; their abuser was known and liked by police so they doubted anything would happen to them; or that no action would be taken because coercive control was not a criminal act in Aotearoa.

> *If convicted of rape he'd only get a slap on the wrist anyway.* ***Pākehā straight woman***
>
> *I didn't think anything good would come of it but knew bad things might.* ***Wahine Māori (straight)***

Lack of information

Lack of information about the police role or statutory purpose in responding to family violence and sexual violence can also impact on victim-survivors' decision to contact police. Of those with no police involvement, one quarter of women in the Backbone sample and sexuality diverse women, and one third of trans and non-binary people said they did not contact the police because they did not know the police could help. Even more (45% of Backbone participants; 43% of sexuality diverse women and 51% of trans and non-binary people) said they did not think the police could help them. These responses all indicate lack of confidence or clarity in what the police may have to offer to victim-survivors of violence and abuse.

Information sharing by police could be dangerous

Some participants (16% of the Backbone sample and 13% of the HTRK sample, with no police involvement) were put off contacting the police because they did not want the police to have their personal information, or share this with other agencies. (See Chapter 7 for discussion regarding other survey participants' experiences of the lack of consent-seeking processes around routine information sharing in interagency networks.)

Concerns about the impact of contacting police

Survey participants with no police involvement reported they considered potential impacts of contacting police on their living situation, the safety of their children, the abuser and on their wider interactions with community including their workplace.

Concerns re abuser reaction

Some participants (13% in the Backbone sample and 4% in the HTRK sample of those with no police involvement) did not contact the police because they had been threatened by the abuser that they would hurt them, or their children if they contacted the police. Participants described in open text being threatened the abuser would hurt or kill them, their children, their family members, and/or their pets if they contacted police. Participants were also threatened that the abuser would contact agencies (e.g. Oranga Tamariki) and report false allegations[43].

> *I was very afraid to 'cross' him.* ***Pākehā straight woman***
>
> *I was scared my partner would make me out to be the crazy one and the police would believe him. Then he would take it out on me after and I would never be believed.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

43 Some participants described details about the person who harmed them.

Impact on children

Some participants in the Backbone sample were concerned about the impact on their children if they contacted the police. As well as concerns that the abuser might retaliate and hurt their children, some participants (13% of those with no police involvement) worried that they would lose custody or have less access with their children, and some (9%) did not want Oranga Tamariki to become involved[44]. A small number were afraid of being charged for failing to protect their child/ren if police became involved[45].

It is difficult to come to meaningful conclusions about the concerns of HTRK participants about the impacts of contacting police on parenting because just 27 sexuality diverse women and 11 trans and non-binary people reported ever having had child/(ren) in the sample of those with no police involvement. Participants in the HTRK sample who had ever had children reported not wanting Oranga Tamariki (CYFS) to become involved (16%); being afraid they would lose their children or have less access to them (13%); and being afraid of being charged for failing to protect their child/ren (11%), and 2% were worried they would lose their children because of their sexuality or gender.

Impact on their abuser

Of those with no police involvement, 26% of Backbone sample participants, 22% of sexuality diverse women and 32% of trans and non-binary people reported not contacting police because they were scared of what would happen to the abuser.

Impact on their community

Survey participants reported considering the impact of calling the police on those around them. Of those with no police involvement, nearly one third (31%) of participants in the Backbone sample and a quarter of participants in the HTRK sample were worried that their friends, family, whānau or community would react badly if they contacted police[46]. For around one in five participants in both samples this worry went further and they were concerned that people around them would punish or banish them for contacting police[47]. For those in the HTRK sample this wariness can be understood in the context of historical criminalisation of Takatāpui and Rainbow identities and ongoing discrimination, particularly for trans and non-binary people.

One in five trans and non-binary victim-survivors (20%) said they did not want to 'come out' and that stopped them contacting the police, compared to only 2% of sexuality diverse women.

Impact on work

Some participants (around 10% of those who had no police involvement, for both samples) did not contact the police because they were worried that contacting police about the violence and abuse would impact negatively on their work.

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44 Of participants in the Backbone sample who selected they did not want Oranga Tamariki involved, two from a possible 11 wahine Māori who have had children selected this option, and six from a possible 54 Pākehā participants.

45 Under Section 195A of the Crimes Act 1961, a person who has frequent contact with a child or vulnerable person and knows that the victim is at risk death, grievous bodily harm, or sexual assault and fails to take reasonable steps to protect the victim from that risk is liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 10 years if convicted.

46 Participants in the Backbone sample who worried their community would react badly if they contacted police came from a range of ethnicities including Māori, Pasifika, Asian, Another ethnicity, and Pākehā.

47 Two thirds of participants in the Backbone sample who said they were worried their community would react badly if they contacted police also said they worried their community would punish or banish them for doing so.

Impact on immigration and residency status

Only 32 survey participants with no police involvement did not identify as Māori and/or Pākehā NZ European, and of these, five did not contact the police as they were worried their visa or resident permit would be cancelled and they would have to leave the country or were scared of coming to the attention of Immigration services. A small number of participants in the Backbone sample (2%) said they did not feel they spoke English well enough to contact the police[48]. Chapter 10 offers more information regarding issues refugee and migrant women face in dealings with the NZ Police, based on the experiences of Shama Ethnic Women's Trust.

Worries the police would treat the victim-survivor badly

Victim-survivors consider their own personal circumstances when trying to decide whether to contact the police. We asked participants if they were worried the police would treat them badly based on a list of 17 drop-down options. The list included a wide range of options that covered personal identity and culture, environmental factors like financial and social status, relationships and factors related to the nature of the abuse/assault. Participants could also select that they were not worried the police would treat them badly.

Most survey participants with no police involvement who answered this question selected options from the drop-down option list, (see Table 7 below) and 19 participants in the Backbone sample and 10 in the HTRK sample provided open text responses to provide more detail. Overall, trans and non-binary people reported more worries per person (2.6) than sexuality diverse women (2.1), and women in the Backbone sample (1.8).

About a third (34%) of participants in the Backbone sample, a quarter (26%) of trans and non-binary participants and 14% of sexuality diverse women said they were not worried the police would treat them badly[49]. However, most victim-survivors did express a range of worries about how they would be treated by police, including fears of being treated badly due to: past experiences with police; family members' experiences of police; bad police behaviour; fears of being dismissed and/or disrespected; and impressions that police would not care for or understand their needs. Some participants commented that police are ill-equipped to deal with sexual violence. Themes are discussed further below.

Gender

One in five women in the Backbone sample (19%), one in three sexuality diverse women (33%) and nearly half of trans and non-binary people (46%) said they worried that police would treat them badly because of their gender.

There is substantial critique of police responses to women when they report family violence and sexual violence, and growing evidence of inadequate police responses to trans and non-binary people more broadly, as discussed earlier[50]. Women have told Backbone in previous surveys and communications that front-line police officers rely on gendered stereotypes that serve to minimise violence and excuse the perpetrator[51]. Gender concerns for sexuality

48 The survey was only offered in English and so could not capture a better indication of the quantity of this issue for victim-survivors who have English as a second language.

49 Of the 31 participants in the Backbone sample who were not worried police would treat them badly, 18 identified as solely Pākehā New Zealander, four as Māori, seven as Another ethnicity, one as Asian and one participant did not provide their ethnicity. Of the 19 participants in the HTRK sample who were not worried the police would treat them badly, 16 identified solely as Pākehā New Zealander, two as Asian and one as Māori.

50 See: Bazley, M. (2007) Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Police Conduct Volume 1 NZ: Commission of Inquiry into Police Conduct

Ministry for Women (2009) Restoring Soul: Effective Interventions for Adult Victim/Survivors of Sexual Violence. NZ: Ministry for Women. (Discusses some sexual violence victim-survivors' experiences of reporting sexual violence to police.)

For wāhine Māori experiences see: Wilson, D., Mikahere-Hall, A., Sherwood, J., Cootes, K., & Jackson, D. (2019). E Tū Wāhine, E Tū Whānau: Wāhine Māori keeping safe in unsafe relationships. NZ: Taupua Waiora Māori Research Centre, AUT

Concerns about police treatment of trans and non-binary people is discussed here: Walton, F. (2022) "Human Rights Commission urges police to address treatment of transgender people" 13 July 2022, NZ: RNZ.

diverse women and trans and non-binary people might include incorrect assumptions that the more masculine-looking person is more likely to be a perpetrator, and misgendering, or failing to use the correct name, gender or title, for trans and non-binary victim-survivors[52].

Abuser has influence

Victim-survivors are often forced to navigate the perceptions of others in their community regarding the abuser when deciding how safe or otherwise it is to report family violence and sexual violence. Just under one fifth of participants in both the Backbone and HTRK samples (18%) said they were worried the police would treat them badly because the person who abused/hurt them is a leader or has influence in the community.

This finding is consistent with earlier Backbone and Hohou Te Rongo Kahukura research and community engagement, which has identified that victim-survivors may be attacked, undermined, ridiculed and excluded when those causing harm have social capital or are in community leader or spokespeople roles. Furthermore, because Takatāpui and Rainbow communities are small, community leaders have considerable power to exclude community members from social events, online spaces and even support networks. To raise concerns of abuse about a community leader is to risk being ostracised from what may be the only community a victim-survivor feels belonging and support within. This means particularly strong and persistent efforts are required to build accountability when community leaders are causing harm, particularly inside Takatāpui and Rainbow communities[53].

Age

Of those with no police involvement, nearly one in three participants (30%) in the HTRK sample and 15% in the Backbone sample were worried about bad treatment because of their age[54]. Experiencing violence as a child or young person was explicitly mentioned by some participants in free text. For some, being young made it harder to know how to contact police. For others, the fear that police would be dismissive was a barrier.

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51 See The Backbone Collective (2020) Victim-Survivor Perspectives on Longer-Term Support After Experiencing Violence and Abuse A report prepared for the Ministry of Social Development. NZ.
The Backbone Collective (2021) Victim-Survivor Feedback on The Government's National Strategy and Action Plans to Eliminate Family and Sexual Violence: A report prepared for the Joint Venture Business Unit. NZ.

52 See for example: Dickson, S. (2016) "Doing our best for LGBTIQ survivors", in Good Practice Responding to Sexual Violence. NZ: TOAH-NNEST.
Dickson, S. (2016) Building Rainbow communities free of partner and sexual violence. NZ: Hohou Te Rongo Kahukura.
Veale J., Byrne J., Tan K., Guy S., Yee A., Nopera T. & Bentham R. (2019) Counting Ourselves: The health and wellbeing of trans and non-binary people in Aotearoa New Zealand. NZ: Transgender Health Research Lab, University of Waikato. See: www.countingourselves.nz/2018-survey-report
Ministry of Justice (2020) New Zealand Crime and Victims Survey, Experience of Crime by Sexual Orientation, Cycle 1 and Cycle 2, March 2018 – September 2019. NZ: MoJ.

53 Dickson, S. (2016) Building Rainbow communities free of partner and sexual violence. NZ: Hohou Te Rongo Kahukura.
Dickson, S., Fraser, B. and Bramwell, N. (2021) Healthy Relationships and Consent: Through the lens of Rainbow identifying youth. NZ: Waikato Queer Youth and Hohou Te Rongo Kahukura.
See The Backbone Collective (2020) Victim-Survivor Perspectives on Longer-Term Support After Experiencing Violence and Abuse A report prepared for the Ministry of Social Development. NZ.

54 The HTRK sample included one in four participants under the age of 25, unusually high for a survey about family violence and sexual violence experiences.

> *My age. I was in my teens at the time and I thought the police would be dismissive due to my age and gender.* ***Pākehā lesbian woman***

Sexuality

Nearly half of trans and non-binary participants (49%) and 16% of sexuality diverse women were worried about bad treatment because of their sexuality. This affected people of many different sexualities and, in free-text, participants described not believing same-gender violence from a woman would be taken seriously. One participant expressed related concern over police culture more broadly:

> *Rape culture, the patriarchy, lack of trauma informed and sensitive understanding on how to treat victims.* ***Pākehā bisexual woman***

Victim-blaming myths

As discussed earlier, victim-survivors are forced to consider the impact of victim-blaming myths on the people they reach out to for protection or support. Some Backbone sample participants (15%), sexuality diverse women (24%) and trans and non-binary people (10%) said they were worried they would be treated badly by police because they were drunk or drugged at the time the abuse/assault took place.

Victim-survivors in the Backbone sample said in free-text responses that they were concerned the police would pass judgement based on their situation. This included fear of perceived stereotypes associated with victims of abuse – e.g., they feared being viewed as 'emotional junkies,' 'enablers of the abuse', and 'stigmatised as mentally ill.'

> *Afraid police would just see me as an emotional unstable woman as partner was so manipulative and smooth talking.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

A sense of shame and embarrassment was also a deterrent from seeking help from police. There were general feelings of inability to find help or support from the police.

Disability or illness

Of those with no police involvement, 13% of participants in the Backbone sample were worried the police would treat them badly due to their disability or illness (including mental health). For Backbone participants with a disability, this increased to 24%.[55] One in three trans and non-binary victim-survivors (31%) reported worries about treatment because of their disability or illness, and around one in five trans and non-binary participants (18%) reported feeling worried that some people found their way of communicating hard to understand. These worries were reported by much smaller numbers of sexuality diverse women.

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55 Five of these participants experience difficulty with more than one of the activities listed. Activities included; Seeing, even when wearing glasses or contact lenses: Hearing, even when using a hearing aid; Walking, lifting or bending; Using your hands to hold, grasp or use objects; Learning, concentrating or remembering; Communicating, mixing with others or socialising. See Appendix 1 for Backbone sample demographics including disability experience.

Financial and social status

Participants in the Backbone sample (8%) and the HTRK sample (11%) who were worried the police would treat them badly because of their financial or social status were asked more about this concern, via a list of drop-down options (they could choose more than one) and an 'other' option to provide an open-text response. Eighteen participants discussed worries related to either seeing themselves as having high financial or social resources or, conversely, because they were without adequate income or housing, including being on a benefit and/or homeless. This included challenges of living outside a major urban setting:

> *I live in a good house but have no income to support myself. I am perceived as well-off due to my education level but have no control over money.* ***Another ethnicity, straight woman***

> *I was living in a small town when I called them it went to the big city phone number even when it was in hours. What were they going to see anyway when it was a psychological threat?* ***Another ethnicity, queer non-binary person***

> *I'm a combination of high prestige and difficult circumstances which makes it hard to quickly assess what the baseline is, and I'm at risk of scapegoating rather than understanding the complexities of abuse.* ***Pākehā queer trans person***

Appearance

Some participants, particularly trans and non-binary people (33%) said they were worried the police would treat them badly because of how they look. A follow-up question asked more about why they were worried, and offered a list of drop-down options and an 'other' option for open text responses. Six participants provided more information in the Backbone sample and were most likely to say their physical appearance (i.e. their own body rather than they way they dressed, for example) was the reason police would treat them badly.

> *I was not pretty enough to be raped.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

Eighteen victim-survivors in the HTRK sample answered this question, most of whom selected the 'way I dress' and 'physical appearance,' followed by 'tattoos/piercings'. In open text, one sexuality diverse woman mentioned her socio-economic status, and most trans and non-binary participants discussed having non-normative gender expressions including clothing. One person mentioned their own behaviour when distressed.

> *I'm Transgender and from my previous experiences with the police, and friends' previous experiences. They don't understand how to communicate with trans people. My friend and I were constantly deadnamed, our identities were not respected and we felt uncomfortable and unsupported*[56]*.* ***Pākehā pansexual trans woman***

56 As discussed in the terminology section, deadnaming refers to using a trans person's old and incorrect name. It is disrespectful and a common way to undermine trans people's gender and sense of self.

Family and social connections

Smaller numbers of participants were worried about their treatment by police because of their family/social connections, ethnicity or culture[57], their partner/ex-partner being known to the police or gang connections as shown in Table 7 below.

Table 7: Factors which survey participants with no police involvement were worried would result in police treating them badly (n=193)

Factor	Backbone sample women n= 91	Sexuality-diverse women n= 63	Trans and non-binary people n= 39
None of the above, I wasn't worried the police would treat me badly	34%	14%	26%
Other - please tell us more	21%	13%	8%
My gender	19%	33%	46%
The person who abused/hurt me is a leader in the community or has influence	18%	17%	18%
My age	15%	35%	23%
I was drunk or drugged at the time the abuse/assault took place	15%	24%	10%
My disability or illness (including mental health)	13%	8%	31%
My family/social connections	12%	8%	8%
My financial or social status	8%	14%	5%
My ethnicity or culture	7%	5%	8%
How I look	7%	8%	33%
My religious/spiritual beliefs	6%	0%	0%
Some people find my accent hard to understand	3%	0%	0%
Some people find my way of communicating hard to understand	2%	2%	18%
Gang connections	2%	2%	3%
My partner/ex-partner being known to the police	2%	5%	3%
My sexuality	1%	16%	49%

57 All of whom were non-Pākehā.

Chapter 3: First contact with police

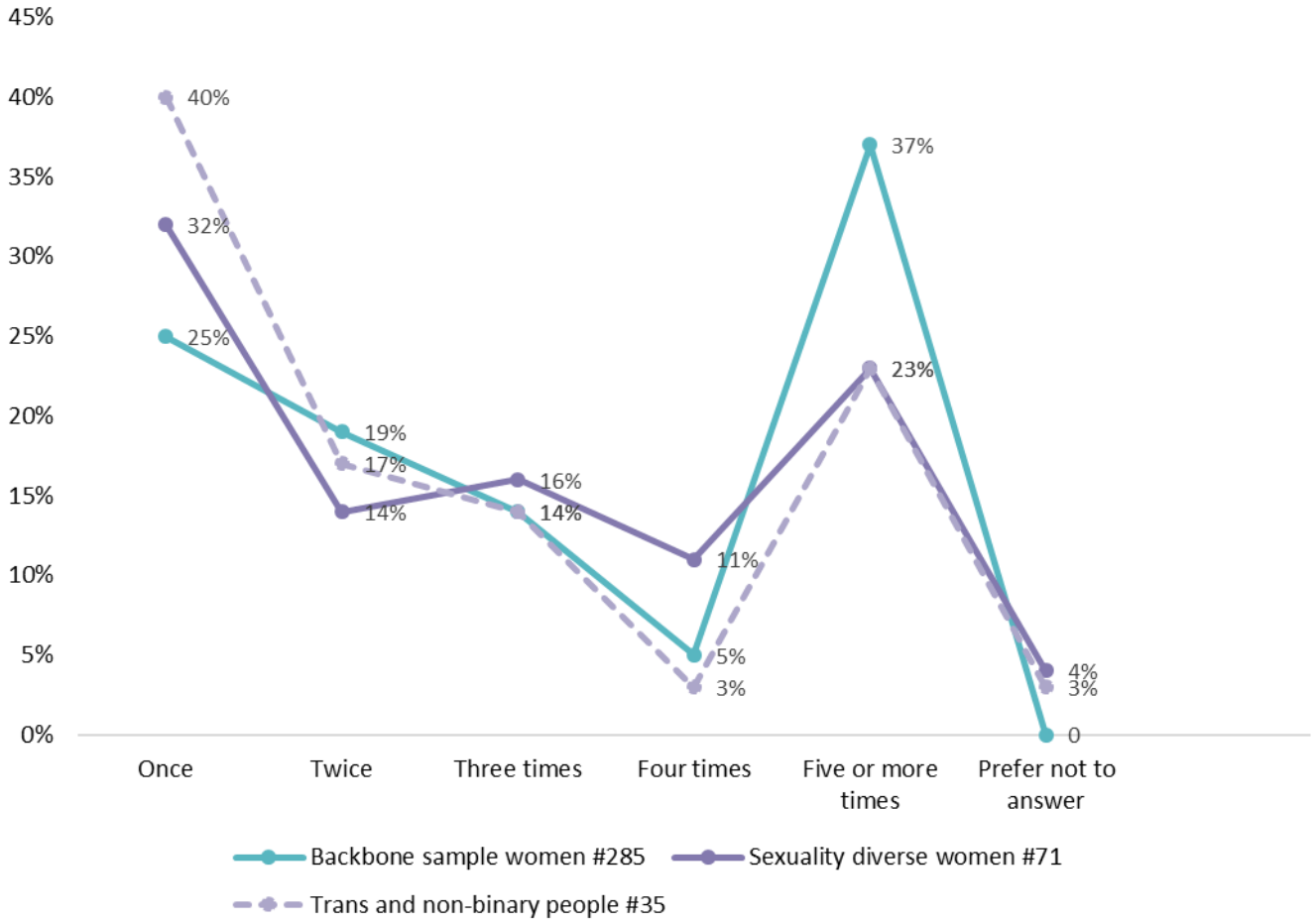
Chapter 2 presented findings from those survey participants who had had no police involvement in the (most recent and/or significant) event/s of violence and abuse they reported on in the survey. The following chapters present findings from survey participants who had had police involvement regarding the event/s of violence and abuse they reported on in the survey. This chapter discusses their experiences of first contact with the police concerning violence and abuse, including the number of times police were involved, victim-survivors' experiences of police treatment during their first contact and how this impacted on their willingness to contact police again in the future. Survey participants discussed in depth why they did not contact police again after their first experience, and these responses highlight the importance of first contact. They also show the need for urgent improvements in police practice to better understand family violence and sexual violence, centre the needs and experiences of victim-survivors and prioritise acting to keep victim-survivors safe and holding those who use violence and abuse to account. Chapter 4 builds on this chapter and discusses participant's most recent or significant experiences with police.

Number of times the police had been involved regarding experience(s) of family violence and/or sexual violence

Most participants in the Backbone sample had police involvement on multiple occasions regarding the person who had hurt them or their children. Over one third (37%) said police had been involved five or more times, 14% involved three times, and 19% twice. Only one quarter of participants had the police involved on only one occasion.

In contrast, victim-survivors in the HTRK sample most often selected that police had been involved on only one occasion after family or sexual violence, with 32% of sexuality diverse women and 40% of trans and non-binary people reporting just one contact. However, many HTRK participants had multiple contacts, including nearly one in four victim-survivors (23%) with five or more contacts with police. Half of sexuality diverse women and 40% of trans and non-binary people had three or more contacts.

Figure 3: Number of times police involved relating to abuser's use of violence and abuse (n=391)



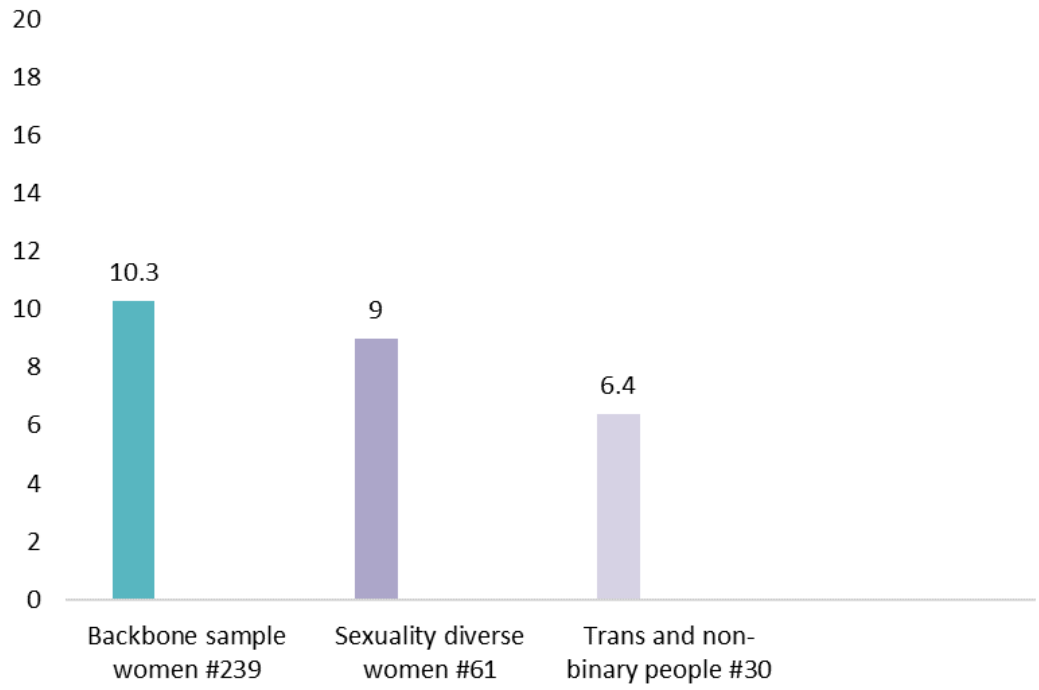
Victim-survivors from both samples who experienced non-family sexual violence (NFSV) were far more likely to only have contact with police on one occasion. Of those who experienced NFSV, 42% in the Backbone sample and more than half of the HTRK sample reported only one contact with police.

First contact with police: experience ratings

Participants were asked to use a slider ranging from 0 (very poor) to 20 (very good) to rate how good their first contact with police was. First contact is extremely important – it may be the first time a victim-survivor has asked for help, and it may inform whether they will see police as safe to engage with if they experience further violence.

There was a wide range in experiences of police response at first contact, but trans and non-binary people (6.4) reported a significantly lower average rating than sexuality diverse women (9) or women in the Backbone sample (10.3).

Figure 4: Average rating out of 20 for first contact with police (n=330)



Exploring further, over a third of trans and non-binary people (37%), over a quarter of sexuality diverse women (28%) and 15% of women in the Backbone sample rated their first contact with the police as very poor (0-3).

Only 3% of trans and non-binary victim-survivors gave their first contact with the police a very good rating (17-20), compared with 17% of Backbone participants and 18% of sexuality diverse women. No trans and non-binary people reported their first contact with the police at the highest rating of 20.

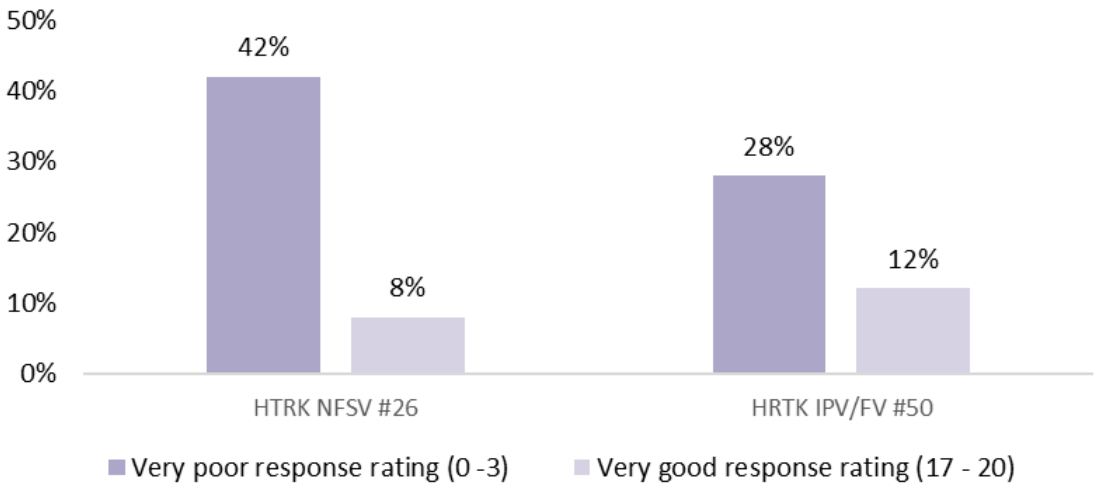
We also analysed ratings by ethnicity and relationship context of violence. In the Backbone sample Māori participants were as likely to rate their first contact with police as very poor (18%) as tauiwi participants (15%) and were more likely to rate their first contact with police as being very good (26%) than tauiwi participants (19%). In the HTRK sample, Māori participants were less likely to rate their first contact with police as very poor (25%) as tauiwi participants (32%) and were more likely to rate their first contact with police as being very good (20%) than tauiwi participants (11%).

There was little difference in ratings given by women in the Backbone sample for police contact responding to NFSV compared with intimate partner violence (IPV) or (other) family violence. This was not the case for HTRK participants, who were both far more likely to rate the first involvement in both contexts as poor than the Backbone sample, but also more likely to report first contact after sexual violence as poor (42%) than after IPV/FV (28%)[58].

58 There were 91 participants in the HTRK sample who answered this question. However, in five cases the abuser was a carer and in 10 cases the participants did not provide information about the relationship context in which the abuse occurred in. Therefore, the total number of participants in Figure 4 and Figure 6 are different.

Figure 5: Very poor and very good ratings of police first contact by familial context of violence and abuse for Backbone sample women

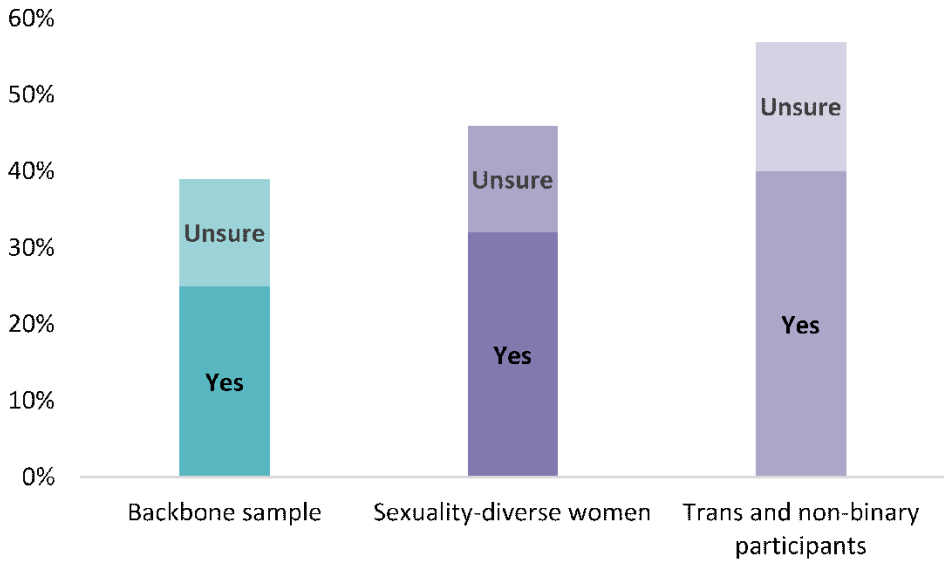
Figure 6: Very poor and very good ratings of police first contact by familial context of violence and abuse for HTRK sample participants



First contact with police: impacts on subsequent police involvement

Participants were asked if their first ever experience with the police stopped them from contacting the police again in the future. As Figure 7 below shows, a quarter of Backbone participants, a third of sexuality diverse women (32%) and 40% of trans and non-binary participants reported that their first experience with police had stopped them contacting the police again. A majority of Backbone participants (61%) and sexuality diverse women (54%) said their first experience with police had not stopped them contacting police again, with 14% of participants unsure. But only 43% of the trans and non-binary participants reported that their first experience with police had not stopped them contacting police again, with 17% unsure.

Figure 7: Participants who said their first contact with police first put them off contacting police in the future (n=391)[59]



Overwhelmingly, participants in both samples who rated their first contact with police as OK to very good (11 – 20) said their first contact with police did not stop them from contacting police in the future. One percent of participants in the Backbone sample who rated their first contact with police between 11 and 20 said their first contact with police stopped them contacting police again compared with 29% of participants who rated their first police contact as 0 to 10. There were no participants in the HTRK sample who rated the police response between 11 to 20 who reported they were put off from calling police again in the future.

We asked for more information from victim-survivors who said their first experience stopped them contacting the police again, or they were unsure, and 103 Backbone participants and 47 HTRK participants answered via free text. The themes for the two samples are discussed below.

Enabling the abuser

The overarching theme from women in the Backbone sample was that the police had enabled the abuser to continue their abuse. In many cases, women described experiences of police engagement as being mana-diminishing, involving a broken system and/or 'bully behaviour'. They viewed police engagement as making matters worse and increasing violence and abuse for victim-survivors.

> *Police response extended and compounded my/my children's experiences of violence.* ***Another ethnicity, straight woman***

Many victim-survivors in the HTRK sample experienced police supporting perpetrators rather than those experiencing violence.

59 Six percent of trans and non-binary people and 1% of sexuality diverse women selected the drop-down option 'prefer not to answer'.

> *My rapist [and I were teenagers]. The [area] police threatened me with statutory charges if I told anyone, or continued to pursue getting my rapist charged.* ***Pākehā lesbian/gay non-binary person***
>
> *SA [sexual assault] detective told me my rapist was a good guy.* ***Māori lesbian woman***
>
> *I went to police to report being strangled, and was told they would follow up. They did, then told me my husband was handsome, charming and didn't believe me.* ***Pākehā bisexual woman***

Not taken seriously by police

Participants in the Backbone sample reported feeling ignored, dismissed, and mistreated in their encounters with police – all of which added to their feelings of not being taken seriously. Most women described the police as not taking the victims of abuse, and their experiences and acute needs seriously. Several women expressed they would 'never call them [the police] again'. Women felt that when they were not taken seriously by police, the danger for further abuse increased.

> *They've proved to me they're not here to help and keep me safe at all but to do the opposite.* ***Wahine Māori (straight)***

Women in the Backbone sample also highlighted police perceptions and limited understanding of less obvious abuse e.g., psychological, verbal, and emotional abuse. Many felt police seemed to treat psychological, verbal, and emotional abuse as minor offences. Several women described police inaction due to not taking the abuse seriously as a catalyst for further and more severe abuse. When police left the home of victims and the abuser, participants explained they were either ridiculed by their abuser or physically abused as punishment for contacting police.

The most common theme in the HTRK sample about first experiences with the police was a sense that victim-survivors did not feel like the police were interested in what they were reporting so did nothing, or blamed them for violence they had experienced, and did nothing.

> *I was told that I'd made my bed and I had to lie in it, in regards to having an ex partner that was a gang member.* ***Māori asexual woman***
>
> *Did not feel that the police grasped the severity of the abuse. The abusive act itself could be written off as minor in some settings but I felt as though the attack was motivated by hate (a hate crime) and the police did not seem to treat it as such. Instead it felt like they saw it as a harmless prank and did not do much to protect me.* ***Māori queer Takatāpui person***

'Wasting police time'

Many participants in the Backbone sample described a sense that they were 'wasting police time' or being a 'nuisance to police'. To illustrate, one tauiwi woman said she was told this is 'not a forum to complain about your ex.' In some cases, women were deterred from pressing charges or encouraged against formally reporting the abuse. Others were told we have other 'important things to do.' One woman described feelings of being 'just another statistic for them [the police], not a real person.' Another spoke of being told that police were 'on a time limit and worked hard to just get one of us to leave the house.' Police were also described as having no time, a lack of empathy, even being 'lackadaisical' in their approach to violence and abuse which further emphasised feelings of being an inconvenience.

> *I was [a teenager] with a previous partner… neighbour ran out called the police. The police did not arrive until 5 hours later. I was told I was lucky they even showed up.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

Judgements, stereotyping, discrimination and racism

Many participants in the Backbone sample spoke of the judgements made about victim-survivors from varying perspectives. Tauiwi women described being judged for living in a 'nice area' and being described as 'good people'. In these instances, women were not believed when they reported abuse as they felt domestic violence was seen by police to be a problem only in less affluent areas.

> *When they arrived, they didn't believe [my child's] story, they told me and the abuser that we seemed like a nice family in a nice area and that they knew we were 'good people'. Both my [child] and I realised that the police would not ever believe us because we don't look like the kind of people they assume to be victims and we don't live in areas they assume victims live in.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

Some women explained that police failed to see the abuser as dangerous or even abusive because of his ethnicity, which resulted in police not believing women victim-survivors and placing them in dangerous situations.

> *He (the abuser) is a white male, I am a Māori female.* ***Wahine Māori (straight)***

Several participants in the Backbone sample also shared how their state of panic, in comparison to the calmness of their abuser, was framed as a contributing factor to the abuse when police arrived. One woman described being charged for assaulting the abuser when she was trying to defend herself and escape.

Participants in the Backbone sample also described being treated by police like they were at fault for the abuse. Victims being asked to leave the home for the safety of all was a common theme. The police judgements of victim-survivors as being at fault and the cause of the violence and abuse left women feeling responsible for the abuse. Participants explained that the victim blaming, and often incorrect judgement of victims, resulted in substandard reporting by police of the abuse.

> *I felt like I didn't get a fair chance in my reporting and felt prejudiced against.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

Many victim-survivors in the HTRK sample reported disrespect and abuse related to their gender, including overt transphobia and being misgendered while trying to report violence.

> *They laughed at me for trying to report. Deliberately refused to file my report. Deliberately used male pronouns even when corrected. Told me it was my fault I got raped because it's what trans freaks like me deserve.* ***Pākehā asexual trans woman***
>
> *I am Non Binary and autistic. They didn't respect my pronouns or need for a support person during the process. I felt pressure to say I didn't need a support person when I did.* ***Pākehā bisexual non-binary person***

System breakdown

Several women in the Backbone sample said there was no continuity of care and response based on their experience with police.

> *I think that the systematic lack of assistance, in your time of dire need, is the worst part of abuse. The system, in my experience is completely abuser enabled.* ***Another ethnicity, straight woman***

> *I was passed around like a parcel and was dealing with 3 different officers before I had 1 for the rest of the duration of my investigation.* ***Wahine Māori (straight)***

Some wāhine Māori were denied a support person during initial mediation attempts by police. One woman spoke of her preference for a whangaia (qualified support worker) instead of the two police officers who turned up with no empathy or understanding of the mamae (pain) she and her child were experiencing. Several tauiwi women highlighted the lack of follow-up beyond the arrest of the abuser.

Many women in the Backbone sample spoke of their experience during the interview process and felt that the abuser was given more time to tell his story than they were. In some cases, especially those that involved children, victims were interviewed in the same room as their abuser.

For many victim-survivors in the HTRK sample, their first contact with police was actively disrespectful in a variety of ways, including failing to respond well to distress.

> *I was in the reporting room for [equivalent to a work day]. At one point an officer yelled at me because I wouldn't stop crying and they couldn't use the recording if i kept blubbering through it. I regretted going at all as it just added to my trauma and didn't feel at all like they believed me.* ***Pākehā sexuality diverse woman***

Others were forced to report violence without privacy, essentially forcing them to "come out" in front of others.

> *I had no privacy. I had to tell the Police in front of other people waiting to be seen. I already felt very ashamed and having other people (who were also Māori) over hear what had happened to me caused me more shame and made me feel afraid of being outed if seen again by them.* ***Māori Takatāpui person***

No immediate support provided

Another key theme for women in the Backbone sample was police failure to provide the immediate support and protection participants needed.

> *They [police] were more focused on finding a crime than on supporting me and my children. I felt like an after thought and felt intimidated by their prescence and impersonal processes.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

Many women said they were not informed of support services during their first police encounters regarding the abuse – in fact, many said help and support for abusers seemed to have greater importance to police than help and support for victims.

Many participants in the Backbone sample described their frustration at not knowing their rights and actions they could take to protect themselves from their abuser. Some women were encouraged not to formally report their abuser by the police, and were told to think of the impacts on the abuser's future. For some women, police did not follow their own processes for example[60] , a risk assessment was not performed, Oranga Tamariki were not informed, and a Police Safety Order or trespass order was not issued by police. Incorrect reporting in some cases led to the removal of children.

> *My [children] had their voices robbed and stolen from the system, by the lack of responsibility.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

Many women said police minimised violence and passed it off as a 'civil issue', failing to take responsibility for laying charges, and often advising victim-survivors to seek a protection order through the courts.

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60 NZ Police has a comprehensive Family Violence Policy and an Adult Sexual Assault Investigation Policy (not available on the Police website). Both policies outline how police officers should respond to family violence and sexual violence including initial response, interviewing victims, when to arrest, prosecution procedures, bail and active case management.

> *They were very dismissive about the violent nature of my then partner as there was no visible bruising or blood.* ***Wahine Māori (straight)***
>
> *They weren't there to listen to me, and I was almost forced to ask for a protection order which they then refused to take away after I requested them to do so.* ***Wahine Māori (straight)***

Not what victim-survivors were expecting

Victim-survivors in the HTRK sample said the police response they experienced was very different from their expectations, often based on reading police information or their own professional knowledge. One participant, who works in violence prevention, asked to report an incident of violence to a police officer from another team, so as not to compromise any professional relationships. This request was not granted.

Participants also discussed very slow responses, and responses that significantly compromised their safety.

> *Growing up I always viewed police as people who'd protect me. After getting in contact with the detective police in [area] about my domestic violence situation, their actions looked nothing like what police websites say. I was not taken seriously by policemen and felt like I have to land in hospital from abuse to be taken seriously. My experiences were belittled, I was repeatedly over talked and hurried out when I'd break into tears because they couldn't seem to handle me expressing tears. I was persuaded that I need to let it go, I need to get a counsellor and court would traumatise me since I wouldn't 'win' though he hasn't even seen my evidence or interviewed any witnesses.* ***Pākehā lesbian woman***

Gaps in skills in responding to mental health in mana-enhancing ways

Finally, several participants in the HTRK sample described poor police responses to violence and abuse situations in which either the victim-survivor and/or the abuser were experiencing mental health distress, often leaving them in an unsafe situation.

> *The first time the police were contacted my ex husband had taken off with our [child] while suffering from [a serious mental health issue]. They were unable to take him to the hospital or arrest him.* ***Pākehā bisexual woman***
>
> *As I was suffering from a manic break down due to an overload of stress, trauma, suicidal thoughts/ mindframe and a complete inability to process any/all emotions at all triggered and gaslit by my partner at the time I personally felt they should have taken custody of me and admitted me to the mental health ward. Instead they left me in the care of my partner and instructed her to take me to the emergency department's mental health crisis team.* ***Pākehā bisexual woman***

Chapter 4: Most recent experience of police involvement

In this chapter we focus on survey participants' most recent or significant experience of police involvement, including how victim-survivors came to be involved with police and who contacted the police, why victim-survivors contacted police, what they hoped would happen to the person who abused them and what action the police took. Overwhelmingly, victim-survivors contact police because they want the violence and abuse to stop; they are scared, they need protection for themselves and/or their children, and they want police to use their statutory powers to help make them safe. Many also want the person who used violence and abuse to be held to account in some way, which often meant arresting the abuser. The following discussion explores the barriers to victim-survivor safety and offender accountability for these victim-survivors when police take no action in response to family violence and sexual violence, or act in ways that embolden the abuser. It also highlights police action which survey participants said resulted in a good outcome for them and/or their children.

Who reported the violence or abuse to the police?

Victim-survivors indicated they actively contacted the police to seek help for their experiences of violence and abuse. Three quarters of participants in both samples responded that they reported the violence or abuse to police themselves[61]. If participants said someone else contacted police they were given a drop-down list of options and asked to select who contacted police on this occasion (their most recent or significant time of police involvement).

When someone else contacted police other than the victim-survivor it was most likely to be a family or whānau member. Some participants in the Backbone sample who provided more information about who contacted police reported it was a neighbour (6%), or a family or whānau member (6%); fewer reported it was the abuser (2%), their employer (1%) or a stranger (1%). Some participants in the HTRK sample who provided more information reported it was a family or whānau member (11%), the person who abused or hurt them (5%) or a neighbour (3%)[62].

The remaining participants said a variety of people had contacted the police, including: friends, flatmates, associates or work colleagues; children who were being abused; professionals such as daycare/school/teacher/school counsellor, doctor, psychologist, hospital; service providers (Women's Refuge or social services, social worker); members of the public, including a stranger; or people working in hospitality who witnessed the violence[63]. In the Backbone sample, wāhine Māori (32%) were more likely than tauiwi women (21%) to say someone else contacted the police. When someone else had contacted police, 20% of wāhine Māori but no tauiwi participants in the Backbone sample said it was a stranger. However, in the HTRK sample, tauiwi participants (29%) were more likely than Māori participants (19%) to report someone else contacted the police. There were no participants in the HTRK sample who said a stranger had contacted police.

61 There were 277 participants from the Backbone sample and 105 participants from the HTRK sample who answered this question.

62 Sixty-three women in the Backbone sample and 28 participants in the HTRK sample provided this information.

63 This includes responses from 18 participants in the Backbone sample and 7 in the HTRK sample.

Participants who reported someone else had called police were asked how they felt about that person contacting the police on that occasion. Around half the participants in both samples (56% Backbone; 48% HTRK) said they were pleased the other person contacted the police, and 3% said they did not care either way. However, 31% of participants in the HTRK sample and 19% of participants in the Backbone sample said they wished the other person had not contacted the police[64]. Wāhine Māori in the Backbone sample were more likely to say they wished that person had not contacted the police (32%) than tauiwi women (15%).

Participants in the Backbone sample who left comment in the open text 'other' section to describe how they felt about someone else contacting police expressed ambivalence. For some, the resulting police response did not make them or their children safer and so they were not positive about police being involved.

> *Brave for children to call police first before me, but police underestimated the reality of their situation providing [the children] a Police reference number they couldn't remember and returned calls were "unknown caller" which they feared was abuser and didn't respond or pick up.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

Others explained that someone else contacting police was done to harass them – either by the abuser or someone else.

Participants in the HRTK sample who left comment reported that the major issue with someone else contacting the police was when they were not involved or offered the opportunity to give consent. When participants knew the police were being called, they were able to assess their safety; where they were not, trust was damaged.

Reason for contacting the police

Participants were asked to select from a drop-down list of 18 options as many reasons as they wanted for contacting police on the most recent or significant time police were involved. Participants in the Backbone sample selected the most reasons per person (5) followed by trans and non-binary people (4.6) and sexuality diverse women (3.9).

When victim-survivors contact police, they often need urgent help to make violence and abuse stop and prevent it from happening again. The most common option chosen by participants in the Backbone sample was that they contacted the police because they were scared (63%). More than half of trans and non-binary people (56%) and just under half of sexuality diverse women (44%) also said they were scared.

Many participants, especially in the Backbone sample, said they needed help urgently. Tauiwi women in the Backbone sample (45%) were nearly twice as likely to say they contacted police because they needed help urgently than wāhine Māori (23%). There was no such difference in the HTRK sample. Many women in the Backbone sample (40%) and sexuality diverse women (30%) contacted police to protect their children and some said they needed help as their children were being removed, were under threat, or had not been returned[65].

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64 There were 68 responses to this question from the Backbone sample and 29 responses from the HTRK sample.

65 Of women who had police involvement, in the Backbone sample 57% had dependent children, and of sexuality diverse women 40% had dependent children.

Some participants said they contacted police to report being assaulted; having their Protection Order breached; and/or experiencing rape or sexual assault or unwanted sexual behaviour. Just over half of trans and non-binary people (52%) said they contacted police due to sexual assault/abuse, higher than both sexuality diverse women (38%) and Backbone participants (20%). Significantly fewer participants in the HTRK sample reported contacting the police for breaches of Protection Orders, potentially reflecting a lack of take-up of this tool in the context of no specialist support for Takatāpui and Rainbow victim-survivors.

Sometimes contacting the police was done as a preventative measure. Some participants contacted the police to prevent the person from assaulting or abusing them right now. Many said they wanted to prevent the abuser from assaulting or abusing them in the future and said they contacted police to prevent the person from assaulting or abusing anyone else in the future. In the Backbone sample, wāhine Māori (42%) were more likely than tauiwi women (33%) to say they contacted police to prevent the person from assaulting or abusing anyone else in the future. Nearly two thirds of trans and non-binary people (64%) said they contacted police to prevent the person from assaulting or abusing anyone else in the future. Over half of participants said they wanted the abuser held accountable for the violence and abuse.

Often, victim-survivors made proactive decisions about contacting the police. In some situations, these decisions were influenced by agencies/services or people around them. Some, particularly sexuality diverse women, were encouraged to call the police by family/friends/whānau and some by a service or other Government department. Few participants from either sample reported being pressured into calling the police.

Table 8: Reasons for contacting the police on this occasion (n=280)

Reasons for contacting the police	Backbone sample women n=205	Sexuality diverse women n=50	Trans and non-binary people n=25
I was scared	63%	44%	56%
I wanted the person who abused/hurt me to be held accountable for what they had done	57%	52%	52%
To prevent the person from assaulting me or abusing me in the future	47%	38%	56%
I needed help urgently	42%	20%	36%
To protect my children - I was frightened for the children	40%	30%	12%
I was assaulted	38%	24%	36%
To prevent the person from assaulting or abusing anyone else in the future	35%	46%	64%
To prevent the person from assaulting or abusing me right now	29%	14%	24%
I was encouraged to call the police by family/friends/whānau	25%	40%	32%

My Protection Order was breached	23%	6%	4%
I wanted to report rape or sexual assault or unwanted sexual behaviour	20%	38%	52%
I was encouraged to call police by a service or other Government department	15%	8%	4%
Other - please tell us more	11%	8%	12%
My children were being removed, were under threat, or had not been returned	4%	8%	8%
I needed to get my stuff/property back	3%	2%	4%
I was pressured into calling the police by family/friends/whānau	2%	6%	8%
I was pressured into calling police by a service or other Government department	2%	4%	4%
Prefer not to answer	1%	-	-

Some survey participants shared more detail in an open text box about their reasons for contacting police[66]. For many of the women in the Backbone sample, the reason they contacted police was to report offending, including the abuser breaking into their home while they were not home, breaches of Protection Orders, abusive incidents and getting help for their child. Some contacted police to report historical violence and abuse they or their children had experienced. Some had investigations with police that were ongoing. These women shared experiences of police not responding well to the violence and abuse, and many were disappointed with the response they received.

> *I am having flash backs of a range of incidents now. the police have no idea about psychological abuse nor manipulative tactics.* ***Another ethnicity woman***

Some participants said they were encouraged or pressured by others to contact the police. Some participants contacted police because they needed advice about what to do as the abuse was getting worse or they felt they could no longer cope.

> *I had had enough and couldn't even recognize myself in a mirror.* ***Straight woman***

A number of women were told by police to call and report every incident but found when they did the police did not respond.

> *Police in [area] told me to keep reporting everything to paint a picture. The police in my area seem to not want me to do that as it creates work for them.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

Participants in the HTRK sample gave more details of the specific incident which included threats to pets, using weapons and trying to get an abuser to leave their home.

66 Twenty-two participants in the Backbone sample and seven in the HTRK sample shared more information.

Differences in reasons for contacting police by relationship context

Relationship context of the violence had an influence on the reasons for contacting the police: sometimes the effect was the same in both samples, and sometimes it was different (see Table 9 below).

When participants or their child/ren had experienced non-family sexual violence (NFSV), they were significantly more likely than those who had experienced family violence (including IPV) in both the Backbone and HTRK samples to say they had contacted police to prevent the perpetrator assaulting someone else in the future (this was also the most common reason given by victim-survivors of NFSV for contacting the police aside from reporting rape or sexual assault or unwanted sexual behaviour). Participants who experienced NFSV, particularly those in the HTRK sample, were also more likely than those in their sample who experienced FV to say they were encouraged to contact police by family, friends and whānau.

In contrast, participants in both samples who experienced family violence (including IPV) were more likely than those experiencing NFSV to report contacting police because: they needed help urgently; and/or to protect their children; and/or to prevent the abuser assaulting them now.

However, in the HTRK sample, participants who experienced NFSV were more likely than those who experienced FV to contact the police because they were scared (and to prevent being subject to further assault or abuse from the same person), whereas in the Backbone sample, participants who experienced NFSV were significantly less likely than those who experienced FV to contact the police for these reasons. It is unclear how much this difference between samples is due to potentially different contexts of NFSV for survey participants (such as current social communities or historic child sexual abuse).

Some differences between relationship contexts are potentially due to the ongoing nature of violence and abuse in FV and IPV contexts for victim-survivors who are in a close personal relationship and may live with, or have regular contact with the abuser.

Table 9: Reasons for contacting police by context violence and abuse occurred (n=280)

Reason for contacting police	Backbone NFSV n=26	Backbone FV n=179	HTRK NFSV n= 24	HTRK FV n= 51
I was scared	27%	69%	54%	45%
I needed help urgently	23%	45%	13%	31%
To protect my children - I was frightened for the children	4%	45%	4%	33%
To prevent the person from assaulting or abusing me right now	8%	32%	4%	24%
To prevent the person from assaulting me or abusing me in the future	31%	49%	46%	43%
To prevent the person from assaulting or abusing anyone else in the future	58%	31%	71%	43%
I wanted the person who abused/hurt me to be held accountable for what they had done	46%	58%	54%	51%
I was encouraged to call the police by family/friends/whānau	35%	24%	46%	33%
I was pressured into calling the police by family/friends/whānau	4%	2%	13%	4%
I was encouraged to call police by a service or other Government department	8%	16%	8%	4%

What victim-survivors hoped would happen to the abuser when they contacted the police

We asked participants what they hoped would happen to the person who abused or hurt them (or their child/ren) when they contacted the police on this occasion, and offered a drop-down list of options (Table 10). Participants in the Backbone sample selected more hopes per person (5.3) than trans and non-binary victim-survivors (4.8) and sexuality diverse women (4.5).

Victim-survivors most commonly reported they hoped police contact would mean the abuser would be kept away from them. Many of the participants in both Backbone and HTRK samples reported hopes that would necessarily lead to the prevention of further violence and abuse toward them by the abuser: preventing any contact between abuser and victim-survivor or their children; police involvement scaring the abuser into stopping the violence; or – in slightly lower proportions –the abuser getting help with the violence or other issues.

As shown in Table 10, many participants hoped that police would use their statutory power and act by arresting/prosecuting and sentencing the abuser. Significantly fewer participants hoped the abuser would be held in custody or be placed in respite care or be given a warning (this last option was more unpopular with trans and non-binary victim-survivors than with the Backbone sample or sexuality diverse women). About a third of participants in both samples wanted access to restorative or marae-based justice processes.

We heard from 21 participants in the Backbone sample and 12 in the HTRK sample who left comment in the open-text box to further describe their hopes when they decided to contact police.

Stop the violence

Many participants wrote in the open-text box that they hoped that by calling the police, the violence would stop. Some participants explained they contacted police because they needed immediate help to prevent serious assault, death, abuse at access changeovers or they needed urgent medical assistance. Several participants explained they contacted police because they wanted to ensure the abuser would have no contact with them, stop stalking and harassing them and be told by police to stay away from the victim-survivor.

> *My physical injuries from her abuse would finally get looked at. Too many more to list.* ***Pākehā lesbian trans woman***
>
> *I needed her to know I had made a formal complaint. That I wasn't afraid.* ***Māori Takatāpui person***

> *That the person who abused me would not be able to contact me.* ***Wahine Māori (straight)***
>
> *I kept hoping there would be more in the law than there is for psychological abuse and manipulative men – I found there was very little my family lawyer was willing to do as it's hard to evidence. I found police advice extremely helpful and very practical to help stop post separation abuse/harassment.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

Protecting children

Many were motivated by protecting children or young people and hoped that contacting police would make the children safer immediately or that the police would follow up by interviewing and assessing the children and then they would be made safer as a result.

> *I wanted supervised access for my child.* ***Pākehā bisexual woman***

> *I just wanted to be safe at handovers and not be psychologically and verbally abused in front of our [child].* ***Pākehā woman***
>
> *The children would be interviewed and protected.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

Educative function

Some participants in the Backbone sample wanted police to provide an educative function. Either they wanted police to explain the options available or wanted them to speak to the abuser and tell them what would happen if Protection Orders were breached. Some said they wanted there to be a record that the violence and abuse had happened so that in future there would be a greater chance they would be believed; they wanted proof to be recorded.

> *They would tell this man in no uncertain terms what could happen and what the Protection Order rules are.* ***Pākehā straight woman***
>
> *If anything heinous was to happen there would be paperwork, or something on record, pointing to the culprit.* ***Pasifika straight woman***
>
> *I spoke with police (over the counter, then in a private room with the family violence officer) at local branch to have the violence toward me recorded so future issues would be believed and dealt with swiftly/firmly, and protect against him lying or shifting blame onto me.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

Abuser held accountable

Some participants said they contacted the police because they wanted the abuser to be made accountable, including through compulsory attendance in drug and/or stopping violence programmes, or through police arrest and prosecution.

> *They would be held accountable and told not to use our child as a weapon against me.* ***Pākehā sexuality diverse woman***

> *They would be held accountable for their actions.* ***Another ethnicity, straight woman***

Later in this report, in Chapter 6, we provide a comparative analysis of what participants hoped would happen to the abuser and the impact of police action on the abuser.

Table 10: What participants hoped would happen to the abuser when they contacted the police (n=278)

What participants hoped would happen	Backbone sample women n=203	Sexuality diverse women n=50	Trans and non-binary people n=25
They would be kept away from me	62%	54%	72%
Police involvement would scare them and stop the violence	51%	48%	40%

They would be arrested/prosecuted and sentenced	46%	38%	48%
They would get help to stop using violence	46%	30%	36%
They would be prevented from having any contact with me in the future	45%	34%	52%
They would get treatment so they don't do it to anyone else	44%	42%	32%
They would stop hurting me	43%	30%	48%
They would get help for their mental health issues	40%	36%	32%
They would be given a warning	30%	24%	12%
They would be held to account in some way other than through the court system (i.e. restorative justice, marae-based justice)	29%	30%	36%
They would be held in custody	27%	20%	20%
They would get help with their drug and alcohol issues	27%	26%	16%
Other – please tell us more	11%	14%	20%
They would have to give back my stuff/property	5%	2%	4%
They would be placed into respite care	3%	6%	4%

Of participants who had children, one quarter hoped that by contacting police their children would be made safer because the abuser would be prevented from having contact with the child/ren in the future.

Table 11: Participants who hoped the abuser would be prevented from having contact with children when they contacted the police (n=210)

	Backbone sample women n=170	**HTRK sample n=40**
They would be prevented from having contact with the child/ren in the future	26%	23%

Differences between Māori and non-Māori participants' hopes regarding police action

There were meaningful differences between Māori and tauiwi participants for a small number of the drop-down options[67]. A smaller percentage of Māori participants than tauiwi participants said they hoped the abuser would be arrested/prosecuted and sentenced in both the Backbone sample (Māori 36%; tauiwi 48%) and the HTRK sample (Māori 32%; tauiwi 45%). Likewise, a smaller percentage of Māori participants than tauiwi participants said they hoped the abuser would get help for their mental health issues in the Backbone sample (Māori 32%; tauiwi 42%) and in the HTRK sample (Māori 26%; tauiwi 38%) . In the HTRK sample, Māori participants were only half as likely

67 There were 31 wāhine Māori and 172 tauiwi women who answered this question in the Backbone sample and 19 Māori and 63 tauiwi participants in the HTRK sample who answered this question.

as tauiwi participants to hope the abuser would be held in custody (Māori 11%; tauiwi 23%), but there was little difference on this measure in the Backbone sample. There were also no differences in rates of tauiwi and Māori participants, across both samples, who said they hoped abusers would be held to account in some way other than through the court system (e.g. restorative justice, marae-based justice).

Differences in participants' hopes regarding police action by relationship context of violence and abuse

In the Backbone sample, women who had experienced NFSV, or whose child/ren experienced NFSV, were far more likely (71%) than women who had experienced FV (including IPV) or whose child/ren experienced FV (43%) to say they hoped the abuser would be arrested and prosecuted; and far less likely to say they hoped the abuser would be given a warning (8% NFSV compared with 33% FV). In the HTRK sample, responses did not differ between NFSV and FV cohorts regarding arrest/prosecution, but – in contrast to the Backbone sample – those who experienced NFSV were much more likely (38%) than those who experienced FV (12%) to hope the abuser would be given a warning. HTRK victim-survivors of NFSV were also much more likely than all other cohorts in both samples to want the abuser held to account in some other way, including restorative or marae-based justice processes (46%).

Participants who experienced FV or whose children had experienced FV were more likely than those who experienced NSFV to hope that the abuser would be kept away from them and that person would stop hurting them, as a result of police involvement. This was especially the case for Backbone participants: Women in the Backbone sample who experienced FV were twice as likely as those who experienced NFSV to hope that police involvement would scare the abuser and stop the violence, and more likely to hope that the abuser would be prevented from having contact with them in the future – however, this was not the case in the HTRK sample. Participants in both samples who had experienced FV were more likely to say they hoped the abuser got help for mental health or drug and alcohol issues as shown in Table 12 below.

Table 12: What participants hoped would happen to the abuser when they contacted the police by relationship context (n=278)

What victim-survivor hoped would happen	Backbone NFSV n=24	Backbone FV n=179	HTRK NFSV n=24	HTRK FV n=51
They would be kept away from me	42%	65%	54%	63%
They would stop hurting me	21%	46%	21%	43%
Police involvement would scare them and stop the violence	25%	55%	50%	43%
They would be given a warning	8%	33%	38%	12%
They would be held in custody	29%	27%	17%	22%
They would be arrested/prosecuted and sentenced	71%	43%	42%	41%

They would be held to account in some way other than through the court system (i.e. restorative justice, marae-based justice)	21%	30%	46%	26%
They would be prevented from having any contact with me in the future	33%	47%	46%	37%
They would get help to stop using violence	25%	49%	29%	33%
They would get treatment so they don't do it to anyone else	42%	44%	46%	35%
They would get help for their mental health issues	21%	43%	29%	37%
They would get help with their drug and alcohol issues	13%	29%	13%	26%

Action the police took

All participants who had police contact, whether they were the person who called the police or not, were asked what actions the police took for their most recent or significant experience with police after family violence or sexual violence. Participants could select as many options from a drop-down list as they wished.

Table 13 below shows that for many participants, police took little action for these victim-survivors. Just over one quarter of participants in both samples said the police took their statement and no further action was taken, and a smaller percentage said they came but took no action or the police gave the abuser a warning only. For 16% in the Backbone sample and over a quarter in the HTRK sample, the police came but only much later than called.

However, other participants, particularly in the Backbone sample, experienced police being more responsive. Nearly a quarter of participants in the Backbone sample (24%) but just half that in the HTRK sample said the police arrested the abuser. Some participants said the abuser was issued a Police Safety Order and a very small number reported that police referred the abuser to social services.

For some participants, the police response resulted in more information and support being available to the victim-survivor. About a fifth of participants in both samples said police gave them information or referred them to other community services; around one in ten said police contacted other supports for them; and a very small number of women (but no trans and non-binary people) said police stayed with them until they felt safe/other services arrived.

Some participants, particularly sexuality diverse women and trans and non-binary people, indicated that the action police took was negative for them. Some participants said the police did not believe them, and this was most common for trans and non-binary people. At least one in ten victim-survivors said the police treated them as if they were the one who had been violent and 4% of Backbone participants and 6% of trans and non-binary people were arrested. Nearly one in ten trans and non-binary people, and smaller numbers of other participants, were given a warning by police, and five women in the Backbone sample said their children were removed.

Table 13: Action police took (n=372)

Action police took on this occasion	Backbone sample women n=269	Sexuality diverse women n=69	Trans and non-binary people n=34
Other - please tell us more	34%	29%	41%
They took my statement and no further action was taken	26%	26%	27%
They arrested the person who hurt/abused me and/or my child/ren	24%	13%	12%
They gave me information or referred me to other community services	20%	23%	21%
They gave the person who hurt/abused me (and/or my child/ren) a warning	13%	12%	15%
They issued a Police Safety Order	16%	15%	9%
They came, but much later	16%	28%	27%
They didn't believe me	14%	20%	27%
They contacted other supports for me	11%	9%	9%
They came but took no action	10%	12%	12%
I was treated as the one who had been violent	10%	12%	15%
They stayed with me until I felt safe/other services arrived	5%	3%	0%
I was arrested	4%	0%	6%
They did not turn up when called	4%	4%	3%
My children were removed	2%	0%	0%
I was given a warning	2%	3%	9%
They referred the person who hurt/abused me and/or my child/ren to social support services	2%	3%	3%

There were 90 victim-survivors in the Backbone sample and 34 in the HTRK sample who gave more detail in free-text about the action police took in their case. While some participants discussed actions they perceived as helpful or mixed, the overwhelming majority shared unhelpful police responses.

Helpful actions

Some participants in the Backbone sample described police action which resulted in a good outcome for them and/or their children. Most women who felt positive about police action explained police had acted promptly and removed the abuser and/or arrested them. Sometimes police were praised for following up with other actions that enhanced the safety of the victim-survivor including: issuing a Police Safety Order; enforcing no-contact bail conditions; keeping the abuser in custody for the night; removing children from his care and returning them to the victim-survivor; and adding alerts to their recorded details to ensure a quick response in future.

Some women in the Backbone sample described officers being responsive to them by showing compassion, understanding family violence and/or sexual violence and being supportive. Sometimes police did practical things that made a big difference like staying with the victim-survivor until support arrived or taking her to the police station or hospital to meet with a refuge advocate.

> *The police officer came to my house stayed for over 2 hours carefully and respectfully listening and immediately actioned a number of things to investigate.* ***Asian straight woman***
>
> *A [] female constable [worked] at the local Police station and she had a really good background in domestic violence. She arrested my ex-partner and he went to court. Finally something happened. I thank this woman for the help she gave me.* ***Another ethnicity, straight woman***

For some victim-survivors in the HTRK sample, the response from the police potentially helped enable them to access support.

> *They told me how to apply for a Protection Order.* ***Māori bisexual woman***
>
> *Historic charge… they handled it well and referred me to helpful services.* ***Another ethnicity, bisexual woman***
>
> *The person left while I was on the phone, so I told the Police not to come. They encouraged me to call back if I needed to any time.* ***Another ethnicity, lesbian woman***
>
> *They arrested the person after he was told by me to talk to police about breaching the protection order when he contacted me a few weeks after I reported it.* ***Pākehā pansexual trans man***

Participants also described situations in which the police had offered them agency and choice over the process, which resulted in outcomes which victim-survivors described as positive for them.

> *I was left to decide whether I wanted to name the offender and was explained my options.* ***Pākehā bisexual woman***
>
> *They recorded my statement, they called me back several days later to let me know that they had spoken to my abuser in person to let him know that I had made a report. The police officer told my abuser that I didn't wish to proceed with charges or court, but that they believed my statement (this is what the officer told me).* ***Māori bisexual woman***

Neutral or mixed responses

Other participants described a mixed response from police – actions that were both positive and negative. Some women in the Backbone sample with multiple contacts with police described poor responses on some occasions but

a more helpful response in their most recent interaction. Other women explained that the police response could have been more helpful but because they were frightened of the reaction of the abuser they decided not to proceed further. Sometimes police would arrive at the property, deescalate the situation but then leave and the abuser would resume his abuse or would return to the house shortly after police left. Others said police kept the abuser in custody for too short a time. Some women explained it was good that police removed the abuser but then if they failed to take the case further or investigations took many months then victim-survivors were left in greater danger.

> *I spoke to police. They would have done more for me if I'd wanted to take the next steps but I was scared. Scared of my ex and scared it could impact my care of children.* ***Pākehā straight woman***
>
> *The support and advice at the end was great and hugely different from the start when I regretted even reaching out.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

Participants in the HTRK sample also described situations which were mixed, including because they received different responses from different police officers in relation to the same incident, or because there was some action, but it did not make them safer for long.

> *I didn't want to go through the courts as i know the deal but Detective Sergeant [name] was great and I think gave him a warning….[Police officer Name] and [Police officer name] were absolutely abusive later on so are two very different experiences.* ***Pākehā pansexual trans person***
>
> *[The abuser] went to the station with them for the night but was back in the morning.* ***Pākehā pansexual non-binary person***

Unhelpful responses

Most victim-survivors in both samples who left comments in free-text described responses from police that were unhelpful and ultimately led to them being made less safe. Many regretted contacting the police.

Police took little or no action

Women in the Backbone sample shared many experiences of police taking no action in response to the violence and abuse, including police who:

- Did not take a statement from the victim-survivor or who dissuaded her from making a statement
- Did not make a formal report of the incident
- Did not arrest the abuser
- Did not proceed with prosecution
- Refused to progress the charge as police perceived the assault/abuse as historical[68]
- Took no action to protect the children – refused to interview children
- Gave no help or support to the victim-survivor
- Did not take the abuser into custody
- Did not monitor the abuser so he was able to return to victim-survivor's home shortly after police had left
- Did not undertake a promised safety check
- Did not respond to the complaint because there were Family Court proceedings.

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68 The Criminal Procedure Act 2011 sets out the time limits for filing a charging document. Time limits vary according to the category of the offence. It is unclear from the participant responses which category the offences came under. Therefore, we cannot determine if police perception the assault/abuse is historical is a practice or policy issue.

> *I went down to them and the constable wrote a sentence in his notebook, said he would look into it and then sent me home. I later found out he hadn't even logged my visit or filed a case number/report. No record other than the sentence in the notebook existed from my visit.* ***Pākehā straight woman***
>
> *Minimised the assault and made excuses for offender's behaviour and took no further action.* ***Pākehā straight woman***
>
> *Still waiting on a detective to be assigned - been [more than a year] since the initial sexual assault report.* ***Wahine Māori (straight)***

For victim-survivors in the HTRK sample, contact with the police often resulted in little action.

> *At the time I was a minor. They came but the perpetrator had already left so they were like meh.* ***Pākehā bisexual woman***
>
> *I was just told that they have spoken to this person who was also known to them as a violent person. Nothing else were done.* ***Another ethnicity, asexual woman***
>
> *Said under investigation. No further contact.* ***Asian bisexual woman***
>
> *They told me "don't bother" direct quote."* ***Bisexual non-binary person, unknown ethnicity***

Police response was harmful to the victim-survivor

Participants in both samples described poor treatment from police that stood in the way of any positive effects from police actions. These victim-survivors described police failing to respond appropriately due to a lack of understanding about the nature and seriousness of family violence and sexual violence. Sometimes this failure to comprehend the danger meant: victim-survivors were expected to stay in their home with the abuser; children were kept in unsupervised care with the abuser; breaches of Protection Orders were ignored; and assaults were minimised. Participants described police officers being manipulated by abusers, taking their side, and not believing victim-survivor accounts of the violence. Sometimes, even when police did agree violence and abuse had occurred, they encouraged victim-survivors not to make a statement or pursue a charge.

Some participants described poor behaviour by police officers that meant no action was taken and they no longer felt trust that police would act to protect them, including police who:

- Arrested them or threatened to arrest them
- Reported the victim-survivor to Oranga Tamariki which made everything worse
- Said they couldn't help
- Shared incorrect information with others placing a victim-survivor's credibility at risk
- Used physical mistreatment
- Used victim-blaming or belittling language
- Forced them to tell their story many times over
- Told the victim-survivor the violence was not a serious incident
- Judged the victim-survivor falsely
- Made them feel stupid
- Did not show a caring or supportive approach
- Intimidated a child
- Put the responsibility for a decision about subsequent action on the victim-survivor

- Took a very long time to take a formal statement
- Took a long time to follow up with interview of the abuser
- Poor record keeping and not logging a case file or report
- Police officers who knew the abuser siding with him
- Not charging the abuser even though there was sufficient evidence
- Not keeping the victim-survivor informed about progress of the case
- Interviewing both parties but applying no analysis to determine who was telling the truth
- Insisting on writing the statement for the victim-survivor so it was not fulsome and contained inaccuracies
- Taking a long time to turn up.

> *He [the police officer] really didn't care at all was acting like it wasn't his problem.* ***Wahine Māori (straight)***
>
> *Made false judgements about me and my motives and wrote these in the Oranga Tamariki and police records as fact.* ***Another ethnicity, straight woman***
>
> *They interviewed me for 4 hours. Then they contacted me back saying they had to close my case due to not enough evidence.* ***Wahine Māori (straight)***
>
> *I was living somewhere that didn't have 24 hour police service so they take a long time to get there.* ***Another ethnicity, straight woman***

> *…came home and find the local cop on our door step talking to [the abuser] -sharing a joke no less.* ***Pasifika bisexual woman***
>
> *They told me to call back if the situation escalated, as she refused to open the doors, give me my things and just screamed at me behind walls.* ***Pākehā bisexual woman***
>
> *He treated it like a sibling spat and said he would be "Disappointed" if his daughters "resorted to violence", as if I was just as bad as the person who attacked me. He even told me off because he said he couldn't find the address. He didn't even take a statement.* ***Pākehā bisexual woman***
>
> *They reduced his charges….and they didn't charge him for the damage he done to [property]. They refused me a protection order. They told ME to "calm down and stop being hysterical," after he tried to [seriously injure me]. He knew the system, he gloated when he breached the safety order that his charges got lowered, and I had to pretend to be ok with that.* ***Pākehā pansexual non-binary person***

Some participants said the police appeared to believe the perpetrator rather than them.

> *They investigated the assault, but the case was closed as the perpetrator had said I had consented. Even though the report I made was on the basis that I was … raped both while unconscious and later asleep.* ***Another ethnicity, queer trans man***
>
> *They advised [] without my consent and said I had been lying and had made up false emails to frame my ex.* ***Pākehā straight woman***
>
> *They believed my abuser saying that he didn't cause my injury, that I did it to myself!!* ***Wahine Māori (straight)***

For some participants, the police not believing them led to further serious problems accessing other support, including being sectioned under the mental health act.

> *They [the police] told refuge not to help me leave the abusive situation, and as a result they didn't help me leave.* ***Pākehā trans woman***
>
> *They questioned my actions my mental health and left me feeling unsafe…. It was horrendous. I was shaking and incoherent by the end I asked for help but they just left.* ***Another ethnicity, bisexual woman***

> *The police did not let me write my own statement as they claimed they had to do it. They did not put care in it and it was used against me in court.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

Several participants were told not to call the police again.

> *I was threatened by the cops to not call them again or they would strip my legal rights and my financial rights.* ***Another ethnicity, non-binary person***

Some participants described not just harmful practices from police but also unlawful ones, particularly when there were relationships between police staff and abusers.

Hopes compared with action

There were large differences between what participants hoped would happen when they contacted police, and the action which police took. In the Backbone sample (Table 14), of the 93 participants who selected the drop-down option hoping the abuser would be arrested by police, only 32% said in a later question that police did arrest the abuser. Furthermore, of the 61 participants in the Backbone sample who selected they hoped the police would give the abuser a warning, only 18% reported their abuser was issued a warning by police. Particularly stark: of those participants in the Backbone sample who selected at least one of the following hopes regarding referral of the abuser to services or treatment – help to stop using violence (93 participants); help so they don't do it to anyone else (89 participants); help for their mental health issues (82 participants); help with their drug and alcohol issues (55 participants) – only 3 participants (out of a total of 126) said the police referred the person who hurt/abused them and/or their child/ren to social support services.

The comparators in Table 14 show that for the Backbone sample, victims' hopes had little to no correlation with (or likely impact on) police actions taken: for example, whether or not victims hoped for an arrest or for a warning, the rate at which police took that action remained the same.

Table 14: Hopes vs Actions Backbone sample (n=203)

	Participant hope	Police action matched hope	% of hopes matched by action	*Comparator: participants who did not disclose hope, but did experience action*
Arrest	93	30	32%	*32% (35/110)*
Warning	61	11	18%	*18% (25/142)*
Referral	126	3	2%	*4% (3/77)*

In the HTRK sample (Table 15 below), of the 31 victim-survivors who indicated they hoped police would arrest/prosecute, only 7 (23%) said the person causing harm was arrested by the police. Of the 15 participants who hoped the police would give the abuser a warning, three said the police did so. Some participants said that they hoped contacting the police would lead to the abuser being referred to services or treatment. Of those participants in the HTRK sample who selected at least one of the following hopes – help to stop using violence (24 participants); help so they don't do it to anyone else (29 participants); help for their mental health issues (26 participants); help with their drug and alcohol issues (17 participants) – only one participant (out of a total of 44) said the police referred the person who hurt/abused them and/or their child/ren to social support services.

Table 15 below also shows that victims' hopes have little to no correlation with (or likely impact on) police actions taken. The only situation in which the survey indicates police actions may be correlated to HTRK sample hopes to some extent is perpetrator arrests: those who indicated a hope for an arrest reported an arrest was made more often than those who did not indicate such a hope, but the arrest rates for those hoping for this outcome were still low: 23% (vs 14% where the victim did not indicate such a hope).

Table 15: Hopes vs Actions HTRK sample (n=75)

	Participant hope	**Police action matched hope**	**% of hopes matched by action**	***Comparator: participants who did not disclose hope, but did experience action***
Arrest	31	7	23%	*14% (6/44)*
Warning	15	3	20%	*17% (10/60)*
Referral	44	1	2%	*6% (2/31)*

Debate currently exists questioning the role of police in responding to family violence beyond its statutory obligations[69]. However, many victim-survivors want those using violence and abuse to be connected with social support services when they call the police. These results show this hope is not being realised, which is surprising given police run and participate in multi-agency meetings in most regions that include a range of social service providers. There is a clear opportunity for police to enhance responses in terms of referral.

Differences in action police took for Māori and non-Māori participants

In the Backbone sample, wāhine Māori were more likely than tauiwi women to report: that the abuser was arrested;[70] that police came but took no action; and that police gave them information or referred them to other services, as shown in Table 16 below. In the HTRK sample tauiwi participants were more likely than Māori participants to report: that police did not believe them; police arrested the abuser; and/or the victim-survivor was treated like the violent one.

69 A recent interview of the Police Minister and the Police Association president highlighted police concern that front-line officers are too often doing the job of health services, stating 'more officers were responding to family harm and mental health callouts, and it was pulling them away from their core duties.'

70 Although wāhine Māori were more likely than tauiwi women to report that the abuser was arrested, Māori participants were less likely than tauiwi participants overall to say arrest should always be an action police take and more likely to say arrest should never be used than tauiwi victim-survivors in both samples (see Chapter 7.)

Table 16: Differences in actions police took for Māori and non-Māori participants (N–372)

Action police took	Backbone Māori n=46	Backbone Tauiwi n=223	HTRK Māori n=25	HTRK Tauiwi n=78
They arrested the person who hurt/abused me and/or my child/ren	37%	22%	8%	14%
They came but took no action	17%	9%	16%	10%
They gave me information or referred me to other community services	26%	19%	20%	23%
They didn't believe me	17%	14%	16%	24%
I was treated as the one who had been violent	11%	11%	4%	15%

Differences in action police took for disabled and non-disabled victim-survivors

In the Backbone sample, there were two differences in responses from disabled participants and non-disabled participants regarding the action(s) police took. Disabled women (n=98) were more likely than non-disabled women (n=171) to report police took their statement but no further action was taken (32% compared with 22%) and far less likely to say police referred the abuser to social support services (1% compared with 22%). In the HTRK sample, disabled participants (n=73) were more likely to say police contacted other supports for them (17% compared with 6%) than non-disabled participants (n=30).

Differences in action police took for NFSV and FV

There were some significant differences in actions police took for women in the Backbone sample where either they or their child/ren experienced NFSV compared with responses from women where they or their child/ren experienced FV, suggesting police responded more seriously to violence when perpetrated by someone who is not an ex/partner, family or whānau member[71]. Women who experienced NFSV were nearly twice as likely as those who experienced FV to report: that police arrested the abuser (41% compared with 22%); and that the police contacted other supports for them (22% compared with 10%). They were also far less likely than those who experienced FV to report that police took their statement but no further action was taken (13% compared with 27%); that police came, but much later (6% compared with 17%); and that police gave the abuser a warning (6% compared with 14%).

Arrests

When participants said the person who abused them was not arrested, we asked if the police gave them a reason for the lack of arrest, and results were similar across both samples. Half the women in the Backbone sample who answered this question (n=196) said police did provide a reason; 35% said police did not give a reason; 10% do not

71 This question was answered by 32 women who said they or their child experienced sexual assault or abuse from someone who was not a partner/ex, family or whānau member and 237 women who said they or their child/ren experienced violence and abuse from a partner/ex, family or whānau member.

remember and 5% said they preferred not to answer the question. In the HTRK sample for this question (n=90), 46% of victim-survivors said police did provide a reason; 40% said they did not; 10% do not remember and 4% preferred not to answer the question.

We asked participants via free text what reason police gave for not arresting the abuser, and 98 women in the Backbone sample and 40 participants in the HTRK sample provided responses.

Insufficient evidence becomes a matter of 'he said she said'

Women in the Backbone sample were most likely to say police had told them there was insufficient evidence to arrest. This occurred for sexual, physical, and psychological violence. Participants gave several reasons for police concluding there was insufficient evidence including the following:

- Deemed by police as low chance of prosecuting in court
- Police saying the abuse was historic and happened too long ago to prosecute, the time limit for bringing court action had been exceeded
- Spousal sexual abuse hard to prove
- Police only took report rather than statement
- Abuser would lie or deny the abuse
- Abuser was believed over victim
- No physical evidence or witnesses
- Stalking – no physical harm or evidence
- No thorough investigation conducted
- Victim did not tell the police all the details of the abuse because they were frightened of the consequences of the abuser knowing that they had reported, and/or scared of wider consequences
- Abuser and/or victim was intoxicated
- Abuser 'skirting the law'
- Children who experienced or bore witness to abuse were either not interviewed or interviewed in the same room as the abuser, which resulted in an incorrect reporting of events and lack of evidence.

> *Insufficient evidence of sexual abuse towards my child.* ***Another ethnicity, straight woman***
>
> *No evidence.* ***Asian straight woman***
>
> *The investigations concluded that they could not pull up any significant evidence which could help me win a case against the accused in court.* ***Asian straight woman***

Lack of evidence also emerged as a common theme for victim-survivors in the HTRK sample. Some victim-survivors gave more context for this, with significant overlaps with other themes.

> *Insufficient evidence as he and I were the only ones in the room when he raped me.* ***Another ethnicity, bisexual woman***
>
> *They went and talked to my ex he said he didn't abuse our child they accepted his version and said they didn't have enough evidence abuse had occurred.* ***Pākehā bisexual woman***

Victim-survivor chose not to proceed

Victim-survivors made active choices around how they wanted things to proceed, for their own safety. In some cases, in both samples, victim-survivors asked to have charges dropped due to the stress involved in the court process. Others were fearful for their safety.

> *I told the police that I did not want to press charges, but that I would be fine with my report being saved in case my abuser is accused of abuse by someone else. I did not want to proceed with charges as I imagine the court process would be unbearable for my mental health.* ***Māori bisexual woman***
>
> *Because I did not want to go through the courts.* ***Pākehā pansexual trans person***
>
> *I didn't press charges at the time as I was scared. In hindsight I should have. And left him then and there. But you believe the lies that things will get better and they will change. It took me another couple of years to leave but basically he's never been held accountable to any of the violence.* ***Another ethnicity, bisexual woman***
>
> *He would likely murder me before it got to court.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

Several women in the Backbone sample did not want their abuser to be arrested, most often because they wanted the abuser to get help. Other women chose not to have the abuser arrested in efforts to limit the trauma to their children.

> *I worried that my children would be traumatised if they saw their father being handcuffed and taken away in a police car. I went to the police station in person with a friend and the police officers were really helpful.* ***Pākehā straight woman***
>
> *I didnt want him arrested just some help for him.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

Some women in the Backbone sample wanted their abuser to leave the property rather than be arrested. This was particularly evident for those who experienced family violence and intimate partner violence.

Many participants pointed out that often victims do not have the capacity to report immediately following the abuse as they struggle with the impacts of the abuse, the stress of dealing with agencies, fear of the abuser, all while continuing to participate in everyday activities for themselves and their children. The delay in reporting the violence and abuse means some reporting comes to be deemed historic, which makes it difficult to prove and provide evidence to lead to arrest.

> *I had chosen not to name the offender so no arrest is able to be made until i (and if i) decide to.* ***Pākehā bisexual woman***
>
> *I asked for the charges to be dropped and for him to not be arrested. I had nowhere else to go and it was all too stressful and complicated.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

Hard to prove and make arrest for sexual violence and stalking

A key theme that emerged in open text responses was the difficulty in having abusers arrested for sexual violence. The police responses in these examples were poor due to process failure – and/or beliefs that involved victim blaming and rape myths. Such responses included the following:

- Not taking forensic examination at the local hospital despite the victim reporting the rape[72]
- Saying there was insufficient physical evidence of child sex abuse
- Believing the perpetrator when they denied having sexual connection with rape victim
- Saying there was lack of evidence 'around that time of the rape'
- Telling the victim-survivor that the law will eventually catch up with the perpetrator as he has prior arrests
- Not following-up as the victim was intoxicated
- Deeming court prosecution to be unlikely.

For those who experienced stalking behaviour from the abuser, it was difficult to have the abuser arrested as police said there was a lack of physical evidence[73].

> *It is no offense to be followed harassed or stalked in a public place as he is an ex not a stranger.* ***Pākehā straight woman***
>
> *He said she said. No evidence which there usually isn't in spousal sexual abuse.* ***Wahine Māori (straight)***
>
> *Not enough evidence. We had no physical marks on us to prove he had assaulted us.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

Depends on who you get– varying levels of experience, professionalism, and care

Although the majority of open-text responses to the question "what action did police take?" shed a negative light on police response and the reasons for not arresting perpetrators, a small number of women in the Backbone sample described positive experiences with police where their stories were heard, the situation was deescalated, and they were initially made safer as a result. Women explained, however, that positive experiences were not always ongoing as the response from police was often determined by the individual police officers involved who were different over time. Senior police officers or detectives were praised for their care, patience, understanding, and knowledge of violence and were able to make appropriate action in partnership with the victim:

> *The police were very understanding about the mind games and intimidation he was using.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

However, officers who were inexperienced and/or younger were often described as careless, ingenuine, non-compassionate, or lacking understanding of the dynamics of family violence and post-separation abuse. Responses also suggest continuity of care is key, particularly ensuring officers and frontline staff at police stations who deal with family violence can build rapport and trust instead of passing victim-survivors around from officer to officer.

> *Two male officers on two occasions (one a Sargent) were very empathetic, understanding, took notes, and gave him [the abuser] a warning…Three officers (very young) on a separate occasion were so callous. They …refused to stay with me when my ex was present. I felt so alone. I want to commend the two officers who were supportive on the other occasions. But the three officers on that day appeared to have no compassion or understanding.* ***Pākehā woman***

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72 For more information on appropriate medical examination procedure, see the Sexual Abuse Assessment and Treatment Service (SAATS) webpage on the Medsac website.

73 As noted in Women's Refuge Brief: Intimate Partner Stalking in New Zealand (pg. 1), The criminal provision in the Harassment Act 1997 (HA) most closely aligns with stalking. However, the HA is not fit-for-purpose for family violence; provisions are instead framed to address acquaintance/gang stalking, and do not cater for the perpetration of tactics by partners.

Dissuaded by police to make report

Many women in the Backbone sample described being advised by the police not to lay charges, which sometimes felt like appropriate advice. One woman reported being offered a Police Safety Order instead. However, some women who were dissuaded from laying charges said police advice was that successful prosecution in court was unlikely, while others, concerningly, were advised by police to think of the harmful impact of conviction on the abuser. It is unclear if this issue is driven by police attitudes, or if police are simply advising on barriers inside the justice system; however, the result is that victim-survivors do not feel that their safety is being prioritised.

Demographic of abuser

Some women described how their abusive partner or associate of the partner was in a profession that led to police taking the word of the abuser over the victim e.g medical, business or justice system professionals. Victim-survivors described their partners as being viewed as having more 'credibility'. The following experiences depict the assumptions of police in these instances[74].

> *My ex was a [professional] they believed whatever he said...they didn't fully investigate, just took him at face value.* ***Pākehā straight woman***
>
> *The police didn't even look at him as a potential abuser, because he was a [professional] whom they [the police] knew well. When I had initially called the police they didn't want to come out when they heard his name and said I could ring them when he has just hit me.* ***Another ethnicity, straight woman***
>
> *Because [someone associated with the abuser] arrested me, at his request, they said I had no credibility so they won't even investigate.* ***Woman of undisclosed ethnicity***

The police blamed the victim-survivor, or indicated they did not believe them

The most common reasons for lack of arrest that victim-survivors in the HTRK sample gave in open text responses were related to whether police blamed them for what had happened, or whether the police believed them. Often this was related to gender of the victim-survivor or the abuser, illustrating challenges in police practices in risk assessment for Takatāpui and Rainbow communities both for same-gender relationships and for relationships involving trans and non-binary people.

> *Because I'm a man and no way could she have done such a thing. was the main reason I remember.* ***Another ethnicity, non-binary person***
>
> *Because they had called the police on me so they were the victim.* ***Pākehā sexuality diverse woman***

Many participants simply stated the police did not believe them. Several said the police told them they believed the abuser.

74 Specific roles have been replaced with 'professional' to protect the identity of participants.

> *That they believed I had committed crimes against him, and that they'd have me charged if I pursued the matter further.* ***Pākehā lesbian/gay non-binary person***
>
> *[Police said] we talked to him he says he didn't do it and there's no evidence to prove he did. They also told he and his lawyer that I intended to apply for a protection order which I had specifically asked the police not to do.* ***Pākehā bisexual woman***

Some participants in both samples said they had been blamed because of their own behaviour when the abuse occurred.

> *I was told there was "likely" fault on both sides but as he already made a complaint against me first they weren't going to take action. At this point I already had a protection order against him …but police said that was "not relevant" and "nothing to do with them" in relation to my complaint.* ***Another ethnicity, straight woman***
>
> *That if I tried to prosecute the person it would look bad for me because I had had a drink that night. He had convinced them that I was overreacting because of it.* ***Māori bisexual woman***
>
> *I was at fault because the abuse had happened at his house.* ***Pākehā pansexual woman***

Police took another action instead

Several participants in the HTRK and Backbone samples said police gave warnings or told victim-survivors they wanted to deal with the abuser's needs first.

> *To give them the time to cool down and get sober with a warning.* ***Māori lesbian/gay non-binary person***
>
> *Needed assessment by mental health as then threatening to suicide.* ***Pākehā lesbian woman***
>
> *It would be too difficult to do anything more than talk to him about his behaviour. I think they gave him a warning.* ***Pākehā straight woman***
>
> *[Police] were more concerned as to how he would feel knowing he had been reported.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

Could not locate the abuser

Several victim-survivors in both samples were told by the police they could not arrest the abuser because they could not find them.

> *Could not find the offender on or near my property or nearby he managed to flee before the police arrived every time unfortunately.* ***Pākehā bisexual woman***
>
> *He was difficult to locate.* ***Pasifika straight woman***

Age issues

The last theme in responses from participants in the HTRK and Backbone samples about why police did not arrest an abuser related to age, including the abuser and/or the victim-survivor being under 16 at the time of abuse or at the time of contacting the police.

> *The offender was [under 16] years old at the time of the offence and so was I. He was already involved with Police for other reasons and they were concerned for my safety if they had to take matters further. They assured me he would receive counselling and support to learn about consent.* ***Māori bisexual woman***

> *The[the police] thought the child was lying and no violence had occurred.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

Being young was also combined with not recognising abuse in relationships between women as serious for one participant.

> *I was too young and so was my abuser. We were both [teenagers]. They also made it clear two women don't be taken seriously, they talked like women can't also rape another women.* ***Pākehā lesbian woman***

Chapter 5: Police treatment of victim-survivors

The following chapter discusses victim-survivors' experiences of police treatment during their most recent or significant experience of family violence and/or sexual violence. Unfortunately, victim-survivors often report not being treated very well by police: many survey participants did not have a positive experience and reported police behaviours that show a lack of understanding, skill and specialisation in responding safely and appropriately to victim-survivors and their experiences. Reported mistreatment and bias from police and suspected reasons for such mistreatment are discussed – but we are also able to highlight the police practices that victim-survivors said were helpful.

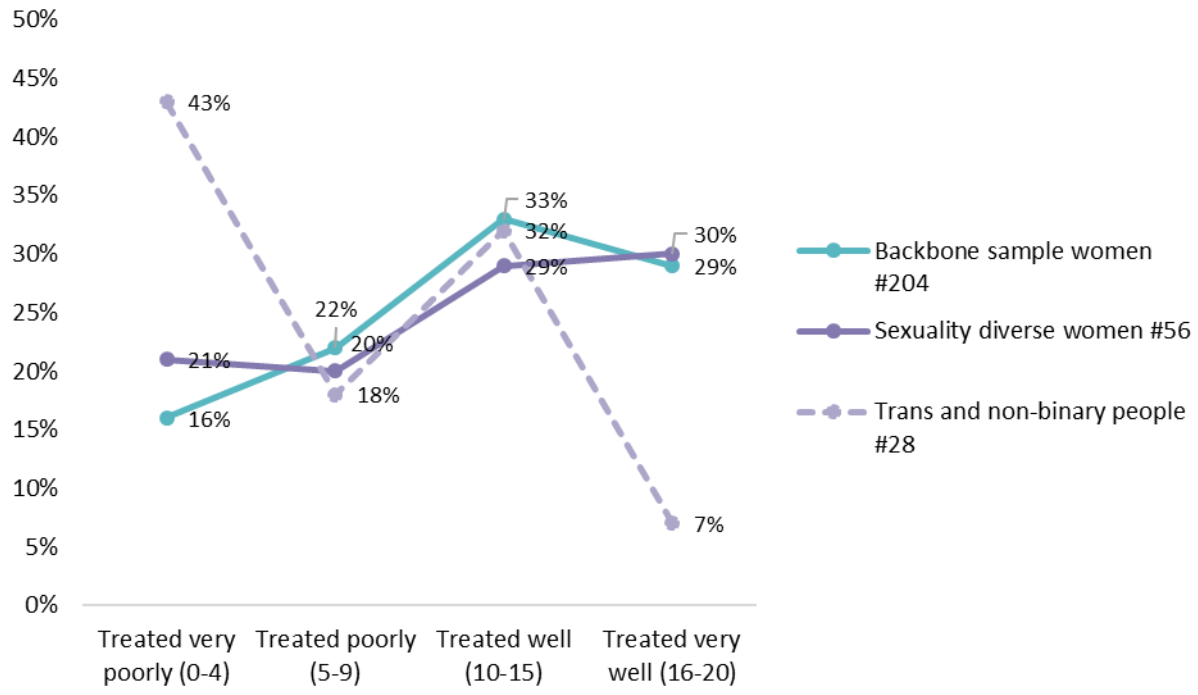
How well were participants treated by the police

Participants were asked to reflect on their most recent or significant experience of police involvement after violence and rate how well police had treated them on this occasion. Ratings ranged from 0 (treated very poorly) up to 20 (treated very well).

Average ratings out of 20 for victim-survivors were significantly lower for trans and non-binary people (7) than sexuality diverse women (10.4) and women in the Backbone sample (11.2). No trans or non-binary victim-survivors gave the police a rating of 20, but about one in five sexuality diverse women and women in the Backbone sample did so.

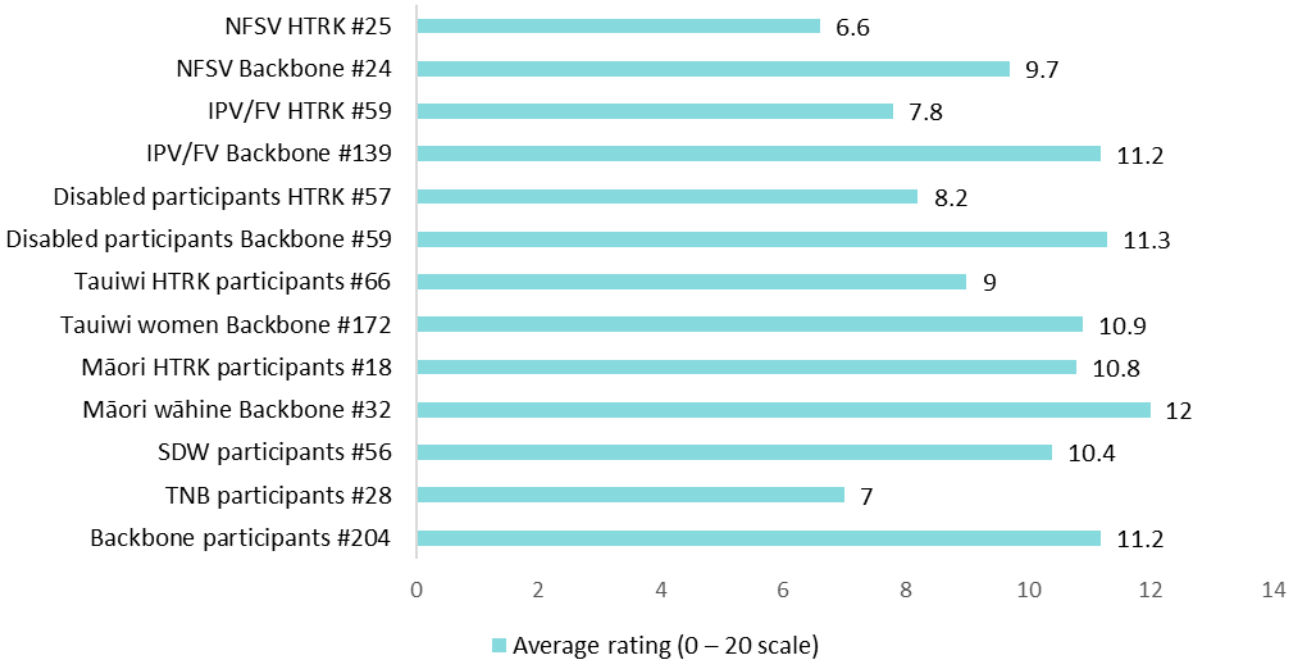
Ratings of police treatment by women in the Backbone sample and sexuality diverse women were similarly distributed with both cohorts having more participants rating the police treatment as 'well' or 'very well' than rating police treated them 'poorly' or 'very poorly'. However, trans and non-binary people were far more likely to say the police treated them very poorly and far less likely to say police treated them very well. Over four of every 10 trans and non-binary participants rated their treatment by police as 4 or less, and nearly two-thirds rated their treatment as 9 or less.

Figure 8: Victim-survivor rating of how well police treated them (N–288)



The rating scores were broken down further to explore differences between participant cohorts, shown in Figure 9 below. Of those who answered this question, women in the Backbone sample gave a higher average rating across all cohorts than participants in the HTRK sample. Wāhine Māori in the Backbone sample gave the highest average rating (12), and HTRK participants who had experienced NFSV gave the lowest average rating (6.6). Participants in both samples gave lower average ratings of police treatment for NFSV; and Māori participants in both samples gave higher average ratings of police treatment than tauiwi.

Figure 9: Average rating of treatment by police by participant cohorts (unweighted)



Would victim-survivors contact police again?

Participants were asked if they would contact police for help in the future based on their most recent or significant experience. Half the participants in the Backbone sample (51%, n=263) said they probably would contact police again and one quarter said they would not. The remaining 24% were not sure. Responses were similar if slightly less positive from sexuality diverse women (n=69): 46% reported they would probably contact police again, 30% would not, and the rest were unsure. Unsurprisingly, based on other responses, trans and non-binary victim-survivors (n=35) reported being much less likely to contact the police again. Just 26% reported they probably would contact police again. More than half of trans and non-binary people (57%) said they would not, and the rest were unsure.

Good practice - did the police help?

We asked participants about how the police had helped them, during their most recent or significant experience with police, and offered a drop-down list of 15 options as well as the chance to say more via a free-text field.

Overall, experiences in which police responses were helpful were low for all participants, but significantly worse for trans and non-binary participants, who reported the lowest rates of help from the police for every option except having the police explain what would happen in a way they could understand; being offered a woman police officer and being offered a support person or victim's advocate, as shown below in Table 17. Sexuality diverse women selected an average of 4.1 helpful experiences from the police, followed by women in the Backbone sample (4) and trans and non-binary people (3).

Participants in both samples were most likely to say that the police had listened to them, but this was still only selected by just over half of sexuality diverse women and women in the Backbone sample, and nearly half of trans and non-binary people. Only about a half of sexuality diverse women and women in the Backbone sample, and a third of trans and non-binary people said the police believed them.

Of significant concern are the low rates for whether police had put victim-survivors' safety first, selected by one in three sexuality diverse women, one in four Backbone participants and just 16% of trans and non-binary people. In addition, about a quarter of women participants but just 12% of trans and non-binary people said police understood family sexual and sexual violence, indicating a significant training need for officers (discussed further in Chapter 8).

Table 17: Ways police helped participants (n=287)

Ways of helping	BB sample women n=212	Sexuality diverse women n=50	Trans and non-binary people n=25
Listened to me	52%	58%	44%
Treated me with respect and dignity	48%	38%	28%
Believed me	46%	50%	32%
Took the violence or abuse seriously	45%	44%	24%
Explained what would happen in way I could understand	36%	46%	40%
Connected me with other support services	33%	24%	20%
Took time and did not rush me	32%	40%	32%
Put my safety first	25%	34%	16%
Understood family and sexual violence	24%	28%	12%
Offered to get a support person or victim's advocate for me	22%	20%	28%
Offered to get a woman police officer for me	14%	16%	16%
Prefer not to answer	7%	14%	8%
Provided other support I needed due to my health issues	2%	8%	4%

Arranged a police Diversity Liaison Officer (DLO) for me	1%	0%	4%

Differences in helpful behaviours of police for Māori and non-Māori participants

There were some notable differences in the experiences of helpful police behaviour between wāhine Māori and tauiwi women in the Backbone sample[75]. Wāhine Māori were less likely to say the police listened to them (40% vs 54%) and treated them with respect and dignity (37% vs 50%) and helped them in other ways (14% vs 22%). However, wāhine Māori in the Backbone sample were more likely to say that police explained what would happen in way they could understand (43% vs 35%), and offered to get a support person or victim's advocate for them (23% vs 15%). In the HTRK sample, Māori participants were more likely than tauiwi participants to say police put their safety first (40% vs 24%), took time and did not rush them (50% vs 33%), connected them with other support services and offered to get a support person or victim's advocate (35% vs 18%).

Differences in helping behaviours of police for disabled and non-disabled victim-survivors

Disabled women in the Backbone sample were much less likely to say police had put their safety first (16% vs 30%) or connected them with other support services (25% vs 38%).

For disabled participants in the HTRK sample, however, the picture was more complex and is explored in Table 18 below. They were more likely than non-disabled HTRK participants to say the police offered to get a support person or victim's advocate (27% vs 13%), helped in other ways (14% vs 0%) and provided other support due to their health issues (10% vs 0%). However, for most other options, disabled HTRK participants were far less likely to experience helpful behaviours from police as shown in Table 18 below. In the context of the considerable overlaps of Takatāpui and Rainbow communities and disabled communities, and the cumulative and intersectional experiences of discrimination and marginalisation, these results are very concerning and are likely to make disabled sexuality diverse women and trans and non-binary people considerably less safe.

Table 18: Comparison of police behaviour for disabled and non-disabled participants (n=287)

Ways of helping	**BB sample Disabled women n=77**	**BB sample Non-Disabled women n=135**	**HTRK Disabled people n=52**	**HTRK Non-Disabled people n=23**
Listened to me	53%	51%	48%	65%
Treated me with respect and dignity	51%	46%	27%	52%
Believed me	43%	48%	35%	65%

75 There were 35 wāhine Māori participants in the Backbone sample and 20 in the HTRK sample who answered this question. There were 177 tauiwi women in the Backbone sample and 55 tauiwi participants in the HTRK sample who answered this question.

Took the violence or abuse seriously	43%	46%	27%	61%
Explained what would happen in way I could understand	38%	36%	39%	57%
Connected me with other support services	25%	38%	19%	30%
Took time and did not rush me	30%	33%	29%	57%
Put my safety first	16%	30%	31%	22%
Understood family and sexual violence	21%	25%	14%	44%
Offered to get a support person or victim's advocate for me	20%	23%	27%	13%
Offered to get a woman police officer for me	17%	13%	17%	13%
Helped me in other ways (please explain)	20%	13%	14%	0%
Prefer not to answer	7%	7%	12%	13%
Provided other support I needed due to my health issues	3%	2%	10%	0%
Arranged a police Diversity Liaison Officer (DLO) for me	0%	0%	0%	4%

Differences in helpful behaviours of police by relationship context

Participants had different experiences with the police depending on the kind of violence they were reporting. Women in the Backbone sample who had experienced or whose children had experienced NFSV (n=24) were less likely than women where they or their child/ren experienced FV (n=188) to say the police put their safety first (17% vs 26%), but more likely to say police offered to get a woman police officer for them (29% vs 12%) and connected them with other support services (42% vs 32%).

In the HTRK sample, participants who experienced NFSV (n=18) were less likely than participants who experienced FV (n=45) to say police listened to them (44% NFSV vs 60% FV), treated them with respect and dignity (22% vs 38%), took the violence and abuse seriously (28% vs 42%), understood family and sexual violence (11% vs 29%) and took time and did not rush them (28% vs 40%). However, HTRK participants who experienced NFSV were more likely than those who experienced FV to say the police explained what would happen in a way they could understand (50% vs 40%).

Open-text responses regarding helping behaviour of police

Backbone Sample

Thirty-two Backbone participants provided more detail about other ways police had helped them. One third of these participants said: the police response made things worse; they were treated like the criminal; they were asked inappropriate questions about their sexual behaviour in the police interview; or they were left with the abuser.

The remaining two-thirds of participants discussed practical help provided by police that made a positive difference to them. For some women, help from police was due to the individual police officer who responded and, for some women, the fact the officer was a woman was very helpful. Some said the police provided great follow-up information and work on their case, and helped them understand their experience better or know when it was safe to return home. Others said that information provided by the police helped them, including about services and support such as sexual assault doctors, court processes or lawyers, Oranga Tamariki or how to block their phone. However, some participants felt that the police thought they were being helpful but they actually put the victim-survivor in more danger because they did not understand abuser behaviour.

> *One officer was amazing, a woman and the other did not believe me as he only spoke to the abuser.* ***Pākehā straight woman***
>
> *Provided me with key updates on how investigations were proceeding and was to be expected along the steps of investigation. Genuinely appeared to care for my wellbeing.* ***Asian straight woman***

Women described police taking concrete action in response to the violence and abuse as helpful, including:

- Laying charges and enforcing tight bail conditions
- Giving the victim-survivor temporary use of a personal alarm
- Responding to Protection Order breaches (although the police response was delayed significantly)
- Police staying with them while their ex-partner removed their property from the house
- Police giving the victim-survivor a glass of water
- Police making them safe (further detail undisclosed).

HTRK sample

The chance to offer comment about other ways the police might have helped was taken up by one sexuality diverse woman and six trans and non-binary people. Five of these participants said the police had not helped them at all; one said they had had good and bad experiences with the police, and one said they didn't think the police understood their context because they were transgender.

> *I don't know if police believed me. I am a gay man with a womans body. I don't know how well they understand that. I have no interest in women.* ***Māori Takatāpui person***

Bad practice – did the police cause harm?

We asked participants about harmful police actions in their most recent or significant experience with police via a drop-down list of 21 options. Only 43% of participants in the Backbone sample, one third of sexuality diverse women (33%) and 18% of trans and non-binary people said the police showed none of the poor behaviours listed. Most survey participants reported poor police practice which demonstrated a lack of understanding, skill and specialisation in responding safely and appropriately to victim-survivors. Trans and non-binary people selected an average of 4.4 harmful actions per person, sexuality diverse women and women in the Backbone sample selected an average of 1.9.

As shown in Table 19 below, the harmful behaviour most commonly reported in all three cohorts was that police minimised the violence and abuse, and the second most commonly reported harmful behaviour for all three cohorts was that police took the side of the abuser. Trans and non-binary victim-survivors reported the highest rates of both these police behaviours – and indeed, highest rates of all harmful police behaviours apart from "Used racist language or showed racist attitudes".

Some participants said police displayed behaviours towards them directly which were harmful including disrespecting the victim-survivor, accusing the victim-survivor of being mentally unwell[76] (as a reason not to believe the victim-survivor) and making fun of them. Again, trans and non-binary people were far more likely than sexuality diverse women and women in the Backbone sample to have experienced these behaviours.

Table 19: Harmful police behaviour towards victim-survivor on most recent or significant experience (n=339)[77]

Harmful police behaviour	BB Sample women n=245	Sexuality diverse women n=60	Trans and non-binary people n=34
The police did none of these things	43%	33%	18%
Minimised the violence and abuse	40%	53%	56%
Took the side of the person who abused or hurt me	26%	27%	38%
Were disrespectful towards me	18%	20%	32%
Other - please tell us more	18%	12%	24%
Accused me of being mentally unwell	8%	17%	27%
Made fun of me	7%	7%	21%
Treated me without respect because of my disability or health condition	5%	7%	24%
Used ableist language or attitudes	5%	12%	21%
Ignored or failed to understand my disability or health condition	5%	10%	32%

76 Experiencing mental health issues such as PTSD, anxiety and depression can be a potential outcome of experiencing family violence and sexual violence. These conditions can impact on victim-survivors' ability to communicate clearly however, they should never be a reason to feel ashamed or a reason not to believe victim-survivors.

Hager, D. (2001) He drove me mad : an investigation into the relationship between domestic violence and mental illness. Masters thesis, University of Auckland.

77 One participant in the Backbone sample selected the option that police 'Ignored or failed to understand my sexual identity' (they identified as straight) and one participant selected the option 'Treated me without respect because I am trans or non-binary' (identified as a straight woman). Due to rounding these two options from the drop-down list have been shown as '0%' in Table 19.

Verbally abused me	2%	5%	9%
Physically harmed me	2%	2%	3%
Used racist language or showed racist attitudes	1%	5%	3%
Treated me without respect because of my ethnicity	1%	2%	6%
Racially profiled me	1%	5%	9%
Ignored or failed to understand my ethnicity and culture	2%	0%	9%
Prefer not to answer	2%	2%	0%
Treated me without respect because I am trans or non-binary	0% (1 participant)	0%	35%
Ignored or failed to understand my sexual identity	0% (1 participant)	5%	29%
Misgendered me	0%	0%	38%
Treated me without respect because of my sexuality	0%	3%	21%

Differences in harmful behaviours of police for Māori and non-Māori participants

There were no significant differences in proportions of Māori participants who reported being treated badly by police compared with non-Māori participants for each of the behaviour options listed. However, poor police practices in relation to ethnicity were selected almost exclusively by non-Pākehā participants. In both the Backbone and HTRK samples victim-survivors who reported that they were racially profiled, that they experienced the use of racist language or racist attitudes or that police ignored or failed to understand their ethnicity and culture were overwhelmingly Māori and Pasifika people[78].

Differences in harmful behaviours of police for disabled and non-disabled victim-survivors

Non-disabled participants in both samples were more likely than disabled participants to report having experienced none of the negative behaviours (Backbone sample: 45% non-disabled vs 39% disabled. HTRK sample: 54% non-disabled vs 19% disabled). Table 20 shows that disabled participants in both samples reported much higher proportions of many discriminating practices from police than non-disabled participants. In the HTRK sample, disabled participants were more than two-and-a-half times more likely than non-disabled participants to report that police minimised the violence and abuse.

One disabled participant commented on disrespectful treatment in free text.

> *Spoke loudly on the phone outside my flat where my neighbors could hear and gave out personal details of my relationship and health problems.* ***Pākehā pansexual woman***

78 One Pākehā person in the HTRK sample and two participants of 'other ethnicity' in the Backbone sample selected one or more of these experiences.

Table 20: Comparisons of harmful police behaviours for disabled and non-disabled participants, for those police behaviours which disabled participants reported more than non-disabled participants by ten percentage points or more (n=339)

Harmful police behaviour	Backbone Disabled n=89	Backbone Non disabled n=156	HTRK Disabled n=70	HTRK Non disabled n=24
Minimised the violence and abuse	46%	36%	64%	25%
Accused me of being mentally unwell[79]	14%	5%	24%	8%
Made fun of me	11%	5%	16%	0%
Treated me without respect because of my disability or health condition	11%	1%	17%	0%
Used ableist language or attitudes	11%	2%	20%	0%
Ignored or failed to understand my disability or health condition	14%	1%	24%	0%

Differences in harmful behaviours of police by relationship context

Overall, in the Backbone sample, women who had experienced NFSV or whose children had experienced NFSV reported similar rates of poor police behaviour to those reported by women who had experienced FV (including IPV) and/or whose children had experienced FV. However, as shown in Table 21 below, women who experienced NFSV were more likely than those who experienced FV to report police accused them of being mentally unwell (as a reason to disbelieve them), made fun of them and were disrespectful towards them. In the HTRK sample, participants who had experienced NFSV or whose children had experienced NFSV reported significantly higher rates of harmful police behaviour than those who experienced FV (including IPV) and/or whose children experienced FV. As shown in Table 21, participants who had experienced NFSV were much more likely to say police used many of the harmful behaviours included in the drop-down options, and much less likely to say they had experienced no harmful behaviours from police (15% of NFSV participants in the HTRK sample, vs 33% of participants who experienced IPV/FV).[80]

79 Experiencing mental health issues such as PTSD, anxiety and depression can be a potential outcome of experiencing family violence and sexual violence. These conditions can impact on victim-survivors ability to communicate clearly however, they should never be a reason to feel ashamed or a reason not to believe victim-survivors.

80 52% NFSV participants in the HTRK sample are trans and non-binary, and 35% are Māori. Of HTRK participants who experienced FV (including IPV), 26% are trans and non-binary, and 21% are Māori.

Table 21: Experiences of harmful behaviours by police by relationship context with a discrepancy between context cohort of ten percentage points or more (n=339)

Harmful behaviours	Backbone NFSV n=27	Backbone FV n=218	HTRK NFSV n=27	HTRK FV n=67
Verbally abused me	7%	2%	15%	3%
Misgendered me	0%	0%	22%	10%
Used ableist language or attitudes	4%	6%	26%	10%
Ignored or failed to understand my disability or health condition	4%	6%	26%	15%
Ignored or failed to understand my sexual identity	0%	1%	30%	8%
Accused me of being mentally unwell	19%	6%	33%	15%
Made fun of me	19%	6%	30%	5%
Minimised the violence and abuse	41%	39%	67%	49%
Were disrespectful towards me	30%	16%	44%	16%
Treated me without respect because of my sexuality	0%	0%	22%	5%
Treated me without respect because I am trans or non-binary	0%	1%	26%	8%
Treated me without respect because of my disability or health condition	4%	5%	22%	12%
Treated me without respect because of my ethnicity	4%	1%	11%	0%
The police did none of these things	41%	43%	15%	33%

Harmful police behaviours: free text responses

We heard from 45 participants in the Backbone sample and 15 in the HTRK sample via open text about their most recent or significant involvement with police. These victim-survivors shared a wide range of negative experiences, which are presented thematically below. Two participants in the Backbone sample reported having mixed responses from police, either between different regions or time periods.

Treating victim-survivors poorly

In the free-text field, most participants in both samples described being treated poorly by the police, including:

- Being accused by police of making up allegations of violence to get back at their ex-partner
- Being told to stop calling police
- Police who were rude, sighing and acting bored, laughing at the victim-survivor, not listening, 'extremely snarky', ignoring the victim-survivor
- Minimising the violence and abuse, being dismissive and unempathetic
- Judging the victim-survivor for being a victim, their type of employment, using drugs, their home
- Humiliating the victim-survivor
- Not providing all the information/deliberately withholding information
- Being insensitive to the children present.

> *The police officer who took me to the station for interview lied to me about what had been done with my partner and didn't tell me he'd been arrested until I was taken home, several hours later.* ***Pākehā bisexual woman***

> *Behind my back falsely decided that I was making up the allegations to get back at my ex-husband.* ***Another ethnicity, straight woman***

> *In the past when the abuse was regular and extreme my safety was never taken [into] consideration and I wasn't listened to I was judged [because of my employment] and a drug user and no female officer was ever present.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

These behaviours left victim-survivors feeling more distressed, having PTSD responses and, for some, feeling like they were the criminal.

> *He [the police officer] had his legs wide and his hands on his hips. I felt really vulnerable and scared - even more so since this occurred in my bedroom. I have never even had a traffic ticket and I have never been exposed to the police as that is not part of my environment. All of a sudden I felt so scared, vulnerable and terrified.* ***Another ethnicity, straight woman***

> *Minimised my experience. Told me he was a good guy who raped me. Made sexist comments when I asked for a female officer.* ***Another ethnicity, bisexual woman***

Police action/non-action has a negative impact

Many participants in the Backbone sample described the actions, or inaction, police took as having a negative impact on them and resulting in further trauma. Those actions included:

- Taking a long time to turn up to the 111 call
- Under-charging the abuser for violence and abuse
- Not pursuing adequate sentencing
- Having no woman officer present or arriving with a group of male detectives even though police knew the victim-survivor was a rape survivor
- Not following up with the charge
- Failing to interview or talk with the victim-survivor
- Saying they would get a protection order at sentencing but not doing so

- Taking no action – just referring the victim-survivor to a family violence agency who did nothing
- Not listening to the victim-survivor but to the abuser instead
- Not providing any help
- Not allowing the victim-survivor to have a support person travel with her in the police vehicle
- Sharing information with the victim-survivor that minimised the rape
- Assuming the violence was not rape because rapist was her husband
- Pressuring the victim-survivor to separate from the abuser, make a statement, testify or being forceful about the next steps she should take.

Lack of understanding about family and sexual violence

Some participants discussed a lack of police understanding about violence and abuse which put them at greater risk and resulted in police blaming them for the abuse. One Māori participant explained that police have "very minimal awareness for Māori & intergenerational traumas". Participants explained police did not understand that abusers can present to police as friendly and 'nice' but can also be violent and abusive to the victim-survivor. Furthermore, some participants said police did not understand the impact of violence and abuse on children, and that police views that abusers should still have contact with children put children in greater danger. One participant explained that police viewed the violence and abuse as a family matter that was better responded to by the Family Court than by them, and that this response made things worse for her and her children.

> *Police frequently told me after crime incidents to manage these issues in family court since the case was current there. By handing it off to court, this was viewed by court as police having not done anything so it was not serious or valid for coca [Care of Children Act] proceedings. Violence was purposefully ignored in family court proceedings.* ***Pākehā straight woman***
>
> *On this particular occasion [the police officers] arrived, [one] walked in the room and said 'Fuck, she took him back again!'* ***Wāhine Māori (straight)***
>
> *They asked me if it was so bad why had I stayed so long with my husband… I was so traumatised by the way police dealt with me and minimised me I don't think I will ever trust them again.* ***Another ethnicity, straight woman***

Discrimination against trans and non-binary people

Using drop-down options, over one third (38%) of all trans and non-binary victim-survivors reported they had been misgendered in their most recent or significant experience with the police. More than one third (35%) reported they had been treated without respect because they were trans or non-binary. In the free-text field, trans and non-binary participants also mentioned poor treatment.

> *Initially misgendered me until I corrected them.* ***Pākehā pansexual trans man***
>
> *They should have provided a private space for me to talk to them. It was humiliating doing the statement in front of strangers in a police foyer. I did not have the courage to ask for a private area.* ***Māori Takatāpui person***

Discrimination against sexuality diverse people

Poor police practices in relation to the sexuality of victim-survivors in the HTRK sample were significantly more likely to be selected by trans and non-binary participants, and were selected by participants of all sexualities.

Twenty-nine percent of trans and non-binary people and 5% of sexuality diverse women said the police ignored or failed to understand their sexual identity, and 21% of trans and non-binary people and 3% of sexuality diverse women said they had been treated without respect because of their sexual identity. On the surface, these figures are surprisingly low; however, as can be seen in participant comments in relation to not having violence between women taken seriously and feeling like how participants looked led to poor response from the police, often people find it easier to recognise discrimination with concrete examples. In free text, participants discussed feeling sexualised in police interviews.

Mistreatment and bias shown by police

We also asked participants about their perception of the basis for any bias or mistreatment they had experienced from the police. Over one third of participants in the Backbone sample (36%) indicated they had not experienced mistreatment due to any of the drop-down options in Table 22. None of these participants used the open text 'other' option to leave comment explaining any other factors they see as reasons for mistreatment. The same proportion of sexuality diverse women (36%) also indicated they had not experienced mistreatment; this figure was halved for trans and non-binary people (18%). Overall, trans and non-binary people reported much higher numbers of experiences of bias or mistreatment per person (average of 4.9) compared with 3.2 for sexuality diverse women and 2.7 for women in the Backbone sample.

Victim blaming

Significant numbers of participants said they had experienced mistreatment or bias from police due to factors related to victim-blaming myths. About one in four women, and one in two trans and non-binary people, reported they experienced mistreatment from police because they were victim-survivors, and some reported the poor police response was because they had called police numerous times in the past. About one in five women and one in two trans and non-binary people reported they were mistreated because of their gender and, in free-text, two participants further specified that being transgender/a trans woman meant they were treated poorly. Some reported police mistreatment as being caused by the victim-survivor being drunk or drugged at the time the abuse/assault took place.

In addition, in free text, many Backbone participants explicitly named the ways in which police judged the victim-survivor negatively for being a victim-survivor and treated her poorly as a result. Women described being judged by police for the following:

- Having more than one abusive partner in the past
- Creating more work for police by reporting ongoing abuse
- Ostensibly over reacting about the abuse
- Being at fault for having an abusive partner
- Having a previous criminal conviction
- Being well off
- Having an addiction
- Fighting back during the assault.

> *I'm an educated professional and was often mocked that I should know better than be a victim of domestic violence!!! Such an unhelpful ignorant attitude which was/is very debilitating.* ***Pasifika straight woman***
>
> *Family court involvement seems to make the police make negative assumptions about the mother.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

> *Victim blamed and told its my fault for my choice in man.* ***Wahine Māori (straight)***

Factors relating to the abuser

Some participants, particularly in the Backbone sample, said police treated them badly due to factors relating to the abuser. Fifteen percent of women in the Backbone sample and 9% of sexuality diverse women and trans and non-binary people said police treated them badly because their partner/ex-partner was known to the police. Some participants said the poor police treatment was because the abuser has influence or is a leader in the community, including 12% of participants in the Backbone sample, 7% of sexuality diverse women and 9% of trans and non-binary people.

Victim-survivor identity

Many participants felt they were mistreated by the police because of who they are. When asked what participants thought were the reasons they were treated badly by police, many reported factors which are aligned with results for other questions in the survey, particularly relating to age, gender, sexuality, ethnicity and disability. One in three trans and non-binary victim-survivors, one in five sexuality diverse women and one in ten participants in the Backbone sample were treated badly because of their age. In free-text responses, two participants described being young at the time they were seeking help, and not being taken seriously because of their age and the age of the perpetrator. Trans and non-binary people (38%) were four times more likely than sexuality diverse women (9%) to report being treated badly by the police because of their sexuality.

Table 22: Factors victim-survivors report as causes for their poor treatment by police (n=380)

NZ police treated me badly because of	Backbone sample women n=276	Sexuality diverse women n=70	Trans and non-binary people n=34
None of the below	36%	36%	18%
I am a victim-survivor	26%	29%	50%
My gender	17%	20%	50%
I've called police numerous times in the past	15%	9%	12%
My partner/ex partner being known to the police	15%	9%	9%
Other - please tell us more	14%	13%	21%
My financial or social status	13%	11%	24%
My disability or illness (including mental health)	12%	26%	38%
The person who abused/hurt me is a leader in the community or has influence	12%	7%	9%

My age	9%	20%	32%
I was drunk or drugged at the time the abuse/assault took place	9%	11%	18%
My ethnicity or culture	7%	4%	12%
How I look	7%	10%	32%
My family/social connections	6%	9%	15%
Some people find my way of communicating hard to understand	5%	7%	21%
Gang connections	2%	1%	3%
My religious/spiritual beliefs	2%	3%	3%
Prefer not to answer	1%	4%	3%
My sexuality	0%	9%	38%

Financial and social status

Just under one quarter of trans and non-binary participants, and just over one in ten Backbone sample and sexuality diverse women said they were treated badly by the police because of their financial or social status. These participants were offered the opportunity to specify further via both a set of eight drop-down options and free-text responses.

In the Backbone sample, 35 women provided more information via drop-down options. More than half of these participants reported they were treated badly because they were well-educated and over a quarter because they were well-off. Over a third reported police mistreatment was due to the area or place they live in – although no further information is available about what it is about this place that impacts on police response. Smaller numbers reported that being on a benefit or being a single parent was the reason for police treating them badly.

Sixteen Backbone participants commented further in open text about poor treatment due to their financial or social status. These women described being judged by police for being well off or for being poor. Some women talked about police siding with the abuser/s because they had more social standing, power or status due to their age, employment, caregiving status (as co-parent) or financial position. Others described poor treatment by police based on police judgements of the abuser (gang member or known to police). Some women explained the bias police expressed towards them was based on stereotyping them as trouble makers, or judgements about mental health, whether victim-survivors had lived experience of mental distress or not.

Sixteen participants from the HTRK sample answered the follow-up question about their financial or social status. Via drop-down options, 10 participants reported police treated them badly because they were on a benefit and six reported it was because of the area or place they live. Others reported they were treated poorly because they were a single parent (four responses) or homeless (two responses), and one participant described this further in free text:

> *The answers above are about one person still I just happened to be homeless at points as well and single but still trapped by the psychological, financial, mental and emotional abuse and manipulation.* ***Pākehā pansexual non-binary person***

No participants in the HTRK sample said they had been treated badly because they were well-off, and in free-text responses, participants discussed their social status as a basis for mistreatment because they were single parents, they were transgender, or they drive an old car.

Mistreatment due to disability

Disabled participants in both samples were much more likely to say they were treated poorly by police due to their disability or illness (Backbone: 29% disabled vs 2% non-disabled; HTRK: 39% disabled vs 7% non-disabled).[81] Furthermore, disabled participants in the HTRK sample were far more likely to say they were mistreated because of how they look than non-disabled participants (23% vs 3%).

Mistreatment because of how a victim-survivor looks

Some participants, particularly trans and non-binary people, said that they were treated badly by police because of how they look. One third of trans and non-binary people, one in ten sexuality diverse women and 7% of women in the Backbone sample said the police mistreated them because of how they looked.

Nineteen women in the Backbone sample and 18 participants in the HTRK sample answered a follow-up question about being treated badly by police because of how they looked. Nearly half of the Backbone women who answered this question reported police bias was due to how they dressed or their physical appearance, and three reported it was because they had tattoos or piercings.

There were nine participants in the Backbone sample who left further comment in the open text 'other' option with most explaining that the bias was due to them not presenting as a 'typical/usual victim' i.e. they were well dressed, they looked physically able to look after them self, too 'posh' or 'wealthy'. Two other participants mentioned that the reason for police treating them poorly was their skin tone and their age.

Two-thirds of responses from HTRK participants to this question reported bias was due to their physical appearance and half because of the way they dressed. Five participants felt they were treated badly by the police due to their tattoos or piercings. Seven participants in the HTRK sample left further comments; three of which referred to being a trans woman, and two to the ethnicity/culture of the participant not being white.

Minimisation of the violence and abuse

Many of the 37 participants in the Backbone sample who left further comment in the open text 'other' option for the question regarding mistreatment and bias shown by police discussed victim-survivors being viewed as 'the problem.' This meant violence and abuse were minimised, and victim-survivors' experiences of trauma were not responded to appropriately by police. Women explained they were accused of making up the allegations of violence and abuse and were not believed by police. Participants described examples of police not responding when they called for help or not taking the situation seriously and failing to see the danger the victim-survivor was in.

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81 Participants who selected the option My disability or illness (including mental health) for this question but who did not earlier indicate in the demographics questions that they had a disability or health condition were coded as 'non-disabled' for this analysis.

The minimisation of the abuse was based on a lack of understanding of what violence and abuse looks like and the dynamics abusive men use[82].

> *I think police may have thought I kept "getting back together with him" even though this was not the case. I was bound by family court orders to facilitate contact and I had no mechanisms to stop him turning up at my place.* ***Another ethnicity, straight woman***
>
> *They were quite dismissive and didn't understand the magnitude of what was happening.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

Women talked about the police failure to understand how victim-survivors might present and how abusers could present in a different way that was more believable.

> *My partner had the ability to go from being abusive and violent to suddenly being calm, measured and "the voice of reason" and "only trying to help" when Police arrived. I was dismissed due to being "emotional" or in "histrionics".* ***Asian straight woman***
>
> *I shake uncontrollably when scared or nervous so they thought I was just over reacting.* ***Wahine Māori (straight)***

Sometimes the abuser was viewed as the victim.

> *The police make him sound like the victim who needs understanding.* ***Another ethnicity, straight woman***

Many participants described the way in which the abuser used police to further their abuse either by making continual false reports to police about the victim-survivor or by being manipulative and 'controlling the narrative'. Some participants explained that the abuser had connections within police that gave him influence over how the police responded to the situation.

> *My ex is a white professional male and has a higher level of education than most police. He'll talk his way (or use a lawyer) to talk his way around everything including breaches of protection order. He uses the police against me- making false allegations and statements and using them to intimidate me.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

The result of police treating victim-survivors badly because of: victim-blaming myths; lack of understanding about dynamics of family violence, sexual violence and abuser behaviour; and the abuser having such influence was that victim-survivor complaints to police regarding sexual assaults, historic rape, and family violence were ignored.

> *The police don't seem to care or take my situation seriously. They don't return my calls. They don't record all the breaches and they are not doing anything about the threats and stalking.* ***Another ethnicity, straight woman***

82 The Backbone Collective (2020) Victim-Survivor Perspectives on Longer-Term Support After Experiencing Violence and Abuse A report prepared for the Ministry of Social Development. NZ.

Chapter 6: Outcomes of police involvement

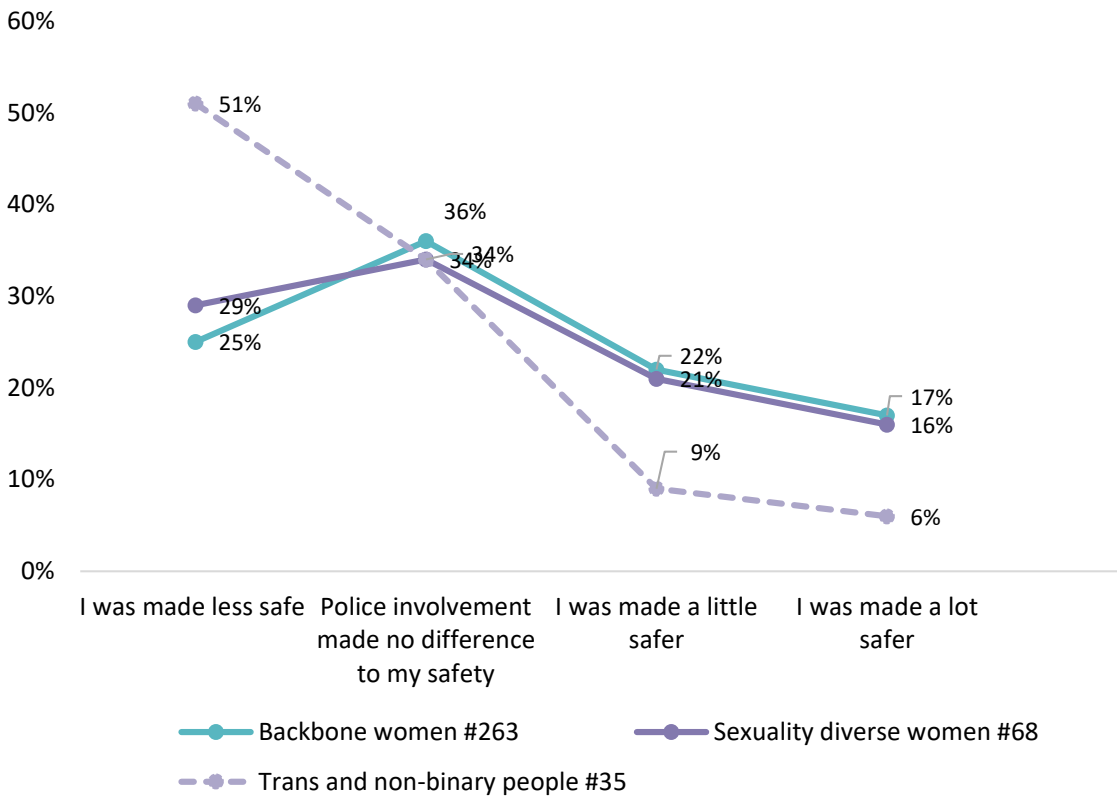
In the following chapter we present the outcomes of police involvement for victim-survivors, their whānau and the person who abused them. Most importantly victim-survivors assess the impact of police involvement on their safety: unfortunately, for many victim-survivors, police involvement made them less safe. We explore actions police took that participants say made them and their children safer and those that made them less safe, including actions which emboldened the abuser. In many cases police action led to continued and worsening violence and abuse and a lack of faith or trust in the police.

Safety after police involvement

We asked participants about what difference the police made to their safety on the most recent or significant occasion when police were involved.

Close to four in ten women in the Backbone sample (39%) and sexuality diverse women (37%) said police involvement made them a little or a lot safer, but this figure dropped to 15% for trans and non-binary participants. Of significant concern is that one in four women in the Backbone sample, 29% of sexuality diverse women and 51% of trans and non-binary people said police involvement made them less safe.

Figure 10: Difference police involvement made to participant's safety (n=366)[83]



83 Some participants selected 'prefer not to answer' from the dropdown options listed (Backbone sample women n = 4, Sexuality diverse women n = 2, trans and non-binary people n = 0). These responses have been excluded from Figure 10.

Differences to safety for Māori and non-Māori participants

In the Backbone sample, Māori participants (30%) were more likely than tauiwi (24%) to say police involvement had made them less safe. We found no significant difference in the rates of Māori (39%) and tauiwi (37%) participants in the Backbone sample who said police involvement made them safer, either by a little or a lot.

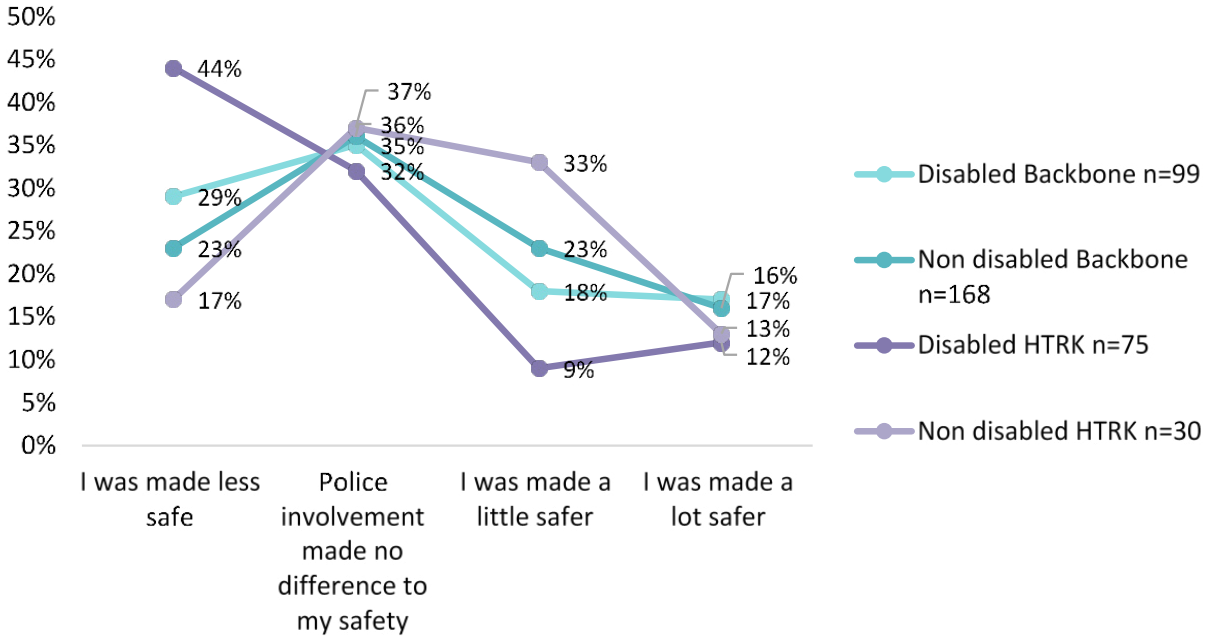
In the HTRK sample, Māori participants rated the impact of police involvement on their safety very similarly to the Backbone sample. Thirty-one percent said police involvement had made them less safe, and 39% said police involvement made them safer.

However, tauiwi participants in the HTRK sample reported very different experiences than tauiwi participants in the Backbone sample. They were more likely to say police involvement had made them less safe (38%) and less likely to say that police involvement made them safer (25%). While these ratings may mean different things for different participants, it is interesting to note that sexuality and gender diversity means tauiwi participants are reporting much poorer safety ratings, while for Māori, it seems that being Māori is the most significant demographic determinant in terms of safety, regardless of sexuality or gender identity.

Differences to safety for disabled participants

Disabled participants in both samples were more likely to say they were made less safe by police involvement as shown in Figure 11 below. Nearly half of disabled HTRK participants (44%) were made less safe by police responses. Conversely, non-disabled HTRK participants were the least likely (17%) to report being made less safe by police responses.

Figure 11: Differences to safety for disabled and non-disabled participants



Differences to safety by relationship context

In the Backbone sample women who had experienced NFSV or whose children had experienced NFSV were less likely than women who experienced FV (including IPV) or whose children experienced FV to say police involvement made them a little safer (10% NFSV context vs 23% FV context) and more likely to say it made no difference to their safety (48% NFSV context vs 34% FV context). However, there was no significant difference in rates of participants who reported police made them either a lot safer, or made them less safe.

In the HTRK sample, participants who had experienced NFSV or abuse were much less likely than those participants who had experienced FV to say police involvement made them either a lot or a little safer (3% vs 41%). Participants who experienced NFSV were also far more likely than those who experienced FV to say police involvement made no difference to their safety (52% vs 22%) and more likely to say police involvement made them less safe (45% vs 33%).

Table 23: Differences to safety for participants by relationship context[84]

Difference to safety	NFSV Backbone n=31	FV Backbone n=236	NFSV HTRK n=29	FV HTRK n=58
I was made a little safer	10%	23%	3%	24%
I was made a lot safer	16%	17%	0%	17%
Police involvement made no difference to my safety	48%	34%	52%	22%
I was made less safe	26%	25%	45%	33%

Police involvement that made victim-survivors safer

Participants who said police involvement made them safer were asked via open text to describe how. Ninety-one women in the Backbone sample and 25 participants In the HTRK sample provided more detail, presented here thematically.

Listening to victim-survivors and believing them

One of the main issues highlighted by women in the Backbone sample who said police involvement made them safer was that police listened to, believed, and understood them. Several sexuality diverse women also talked about how powerful being listened to and believed by the police had been for them, and how police acting on that belief made them safer.

> *By just being there and actually listening and taking me seriously.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

> *I felt like they truly believed me and that I was taken seriously. I didn't feel judged.* ***Māori bisexual woman***

84 Note: this table includes only responses from participants who provided information about the context in which they experienced violence.

> *They listened to me. Believed me even though it was only psychological not physical abuse. They took action to issue a safety order. But told me he would likely be back that night. To call them immediately.* ***Pākehā bisexual woman***

Acting swiftly

Participants said that when police act swiftly, abusers think twice before offending again.

> *Ex knows that I will seek help from the police, officers have frightened him.* ***Another ethnicity, bisexual woman***

> *My violent partner knows police will be called, so sometimes that makes him behave better.* ***Wāhine Māori (straight)***
>
> *I feel knowing the police were involved and prepared to act was a wake-up call for the ex and his family.* ***Pākehā woman***

Arresting the perpetrator

Arresting the perpetrator prevented serious harm to whānau members in some cases. Some participants in the Backbone sample explained that when a Protection Order is breached, abusers are not always arrested. Officers who automatically arrest abusers for breaching Protection Orders were described as helping in preventing further abuse.

> *He was locked up this time, a second breach of protection order and held in custody...thank God as that week gave him enough time in the cells to deescalate...[during his time in the cells] he realised he was in the wrong so it saved my life.* ***Wahine Māori (straight)***
>
> *My ex was arrested...I felt safe because I knew I could call the police if needed my ex would be arrested...* ***Wahine Māori (straight)***

When the police made the arrest, victims reported feeling validated and believed about their experiences of abuse. Unfortunately, for some women, the fear of further abuse returned as soon as the abuser was given bail. Refusing bail for a perpetrator was described as an action police took that kept victim-survivors safe.

Issuing a Police Safety Order

Participants understood that Police Safety Orders can be given at the discretion of the police. Safety orders have been key in giving some victim-survivors time to plan next steps and seek information on support services.

Charging a perpetrator

Some survey participants said that when police charged the perpetrator they were made safer.

Removing the abuser

Removing the abuser was necessary in ensuring immediate safety for some victim-survivors in the Backbone sample. All the trans and non-binary people who answered in free-text said having the abuser taken away, if only for a night, gave them space and time to reconsider their options, including helping them leave the relationship or situation.

> *He got bail conditions that precluded him from contacting us and he was confined to a different region to where I lived. This distance gave me respite from the daily battering and helped me to see the abuse for what it was.* ***Pākehā woman***

> *Making my ex partner leave me alone for 48 hours (wasn't long enough but it was a start) and they couldn't be at my house. having this space from them gave me the strength/power/courage to end the relationship.* ***Pākehā bisexual trans man***

Several sexuality diverse women also said having the abuser taken away made them safer.

> *The abuser came back to the home minutes after the police left. I was able to have him removed. The Police did say they couldn't find him but he was obviously somewhere watching and waiting for them to leave.* ***Māori bisexual woman***
>
> *Immediately located and removed her to [a significant distance away].* ***Pākehā lesbian woman***
>
> *He was removed from the house for 5 days, so I could move out.* ***Pākehā bisexual woman***

However, some participants explained that the respite from contact was only temporary.

> *They asked my ex, the abuser to leave. They issued a Police Safety Order until I could get a Protection Order put on him. Although they didn't arrest him, they told him he could not come back to the property. He ignored their warnings, but initially for a week or so after he was first removed, my children and I were finally safe in our own home.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

Providing information and referral to support services

Participants volunteered in the free-text response field that when police referred or transported them to support services like Women's Refuge, they felt safer, that the police were taking them seriously, and that support services were more likely to be available. Victim-survivors also found it helpful when police informed them of next steps, offered practical assistance or advice about documenting abuse including harassment and stalking. As guided by police, having evidence on file and documenting abuse was described by participants as 'taking a little bit of power back.' Reassurance from police was key in making participants feel safe and validated.

> *They came with me into the house and helped me pack my things while they talked to my [family member]. They got me in touch with Womens refuge and they were able to find counseling options for me. Womens Refuge would call me and ask me how I was going every week and if I needed further help.* ***Māori pansexual woman***
>
> *The police organized a restraining order. Sat with me until [support person] was available Called [service], with my permission Assured me he'd be arrested.* ***Pākehā asexual woman***

Having women officers trained in domestic violence present

Many women in the Backbone sample preferred having women officers respond to their call for help. Having a woman police officer made a positive difference to some participants' feelings of safety. Some women discussed women officers as having empathy and understanding toward victim-survivors.

> *I had female detectives take our statements which also made me feel relief and safe.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

Catching the abuser

Some participants explained that when police located and 'caught' the abuser they were made safer as a result. For many victim-survivors, a safety order or protection order does not guarantee their safety.

> *When they did turn up, I felt a sense of safety at that point, but really when they leave, I never feel safe, there is no guarantee my partner won't come back and get me, especially when he is on the run. It's not until he is caught or in custody that I feel safer. And then he always gets out and I'm the one who has to put up and wait it out until he has his next massive violent episode.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

Prioritising the safety of victim-survivors and children, when using discretion

There were several examples shared where police discretion was necessary to ensure appropriate action was taken to make victim-survivors safer. While these actions were not prescribed in police protocols, they were made under the discretion of the officers and helped keep the victim-survivors safe. For example, police supported a participant to relocate to another region.

Police involvement made victim-survivors less safe

If participants signalled police involvement had made them less safe they were asked via open text to describe how. Sixty-six women in the Backbone sample and 38 participants in the HTRK sample provided more detail, discussed in themes below.

Police failed to act

Participants in both samples most commonly reported that police responses which supported the abuser, including failing to act or treat violence seriously, made them less safe. Participants said violence and abuse often escalated because the abuser now saw they could get away with the violence. Participants said police failed to act in a number of ways including:

- Failing to prosecute, therefore the abuser went on to abuse others
- Failing to arrest the abuser, so the victim-survivor was then perceived by others as lying about the abuse
- Never holding the abuser to account for what they had done
- Failing to respond to breaches of orders or arrest for violence, which had huge consequences for subsequent proceedings in Family Court
- Encouraging the victim-survivor not to make a statement about sexual assault
- Not referring the victim-survivor to any support services.

> *Having the police involved but having them do nothing empowers the abuser and disempowers the victims.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

> *By effectively preventing me from leaving for a safer place (I had one to go to, I just couldn't get there…. They have also made me less safe in the past by various kinds of transmisogynistic discrimination, misgendering, deadnaming etc - I don't know if they did that this time or not…but their very involvement also makes me less safe.* ***Pākehā lesbian trans woman***

> *They let the person who attacked me remain in the same house, and they let her get away with it. No consequences or intervention meant she would go on to attack me again. He also made it very clear that he thought this was a waste of his time, and that I was being hysterical. My attacker [seriously physically assaulted me], the 111 operator told me I had to stay at the house for the police to help. When the officer finally showed up, he treated me like I was just being dramatic and just as bad as the person who attacked me.* ***Pākehā bisexual woman***

Many participants talked about being punished by the abuser for involving police and some were punished (including physical assaults) by family members and friends of the abuser.

> *Because the case was dropped, it empowered my abuser and his friends to increase their berating of me, and most likely empowered him to continue this behaviour with others - enabled his belief that he did nothing wrong.* ***Pākehā non-binary person***

> *My ex continued to breach protection order. It was torture. Police kept saying its a family court matter and family court saying the police didn't see it as a breach as no report was made.* ***Wahine Māori (straight)***

> *Because of the rapist's 'friends in high places' and the very fact that I had disclosed I felt very vulnerable.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

> *Contacting the police made the abuser angry at me and my [child] and also made me feel like there was no point contacting the police again, so we were trapped in the violence with no support.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

> *Was stalked and intimidated by offender to retract my statement as he did not want police talking to him.* ***Māori asexual person***

> *Having them arrive made the abuser angry, after they left the abuse escalated. I was so scared that I fled the property and didn't return for months.* ***Pākehā lesbian/gay non-binary person***

> *My partner was furiously angry that the police had been called and blamed me even though I wasn't the one who had done it. He became significantly more likely to harm me in the aftermath.* ***Pākehā bisexual woman***

> *My abuser will now view me as a narc for telling the police about her violence towards me. I couldn't get a restraining order so now they would have just made her angry and she's still on the loose and making her friends [target me] when they see me out in public.* ***Pākehā lesbian woman***

One victim-survivor had been left by the police as a child with an abusive adult who was harming both her and her mother.

> *My mother went to the hospital in the ambulance. They left me with a violent and sexually abusive man.* ***Māori bisexual woman***

A worse outcome

Participants in both samples who used the free-text field described feeling more vulnerable following police involvement. As a result of police not acting or taking the wrong actions, participants felt traumatised, unsafe and hopeless. Some were in a far worse situation after contact with the police.

Some participants explained they were forced to leave their home, lost their property, and/or were arrested themselves and were no longer able to see their children as a result. These victim-survivors described police involvement as traumatising.

> *I felt as though it was made to be my fault and if I had not put myself in that position that I would not have been sexually abused. I felt less safe because I walked out thinking that this could happen again and again to me but no one would be held accountable.* ***Pākehā straight woman***
>
> *They did nothing. I wasn't even referred to any support services, just told to call again if felt unsafe. I tried to file a report with police 3 times and each time was denied this right for protection.* ***Pākehā straight woman***
>
> *Abuser was told of reporting allowing him to delete evidence and child was forced into his care following as police closed the case without advising and social services never followed up despite my contact numerous times.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

Five victim-survivors in the HTRK sample described being treated as the wrongdoer, including being arrested, as risk assessment by police failed to identity primary aggressors.

> *Police involvement meant I was arrested when this was an abuse initiated by another family member. Once the police were involved, there was no other options expect the courts for where/how the abuse was treated. I would have much rather wrap around support for me and my family instead of us all ending up with court proceedings.* ***Māori Takatāpui person***
>
> *They viewed my distressed mental health state and didn't believe me so I was issued with a PSO which my partner later used against me with litigation abuse.* ***Another ethnicity, bisexual woman***
>
> *I was perceived as the offender when this was not the reality of the nuanced situation. I was pressured to sign a statement that did not accurately reflect what I communicated and threatened that I would "spend the night in the cells" if I did not sign.* ***Pākehā lesbian woman***

Several victim-survivors were clear the police contact was so negative they would be unlikely to call the police again and would find it difficult to recommend the police to others.

> *Hearing the police phrase the reason for the case being closed in such a way ("consent was given"/"you consented") made my mental health plummet. I completely lost all my faith in the police after this. I cannot imagine a scenario where I would ever make another report, knowing how horrific the experience was. I would like to be able to encourage others to report their own assaults, but doing so feels almost irresponsible now.* ***Another ethnicity, trans man***
>
> *It made me feel there was no point in reporting further breaches to the Police. They would not be there to help me. It took a lot of courage to report in the first place.* ***Pākehā straight woman***
>
> *I feel less safe because now my abuser knows that even when the Police show up they will still not do anything or choose to believe him over me. I feel so hopeless now because I have no other way to turn and he knows it.* ***Another ethnicity, straight woman***

Police behaviour mirrors that of the abuser

Many participants described treatment by police that felt like an extension of tactics the abuser used including intimidation and harassment, belittling, abuse, accusing them of lying about the abuse, making the victim-survivor out to be the criminal, minimising the violence, blaming the victim-survivor or treating them with disrespect.

Participants also said they were made less safe when police:

- Did not believe them about the abuse
- Did not listen
- Did not understand the dynamics of family violence
- Accused them of wasting police time
- Blamed them for the violence and abuse
- Sided with the abuser.

> *Their attitude that the violence wasn't severe enough to do anything They intimated that it was my fault.* ***Wahine Māori (straight)***

> *They were discriminatory, negative, questioned my motivations at every stage and my behaviour queried my meds verbally abused me.* ***Another ethnicity, bisexual woman***

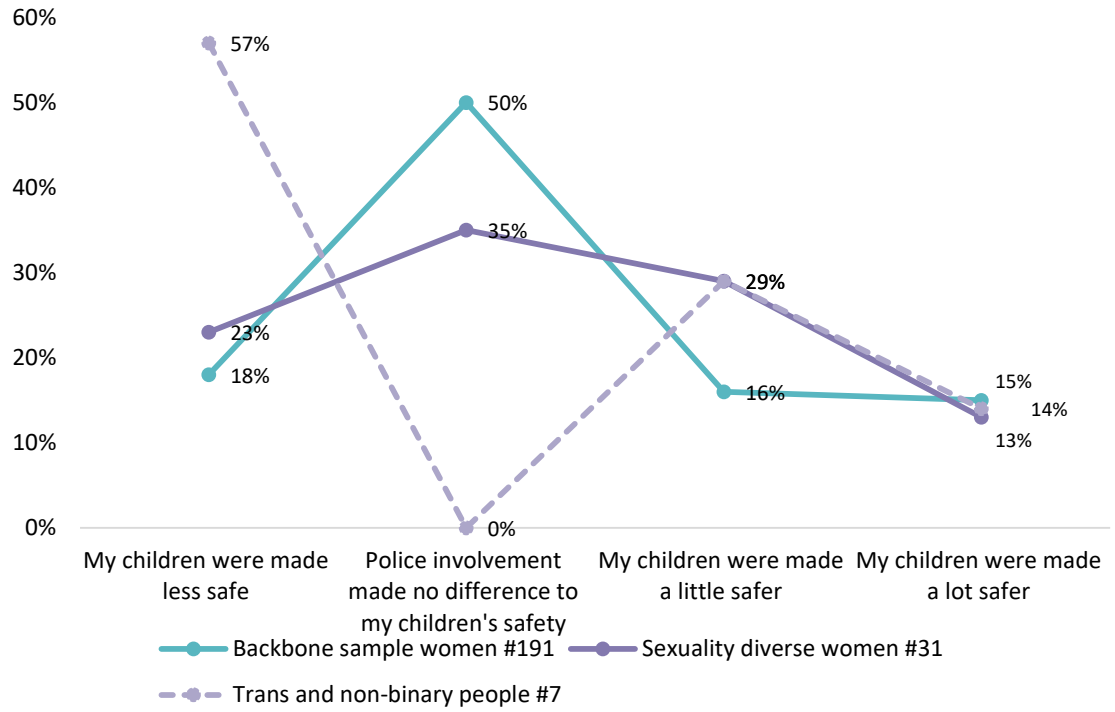
The difference police made to children's safety

Police have a statutory obligation to protect children from violence and abuse as outlined in their child protection policy.[85] However, survey responses often pointed to lack of action by police to protect children. We asked all participants – whether or not they had reported having children – what difference police involvement made to their children's safety on the most recent or significant occasion. Mirroring the findings about their own safety, survey participants who had children, in both samples, were more likely to say police involvement made no difference to their children's safety or their children were made less safe as a result as shown in Figure 12.[86] The least common response from participants in both samples was to report that police involvement made their children a lot safer.

85 The first principle in the NZ Police Child Protection Policy (current July 2022) is: 'The rights, welfare and safety of children are our first and paramount consideration'. Page 7.

86 There were a significant number of participants in the both samples who selected the 'prefer not to answer' option for this question, probably due to all participants being asked this question, whether or not they had children. The data presented in Figure 12 only includes those participants who indicated they had children. Participants who selected 'prefer not to answer' were also excluded.

Figure 12: Difference police involvement made to children's safety (n=229)[87]



Differences to children's safety for Māori and non-Māori participants

Māori women in the Backbone sample (n=34) were more likely than tauiwi women (n=157) to report police involvement made their children a lot safer (26% vs 13%). In the HTRK sample, Māori participants (n=10) were more likely than tauiwi participants (n=28) to report police involvement made their children less safe (40% vs 25%) and less likely to say police involvement made no difference to their children's safety (10% vs 36%).[88]

Table 24: Difference police involvement made to children's safety for Māori and non-Māori participants (n=229)

Difference to safety	Māori Backbone n=34	Non-Māori Backbone n=157	Māori HTRK n=10	Non-Māori HTRK n=28
My child/ren was made a little safer	12%	17%	30%	29%
My child/ren was made a lot safer	26%	13%	20%	11%
Police involvement made no difference to my child/ren's safety	47%	51%	10%	36%
My child/ren was made less safe	15%	19%	40%	25%

87 Very few trans and non-binary people indicated they had children, so these findings should be treated with caution.

88 Rates of selection of all other drop-down options in this question were similar between Māori and tauiwi participants in both samples.

Children made safer – free text responses

Survey participants who reported police had made their children safer (by a lot or a little) were asked to describe how. Fifty-seven women in the Backbone sample, 11 sexuality diverse women and three trans and non-binary people left comment describing a range of responses from police that were beneficial to their children's safety.

Stopping contact with the abuser

The most common theme from participants in the Backbone sample was that police action that resulted in contact being prevented between the children and the abuser (at least temporarily) made the children (and the participant) much safer.

> *When the childrens father is not around, we are all a lot safer.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

Women described several actions from police which prevented contact at least temporarily including:

- Removing the abuser from the property
- Issuing police safety orders which included the children
- Enforcing non-association bail conditions following arrest
- Arresting and holding the abuser in custody
- Sentencing the abuser to prison
- Returning the child/ren to the victim-survivor
- Issuing trespass orders
- Getting the victim-survivor and the children out of the house safely.

Other participants explained that because of police involvement the abuser stopped coming to the house as the risk of further police involvement acted as a deterrent. However, some women in the Backbone sample clarified that some police action that prevented contact between the children and the abuser only offered temporary respite from the violence and abuse when orders lapsed etc.

> *It enabled me to keep them away from abusive father - but only temporarily.* ***Wahine Māori (straight)***

Victim-survivors in the HTRK sample were most likely to say their children were safer because they themselves were safer. Others discussed specific police actions, such as issuing and enforcing safety and trespass orders.

> *My children are grown up now, so they weren't specifically mentioned in the trespass order. But I was pretty sure, the person bothering me, would not bother them, after getting the trespass order from the police station.* ***Māori non-binary person***
>
> *By issuing a Safety Order and removing the abuser when he came back.* ***Māori bisexual woman***
>
> *They were put on the safety order. In this case it was enough to make him stay away. I was really scared though because he was unstable and I thought I was less safe at the time. But it did work.* ***Pākehā bisexual woman***

Positive interactions with police

Some participants described positive interactions between their children and police which helped children trust the police, and showed them police would protect them from the abuser. Positive interactions included: calm, reassuring, friendly and kind communication with children; validating the child's experiences; keeping the children informed; and taking action to remove the abuser. Some children felt safer knowing the abuser's behaviour was on record with police and could be referred to if there was any further violence.

> *Knowing he had been arrested made them feel like he might learn and treat us all better.* ***Pākehā straight woman***
>
> *The children were made to feel safer just by having the police there.* ***Pākehā straight woman***
>
> *By arresting him and refused bail my child knew he wouldn't just show up and felt safer for me and them.* ***Another ethnicity, straight woman***

Resources and referrals

Some participants in the Backbone sample had been offered resources by police which helped children to be safer, including police safety alarms and entering a family violence flag against the victim-survivor's phone number so if she called police they knew who it was without her having to speak. Police could also improve children's safety when they worked with other agencies including: advocating to Oranga Tamariki for the children to have no contact with abusers; referring the abuser to a stopping-violence programme as part of sentencing; and writing accurate reports which supported a victim-survivor's application to the Family Court for Protection Orders or parenting orders, resulting in no further contact between the abuser and the children.

Children made less safe: free text responses

Survey participants who selected that police had made their children less safe were asked to describe in what ways. We heard from 34 women in the Backbone sample, eight sexuality diverse women and four trans and non-binary people who used the open text box to describe a range of ways their children were made less safe.

No police action

Participants were most likely to say that the lack of police action and help made their children less safe, because the abuser could do anything they wanted.

> *Even after lawyer for child said he should have been breeched and he was abusing the kids. He got away with what he was doing and they didn't even contact him to give him a warning. Just said no breech. Get over it.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

Loss of trust and confidence

Some children felt the police did not believe them about the violence and abuse and therefore no longer had any trust or confidence in the police and had told their mothers they would never contact police in the future.

> *My children no longer have any trust in the police system. One child [said if they were] ever in trouble again [they] would call [a different service] cause they would actually show up.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

> *They sure know not to turn to the cops.* ***Māori pansexual non-binary person***
>
> *My [child] asked to make a statement because [they were] so upset by what [they] saw. The police said no and so [they] decided that the police are not there to help and that [they] wouldn't report an incident in future. [They were] involved in a subsequent incident and it took weeks for me to convince [them] the police might listen.* ***Pākehā pansexual woman***
>
> *My [child] believes that the police did not believe [them] and/or did not care about [their] safety. [They] would never contact police again, even in an emergency.* ***Another ethnicity, straight woman***

Police not believing children and adult victim-survivors leads to changes to care arrangements and/or removal of children

A number of victim-survivors in both samples said police contact had resulted in their children being taken off them and placed in the abuser's care. Participants said the police did not believe them or their children about sexual and physical abuse. Some women in the Backbone sample had been accused by police of making up the allegations of violence and abuse of children, some said the police believed the abuser, and never interviewed them or the children, and police then referred them to Oranga Tamariki.

> *By not believing me and blaming me for maliciously making up the sexual abuse allegations, they (along with Oranga Tamariki and the Family Court) placed my children back with the perpetrator (their father) without any further investigation of the risk that he posed to them.* ***Another ethnicity, straight woman***
>
> *Offender was angry police had been called and used the fact that police didn't take it seriously and therefore tried to use the scenario in family court proceedings to oppose protection order for myself and child.* ***Pākehā straight woman***
>
> *My [child] was taken from me by the court and given to [the abuser].* ***Pākehā straight woman***

Several participants in the HTRK sample talked about police actions leading to custody arrangements which were less safe for their children, including ongoing disclosures of abuse from children.

> *My children were terrified of him and still had to go to his house because of a parenting order.* ***Pasifika bisexual woman***
>
> *They took me away and left the child with the woman who I was reporting for child abuse.* ***Pākehā trans woman***
>
> *When the altercation was brought up in a parenting order dispute, the fact that the police had found no major issues was used as reasoning for why supervised visits and a stopping violence programme were not necessary.* ***Māori bisexual woman***
>
> *Custody was reversed to my ex. So now my child spends more time with their abuser than with me. My child has not stopped disclosing abuse. But I am too afraid to go to police for fear of not being believed.* ***Pākehā bisexual woman***

Abuser emboldened by lack of police action

Many women in the Backbone sample said police inaction emboldened the abuser to continue the abuse towards the adult victim-survivor and the children. For some this meant stalking or psychologically abusing the children, for others it meant punishing the children for talking to police about the abuse. Some described the abuser going on to use the police to abuse her and the children, such as falsely reporting violence and abuse, resulting in the arrest of the victim-survivor.

> *My [child's] abuser [their] father and my ex-husband) now knows there are no consequences for his actions. That at the very most he may receive a warning over the phone from the police but there will be no follow-up and no further action for his actions and his abuse of our [child] and myself. This means he now believes he can and will get away with anything he wants without fear of consequence or punishment and this has meant his abuse has escalated and continued for the [number of] years since our separation.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

Some participants said the police did not put children's needs first and did nothing to protect the child. For others the lack of police action had far-reaching consequences including: no interventions for children who had witnessed or experienced abuse; children feeling scared in their own homes because the abuser could come and go whenever they felt like it with no consequences; and the abuser using the lack of police action as a defence to a Protection Order being granted.

Several participants mentioned ongoing abuse towards their children having been enabled by the lack of an appropriate police response.

> *My [child's] father has proceeded to mess with our [child's] mental health by saying things that are minor psychological abuse but not enough to warrant a child interview since this can be more harmful in some cases.* ***Pākehā pansexual trans man***

Other impacts of police involvement

The safety of victim-survivors and children is only one element of the impact of police involvement in family violence and sexual violence. We also asked participants about the impact of police involvement more broadly.

Impact on the abuser

We asked participants about the impact of police involvement on the person who abused or hurt them and/or their children via a drop-down list of options. A poor police response and lack of understanding of family violence and sexual violence not only reduces victim-survivor safety but also reduces abuser accountability and in turn reinforces the belief that family violence and sexual violence are OK. Table 25 shows that for many victim-survivors, abusers were emboldened by police involvement, putting the victim-survivor in greater danger and in some cases reducing support from people around them.

Nearly half of the women in the Backbone sample and trans and non-binary people, and over a third of sexuality diverse women, said involving the police showed the abuser that they could get away with using violence or abuse. Abusers used police involvement to further harm the victim-survivor by taking revenge on them for contacting police in about a third of cases in both samples or making out to police the victim-survivor was abusive/violent and presenting themselves as the victim, particularly for women in the Backbone sample. One fifth of women in the Backbone sample, and sexuality diverse women, and more than a quarter of trans and non-binary people said the abuser felt supported by the police and some said the abuser had more information about the victim-survivor because of police involvement. All these impacts significantly undermine safety for victim-survivors.

In contrast, far fewer victim-survivors in both samples reported impacts on the abuser that were helpful for them and/or their children. For a small percentage of survey participants, police involvement increased their safety because: the violence and abuse stopped as a result (ranging from 6% of trans and non-binary people to 13% of the Backbone sample); the abuse lessened but had not stopped altogether (ranging from 4% of sexuality diverse women to 14% of the Backbone sample); friends/family/whānau/community now know what the abuser is capable of (ranging from 6% of trans and non-binary people to 23% of the Backbone sample); and/or friends/family/whānau started taking the violence and abuse seriously (9% for trans and non-binary people to 12% for sexuality diverse women). However, some participants (ranging from 16% of the Backbone sample to 30% of trans and non-binary people) said their friends/family/ whānau/ community felt sorry for the abuser as a result of police involvement and supported them and not the victim-survivor.

Table 25: Impact of police involvement on the abuser (n=358)

Impact of police involvement on the abuser	Backbone sample women n=257	Sexuality diverse women n=68	Trans and non-binary people n=33
It showed the person they could get away with abusing/hurting me	48%	38%	49%
The person took revenge against me in some way	36%	27%	39%
They made out to police I was abusive/violent and presented themselves as the victim	35%	27%	18%
My friends/family/whānau/community now know what the person who abused/hurt me is capable of	23%	22%	6%
They seemed to feel supported by the police	20%	18%	27%
My friends/family/whānau/community felt sorry for the person who abused/hurt me and supported them and not me	16%	19%	30%
Other - please tell us more	16%	24%	33%
The abuse has lessened but not stopped altogether	14%	4%	12%
The abuse has stopped	13%	10%	6%
The person now has more information about me	13%	12%	18%
My friends/family/whānau started taking the abuse seriously	11%	12%	9%
I don't know	9%	15%	3%
The violence became public information – the person who hurt/abused me became identified	7%	12%	9%

The person was prosecuted for other things that were found during the call out	2%	4%	0%
Prefer not to answer	0%	2%	3%

Impacts on the abuser: Free-text responses

There were 40 participants in the Backbone sample and 27 in the HTRK sample who wrote more detail about the impact of police involvement on the abuser in the free-text field.

Negative impacts - Lack of police action meant the abuser got more abusive/violent

Most participants who used the free-text field reported police involvement had not disrupted the abusive behaviour or had made the abuser more abusive. Many participants said that because police took no action towards the abuser, nothing changed.

> *They just visited him & he refused to come out. So they left. I don't get it.* ***Wahine Māori (straight)***

> *After the 1st incident the abuse worsened. I left the relationship and he stalked and scared me for 3 months. I went to the police numerous times and received no assistance.* ***Another ethnicity, bisexual woman***

Many victim-survivors reported violence and abuse became worse as abusers were emboldened by the lack of police action. Some abusers used the police to their advantage either making or threatening to make reports against the victim-survivor. Some participants were punished by the abuser for involving police; for example, they were stalked and/or threatened, and/or the abuser used other systems such as the Family Court to retaliate for police involvement. Family Court proceedings resulted in financial abuse and some victim-survivors lost care of their children as a result.

> *The police involvement led to sudden applications by abuser to family court to distract from his serious wrongdoing. Because police didn't act we were abused through litigation for another [number of years] from just that incident alone which court never once acknowledged happened or even made an impact on the children.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

> *They gained full custody of our child. I will never report anything to police as long as I live to do with sexual abuse.* ***Pākehā bisexual woman***

> *The abuse got worse because police educated her how to get away with even worse.* ***Another ethnicity, lesbian trans woman***

> *The perpetrator felt comfortable enough after the case was closed to send me an abusive text, with wording that implied he felt like the police were on his side.* ***Another ethnicity, trans man***

In effect the lack of action by police put these victim-survivors in greater danger and resulted in wide-reaching implications with family and community relationships, employment and finances. Some described how the abuser spread lies or accusations about them to the wider community and framed them as the 'crazy ex'. Participants felt let down by the lack of response, including in relation to children. They described being left wholly responsible for trying to keep themselves and their children safe.

> *Essentially, I had to be the police, I had to do their job to make sure me and my family would be safe moving forward.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

> *It worsened a rhetoric he had where he would tell me "one day I'm going to kill you and your [family]". He seemed to no longer have fear of getting caught.* ***Māori bisexual woman***

> *It made the situation more dangerous until I was able to find another way to leave.* ***Pākehā lesbian trans woman***

> *She has got smarter about what she does but many years later and she still tries to make contact, engages in stalking behaviour, portrays herself as the victim and seems to carry intense anger at my making the decision the relationship was not healthy and needed to end. I would see she has a form of revenge as the long game.* ***Pākehā lesbian woman***

> *They still have not questioned him over 18 months later.* ***Another ethnicity, bisexual woman***

> *He went on to breach the PO again, and then submitted application for PO against me, i had to get a loan for [large amount] legal fees. the PO application was struck out but the psychological and financial impact huge all due to police inaction.* ***Pākehā woman***

Positive impacts - The abuse stopped or changed

A small number of participants used the abuser-impact free-text field to report that police involvement had resulted in the abuse stopping or changing. Some of these victim-survivors explained that when police finally arrested the abuser after previous call outs and taking no action, the abuse stopped.

> *I didn't think there would be any consequences for him based on previous call-outs, but he was arrested the last time.* ***Wahine Māori (straight)***

> *The abuse has stopped - for the moment.* ***Pākehā woman***

Some participants reported the abuse had stopped as they had escaped; they had a trespass order; or the abuser was arrested and served a sentence. However, some said that while the physical assaults had stopped, the abuser was using other ways to continue to abuse them– stalking, threatening, and using the courts.

> *He was not able to see our children for around 3 months while a supervisor was appointed.* ***Māori bisexual woman***

> *The abuser stopped harassing me for two weeks before starting up again.* ***Māori Takatāpui person***

> *The violence did stop, but it took multiple encounters and a number of years. When I got the police involved, he just started stalking me and my children in more cunning ways.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

One participant said that the police had done a good job and referred them to other agencies, but no support was forthcoming from those other agencies.

Unsure of impact due to lack of information

Many participants in the HTRK sample used the abuser-impact free-text field to report they did not know what the impact had been on their abuser because they had not been kept informed by police. Several participants who had experienced sexual harm had not known who the abuser was, and the police had not been able to identify them. Other participants wrote about situations with abusers who continued their violence, sometimes for many years later.

Hopes verses impact on the abuser

In an earlier section we discussed what participants stated they hoped would happen when they contacted the police. We analysed the responses of participants who said they hoped police involvement would keep the abuser away from them, stop the abuser hurting them and/or prevent the abuser from having any contact with them in the future. For most of these victim-survivors, police involvement did not achieve those hopes. In many cases police involvement made little or no difference to the ongoing use of violence and abuse by the abuser; in others, abusers sought revenge as shown in Table 26 below.

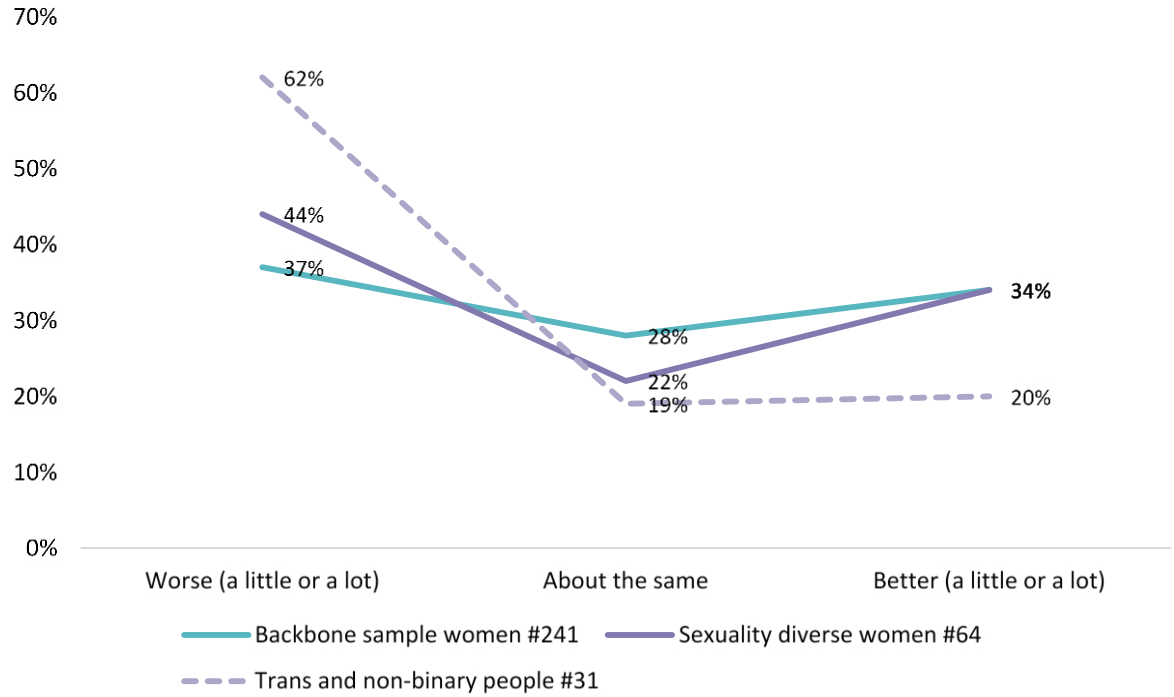
Table 26: Impact of police involvement on the abuser, as reported by victim-survivors who hoped police involvement would prevent contact and/or violence from the abuser (n=201)

Impact on abuser	Backbone sample women who hoped to prevent contact/violence n=151	Sexuality diverse women who hoped to prevent contact/violence n=31	Trans and non-binary people who hoped to prevent contact/violence n=19
Abuse has stopped	13%	13%	11%
Abuse has lessened but not stopped	17%	10%	11%
Abuser took revenge for police involvement	40%	29%	37%

Impact of police involvement for victim-survivors

We asked participants if police involvement made things better, worse or left things about the same for them. Victim-survivors in both samples were more likely to report police involvement made things worse for them than better. Over one third of women in the Backbone sample (37%), 44% of sexuality diverse women and 62% of trans and non-binary people said things were either much worse or a bit worse after police contact: those who reported it was much worse included over one fifth of the Backbone sample (22%), 28% of sexuality diverse women and 35% of trans and non-binary people. About a third of women participants in both samples, but just 20% of trans and non-binary people, reported the police had made things better for them.

Figure 13: Impact of police involvement for victim-survivors: did it make things worse, the same or better? (n=336)[89]



How things got worse for victim-survivors

Participants who said things were a bit or much worse after police contact were then given a list of drop-down options about how and why things became worse (Table 27). For many who answered this question, the cost of police involvement was their own safety. Over half of Backbone participants (58%), two-thirds of sexuality diverse women (67%) and nearly all trans and non-binary people (90%) said they were more frightened after contact with the police. Over a quarter of women in the Backbone sample, one in three sexuality diverse women and 42% of trans and non-binary people were threatened or harmed by associates of the abuser; a significant number were punished or banished by their friends/family/whānau/community; and some were made less safe as their information was shared with the wider community or the abuser. All these experiences were reported at higher rates by trans and non-binary victim-survivors.

Some participants were punished, for police involvement, via organisations that are part of a wider system response to family violence and sexual violence. One third of participants in the Backbone sample and 15% of the HTRK sample said Family Court professionals now saw them as a trouble maker/making up the abuse/seeking revenge as a result of police involvement; some said a notification was made to Oranga Tamariki about their children; and some said they lost access to their children. Participants in both samples said they were arrested by police; some lost housing or income support; and a small percentage said their immigration/visa status is now under threat. One third of trans and non-binary people (32%) also reported being "outed" as trans or non-binary without their consent and 21% had their sexuality "outed" without their consent.

89 Participants who selected either 'I don't know' or 'Prefer not to answer' were not included in Figure 13.

Table 27: How things got worse for victim-survivors because of police involvement (n=134)

How things were worse after police involvement	Backbone sample women n=88	Sexuality diverse women n=27	Trans and non-binary people n=19
I was more frightened	58%	67%	90%
Other - please tell us more	40%	19%	32%
Family Court professionals see me as a trouble maker/making up the abuse/seeking revenge	33%	11%	21%
I was threatened or harmed by associates of the abuser	27%	30%	42%
Now everyone knows about my situation	22%	19%	32%
My friends/family/whānau /community punished or banished me because of the police involvement	21%	19%	37%
My friends/family/whānau /community reacted badly to the police involvement	19%	22%	26%
My information has been shared with the wider community or the person who used violence or abuse	19%	22%	26%
A notification was made to Oranga Tamariki about my children	17%	7%	5%
I lost access to my children	10%	11%	5%
I was arrested	10%	3%	11%
I have lost my housing	9%	7%	21%
I have lost income support	6%	4%	5%
My immigration/visa status is now under threat	2%	0%	0%
I no longer have a caregiver	2%	0%	0%
I was charged with being a non-protective parent	1%	0%	0%
My sexuality was “outed” without my consent	0%	0%	21%
I was “outed” as trans or non-binary without my consent	0%	0%	32%
Prefer not to answer	1%	0%	0%

Impacts on the victim-survivor: Free-text responses

Thirty-five participants in the Backbone sample and 11 in the HTRK sample left more detail in the free-text field about how things had gotten worse for them. These victim-survivors explained the impacts of a poor or unprofessional police response.

Poor or unprofessional police response makes victim-survivors less safe

Many victim-survivors said the abuser's behaviour (violence, abuse, stalking, threats) worsened because police had minimised the abuse, so the abuser was emboldened and felt they could get away with anything. Some said the abuser had retaliated against them via the courts for contacting police.

> *Losing custody of your child for no safety reason or safety concerns except that you have apparently raised false allegations of sexual abuse is the most ridiculous thing I've ever experienced.* ***Pākehā bisexual woman***
>
> *It made clear to my abuser that they could be seen as the victim.* ***Māori bisexual woman***
>
> *The lack of arrest made the abuser more bold in his stalking actions and he came to believe there would be no consequence and I started losing faith in the ability of the police to uphold them protection order.* ***Another ethnicity, bisexual woman***

> *Because they minimised the assault the offender believed there was nothing wrong with what they did and they were justified in their actions.* ***Pākehā straight woman***
>
> *It didn't put a stop to the abuse and it made my abuser realise he had all the power and control and the police believed him and not me.* ***Asian straight woman***
>
> *He got away with ALL his criminal activity towards me and I was blamed for calling it out.* ***Pasifika straight woman***

Participants described examples of poor police practice including: breaching their privacy; having a poor understanding of family violence dynamics; believing the abuser over them; minimising the violence and abuse; producing poor reports that impacted negatively on other court proceedings; and waiting to respond to assaults until they were very serious. One participant said she was forced into court proceedings by police which resulted in her being threatened by the abuser and humiliated by the judge.

Many participants discussed the huge personal toll police involvement had on them. Due to a lack of police action these victim-survivors no longer trust police and said they feel less safe.

> *I have a Protection Order but am too scared to use it now due to the police response.* ***Pākehā straight woman***
>
> *I wanted to trust the police would help if needed and realised that they wouldn't.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

Some felt let down, without hope, isolated and overwhelmed by the knowledge that there was no real support for victim-survivors and children. Some participants talked about the impact on their relationships with family members who supported the abuser following police involvement and blamed them for police involvement. Participants described a loss of self-respect including feeling anxious, having poor mental health, PTSD, having their reputations smeared, using drugs and alcohol and struggling to gain employment and dropping out of school following contacting police.

> *He got all the support, I got none…he used my self harm against me when I only done it to cope with what he had been doing ….I'm still harassed years later, threatened, intimidated..."* ***Pākehā non-binary person***
>
> *I was diagnosed with PTSD and a panic disorder from the experience of reporting to police. I am deeply traumatised by police bc of how they dismissed my assault.* ***Māori lesbian woman***

> *I dropped out of school and used drugs and alcohol, becoming a [drug] addict at [young teenager].* ***Another ethnicity, straight woman***

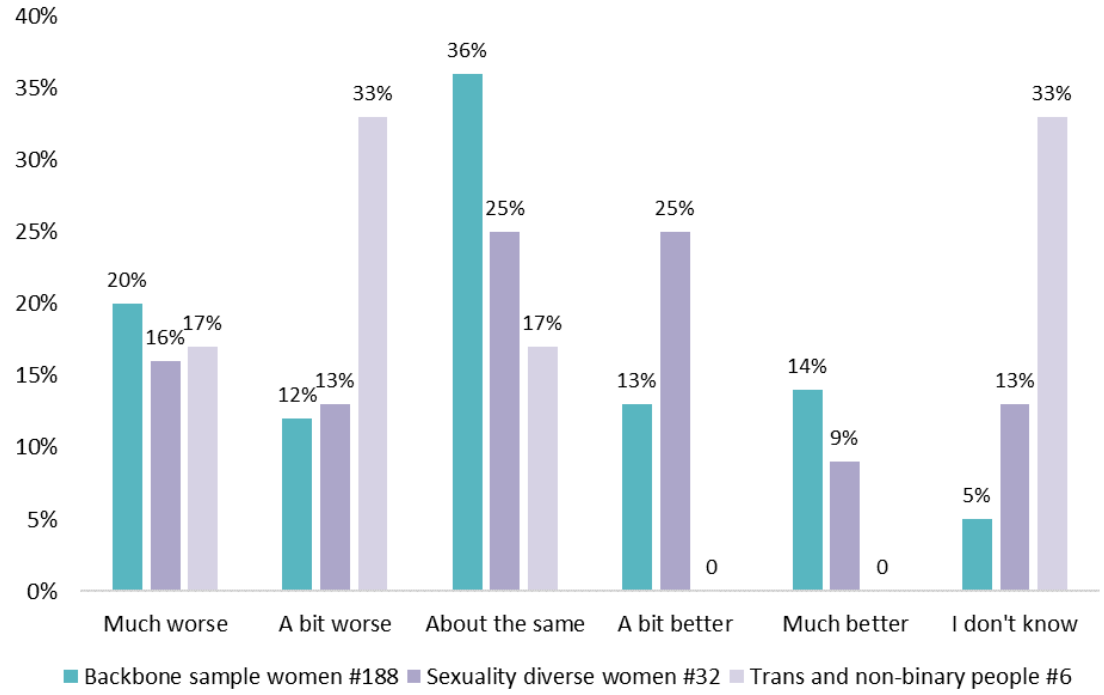
Some women in the Backbone sample said that the impact of the violence and abuse and subsequent police involvement had a terrible impact on their children. Others described statutory authorities becoming involved after police contact, and the abuser using those agencies against them. Other participants said they feared losing their children after contacting police. Some women said that the abuser had used the police against them and made false complaints which resulted in one woman being unnecessarily arrested and another described how she lost everything as a result (her home, children, relationships with friends and family and her reputation).

> *The children were extremely traumatised from the incident and one of which requires expensive psychology to overcome ptsd symptoms at my cost. The children refused to attend contact meanwhile I was blamed in court for not adhering to parenting order despite the PSO incident. All ignored.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

Impact of police involvement for children

Participants were asked if police involvement made things better, worse or left them about the same for their children. Overall, more participants said police involvement made their children's situation worse, or no better, than better, as shown in Figure 14. Some women in the Backbone sample, and some sexuality diverse women, but no trans and non-binary people, said police involvement made things better for their children. Over one third in the Backbone sample, and over a quarter of participants in the HTRK sample, said police involvement left things about the same for their children. This finding points to need for urgent improvement to police practice to ensure their intervention improves the lives of children.

Figure 14: Impact of police involvement for children (n=226)[90]



Impacts on children: Free-text responses

Participants who selected that police involvement had made things worse for their children were then asked to describe in an open text box how police involvement made things worse for their children. Fifty-eight participants in the Backbone sample and 11 in the HTRK sample shared more detail, highlighting police inaction leading to ongoing violence, abuse, trauma and distress for children.

Failure of police to act puts children in further danger

Participants described examples of police ignoring children's accounts of violence and abuse; not recording the violence correctly; and making mistakes which had long-lasting impacts in terms of how other agencies responded to children and the victim-survivor parent.

A number of women in the Backbone sample explained that children were placed in further danger in the following ways after police contact:

- Placed in the unsupervised care of abuser
- Beaten and threatened while in the abuser's care
- No longer being able to have contact with their protective parent/mother
- Forced to live in a house with the abuser because of the lack of support available for the adult victim-survivor and children
- Retaliation towards the child (yelled at, intimidated and threatened by the abuser) who blamed the child for calling police
- Police no longer seen as an option for protection as they accuse victim-survivor of lying when safety concerns are raised

90 Figure 14 includes responses only from those participants who indicated they held children. Participants who selected 'prefer not to answer' were also excluded from the calculations in Figure 14. Please note that the trans and non-binary sample is very small and options have either 1 out of 6 or 2 out of 6 participants selecting them.

- Lack of police action, or reporting of violence and abuse, impacts on care and contact orders made in Family Court which then place children in care of the abuser
- Children living in fear, including not being able to leave their house for fear of being found by the abuser.

> *It meant that they had to continue living in the house with the abuser because he refused to leave and the Police initially did nothing to help me and the kids feel safe in my home.* ***Pākehā straight woman***
>
> *It placed them in the same situation as me. Living in complete and utter fear. We never left the house.* ***Wahine Māori (straight)***
>
> *My children got yelled at, felt more intimidated and threatened. They were told awful things about me again like they always do, like that I'm 'crazy'.* ***Another ethnicity, straight woman***
>
> *Children's names were mixed up to the different incidents. This lead to wrong information going to agencies.* ***Pasifika straight woman***

Several participants in the HRTK sample said their children were now more vulnerable, including to child sexual abuse, because their abuser had more access to them. Children also experienced retaliation from the abuser after police involvement.

> *The child lost all access to me. The police who attended assisted in education of the abuser of how to hide child abuse more effectively.* ***Pākehā trans woman***
>
> *My child now lives full time with our abuser. They disclose things weekly to me about the abuse they are subjected to. Because it is sexual and there are no obvious physical signs only behavioural no third parties have reported anything. And this is my concern around the dire lack of education in the community around the signs of sexual abuse when it isn't rape.* ***Pākehā bisexual woman***
>
> *He ranted and raved at the kids, lectured them for hours on what a bad person I am. They came home traumatised every single time.* ***Pasifika bisexual woman***

Poor police response impacts children's mental wellbeing

The impact on children of a lack of police response, or a poor response (such as arresting their protective parent) can be profound, long lasting and affect all parts of their lives. Participants described a lengthy list of negative impacts on their children resulting from them continuing to experience violence and abuse from the abuser, due to poor police responses. Those impacts included: children suffering from mental distress including depression, anxiety, self-doubt, self-harming behaviour and suicide attempts. Children in some cases learned that the behaviour of the abuser was OK and acceptable; some children started using violence, some thought their abusive dad was a hero or innocent, one started to run away and others stopped going to school regularly.

> *[They] felt very sad that [they] tried to do the right thing by ringing the police, and that it didn't help . [They] began to feel like [they were] trapped and no one was able to help [them]and [they] started experiencing some mental health difficulties.* ***Pākehā straight woman***
>
> *The trauma of not being heard, or protected by either police or court is profound.* ***Pākehā straight woman***
>
> *The fact that no criminal charges were laid & that our community found out caused severe anxiety in my children. My eldest suffered PTSD & wanted to kill [themselves].]They were] afraid to leave the house, even [their] room, stopped attending school, lost friends etc."* ***Māori bisexual woman***

Children do not trust police

Many children no longer trusted police to keep them safe. These children felt unprotected and continued to live in fear because of police inaction. Participants said some children were now frightened of the police and the world in general.

> *Kids got scared of angry cops.* ***Māori pansexual non-binary person***

> *My children have asked repeatedly for help from the police, trusted them to help, and they have done nothing to protect them.* ***Pākehā straight woman***
>
> *My children used to trust the Police and believed that they were to help you when in trouble. They certainly don't believe that now, after our experiences.* ***Pākehā straight woman***
>
> *They were not heard. They were scared and nobody was interested in what they had gone through.* ***Pākehā straight woman***
>
> *Because the police minimised the abuse, the abuser used the opportunity to tell the children that they must have lied about him hurting them and that's why they don't have shared care with him.* ***Pākehā straight woman***
>
> *They did not understand how the police that catch bad people did something bad themselves. My children as a result became scared of the police and the world in general.* ***Another ethnicity, straight woman***

Children's relationship with their protective parent destroyed

A small number of participants in the Backbone sample described experiences of the abuser using police to destroy their relationship with their children. These women were unable to see or have a relationship with their children. Sometimes the lack of contact or relationship breakdown was due to children siding with the abuser and blaming the victim-survivor for involving police, sometimes it was because the abuser had used police involvement to involve the child protection agency or influence Family Court care and contact orders. Some participants described their children being uplifted by police and placed in the abuser's care.

> *I no longer see my children nor speak to them. Their father made them think I was a bad person by hurting me Infront of them.* ***Wahine Māori (straight)***

SECTION 2

IMPROVING THE NZ POLICE RESPONSE TO FAMILY VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE

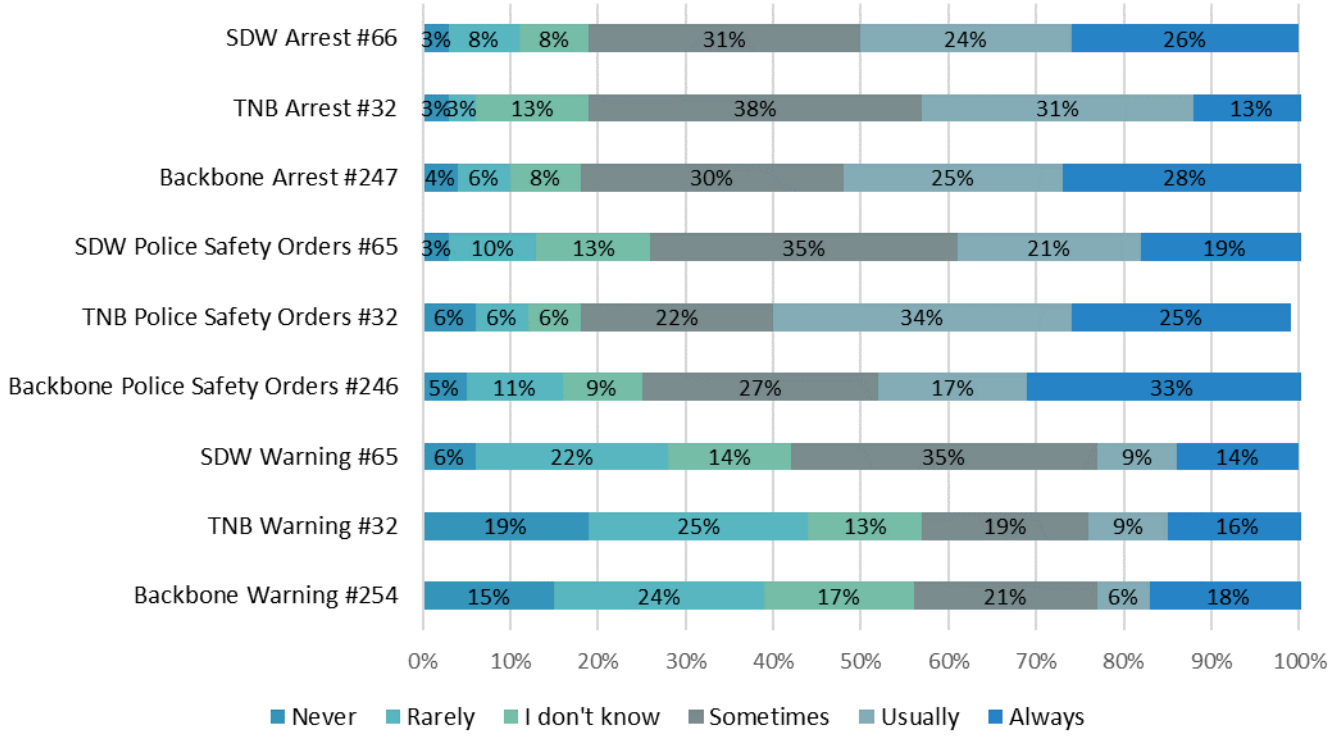
Chapter 7: Practical improvements to the police response

This chapter focuses on practical responses from police that participants believe would enhance victim-survivors' safety. It offers a very strong steer on tools, resources, information-sharing practices and actions that victim-survivors would like to see from police.

Statutory actions police should take when responding to family violence and sexual violence

Police have some actions available to them as part of their statutory powers. We asked participants who had police contact about the use of arrest, Police Safety Orders or warnings as a police response to family and sexual violence.[91] Many victim-survivors indicated that they hoped that police would act in ways to protect them (see Table 10 – e.g. remove the abuser, keep the abuser away from them, hold them in custody). Many also indicated they hoped the police would hold the abuser to account in some way either through the criminal justice process or in some other way. It is therefore not surprising that participants indicated strong support for the use of arrests and Police Safety Orders and to a lesser extent the use of warnings as shown in Figure 15.

Figure 15: What actions should police take in response to family and sexual violence



91 The police options were defined in the survey in the following ways: Warnings - A formal written warning issued only if the offender admits their guilt and prosecution is not thought to be in the public interest. Warnings are entered into the police information system so they are available if the person comes to notice again; Police Safety Orders - Issued by the police for a maximum of 10 days and mean the person they are made against cannot contact, stalk, assault or harass the other person and their children. The offender can be arrested for breaching the order; Arrest - The offender is taken to the police station where they are formally charged. They may then be released on police bail or held until the next court sitting.

Sexuality diverse women and women in the Backbone sample were more likely to select that arrest was usually or always the action police should take, rather than Police Safety Orders or warnings. Trans and non-binary people were more likely to select that Police Safety Orders were usually or always the action police should take, rather than arrests or warnings. Warnings were the least popular action across all three victim-survivor groups. There was a small percentage of participants who selected I don't know with regards to police use of Warnings, and Police Safety Orders and arrest (particularly in the trans and non-binary people sample). Participants were more likely to select I don't know than Never in all but one cohort as shown in Figure 15.

Arrest

Figure 15 shows that just over half the women in the Backbone sample believe that police should always or usually arrest the person who has used violence and/or abuse, with only 10% saying arrest should never or rarely be used by Police. Half of the sexuality diverse women and 44% of trans and non-binary people believe arrest should usually or always be used by the police, compared with just 11% of sexuality diverse women and 6% of trans and non-binary people saying arrest should rarely or never be used.

Wahine Māori (24%) and tauiwi women (29%) in the Backbone sample had comparable proportions of participants who believe arrest should always be an action police take. In the HTRK sample, tauiwi participants were more likely to believe arrest should always be an action police take (24%) than Māori participants (14%). Tauiwi participants in the Backbone sample (2%), and HTRK sample (3%) reported lower percentages of never arrest than wāhine Māori in the Backbone sample (12%) and Māori victim-survivors in the HTRK sample (5%).

Police Safety Orders

The use of Police Safety Orders was supported by many participants in both the Backbone and HTRK samples and was the most popular option for trans and non-binary people. More than half of trans and non-binary people (59%); 40% of sexuality diverse women and half of Backbone participants said Police Safety Orders should usually or always be used. However, support for Police Safety Orders was not as strong from wāhine Māori in the Backbone sample who were more likely (17%) than tauiwi women (2%) to say Police Safety Orders should never be used.

Warnings

The use of warnings by police was the least preferred police response, with over a third of the Backbone sample, 28% of sexuality diverse women and 44% of trans and non-binary people saying that police should rarely or never use warnings. There were no significant differences in the Backbone or HTRK samples between Māori and tauiwi participants selecting police always or never issuing warnings. However, Māori participants in the HTRK sample were more likely to say police should use warnings usually or sometimes in comparison with tauiwi participants (59% vs 33%).

Police best practice responses to family and sexual violence

In addition to concrete statutory actions police can take in response to family violence and sexual violence such as issuing warnings or Police Safety Orders and arresting perpetrators, there are also a range of understandings and approaches that are important foundations for police to base their actions on, in order to uphold victim-survivor safety and abuser accountability.

We asked all survey participants, whether they had police contact or not, to rate the importance of a list of eight best-practice understandings and approaches when police respond to family violence and sexual violence.[92] Table 28 shows extremely high levels of support for each of the eight understandings and approaches offered, with the vast majority of participants (between 95% - 100%) in both the HTRK and Backbone samples rating each understanding/ approach as being important or very important for police when responding to family violence and sexual violence. Participants want police to understand the nature and dynamics of family violence and sexual violence (including psychological abuse) and centre the victim-survivor by believing them, understanding the impact of the violence and abuse on them, and putting their safety at the centre of everything police do.

Table 28: Best practice responses rated by participants as very important or important

Best practice responses	Backbone sample women	HTRK sample
Understand and respond to our specific needs relating to our culture, religion, disability, sexuality and gender	95% (n=240)	99% (n=91)
Understand that we cannot always do the things they want us to do because that might make us less safe [93]	98% (n=242)	100% (n=92)
Understand the impact of the violence or abuse on us	99% (n=242)	99% (n=92)
Understand that psychological harm is violence	100% (n=240)	100% (n=91)
Understand family and sexual violence and the tactics of people who use violence and abuse	100% (n=242)	100% (n=92)
Believe us	98% (n=234)	99% (n=92)
Put our safety at the centre of everything they do	99% (n=245)	100% (n=92)
Take family and sexual violence seriously	99% (n=256)	100% (n=99)

92 These best practice responses were based on earlier research with victim-survivors and input from advisory group members for this research. Participants could also select 'prefer not to answer' which has been removed from the percentages in Table 28.

The Backbone Collective (2020) Victim-Survivor Perspectives on Longer-Term Support After Experiencing Violence and Abuse A report prepared for the Ministry of Social Development. NZ.

93 Please see Chapter 6 for in-depth discussion of police involvement and safety.

Practical things police should provide for victim-survivors

Practical and material support are also vital to improving the safety and recovery of victim-survivors and must be part of specialist responses after violence, including from the police.[94]

Survey participants, whether they had police contact or not, were given a drop-down list of 20 options of practical things police could provide when someone experiences family violence or sexual violence (see Table 29 below). We asked participants which options police should provide, and they were able to select as many options as they wanted, including ideas for police themselves, connections to other services, kinds of information or resources needed and alternatives to the police.

Overall, trans and non-binary people (11.4) selected more practical ideas per person than sexuality diverse women (11.1) or women in the Backbone sample (9.7). The chance to offer more detail via a free-text field was taken up by 26 victim-survivors in the HTRK sample and 54 victim-survivors in the Backbone sample.

Table 29: Practical things police should provide to victim-survivors (N-544)

Practical things police should provide	Backbone sample women n=346	Sexuality diverse women n=128	Trans and non-binary people n=70
Come when we need them (not a long wait)	77%	72%	74%
Have women police officers available to respond if needed	74%	85%	73%
Have an independent advocate who would support us with the police	72%	73%	69%
Connect us with support services in our area (with our consent)	70%	78%	80%
Provide clear information about what will happen if we contact police for help in the future	68%	67%	76%
Tell us what information will be shared with others (agencies or individuals)	68%	73%	74%
Have more information about what is a crime or what we can report	68%	62%	67%
Provide tools and services to identify and remove stalking apps or devices	64%	69%	67%
Have somewhere we can go to get help from police that is not a police station	64%	75%	70%

94 See Backbone's 2020 report detailing the experiences and ideas of 528 victim-survivors from throughout Aotearoa, New Zealand: The Backbone Collective (2020) Victim-Survivor Perspectives on Longer-Term Support After Experiencing Violence and Abuse A report prepared for the Ministry of Social Development. NZ.

Provide access to a safe place for us to stay[95]	63%	68%	69%
Have more specialist Police Liaison Officers – officers who understand our cultural, sexuality, disability and other needs	58%	70%	71%
Provide information about police involvement to the Family Court	56%	53%	50%
Provide access to a phone or other device so we can contact them	39%	45%	40%
Have more police available where I live	36%	27%	17%
Speak te reo Māori if requested, including people who interview children	35%	52%	59%
Have interpreters (including NZSL) easily available	32%	56%	60%
Provide more information about Diversity Liaison Officers (DLOs)	32%	48%	63%
Ensure police do not treat the person harming us badly because of their sexuality	25%	53%	66%
Ensure police do not treat the person harming us badly because of their gender identity	26%	46%	67%
I have other ideas for practical things police should offer [96]	16%	10%	29%

The following section focuses on five practical police actions selected by high numbers of participants, and includes additional relevant free-text comments. Following this section, other practical things victim-survivors reported that they need from police have been presented thematically. These recommendations were gathered from free-text comments made in response to three different questions, a total of 245 responses from Backbone participants, 68 responses from sexuality diverse women and 35 responses from trans and non-binary people.[97]

95 This option was only asked of victim-survivors who had police contact.

96 For victim-survivors without police contact, the last option simply said 'other – please tell us more.'

97 Responses in this section came from two questions for those who did not have police contact: What practical things should police provide when someone experiences family or sexual violence? and Is there anything else you would like to tell us about how the police should respond to family violence and sexual violence in Aotearoa New Zealand? And one question for those who had police contact: What other practical things do you think the police should offer?

Timely response from police

About three-quarters of all victim-survivors want the police to come when they are needed (Table 29). This was the practical option selected most often by participants in the Backbone sample (77%), and free-text comments from both samples also raised the importance to safety of a timely response, unsurprising given participants indicated they often call because they need help urgently, or they are scared.[98] When victim-survivors call police for help after (or during) family violence or sexual violence, they are likely to have weighed up the benefits versus risks for themselves and their children. Therefore, they are relying on a speedy response to immediate danger, including from an abuser's reaction if they know the police have been called. One participant also pointed out the long lag time between reporting and court which opens the victim up to life-threatening and dangerous circumstances.

Specialist responses from police

The practical thing sexuality diverse women (85%) most commonly selected is for women police officers to be available to respond if requested (Table 29). Nearly three-quarters of women in the Backbone sample and trans and non-binary participants also wanted the option of a woman police officer. Victim-survivors can feel triggered or distressed by interacting with men police officers, particularly if they have experienced violence and abuse from a man. In free text, participants also reported they want these women officers to be upskilled in family violence and sexual violence.

> *I think we should follow examples from other countries where there are female officers trained in family violence who work in special family violence centres.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

While the majority of survey participants said police should have women police officers available to respond if needed, only 14% of Backbone participants and 16% of HTRK participants said police did offer to provide a woman officer on the most recent or significant occasion of family violence or sexual violence. In June 2022, only 25.2% of NZ Police constabulary staff were women, up from 19.6% in 2017.[99]

Over two-thirds of all victim-survivors in the HTRK sample want to see more specialist Police Liaison Officers with expertise in cultural, sexuality, disability and other needs, also selected by 58% of participants in the Backbone sample.[100] Access to Police Liaison Officers was rated highly by many participants; however, only 3% of the disabled participants in the Backbone sample, 14% of disabled sexuality diverse women and 5% of disabled trans and non-binary participants said police arranged other support they needed due to their health issues.[101] Similarly, two-thirds of trans and non-binary participants (63%), half of sexuality diverse women (48%), and a third of Backbone participants (32%) want to be provided with more information about Diversity Liaison Officers (DLOs), whose focus

98 See Chapter 4 for a discussion about why participants had contacted the police on the most recent or significant occasion.

99 NZ Police Annual Report 2021-22.

100 As at 4 October 2023, the NZ Police website lists 26 Ethnic Liaison Officers based throughout Aotearoa New Zealand. It is unclear what their role is in terms of 'Family Harm' incidents and interactions with victim-survivors. The NZ Police recruitment web page relating to Ethnic Liaison Officers states: "Work in New Zealand's diverse communities. You'll attend cultural events, educate migrants about our laws, help international travellers who are victims of crime, and many more culturally-enriching experiences".

101 At present there are no designated Liaison Officer roles with a focus on disabled people, personal communication with NZ Police, October 2023.

is Takatāpui and Rainbow communities.[102] However, when we analysed the action police took on participant's most recent or significant experience of family violence or sexual violence, we found that no sexuality diverse women and just 4% of trans and non-binary people were offered access to DLOs.

Just over a third of women in the Backbone sample (36%) wanted more police available where they live; these women were much more likely to be living in rural or small urban areas than major cities. In contrast, just 17% of trans and non-binary victim-survivors and a quarter of sexuality diverse women want more police available where they live, suggesting a wariness about police without specific skills in working at the intersections of family and sexual violence and Takatāpui and Rainbow communities. This was commented on explicitly in free text by several participants.

> *I deeply appreciate police support when there's been trouble, but sometimes the visual aspect of an extremely tall detective who is quite imposing, or a policeman/woman in uniform, can make things feel worse. Many people will not call the police, if in trouble, because "they only make things worse." When someone has made a complaint, it's important to listen to them no matter what they look like, or sound like, and take careful action to help them, Thank you.* ***Māori pansexual non-binary person***

Two thirds of trans and non-binary participants wanted to be sure that police would not treat the person harming them badly because of their sexuality (66%) or gender identity (67%). About half of sexuality diverse women also expressed these concerns for both the abuser's sexuality and gender identity, as did a quarter of women in the Backbone sample. As discussed earlier, people in Takatāpui and Rainbow communities are impacted by historical criminalisation and ongoing discrimination. Anxiety over the safety of someone inside the criminal justice system – even when they have been abusive – becomes a barrier to seeking help from the police. This was expressed explicitly by participants in free text:

> *Have help available for everyone including the perpetrator so they can understand what they are doing is not OK, and have opportunity to make changes & keep family safe without the only option to involve court. That creates a barrier to seeking help when it is not high-end abuse. It feels so shameful to be hurt by someone you love, you do not want to acknowledge what is really happening.* ***Pākehā pansexual woman***
>
> *Provide a safe place for the perpetrator to stay so that person doesn't need to come back to the house (rather than the victim always being the one to leave) Ensure they don't subject perpetrator to racial profiling, or treat them badly because of a mental health or other condition.* ***Another ethnicity, lesbian woman***

Finally, in terms of practical things from police themselves, 32% of the Backbone sample want police to have interpreters (including New Zealand Sign Language) easily available, and several mentioned in free text the need to provide supports for disabled and neurodiverse people. Unsurprisingly, given the significant proportion of Takatāpui and Rainbow communities with disabilities, trans and non-binary participants (60%) and sexuality diverse women (56%) also wanted the police to have interpreters (including New Zealand Sign Language) easily available. More than half of trans and non-binary participants (59%) and sexuality diverse women (52%) also wanted police who can speak te reo Māori if requested, including police who interview children after violence and abuse.

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102 Hohou Te Rongo Kahukura always seek the support of Diversity Liaison Officers (DLOs) where possible when we support Takatāpui and Rainbow victim-survivors to contact the police, though not all DLOs have been trained in responding to family violence or sexual violence. The NZ Police webpage on Diversity Liaison Officers states "Diversity liaison officers (DLOs) are located throughout New Zealand to provide liaison between Police and those in our community who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (Rainbow communities). We have Police officers and Police employees who work in a variety of different roles that hold the portfolio of being a DLO."

Thirty-five percent of Backbone participants overall also said police should speak te reo Māori if requested. Wāhine Māori were far more likely than tauiwi women (52% vs 32%) to select this option.

Connections and pathways to and from other services

The option which trans and non-binary participants most often selected as a practical thing which the police should provide was "Connect us with support services in our area (with our consent)" (80%). This option was also selected by 78% of sexuality diverse women and 70% of the Backbone sample (Table 29). Victim-survivors clearly see calling the police as an opportunity for change and increased safety. However, just 20% of trans and non-binary participants, 24% of sexuality diverse women and 33% of the Backbone sample were connected to support services by police. The lack of specialist supports for Takatāpui and Rainbow victim-survivors may explain the lower connections with support for trans and non-binary participants and sexuality diverse women, but for all victim-survivors, being connected with appropriate support is happening at low rates.

Nearly three quarters of the Backbone sample (72%) and sexuality diverse women (73%) and just over two-thirds of trans and non-binary participants (69%) want to have an independent advocate who would support them with the police. However, we found a large discrepancy between victim-survivors' views that police should provide independent advocates to support them, and the low numbers of victim-survivors (ranging from 20% of sexuality diverse women to 28% of trans and non-binary participants) who said they were offered a support person or victim advocate in their most recent contact with police for reasons of family violence or sexual violence (Table 17).

Victim-survivors clearly want multiple and varied forms of support and information when they contact police (Table 29), but they want to be in control of how that takes place, so they can manage risks to their and their children's safety, including the risk to privacy posed by information sharing. This includes, for Takatāpui and Rainbow victim-survivors, information about their gender and sexuality. Nearly three-quarters of the HTRK sample and two thirds of the Backbone sample want to be told what information will be shared with others (agencies or individuals).

About two-thirds of all victim-survivors who had police contact want the police to provide access to a safe place to stay. This was raised as an acute need by some participants in free text.

Half of participants want the police to provide information about police involvement to the Family Court.

In free-text, many victim-survivors also wanted access to other support services, especially mental health services.

> *Contacting MH [mental health] or other support services when the victim is clearly overwhelmed and unsafe.* ***Another ethnicity, bisexual woman***

> *I don't believe the police themselves are fit to be helping victims, there should be other services that do this role with more of a focus on victim care and safety, access to resources for recovery etc.* ***Pākehā pansexual non-binary person***

> *I felt a lot of pressure/judgement from the police after choosing to associate with my ex after a violent incident. I wish I had more support, specifically access to a womans counsellor in my area, or woman support groups in my area. I think the police could've advocated for me more in this regard, and made an urgent referral for me to seek counselling, considering the severity of the incident. Instead I had to arrange counselling on my own accord, and was put on a waiting list for months.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

Others noted they had experienced a better police response when supported by an independent service. These participants believe a multidisciplinary approach will provide a layer of protection for victim-survivors by allowing police to better understand their circumstances and prevent police blaming them for being a victim, not validating their experience, and not believing them which could lead to more serious abuse.

> *I reported the abuse several times. My [child] even went to the station [more than once] to report the abuse [they] received. The Police did nothing. It wasn't until the violence got worse & I had a [service provider] with me that they actually did something.* ***Māori bisexual woman***

Finally, some participants said the process of referral to support services is important, for victim-survivors to benefit.

> *Follow up and liaising the connection with other support services. Having to contact the police can be traumatic in itself, then being handed information and contact numbers and just being sent on your way reduces the likelihood that people who could really benefit from these services are actually contacting them.* ***Pākehā pansexual woman***

Information and resources

More than two thirds of sexuality diverse women and Backbone participants and three quarters of trans and non-binary participants want clear information about what will happen if they contact police for help in the future. This helps victim-survivors safely plan when they are considering accessing help, support and protection. About two thirds of all victim-survivors want to have more information about what is a crime or what they could report, and participants explained in free-text responses that this information must be made available in easy-read supported formats.

There was also significant support in free-text responses for making more information available about the kinds of protection available for victim-survivors, including for those subject to abuse (such as certain types of stalking) not currently considered crimes, as well as specific forms of violence towards people in Takatāpui and Rainbow communities.

> *When I was abused, between [time frame of two years], what happened to me wasn't covered by the Family Violence Act. It's still not covered by the Crimes Act. So I didn't have any legal avenues and felt completely helpless. It would be helpful if police could make information available about what they can do to protect people, especially women abused by women and other people in same sex relationships.* ***Pākehā bisexual woman***

About two thirds of all participants want tools and services to identify and remove stalking technology, such as apps (software) or devices (hardware). In free-text, one trans victim-survivor said they would prefer tools or services for detecting/removing stalking malware from devices to be available from services other than the police. Nearly half of sexuality diverse women (45%) and over a third of other participants wanted the practical support of access to a phone or other device so they can contact the police if they need to, perhaps indicating that many victim-survivors do not currently have access to a phone or device, or one that is 'safe' to use and is not controlled in some way by the abuser. However, the proportion of victim-survivors without unrestricted access to the internet or their own phone is likely to be masked in an online survey such as this and could therefore be far higher.

Free-text responses also discussed the need for more resources and assistance for disabled victim-survivors. The lack of appropriate resources means many disabled people are trapped in abusive situations; there are high numbers of disabled victim-survivors, and a significant overlap between disabled people and Takatāpui and Rainbow people more broadly.

> *Disabled people stay because they have to rely on the person for support that isn't available anywhere else, if I left I couldn't look after myself at all and would probably be stuck somewhere worse.* ***Pākehā queer non-binary person***

> *Communication tools for people with speech [and] language disorders.* ***Pākehā woman***

Alternative places to get help from police

Many participants described current police station environments as cold and impersonal, provoking feelings of shame. Introducing warm, welcoming, understanding, private police units, separate to that of the current police station, where victim-survivors can safely report, handover children, take a forensic examination, seek mediation, and other support services would create safer spaces for victim-survivors and their families and may increase trust and rapport with police.

Three quarters of sexuality diverse women (75%), 70% of trans and non-binary people, and two thirds of the Backbone sample (64%) want somewhere to go to get help from police that is not a police station. Those who selected this option were offered the opportunity to comment further in a free-text field on alternatives to police stations, and this opportunity was taken up by 173 Backbone participants and 92 HTRK participants. A key point made by many participants was wanting to be able to avoid how intimidating police stations can be, and the dangers of being seen, or having their car seen, at a police station when being monitored by an offender.

> *Most police stations are very unwelcoming and in the past [I] have been told to come back later or go to another place to report it.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

Participants saw alternative options for reporting as positive, even if it were only to another police station.

> *You should also be able to go to any station and not have your case referred back to your local station if you have an issue with the service you have received. Some stations just do not have the resources, capabilities and expertise to handle FV and SV.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

Safety was a primary concern for participants in both samples. Most considered a safe location to report as somewhere the offender would not suspect they had gone to in order to report abuse. Many mentioned wanting to be able to access alternative reporting options in places seen as 'ordinary.' For others, child-friendly alternatives that welcome whānau with hot drinks, comfortable seating, heating, and social workers and counsellors available was the ideal location.

> *Just a safe place but a normal place like a library or something that isn't going to alert the offender to what you are doing.* ***Another ethnicity, straight woman***
>
> *Anywhere that's not there. It is so unsafe parking outside a Police Station when people or the offenders know your vehicle.* ***Wahine Māori (straight)***
>
> *At the supermarket. It was the only place I could go without him. He would wait in the car.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

Alternative reporting suggestion: Healthcare services

Many participants suggested health centres, GPs, pharmacies, sexual health clinics, hospitals, counsellors and mental health services as alternative reporting options, precisely because they are safer to access when being monitored by someone.

> *Counselling centres, if dr surgeries also had attached mental health units, or family social wellbeing services attached, a person could go for a "health check up" and surreptitiously report violence, in a way thats different to having a private conversation with a gp.* ***Pākehā queer non-binary person***
>
> *Any other agency space, it will help keep us safe if the offender thinks I'm seeing a counsellor.* ***Pasifika bisexual woman***
>
> *Community health clinic, have a specialist intake person. Or Local community counseling place, similar set up, dedicated room/person. Somewhere people would be safe going.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

Alternative reporting suggestions: Community organisations, centres and hubs

Community organisations, including social services agencies and community centres were also suggested by many participants. This included but was not restricted to family violence and sexual violence agencies, again because of the benefits of anonymity for victim-survivors. Organisations mentioned by name included Citizens Advice Bureaus, community law centres, Victim Support, Women's Refuge, HELP foundation, Rape Crisis, community centres, Salvation Army and Barnardos.

> *It is a difficult question as you would want somewhere that people who are being abused can go to without suspicion from their abuser, and to access information on what abuse actually entails (i feel most people in abusive relationships stay in them as long as they do because they do not believe the things they are experiencing count as abuse or are serious enough to involve police in) as well as somewhere that will be able to intervene and escalate a situation if necessary. Overall I think it has to be some kind of community space with access to information that is not associated with emergency as strongly as the police station is.* ***Pākehā pansexual woman***
>
> *Specific Social Service agencies that are family & sexual violence disclosure trained...maybe every organization has a champion that is trained to take these disclosures, failing that every organization has a go to person to support to a place/person of disclosure.* ***Wahine Māori (straight)***

Just two participants suggested Rainbow organisations. Though perhaps initially surprising, this is consistent with earlier research which has found that Takatāpui and Rainbow victim-survivors are more likely to seek help after partner violence and sexual violence from friends, family/whānau, counsellors, health services, sexual violence services and police than Rainbow community groups, due to complex dynamics and concerns about confidentiality inside small communities, particularly when an abuser has social power.[103]

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103 Dickson, S. (2016) Building Rainbow communities free of partner and sexual violence. NZ: Hohou Te Rongo Kahukura.

Alternative reporting suggestion: Other community venues

Many participants suggested other community venues such as Work and Income (NZ), post offices, libraries, supermarkets and shopping centres, information kiosk desks, workplaces, petrol stations, churches, council offices, known takeaway restaurants like McDonalds, cafes, fire stations, schools and other education institutions. Some participants mentioned this would require people working in these places to respond safely and refer onwards.

> *Libraries often have rooms where police could meet with victims. This could be done via an online or phone option where a time could be booked to meet there.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

> *Any common place where abuse victims would visit that don't cause the abuser to think anything is out of the ordinary. For example, if a supermarket or library has a security guard or someone at the service desk, if the victims signals to them then the staff should be able to alert authorities and have them come in quietly and have some scenario that can be used to allow the victim to get away safely if they are with the abuser. Even if that means approaching the person and saying "we have noticed some suspicious activity, we need you to come with us to answer some questions" or "congratulations you're our Lucky shopper prize winner, come with us to fill out a couple forms and we can get the prize sent to you.* ***Pākehā bisexual woman***

Alternative reporting suggestions: Marae, trusted family/whānau, Māori wardens and Māori police officers

For many wāhine Māori in the Backbone sample, trusted friends and whānau were ideal people that victim-survivors could report abuse to. Participants in both samples also mentioned Māori wardens and Māori police officers, sometimes due to a lack of trust in other police. Both Māori and tauiwi victim-survivors also mentioned marae as potential safe zones for reporting violence and providing victim support services.

Alternative reporting suggestion: Phone, text, online service that ensures anonymity

The final suggestions of alternative places to report violence or seek assistance included online or via a safety app or helpline where victim-survivors could talk through their concerns anonymously. One participant suggested sending a code that would alert services if a victim needed acute support.

> *A text service if you don't feel safe making a phone call.* ***Pākehā woman***

> *Phone, website, app, text & phone call back, fill in a "help form" that can be handed in at garages/libraries/ chemists and they escalate it.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

Related to these suggestions, some participants in the Backbone sample wanted a call-out service to be available where women could meet support workers kānohi ki te kānohi (face to face) at a location of safety such as the home, workplace, supermarkets, and community centres.

Staff for alternative places to get help from police

Those who selected that it should be possible to get help from police for family violence and sexual violence at places other than police stations were also offered a free-text field to identify who should staff these alternative places. The question suggested examples of police officers, independent advocates, social workers or someone else. One hundred and fifty-nine Backbone participants and 92 HTRK participants offered their staffing suggestions.

There was a strong preference in both samples for social workers and independent advocates, rather than police. Where police were included alongside these professionals, participants often explicitly mentioned plainclothes or non-uniformed officers.

> *I always think its best when people meet an advocate first before the police, even without trying to, the police can be intimidating. Meeting with an advocate or someone else first also gives you the space to understand what will happen and get your head sorted for what happened and in what order etc.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

> *Advocates and social workers. Not police officers.* ***Wahine Māori (straight)***

> *Independent advocates would be best. There are reasons people don't trust cops and it's going to take time and concerted effort for that image to change.* ***Pākehā trans man***

Participants in both samples, but particularly the HTRK sample, also explicitly said they did not want police present due to harmful past experiences.

> *Not police. Properly trained social workers who have first response and crisis training, as well as liaison training. The breakdown seems to happen at first port of call, so many friends have had bad experiences at their first front desk/first reporting person, and this experience stays not only with them for years but also in the community with everyone they know and tell, as a loss of trust and confidence. There is huge repair that needs to be done on this already.* ***Pākehā queer non-binary person***

> *I think a specialised group should be set up for people reporting violence. The police I think, are maybe too busy and are too unsympathetic to cope effectively with violence unless your injuries are clearly visible to them, appear to look bad enough and if hospitalisation is required.* ***Wahine Māori (straight)***

Other staff roles mentioned by participants included mental health specialists, counsellors, therapists, community nurses, health navigators/kai manaaki, psychologists, family law specialists, victim support, legal aid and specialist family and sexual violence services. Many participants wanted a mixture of roles, with everyone, including volunteers, skilled in understanding violence and abuse, so they could receive an integrated and specialist response to violence.

> I think a mix of people would be the best. A police officer so that someone can take that role if need but also social worker and advocates so that there is someone who's specialised in dealing with the sensitive nature of things. ***Māori pansexual non-binary person***

> Specialists trained in receiving or supporting people to make disclosures alongside Police officers. ***Pākehā straight woman***

Many participants in the Backbone sample felt having advocates and specialists with lived experience of violence was crucial to appropriate risk assessment and referral.

> *Quite frankly if you haven't experienced family violence, harm, coercion or sexual abuse then you cannot relate to someone who has just come to the realisation that what's happening to them isn't a) their fault or, b) how a normal relationship works. This was probably my loneliest time and the fact I was surrounded by men in uniform who didn't have a clue what was going on in my head or just how damaged I was made it utter hell.* ***Another ethnicity, straight woman***

Participants also commented on the value of expertise, including some who wanted police presence.

> *I have found that experienced police officers are the most supportive and more clued up and supportive of diverse needs.* ***Another ethnicity, straight woman***

Finally, although the question did not ask this, many participants explicitly mentioned the need for all staff to have received specialist training in family violence and sexual violence.

> *It doesn't really matter what agencies they work with/for as long as they have had specialist training.* ***Another ethnicity, bisexual woman***

> *Trained workers knowing how to identify risk and ask right questions complete survey and submit to police.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

Other practical actions victim-survivors want to see

In the free-text fields, many participants made additional suggestions of practical actions, tools and services police could use to improve their response to family violence and sexual violence. In-depth comments about training will be explored in Chapter 8. There were several overlapping themes, centred around focusing on victim-survivor safety; victim-survivor physical and emotional well-being; and trauma-informed practice which acknowledges police relationships with community. Beyond physical safety, participant responses highlight the need to ensure psychological, emotional, and litigation safety. Participants recommended that a code of conduct based on values of care, humility, understanding and whānau should be a benchmark for police action. Participants' suggestions are presented thematically below.

Demonstrate belief in victim-survivors

Participants want police to: demonstrate belief in victim-survivors; take help-seeking seriously; and validate victim-survivor experiences. Being believed by police improves timeliness of response and victim-survivor safety, and reduces the possibility of abusers feeling empowered to continue their abuse. Several Backbone participants discovered formal statements were more effective in court contexts than reports when their abuse was dismissed in court due to insufficient evidence.[104]

> *For the love of God, all of you, just BELIEVE us.* ***Wahine Māori (straight)***

> *Listen. Believe. Don't just assume we are lying or wrong because one officer (who might have a grudge) says so. Treat each case as a new one not ignore it because of old notes in the files by (possibly biased) officers.* ***Another ethnicity, straight woman***

> *Take some action as soon as they are contacted. I had to approach Police several times before they did anything & then they made the situation about me & ignored the fact my [child] was also abused.* ***Māori bisexual woman***

> *Believe queer people, that women can assault or rape other women or queer people/trans people/non binary people.* ***Pākehā queer non-binary person***

104 It was not clear from participant responses whether they were discussing criminal court or Family Court. 'Reports' refer to the information given to the call centre and the attending officers or counter staff about the incident. A 'formal statement' is prepared by police when complainants/witnesses are formally interviewed and sign the statement which then becomes sworn evidence.

Participants suggested these police actions to demonstrate belief in victim-survivors:

- Automatically issue Police Safety Orders that last one month, rather than asking victim-survivors if they would like to press charges in front of their abuser, which can lead to further abuse
- Take a statement for every victim/witness of abuse who makes a report to support thorough reporting for future court proceedings and investigations
- Provide specialist family violence and sexual violence training informed by victim-survivors and specialists in the field to improve trust of police officers, and reduce lack of trust by police toward victim-survivors
- Undertake safety checks when requested by victim-survivors as needs change over time
- Be directed by victim-survivor as to the safest time to deliver Protection Orders to abusers
- Ask for Protection Orders to be made at sentencing.

Trauma-informed practice

Many victim-survivors are in states of shock, fear, and panic when police arrive which means their capacity to ask questions and absorb information may be limited. Trauma-informed practices, including improved soft skills, demonstrating respect and listening are all likely to create better experiences for victim-survivors.

Victim-survivors want to be informed of available services, ongoing support, options for legal action, and their rights, but may not be able to take this all in at first contact with police. For some, being better informed may have improved outcomes in court and safety for whānau.

> *Eliminate victim blaming. Provide a non rushed, non pressurised environment to talk in.* ***Māori bisexual woman***
>
> *More open and softer approach and understanding to victims.* ***Pākehā bisexual woman***
>
> *My interview was awful! Two male cops, no breaks, no offer of a cuppa. Nice enough blokes but really no idea of the impact of re living that nightmare.* ***Pasifika bisexual woman***

> *I think it is critical that police and other agencies recognise that a victim of abuse has gone through trauma and may not be able to take in all information that they are given at the time of the report. There should be a file of practical information provided to the victim so they know what the next steps are and where to turn for help. It is important not to expect the victim to organise to get the help they need.* ***Pākehā straight woman***
>
> *Police need to show themselves as being supportive by ensuring that the interview process is not an interrogation. That the interview be held in a comfortable supportive room not in a sterile interview room where offenders are questioned.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

Participants suggested these trauma-informed police actions:

- Provide clear information which victims can take away, outlining police processes
- Allocate longer time frames in police call-outs or interviews to allow for breaks and information sharing of next steps. This can help alleviate confusion and harm for victim-survivors experiencing trauma and allows information about rights, support services, the justice system, and police processes to be passed over more effectively
- Ensure families and children are referred to all appropriate services, including mental health services. Some participants recommended that an assessment that looks at contributing factors such as substance abuse, gambling issues, and unemployment should be brought to the attention of judges for appropriate sentencing
- Provide a safer physical environment including private waiting areas and interview rooms which are comfortable and supportive.

Take the needs of children seriously

Participants want to see police acting promptly to focus on the safety of children. Several participants also talked about trauma-informed practices when interviewing their children, especially disabled children. Others talked about their experiences of family violence as a child, feeling isolated and feeling guilt over betraying their parents, and being unable to seek support, which may have negative flow-on effects to help-seeking as an adult.

> *Have specialists who can deal with autistic children don't use that as an excuse for not interviewing…Police only believe parents when there is physical evidence of abuse. Long term sexual abusers groom and do less invasive abuse for years sometimes before leading up to worse abuse. That doesn't have to leave physical damage.* ***Pākehā bisexual woman***
>
> *Please ascertain the safety of the children involved as utmost importance. It's incredible the cruelty that can be cleverly hidden behind closed doors. Or even right to your face. Put the kids in the police car or something before you question them. Don't let them within earshot of the perpetrator. If they evade or ignore questions, don't assume that means everything is fine. Assume the child is frightened but has been subjected to enough hardship that they can mask very well in perceived survival situations.* ***Māori bisexual woman***
>
> *A person specifically to talk to children find out what's going on for them.* ***Wahine Māori (straight)***
>
> *Might be helpful to say "someone has noticed signs of abuse" so the victim won't get in trouble for speaking up. And when police want to speak to the parents of the victim, I think it's best to have the victim there too. Sometimes parents decide things they think is best for their children but they don't always know what's best, children should have a voice too - they may be young but give them a chance. Also some parents are all about keeping their family reputation even if it means their child won't be safe. If a child wants to speak let them speak, family members who don't agree with that obviously have something to hide.* ***Pasifika straight woman***

Participants suggested these police actions to take the needs of children seriously:

- Create child-centred police roles with specialist skills in working with children
- Don’t ask children questions about family violence or sexual violence in front of people who hurt them or other family members. Children need to have private opportunities to talk with police officers with specific skills in working with children
- Provide information to children so they know how to get help if they need it
- Keep children safe when they make disclosures against a parent
- Offer police support for parental access changeovers, if needed.

Develop understandings of different community needs

Institutional discrimination, colonisation and intergenerational experiences of violence means many communities have lack of trust in police, including Takatāpui and Rainbow communities. Many participants in our survey wanted a focus on healing and reparation, not just a rush to punish. Victim-survivors are prevented from getting help by belittling responses from police, including responses which do not demonstrate an understanding of the ways violence occurs differently in different communities.

> *Take into account societal violence towards trans and gnc [gender non-conforming] folks and not be the bringers of it.* ***Pākehā pansexual person***
>
> *They should actually respond as if we were regular people, not criminals for being victimized. Not threaten the person filing the report. Officers shouldn't harass the victim for years by making jokes about them in public.* ***Pākehā lesbian/gay non-binary person***

> *I think that the police system looks to punish the perpetrator rather than encourage whānau development. Its hard for whānau to succeed if they have a criminal history which ultimately makes life harder for the whole family. I'd be really keen to see a system that encourages change rather than prosecution.* ***Wahine Māori (straight)***

Participants suggested these police actions to improve understandings of different community needs:

- Prioritise victim-led responses because police actions have consequences for whānau as well as individuals. Listen to the wishes of victim-survivors
- Attend and prioritise training in working with specific communities, with a focus on violence response. Learning about family violence and sexual violence should be an ongoing journey, focused on the experiences of victim-survivors.

Multidisciplinary approach/access to other services

Many participants in the Backbone sample reported in free-text responses they want advocates and support people to work alongside the police; not only for victim-survivors and children, but in some cases for perpetrators. Victim-survivors said a multidisciplinary approach allows police to better understand their circumstances. Both wāhine Māori and tauiwi women felt a multidisciplinary approach would mitigate some of the lack of trust for police.

> *We don't trust they will make good decisions. Police should take a preventive approach, listen to the victims, not wait for things to get worse before they intervene. There should be a people centric and multi disciplinary response and Police should not be making decisions in isolation.* ***Wahine Māori (straight)***
>
> *Understand the dynamics for supporting men to get help. We are all the solution to this problem.* ***Wahine Māori (straight)***
>
> *More support around social services (counselling, womens groups, mens groups) would be useful for families suffering from family violence.* ***Wahine Māori (straight)***
>
> *I would like help with being able to be more honest with police - I fear that telling the whole truth will impact me and my children negatively, such as having OT find out that my violent partner actually lives with me. I hate having to deal with the police sometimes because it makes things worse, but I need the protection that the police can give.* ***Pākehā straight woman***
>
> *Would be ideal if they had a medic on hand that would go too. I usually didn't have money to get to doctor or wish to be seen with black eyes or swollen face or whatever was going on in public or didn't always realize the extent of an injury due to having to cope with what had happened and was happening with abuser and police and kids and all so the police can have it added to their file on the abuser from a medical professional on scene.* ***Woman of unknown ethnicity***

Participants suggested these police actions to support multidisciplinary approaches:

- Develop relationships with community groups that can provide support, and refer victim-survivors as appropriate
- Seek out community groups who work with diverse populations in particular
- Support community funding which allows diverse community groups to participate
- Include community feedback when assessing risk for victim-survivors
- Prioritise referrals to other services for counselling/therapy
- Offer assistance from advocates to talk with police without fear of outcomes from Oranga Tamariki and other agencies
- Tell victim-survivors their rights as victims and provide them with a lawyer
- Have a medic on hand to attend call outs with police.

Prioritise whānau involvement and support alternative justice models

While some victim-survivors wanted justice responses that punished perpetrators, others believed a long-term approach was needed for successful whānau wellbeing and safer outcomes for everyone. Some victim-survivors in both samples, particularly Māori, wanted the police to follow a 'do no harm' principle that allowed for a restorative and preventative approach before they intervene. This included: police being able to talk to the family of the abuser; restorative justice; and wanting the police to work alongside community supporters.

Restorative and preventative approaches were described as listening to victims and acting to prevent abuse escalating. One Māori participant spoke of the shame associated with having the police involved for herself and her whānau, preferring an advocate for both herself and her abuser to help the abuser be accountable for their behaviour. Some participants recommended that only after restorative approaches are attempted, should the police escalate the situation. There was a concern that abusers who are convicted are likely to reoffend, which further supports calls for a preventative approach.

> *The victims should have a choice in what approach is taken and this should not be dictated by the police officers.* ***Māori queer Takatāpui person***

> *Carceral justice isn't justice, and prison increases recidivism. Punitive justice treats human beings like animals and doesn't address the underlying (violent) causes of societal problems. We need a transformative justice system based in tikanga Māori that focuses on accountability and restoration.* ***Another ethnicity woman***

> *It would be good for there to be an in between step where there is accountability and healing without needing adversarial court process.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

> *I would say to anyone, that if your life is in immediate danger, call the Police. But, if you are dealing with repetitive abuse, there needs to be another organisation you can contact that can deal with the abuser so that the Police aren't constantly called. Every time you contact the Police, they keep a record. So when you phone them the next time, they start treating you like you are annoying them and that you are a nuisance.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

Participants suggested these police actions to prioritise whānau involvement and restorative approaches:

- Embed and support whānau wellbeing models that ensure victim-survivor safety
- Consider restorative justice processes which prioritise victim-survivor safety
- Refer and develop close relationships with community support services.

Support services for perpetrators

Victim-survivors want those hurting them to get appropriate help to change their behaviour – but not at the cost of their own safety. Several women in the Backbone sample said they were asked to leave the house while the abuser stayed. Some participants explained that while the role of police should be to de-escalate the abuse, the safety, mana, and wairua of victim-survivors should be of upmost importance. Victim-survivors should not be asked to leave their homes to appease police and the abuser. Some women in the Backbone sample said removing and arresting the abuser was important to prevent abuse from escalating and continuing.

Support for mental health or substance misuse issues must also not be used to excuse violence, and some participants in the HTRK sample did not feel sure there were appropriate stopping-violence programmes for Takatāpui and Rainbow people using violence.

Two participants in the HTRK sample reported that the person who abused them was involved in violence responses in their community. We have not included these quotes for confidentiality reasons; however, for both participants, this contributed significantly to their lack of help-seeking options. Both described wishing they had felt able to report to the police safely.

> *My ex partner was able to just carry on as normal and not address any of the violent behaviour that led me to call the police. He [the abuser] received information about a men's support service but was not required to attend anything.* ***Pākehā straight woman***
>
> *Arrest the abuser! Just telling them to leave and to find somewhere else to go and to not contact the victim is totally ineffective advice to give an abuser. Arrest them and immediately send a referral to a course for violence.* ***Wahine Māori (straight)***

> *When victims first reach out, they want help for their partners, not punishment. The first step should be mandatory appropriate domestic violence specific counselling. My partner was sentenced to alcohol counselling because he was drunk when the assault happened, but he was not only abusive when he was drunk, this reinforced his blaming of booze for his actions, and was entirely useless.* ***Pākehā bisexual woman***

Participants suggested these police actions to support perpetrators getting the help they need:

- Make support services for perpetrators, especially stopping-violence programmes, compulsory for any incidents of violence
- Remove the person causing harm to prevent abuse escalating, including to specialist houses for people using violence
- Consider alternative residential support for abusive partners to allow victim-survivors to stay at home, and those using violence to receive tailored support
- In order to support those who are being abused by people working in violence prevention (including the police), consider confidential reporting and support options, and make them public.

Sexual violence and family violence are criminal acts not 'Family Court matters'

When incidents of family violence and sexual violence are not taken seriously, particularly when care-of-children issues are being considered, it compromises the safety of victim-survivors and children. Many victim-survivors were not satisfied with police responses which did not take child sexual abuse seriously, including minimising sexual abuse, failing to investigate, taking the alleged perpetrator's word over the child, and failing to refer child sexual abuse to specialist sexual assault teams.

> *Sexual and domestic violence are criminal offenses and should not be referred to family court to be covered for custody issues.* ***Wāhine Māori (straight)***
>
> *I think checking in with other less obvious forms of abuse once someone has contacted them about a specific incident. I don't know what I can and can't report about the abuse I experience - some guidance on this would be good. Not all family and sexual violence is alcohol related. Just because they sober up doesn't mean the abuse stops.* ***Another ethnicity, straight woman***
>
> *Follow up don't make excuses because the young person doesn't want to be interviewed by you.* ***Wahine Māori (straight)***

Participants suggested these police actions to treat sexual violence and family violence as criminal acts:

- Proceed with prosecutions – don't discourage victim-survivors from proceeding with prosecution[105]
- Maintain up-to-date training for police officers dealing with family violence cases to address harmful myths of child sexual abuse and increase understanding of grooming, those who harm children, and children's needs
- Create a specialist unit with staff specifically trained for sexual and family violence with a process that is kept separate to Family Court. Care-of-children proceedings (not including Protection Order applications) in the Family Court, whilst important, should be placed on hold and resolved following a criminal investigation to ensure safety of children.

Transparency of process and improved communication

Many victim-survivors described feeling confused and ill-informed about police processes, often having to chase up detectives and police officers for up-to-date information. They wanted accurate and timely information to be offered in ways they could absorb.

> *We would like more open communication. We finally reported this guy as adults after years of fear - we don't even know if they are doing any investigation.* ***Asian bisexual woman***
>
> *More information available that can be taken away to process. I was told about heaps of resources but can't remember them. Having it written down would be nice.* ***Pākehā bisexual non-binary person***
>
> *More staff and more updates would be great as I live in fear and also feel like it's not important and that I'm wasting the police time.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

105 As explained in the Arrest section many participants shared experiences of police making decisions not to prosecute the abuser even though the victim-survivor wanted that to happen. Although officers are encouraged to make arrests as outlined in the NZ Police Family Violence Policy, the corresponding Solicitor General Guidelines may be being relied upon by officers to apply a test of likely success at prosecution stage which may be influencing their decision not to proceed with prosecution.
https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/crime/300397629/more-victims-are-reporting-family-violence-but-abusers-arent-facing-court-noone-knows-why

> *Keep victims more updated, more regular contact. At least once a month, even if nothing is going on …we as victims are left waiting and waiting, if we had a little more contact it would make a big difference.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

Participants suggested these police actions to improve communication:

- Create or improve current systems to allow for transparency so victim-survivors can keep up-to-date with their case
- Provide regular updates and information in a timely manner to victim-survivors
- Consider one contact person so victim-survivors do not have to tell their story multiple times
- Contact to check the victim-survivor is OK at random times.

Lack of evidence vs. being discouraged to report by police

Many victim-survivors in both samples said their case was deemed as low probability of prosecution due to a lack of evidence. However, when victim-survivors tried to report incidents of abuse, they were sometimes discouraged from reporting by police and criticised for taking up police time as well as feeling like they were labelled as 'troublemakers'.

The evolving nature of family violence for many victim-survivors begins with psychological, emotional, and financial abuse that gets worse over time, and collecting evidence before physical abuse starts will support better police and other agency responses. Victim-survivors want an escalated police response to ensure their safety when their life is in danger, and they want evidence gathering that does not rely on victim-survivors gathering evidence themselves.

> *A person known by police as a violent person should be treated with more urgency and removed from an area they frequent and are known to become aggressive to a controlled area where this person could be watched.* ***Another ethnicity, trans woman***

> *Tracker on the perpetrator. Especially as they are known to breach, this should be taken seriously. In some instances it doesn't matter as people still live together. However, in cases where there is real risk the risk should be taken seriously.* ***Māori bisexual woman***

> *Keep a record. They make every encounter a 'new' encounter so No-one ever looks to see the big picture, or understands what's actually going on. It means it's the victims responsibility to report 'small' things so that there is a written record, otherwise you go to court & the lawyer says there's no evidence of any of those abuses ever happening. But when you're reporting those 'small' abuses to try & create that paper trail, the police think you are wasting their time and being petty.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

Participants suggested these police actions to address evidence gathering:

- Improve current systems to accommodate for reporting of less serious incidents of violence so a historic record can be established and confirmed for future court hearings. Keep records of stalking, harassment and psychological abuse so police can respond swiftly as violence escalates
- Create a weighted demerit point system for violent offences, so police can keep an inventory of offences and seriousness of behaviour, in ways like credit histories. These ratings should be available for victims to use in court and may assist appropriate police response
- Give victims immunity from being charged with illegal activities at their residence to help them feel safe to call police.
- Utilise all available tools of evidence gathering rather than relying solely on victim-survivors. For example, ankle bracelets that track perpetrator movements, if indicated as appropriate by risk assessment.

Protection Orders not enforced

Along with psychological and emotional abuse, Backbone participants said police failing to enforce Protection Orders exacerbated already reported abuse. To illustrate, one tauiwi woman called police for multiple Protection Order breaches and was later told (by police) that if she continued to report breaches her abuser could apply for a Protection Order against her. While some participants felt 'the legal system condones violence against women', others spoke of the role police could play in enforcing court decisions.

> *The police should arrest the abuser when they breach a protection order. By allowing him to get away with stalking and harassing me it is only causing things to escalate.* ***Another ethnicity, straight woman***

Participants suggested these police actions to address litigation abuse:

- Act on court decisions and arrest for breaches of Protection Orders. Many victim-survivors who experienced a breach of their Protection Order discussed poor responses from police, making life unsafe and allowing further abuse.

Tools to improve communication and safety

Many participants had suggestions to help them communicate their needs to the police quickly and confidentially.

Participants suggested police offer these communication tools for victim-survivors:

- Develop devices to get help discreetly (like alarm or text) that can send a self-assessed risk rating e.g. notifying police of increasing severity of actions and urgent call alarm when needed
- Offer pocket cards with numbers to call if future violence takes place
- Develop and offer communication tools for people with speech and language disorders.

Police with the necessary knowledge and skills

A recurring theme in responses from participants was the belief that family violence and sexual violence responses require specialist training so police actions increase safety for victim-survivors and their families. This included training in responding to people from diverse cultural backgrounds; with disabilities; and with diverse sexualities and gender identities. Several participants discussed the need for police to avoid framing victim-survivors as liars or mentally unwell (and therefore unreliable) because they were reporting violence. Participants explained that victim-survivors should not have to prove the abuse or be responsible for keeping themselves safe.

Participants continually explained that it is important police staff understand the nature and dynamics of family violence and sexual violence. They explained it was particularly important that police recognise the abuser's behaviour, even when the abuser presents well.

> *Don't dismiss abuse signs or a person seeking help simply because they are under age and their parent/s/partner/sibling is charismatic and well liked/respected.* ***Pākehā straight woman***
>
> *Ensure / check and double check they are not putting the victim deeper into harms way. Are they really helping the victim by doing what they're doing and how?* ***Wahine Māori (straight)***
>
> *Police are not to ever send junior untrained police to a serious family harm incident. Having such officers overwhelmed and unprepared was horrific.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

Participants suggest these police actions to ensure police with necessary skills are available:

- Develop specialist family and sexual violence training to treat these areas of policing as specialist
- Only send officers trained in family and sexual violence to respond to these crimes.

Improve record-keeping

Many participants said police reports drive the justice response, so they need to be accurate, objective, and thorough. One participant shared her experience of a vague account written by police, which impacted later actions from Oranga Tamariki, Family Court, Probation Services, Corrections, and the criminal court regarding bail decisions.

> *Incident reports have too many errors because police officers don't listen or can't be bothered getting details correct. Victims don't have the knowledge (at the time) to know that they shouldn't sign the statement the police officer wrote because it isn't correct, or it's in words the victim wouldn't use, but they were pressured (intimidated by a large and somewhat aggressive male officer, compared to an injured and extremely vulnerable female victim who had just been assaulted with no support present) to sign it.* ***Another ethnicity, straight woman***

Participants suggested these police actions to improve record-keeping:

- Record all family violence incidents every time - this helps with getting Protection Orders
- Ensure reports are complete, accurate and filed correctly – this has very serious 'downstream consequences' for victim-survivors if not undertaken
- Make sure case files are passed to correct staff
- Create a database of people who commit family violence.

Prevention of violence

Victim-survivors also wanted to see more prevention of violence in their communities, and many see a role for police in this work. This included wanting to see police lead public education and awareness about family violence and sexual violence through campaigns; teaching consent and body sovereignty to families and children in schools; workplace training explaining coercive control and how bystanders can intervene; and training for Oranga Tamariki in dynamics of abuse.

> *I think we need more awareness around..speaking up for others when there are concerns for someone else..encouragement. To many crimes like this occur and many people close a blind eye, not wanting to get involved. A campaign needs to happen in communities.* ***Wahine Māori (straight)***

Improving specific police roles

When a victim-survivor reports abuse, there are several roles in the police system that can either support or harm a victim's safety and well-being during an often dangerous and stressful time. Survey participants were asked if they had any ideas for improving specific police roles. There were 151 women in the Backbone sample, 16 trans and non-binary people and 30 sexuality diverse women who offered their ideas for improving specific police roles.[106] While some participants just asked all police to do their jobs, many survey participants explained the ways in which specific roles can impact them. These roles and recommendations from victim-survivors are described in Table 30.

106 The exact wording of this question was: "Do you have ideas for improving specific police roles? For example, you could share your suggestions for improving the following roles [dropdown options]: Police call takers (people who answer the 111 calls); Front counter staff (people on the front desk at police stations); Attending officers (people who come to your home or other place); Forensic team (people who take photos of your injuries or undertake a medical examination); Detectives in the Adult Sexual Assault Team; or the Child Protection Team Interviewers."

Table 30: Recommendations to improve specific police roles

Role and feedback analysis/summary	Example Quotes
Front of house police staff Don't turn people away or act as gatekeepers. Need prompt, caring, calm and trauma-informed responses. When front counter staff do not act in trauma-informed ways, it acts as a barrier for victim-survivors seeking help. Respect confidentiality and privacy by offering victim-survivors private space away from the abuser rather than expecting victim-survivors to share personal details in front of others. Employ at least two designated front of house staff, rather than pulling in light duty staff.	*Front counter staff, in my experience, are often rude or minimise your experience. They're like the gate keeper or barrier to the police and being able to talk to someone who will understand what is happening. It would be enough to make some people turn around and walk back out the door.* ***Māori bisexual woman*** *All frontline police (on phones, attending, station staff) seem to lack any caring or understanding especially for those who are different in some way. They need a big shift in culture, to learn how to talk to people and show care and respect. Even giving a statement or reporting an issue they default to rudeness and aggression.* ***Pākehā pansexual non-binary person*** *It's hard enough to go in as a victim, but it's worse when the front counter staff aren't very friendly or can't find information on the system and there's no respect for privacy with an open lobby when there's other people present when it's a sensitive situation.* ***Pākehā straight woman*** *Have somewhere they can have you wait so you're not sitting in foyer looking at 1-way glass feeling like a criminal, scared, and trying not to cry.* ***Asian straight woman*** *Employ more front house staff, don't just put people on light duties in this role.* ***Wahine Māori (straight)***
111 Operators Don't be rude or dismissive. Build relationships, even with limited engagement with callers.	*111 operators - Dismissing panicked people is not ok.* ***Pākehā bisexual woman*** *Train 111 operators in dealing with distressed, scared people. Don't be sarcastic or aggressive. Always confirm phone numbers, build relationships.* ***Pākehā straight woman***
Attending police officers Continual and up-to-date training in various types of violence (e.g., family violence, partner violence, sexual violence), and mental health related issues. Behave in trauma-informed ways. Saying there are 'two sides to every story' to a victim is unhelpful. This is retraumatising and reinforces feelings of not being taken seriously.	*I've had such bad experiences because police don't recognise trauma in victims they are not trained to. If you are angry in any way shape or form apparently that makes you not a victim.* ***Pākehā bisexual woman*** *Don't make it more difficult, treat every person with respect, be patient, be understanding, supportive, but do not make promises you can't deliver on.* ***Pākehā straight woman*** *I understand that they [the police] have to stay objective and not take any sides – all we ask for is to be treated fairly and listened to, regardless if you see us as bad or good people.* ***Asian straight woman***

Respect victim-survivor requests e.g. for women police officers to attend Have attending officers with a focus on children, to improve children's safety.	*If a woman requests a woman officer, ensure that is respected. I have had very rude, disrespectful male officers who invaded my space, verbally bullied me.* ***Māori bisexual woman*** *I think adding child specific team members to those on attending would be really great and appreciated by the children more than you'd probably know. It doesn't take much to turn a frightening and traumatizing experience for a child into one that they will remember with hope in their heart instead of absolute dread and life of feeling unsafe on some level even just leaving the house.* ***Māori bisexual woman***
Detectives Allow interviewees to share their stories as opposed to only asking closed ended questions. Ensure transparency and timely correspondence in providing up-to-date information regarding investigation with victims. Ensure conduct and behaviour of detectives aligns with being respectful, and having understanding and patience.	*I had an experience with some detectives and I didn't like it. They treated me like I was the offender. They asked me yes no questions and didn't give me time to share my story so I said nothing.* ***Pākehā straight woman*** *Detectives for my case have been amazing but very slow to respond. Detectives for my [child's] case have been awful and highly confrontational. They don't return my calls or messages and have taken 6 months to interview the abuser.* ***Pākehā straight woman***
Prosecution team Take time to prepare victims and witnesses for court proceedings, especially when the abuser will be present.	*Prepare victims and/or witnesses adequately for court, especially when the abuser is present. E.g., cross examination, shared waiting rooms.* ***Pākehā straight woman***
Forensic Team Be warm and respectful. Offer women forensic officers if that is what a victim-survivor prefers.	*The forensic lady who photographed my injuries was quite rude, she laughed at my injuries. I suggest all staff that victims interact with behave in a manner that is compassionate and considerate…* ***Wahine Māori (straight)***

Child Protection Team (CPT) Some participants had good experiences with CPT. Participants suggested police refer family violence victims directly to CPT. Several participants wanted child sexual abuse investigations, often in the context of family violence, to be taken more seriously. Trauma-informed approaches when interviewing children and young people are important.	*Police need more specialised FHITs and CPTs, and all FV cases need to be referred to then immediately.* ***Pākehā straight woman*** *Detective in the child protection team didn't interview my child. Talked to my ex and decided he was perfectly fine. Wish we had an interview.* ***Pākehā bisexual woman*** *Ideally interviewers would be more aware of how trauma affects young brains. I was asked why I couldn't remember exact details as to how it happened. My support person had to remind them that I didn't need to remember every detail.* ***Pākehā bisexual non-binary person***
Family harm team Need to be more involved with wider agencies as abuse tends to continue even after separation. Be better trained on family violence and sexual violence dynamics.	*Family Harm Team need to be more involved with wider agencies. Family Violence doesn't end just because the beatings do, it carries on and on in other ways eg. Using Family Court to litigate things. Abuse of the court system, psychological manipulation etc etc.* ***Wahine Māori (straight)*** *Family harm needs a complete overhaul. For continuity. For their education on what family violence is. For how to interact with the victim …* ***Wahine Māori (straight)***
Adult sexual assault team Ensure continuity of care. Some cases get passed around too much, or staff are rotated away, which leads to information falling through the cracks. Need continual training, particularly in the importance of trauma-informed approaches. Ensure good communication from officers investigating sexual assault, including avoiding triggers related to the name of the perpetrator. More training to better respond to historical cases and unusual forms/contexts of perpetration. More information about how to report sexual assault in the community, including in hospitals.	*My initial encounters were very good and helpful, however, when the complaint was being investigated, it was shifted between a whole bunch of people…if I hadn't emailed/phoned and text to try and find out what as happening, things wouldn't have moved along…****Another ethnicity, straight woman*** *I don't think they should rotate staff out of the ASA [Adult Sexual Assault] the same way they do other areas. I have twice had two officers removed from the ASA when they were the only ones who hadn't actively harmed me. Good staff need to stay in these arenas.* ***Māori lesbian woman*** *Detectives- have a conversation of how involved/kept up to date with the case as it progresses. Give realistic expectations. Understand common triggers e.g my detective emailed me about the case and put my abusers name as the subject line. Hugely triggering to get an email notification while at work with his name popping up.* ***Pākehā bisexual woman*** *My experience of detectives in the sexual assault team is that they do not believe historical cases and are unable to comprehend the extra-ordinary .... I have been told by Detectives that "it is unbelievable and does not happen in NZ.* ***Another ethnicity, bisexual woman*** *More information needs to be out there around if children or adults are sexually assaulted first step is what. ..... doctors, A&E, police ????…* ***Pasifika straight woman***

Crisis Assessment Team (CAT) Generally, participants were trusting of the crisis assessment team. Sometimes a 'support person' who turns up on behalf of the victim may be untrustworthy and may be manipulative to the victim.	*Don't trust a family member who has turned up as 'support' is actually trustworthy but may be trying to oppress the victim.* ***Another ethnicity, straight woman***

There were also key themes that emerged from participants' comments regarding specific police roles.

Prioritise our tamariki/children and let them have a voice

Many participants wanted to see better, child-focused strategies for engaging with children experiencing sexual abuse and/or family violence, including as witnesses of abuse. Participants recommended children should be able to speak, and in a separate room to the abuser. Allegations of child abuse need to be taken seriously by the police.

Police play a key role in supporting young people to make positive decisions

Some participants explained that police have the potential, through positive interactions with young people, to make a lasting difference, but this requires a wider understanding and appreciation of the issues that young people face.

Follow-up and ongoing relationships

Many participants in both samples described being passed around through different police personnel after reporting abuse, undermining their ability to develop trusting relationships. Participants reiterated the need for dedicated, specialist police personnel for responding to family violence and sexual violence; police who were 'there for the long haul.'

> *There seemed to be frequent change in staff during my case, which was unfortunate as I never got to experience a trusting relationship with any of the officers assigned to my case. As soon as I felt like I had a good rapport with one of them, I would suddenly get an email saying they had moved to a different department.* ***Another ethnicity, queer trans man***

Better internal police communication and consistency of response

Several participants talked about the need for better communication between different police areas and staff, particularly in relation to child sexual abuse inside family violence contexts. Other participants explained that there is no consistent police response to family violence and sexual violence resulting in some officers minimising abuse and associated consequences and others taking a stronger approach. Receiving conflicting information or responses from different police staff undermined participants' trust in the police.

> *Better communication between the call takers and attending officers so that they say the same things. otherwise the attending officer/s call me and kind of laugh at me because I was expecting more of a response but that's what the call taker said would happen.* ***Another ethnicity, bisexual trans man***

> *There's no consistency - one officer will say 'this has gone on too long and we need to get him behind bars', while another dismisses any abuse, or talks to the abuser but not the victims, or ignores the victim having evidence. There's officers who advise to call 111 with certain incidents, while others say it's wasted police time and then you get told off by police for not calling them when you should've.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

Improving safety and protocols for information-sharing

It is common practice throughout Aotearoa New Zealand for police to share information with their partner referral agencies about the victim-survivor and their children. The information sharing occurs as part of regular case management meetings involving government agencies (Oranga Tamariki, Te Whatu Ora/Health NZ staff, Work and Income NZ) and community support and service agencies.[107] NZ Police case management of family harm incidents, including information-sharing with partner referral agencies, is complicated by the fact that there are no specialist family violence response services for Takatāpui and Rainbow victim-survivors funded anywhere in Aotearoa.[108]

We asked participants if the police had told them they would share information about the victim-survivor with other local agencies or services (Table 31). The most commonly selected response across both samples was "no": they had not been told their information would be shared than any other option. This police failure to notify is concerning, and particularly so for Takatāpui and Rainbow victim-survivors, as any information sharing is likely to involve "outing" them to mainstream services.

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107 See the 2010 Evaluation of the Family Violence Interagency Response System (FVIARS) Summary Report on the MSD website.

108 In the Tainui-a-rohe, Hohou Te Rongo Kahukura participates in community meetings and offers advice and training but has no funding to work directly with victim-survivors. We are not aware of any other Takatāpui and Rainbow community organisations involved in this way.

Table 31: Have the police told you they will share information about you? (n=355)

	Backbone sample n=281	Sexuality diverse women n=69	Trans and non-binary people n=5
Yes	38%	35%	17%
No	42%	46%	51%
Maybe	7%	6%	3%
I don't know	14%	13%	29%

Consent to share victim-survivor information

We also asked participants if police should seek consent from victim-survivors before sharing their information with other agencies, and the overwhelming majority of participants said consent should be sought by police. Just 5% of sexuality diverse women and women in the Backbone sample, and no trans and non-binary people, think consent is not required.

There were 14 Backbone and four HTRK participants who left more detailed comment about consent for information sharing in the free-text field. Most of these participants want police to get victim-survivors' consent before sharing information with other agencies and pointed out the serious risks to victim-survivors and children's safety if consent is not gained first.

> *Absolutely crucial to ask before passing details on! ... Seriously if the wrong orginisation called the house wow it could spell trouble for me.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

Some participants said that it depended on which organisation police were sharing their information with. One participant stressed police should not share information with Oranga Tamariki, Women's Refuge or a men's supporting agency without getting consent from the victim-survivor first. Other women felt consent was necessary most of the time but if there was an immediate safety need then information could be shared without a victim-survivor's consent.

> *Uh I don't know if they need consent necessarily (maybe for some certain places tbd [to be determined]) but definitely police should have to inform the person before they share anything (what and to where/whom).* ***Pākehā bisexual woman***

> *The only case where I would say yes to going ahead without being informed would be if there is a direct MH [mental health] concern or some other life threatening danger but the Police create mistrust by reporting things behind your back.* ***Wahine Māori (straight)***

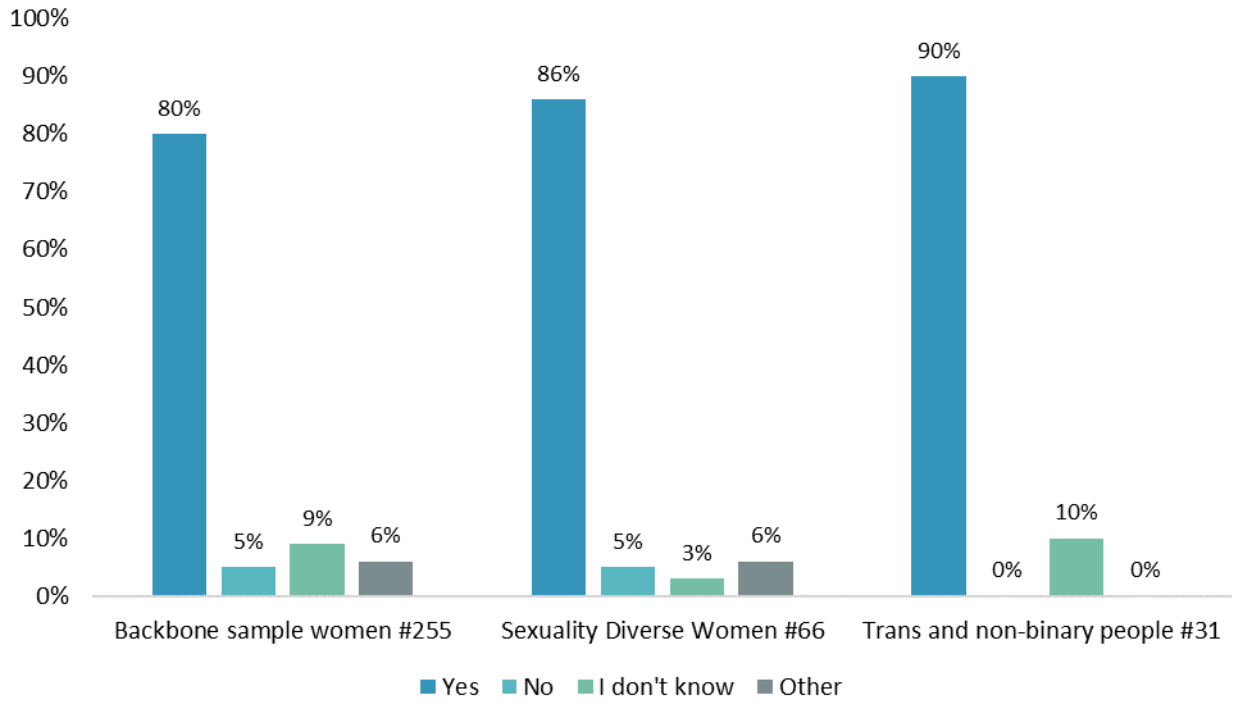
> *Sometimes people need the police to talk to other agencies for them as they're too scared or unaware that they need that help to get out of an ugly situation.* ***Wahine Māori (straight)***

Some participants explained that information-sharing by police could make it easier for victim-survivors to get support from agencies and reduce demands on them.

> *I think some agencies are helpful and if they contact you then it is 1 less stress for you to deal with, especially if you're low to no credit on your phone. Having the agency contact you is easier and you know that the Police have done something.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

However, others explained that if agencies were going to make contact after the police shared information with them, then that contact must be made in a safe way – not via a letter, not phoning and introducing themselves to another household member who could in fact be a supporter of the abuser.

Figure 16: Should NZ Police gain victim-survivor consent before sharing information with other agencies and services? (n=352)



Chapter 8: Improving the knowledge base

This chapter highlights what victim-survivors think the police need to know when responding to family violence and sexual violence, as an organisation and as individuals. We provide detail of specific training topics to help police better understand family violence and sexual violence including; dynamics of violence and abuse; types of violence and abuse; barriers to safety; abuser profiles and behaviours. Victim-survivors also want police to be trained in how to respond safely to victim-survivors including; taking a victim-survivor-led and trauma-informed approach; learning not to judge victim-survivors; prioritising victim-survivor safety and understanding the need for police to act swiftly. We also present information provided by survey participants on how police can improve their response to specific demographics and communities including: Māori and ethnic communities, children, Takatāpui, trans and non-binary people; people who are not straight; and disabled people. Many of the ideas presented here relate to discussion presented throughout this report and highlight the need for police to adopt a specialist response to family violence and sexual violence that keeps victim-survivors at the centre of everything they do.

Improving what police know about family violence and sexual violence

We asked participants what police need to know regarding family violence and sexual violence. There were 212 women in the Backbone sample, 23 trans and non-binary people and 44 sexuality diverse women who left comments in an open-text field.

Participants want a specialist response to family violence and sexual violence, informed by training including: how to respond safely to victim-survivors; how to understand abusers and their behaviour; how to improve practices; and the importance of getting the response right. Participant responses have been sorted into themes below and we rely heavily on participants' own words in this section as they powerfully explain what change is needed and why.

Understand family violence and sexual violence

Most victim-survivors stated that police need urgent specialist training on family violence and sexual violence. Participants want police to recognise signs of violence and abuse, and tactics abusers use, particularly psychological/ emotional abuse, coercive control, online abuse, stalking, and financial abuse. They felt that because psychological abuse is less obvious than other forms of abuse such as sexual and physical violence, it is often disregarded and misunderstood, and the immeasurable harm it causes is not recognised. Many participants said they found the psychological abuse they had experienced worse than the physical abuse.

> *My abuse was psychological so hard to show and came down to "he said she said". I needed the Police to have a better understanding of my concerns as it wasn't something I could show them.* ***Pākehā straight woman***
>
> *Police are stuck on the bash, physical abuse with clear evidence. When I tried to explain how this person terrorised me I was constantly reminded ..... but he didn't hit you. They actually dismissed verbal abuse, in fact normalised it.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

> *That psychological/ emotional abuse is abuse as well, that by the time a victim does call or go to the police a lot of abuse has already happened so they should ask questions relating to that.* ***Another ethnicity, bisexual woman***
>
> *When I rang to check if the protection order had been issued yet. The person cheerfully said yes, you are safe now. When that was the unsafest time for me. Most likely time he was going to do something big.* ***Pākehā bisexual woman***

Other training needs identified by victim-survivors are presented below.

Training/understanding required: Dynamics of violence and abuse

- It goes on for a long time/it doesn't end
- Patterns of abuse and the cycle
- It can be intergenerational
- It can happen to anyone at any time, irrespective of gender, culture, age, sexuality, socioeconomic status. It can happen in high socio-economic homes
- It can begin when children are very young and continue for years
- It can start as coercive control and then escalate to physical violence
- Every situation is different and complex – there is no 'one size fits all' type of abuse or response
- Sexual violence and family violence are prevalent
- Abusers come from all walks of life including people with power and influence and money. They are skilled in concealing their true nature to the victim-survivor at first, and to others around them
- Abusers are manipulative and they may appear to be calm and collected in the presence of police
- The impact of violence and abuse on victim-survivors may mean they present as distressed, confused or angry
- Family members are not always supportive and can be abusers
- There are specific dynamics of violence in Takatāpui and Rainbow communities
- How Protection Orders work
- What consent and 'no' can look like
- Victims do not 'choose' to be in abusive relationships
- How to undertake a risk assessment.

Training/understanding required: Types of violence and abuse

- There are many forms of family violence including child-to-parent violence (which can be a result of a disability, for example, and not bad parenting)
- Stalking and surveillance – these are tactics and should be treated as abuse
- Financial abuse
- The red flags and danger signs
- The power and control wheel
- How and why victims might use responsive violence.

Training/understanding required: Barriers to safety

- Leaving is dangerous and difficult
- The barriers to safety victim-survivors face include barriers that are specific to different communities
- The difficulty in getting a Protection Order (it is not easy and free)
- The impact on victim-survivors including Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD; see below).

> *Police need to know that Family and Sexual violence is never a single act in a single instance on a single occasion… it is an infinite number of looks, glances, expressions, movements, sighs, tuts, silences, shifts in body language, a noise, being seen to be too happy, too sad, too attractive, too unattractive, too shy, too gregarious along with hundreds of other completely random things that set off that feeling of fear and impending doom that means it's going to happen and you have no idea when it will happen or when it will end but you know that when it does end, you'll promise yourself that it will never happen again because you'll be better. It never crosses your mind that his abuse isn't because of who you are, it's because of who he is.*
> ***Another ethnicity, straight woman***

It makes you feel like you're going crazy, over reacting, weak, doubt yourself, feel shame. ***Pākehā straight woman***

It is easy for police to tell women to "leave" when they have not experienced what it's like to be stuck in the cycle, especially if it's generational. ***Wahine Māori (straight)***

Just because I didn't have visible bruises didn't mean I wasn't in danger. ***Pākehā straight woman***

It doesn't matter who you are, where you come from, how put together you look, victims come in every form and the devastation and destruction of violence is the same no matter the person. ***Pākehā straight woman***

Leaving isn't easy. It's bloody scary. Many women won't do it. It could cost them their life. ***Pākehā straight woman***

It doesn't end even if they go to Prison, they still get out and carry on. ***Wahine Māori (straight)***

A victim never planned on being a victim. Most likely they once loved the offender and tried to excuse the offenders behaviour as a one off. They most likely feel that their situation isn't as bad as others so minimised the impact it was having on them. Offenders take control a little at a time and sexual abusers are into the power. ***Wahine Māori (straight)***

The victim would have never started the relationship had she known who the person really was. The higher up in society the more power the abuser has and the more he has to lose if he loses control over this aspect of his life. He is willing to do whatever it takes to keep his position. The abuser will use everything and everybody - he has done this all his life and he has fine tuned it over the years. ***Another ethnicity, straight woman***

Not assume that only men or masculine people are violent, and to understand the very significant impacts of types of violence that aren't physical ie sexual and psychological. ***Pākehā bisexual woman***

Abusers don't always look or behave like abusers

Many participants in both samples said it is critical for police to understand that abusers are manipulative. They may present well to police, be convincing and charming and not 'look like a typical abuser,' but participants explained that a charming exterior often hides violence, and that friends and family may help hide abuse. These participants expressed the challenges associated with having a partner (the abuser) who had learnt how to act calm and collected in front of people. When police are not familiar with these behaviours, especially when they can see the victim-survivor is visibly upset and displaying behaviours of panic and emotional dysregulation from the trauma, participants expressed their fear of not being believed, and of police instead being more accommodating to their abuser.

Many participants described how their abuser could present themselves as the victim and get the police on their side. Often abusers would present as credible, and frame the victim-survivor as "hysterical" or "crazy". Victim-survivors want police to be trained in how to recognise the abusive person in the relationship and to resist their manipulation and lies. Some participants suggested police be trained in recognising pathologies such as narcissism. Police also need training on how abusers use the police response, and the wider system, such as the Family Court, to cause further harm.

> *Police NEED to listen seriously. At the end of the day, I say the police too are victims of psychological abuse by the so called abusers because they either cannot see or want to see that they are being lied to, charmed and manipulated by the abusers who are so adapt at turning themselves in to the victim.* ***Wahine Māori (straight)***
>
> *My partner came across humble and relaxed, I was the complete opposite. It is important they are aware that we are experiencing trauma from the relationship and are so stressed out and fearful.* ***Pākehā straight woman***
>
> *As a victim of psychological abuse I was regularly told I was crazy and that has an impact on my confidence to tell my story. I thought no one would believe me. I was always scared to take that step to call police as I knew I'd they turned up my ex would act like nothing had happened and like I was a nut job. I just knew the helpers would not be able to help me.* ***Pākehā straight woman***
>
> *An abuser doesn't always look or behave like the monster they are. They have mastered the art of alignment with the right people in the community, with family friends.* ***Pasifika straight woman***
>
> *As a police officer, just have an open mind and don't judge things that may seem counter-intuitive to you or less harmful. These are often the ways abusers prolong their abuse because they know no one will notice or ask questions.* ***Another ethnicity, straight woman***

> *Need to be aware of the cycle of abuse, that abusers have a charming character for the public but are monsters behind closed doors.* ***Another ethnicity, bisexual woman***
>
> *They need to bear in mind that victims of violence are not stupid, and have a very good grasp of their abuser's mindset and what might make things worse. They also need to understand that abusers are primarily manipulators and can be very charming and persuasive. They also need to have a really firm grasp on the reality that non-physical abuse is just as bad, if not worse.* ***Pākehā bisexual woman***

Participants in the HTRK sample also cautioned police to be aware of their own assumptions, especially about: Rainbow relationships; who abusers are; and the ways violence may look different in different communities. Several participants discussed police failing to recognise sexual violence from women; participants reported this was because assumptions were being made that women could not cause sexual harm.

> *They should know what it can look like, both physical and mental/emotions ways of manipulation that are used by abusers, how to keep someone safe and make them feel safe so they actually divulge all pertinent information, they should have an understanding of LGBTQ relationships as well as non-monogamous relationship structures, and what actions can best help a situation without causing further abuse or harm.* ***Pākehā pansexual woman***
>
> *Police would do well to remember that men still get privileged treatment, and there are many, many, every day aggressions against women, and people of the global majority, and children, that we all have to live with somehow, which we wish didn't exist. It's important that police don't blindly bring their own prejudices and their own aggressions, to their discussions! It would be great if police were trained, to recognise ways to get clear and careful testimonies from everybody, including people who are traumatised, (behaving oddly), or people who seem strange to them, and so on.* ***Māori non-binary person***
>
> *That there are people out there who are clever enough to evade the police with a convincing story. I'm still amazed we made it out alive without police help.* ***Māori bisexual woman***

Take a victim-survivor-led approach

Participants expressed frustration with police practice not meeting their expectations. Many described the need for police to learn how to take a victim-survivor-led approach to family violence and sexual violence. This requires police to trust that victim-survivors are telling the truth, to believe them, and understand and accept that victim-survivors know the abuser best and are experts at ascertaining the danger they are in.

Participants emphasised the need for courage to report family violence and sexual violence to police, and at times, the increased danger they face after reporting. To minimise these risks, victim-survivors rely on police responding seriously, safely and holding them at the centre. Participants explained it was vital that police did not minimise their experiences.

> *That retaliation/revenge by the abuser/person or people who have been accused against the survivor/victim is more likely than they might assume. Survivors need police to be proactive instead of reactive. Police also need to know how difficult it is for LGBTQ people to report family and sexual violence.* ***Māori bisexual woman***
>
> *It's complicated. People sometimes don't understand they're being abused and can be under the control of someone abusive. Even if everyone else says you're a liar and you're not being abused it's important to take some kind of action.* ***Pākehā asexual trans man***

> *The pain of living with sexual violence and then disclosure is bad enough without being accused of lying either by Police or the public.* ***Pākehā straight woman***
>
> *If the police don't believe and support victim survivors...who will?* ***Pākehā woman***
>
> *Most women don't report rape because they know it won't achieve anything and because they know they will have to relive what happened to them.* ***Pākehā straight woman***
>
> *Most people who report sexual violence are telling the truth.* ***Pākehā straight woman***
>
> *My word should be evidence within itself. women don't report sexual violence for fun, it isn't a game, it isn't something that is pleasant. why is it that we are always treated like we are lying.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

Participants said police need to be guided by the victim-survivor's assessment of their safety. For example, it may not be safe for the abuser to be arrested at that time, or for the victim-survivor to leave the relationship. Participants described that it can be difficult for victim-survivors to accept that the person they are in a relationship with has hurt them and it can bring shame to them telling others about the abuse, including police officers. Women in the Backbone sample also described how difficult it was to tell people about abuse when the abuser has worked so hard to make the abuse a secret.

> *I don't want to be a single parent, so I don't want to get rid of him. But I don't want my kids to witness violence and control, so I need the police to intervene sometimes. It would be good if the police knew this pattern and understood why I stay in it.* ***Wahine Māori (straight)***
>
> *Just because some women go back or are 'frequent flyers' does not mean their abuse is in any way their fault. Its scarier to go it alone than it is to stay with what you know. Especially with offenders who are perfect at manipulating the victim.* ***Wahine Māori (straight)***

> *Specialist police should be trained on how charming abusers are towards non-victims, and also how the victims themselves don't understand they are being abused.* ***Asian straight woman***
>
> *We dont go back to the abuser because we're dumb. My whole life, home, everything was tied together with him. I had nothing and nowhere outside of that. Saying 'oh just take your kids and leave' its so horrible - how? with what money? where? When I am in shock and trauma of being abused, I have to think about all that, too? I wasnt strong enough to do that.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

Recommendations for centring the needs of victim-survivors include: police responding in good time; maintaining confidentiality; investigating thoroughly; referring victim-survivors to helping agencies; and prioritising victim-survivor safety.

> *That they don't need to 'see both sides'. If I am afraid of someone and don't want them to contact or harm me again, that should be enough. I should be able to trespass someone from my own body. My house was valued more than I was.* ***Pākehā bisexual woman***
>
> *Victims are the experts on their safety, listen to them! Do what you say you'll do! Build trust, it takes time. Don't be arseholes to victims... They won't call again. Attend the call outs and provide support EVERY time.* ***Wahine Māori (straight)***
>
> *They need to listen to a woman's perception of fear for her/her children's life and understand it's not misplaced but completely valid and based on years of firsthand experience.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

Learn to take a trauma-informed approach

Survey participants explained that police can take a trauma-informed approach. Police are asked to listen so they can understand the context, including the impacts of the violence and abuse. Victim-survivors need police to respond without judgement, with sensitivity, empathy and compassion. These participants ask that police always treat them with respect and dignity. They need police to show genuine concern and help them understand their experience of abuse. When police do not respond in a victim-survivor centred manner, they can revictimise the victim-survivor and add to their distress leaving them feeling less safe and more isolated from help and safety.

> *Not revictimize the victim by making them somehow responsible for the abuse. The abusers wilingness to change (or not) is not the responsibility of the victim.* ***Pākehā straight woman***
>
> *Respect, empathy, not a cold hearted environment like I was the guilty person.* ***Wahine Māori (straight)***
>
> *They need to be trained on how not to make judgements of the victim how to be genuinely concerned for the victim.* ***Wahine Māori (straight)***

Learn not to judge victim-survivors

Many participants said it was important that police don't blame them for being victim-survivors e.g. because they were drunk at the time of the assault. Many described the impact of the violence and abuse on their mental health and how this needs to be understood. They stated that police need to recognise that victim-survivors may respond to violence in diverse ways.

> *That there is no "perfect victim" that people react in very differently in these situations. Some fight back, some flee etc Often many victims will go through a variety of ways to try make the violence stop.* ***Another ethnicity, bisexual woman***

> *They need to be trauma informed, they need to know that victims who are triggered may all react differently and show up differently, most maybe "hysterical" some maybe disassociating and zoned out or zombified and nonverbal at times, give them pen and paper, DO NOT TOUCH even to guide a triggered person, do not touch us, we will react violently if you try, otherwise we will come when we come to and then we can talk, panic attacks look different for everyone, some are internalised, some are very externally visible. Flashbacks happen and when full emersion ones happen we can also become violent or unpredictable because we are literally reliving trauma, some current, some very ancient, either way DO NOT put a finger on us at all.* ***Pākehā pansexual non-binary person***

> *Abuse leads to victims mental health decline. This can lead to women acting 'crazy' and being seen as the abuser.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

> *People respond to trauma differently. I believe that one of the reasons I was not fully believed was because I seemed to lack emotion when I gave my account. That is a trauma response …and should not have been used against me to question my credibility.* ***Another ethnicity, queer trans man***

The risk of a victim-survivor not being believed because of how they present may be particularly high for neurodivergent victim-survivors.

Historical sexual abuse, ongoing violence and multiple experiences of harm were all named by participants as difficult to recall in ways police seemed to expect, due to trauma and fear for their safety. Many participants said reporting the violence and abuse to police is terrifying in itself. They fear retribution and punishment from the abuser and feel very unsafe. Some explained that reporting made the violence get worse. Participants described the impact of the abuse on them and how important it is that police understand that it is difficult to articulate their experiences, it might take them time to disclose and they might not feel safe to tell the whole story.

> B*e taught therapy strategies and be educated around ptsd causing forgetfulness and memory loss especially during an EVI.* ***Pākehā lesbian woman***

> *Trauma makes it hard to remember things. Especially when it's not the first time somethings happened or it's an ongoing thing. We know what we need to do to stay safe, you need to prove that your options take into consideration every danger that we see. Even if it seems small.* ***Pākehā bisexual non-binary person***

> *Victims are often very broken, years of put downs, neglect, fear. This is not reported lightly, it is a huge risk to speak up for fear of retaliation.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

> *It's really scary to admit it is happening to you.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

> *When reporting family violence the victims often feel terrified of repercussions for making a statement. They feel unsafe in their own home even if the perpetrator isn't living there.* ***Wahine Māori (straight)***
>
> *If we go back to our abuser, we should still be taken seriously when we come back for help. Leaving an abuser is not an event, it is a process. We are not being dramatic when we tell you how afraid we are, we are scared for our lives and our childrens lives.* ***Pākehā straight woman***
>
> *Sometimes we need to know when the other person has been spoken to because there can be [repercussions].* ***Pākehā straight woman***
>
> *Sometimes it takes a while before the person has the strength to get help.* ***Pākehā straight woman***
>
> *In a relationship it is not easy to report sexual violence when it happens and people that experience sexual violence in a relationship don't have physical evidence when they finally are safe and able to report the crime.* ***Another ethnicity, straight woman***
>
> *That it's embarrassing that you feel your to blame or that in some way you could have done more to prevent the scenario(s). That you feel so inadequate repulsed and degraded regurgitating the incident & that no-one understands.* ***Pasifika straight woman***

Many victim-survivors in the HTRK sample wanted police to be aware that trauma from discriminatory or poor experiences with police themselves could also be present when reporting violence.

> *That it can be hard to disclose what has happened especially if the victim has an extensive history of abuse, have been failed by the system before, and to listen to them.* ***Māori asexual woman***
>
> *There is innate hostility towards police because of years of hurt caused by the police to indigenous communities, poor communities, and generally people who don't fit the status quo.* ***Pākehā bisexual woman***

Training on how to prioritise victim-survivors' safety

Survey participants want police to be trained to prioritise the safety of victim-survivors and children by listening to what victim-survivors and their family say they need to be safe, and ensuring this drives police practice. Suggestions for prioritising safety are detailed below.

Supporting victim-survivors

- Keep victim-survivors updated on the case
- Know and share what services are available for victim-survivors
- Tell victim-survivors what they should have in a 'go-bag'.

Interacting safely with victim-survivors

- Visit the victim-survivor in person and do not interview them over the phone
- Don't ask the same triggering questions about the assault repeatedly
- Use clear, non-judgemental language
- Go slowly with the victim-survivor but act quickly in response to the violence, especially if children are involved
- Explain the full police process slowly and clearly – give the victim-survivor notes to help them remember what has been discussed
- Do not discuss abuse in front of the children during statement taking
- Understand the impact of violence and abuse on children and how this affects how children behave.

Police practices to improve safety

- Always ask for a Protection Order to be granted at sentencing
- Prevent abusers from having access to mobile devices/internet while on bail as they will further abuse victim-survivors
- Ensure details in incident reports are correct and as accurate as possible, because even small errors result in cases not proceeding in court
- Violence is a criminal offence and the perpetrator should be charged
- Bear in mind that referring the case to Oranga Tamariki can make the situation worse for victim-survivors
- Do not promote contact of children with abusers.

> *Some victims know more about FV and the law than they do so stop telling them it is not abuse/nothing can be done/ it doesn't meet the Solicitor General's guidelines/doesn't meet the prosecution threshold. Every incident deserves proper investigation, don't minimise it or treat complaints as if they are less important than road safety and other crimes de jeur.* ***Pākehā straight woman***
>
> *Understand behaviors of children who have been exposed to family violence. Being quiet or non- responsive is worrying- not an indication of them being ok.* ***Wahine Māori (straight)***
>
> *It is not safe for victims to be in the same house as abusers especially when they have children.* ***Pasifika straight woman***
>
> *Stop allowing children to have contact with abusive men - if the man is capable of abusing women he will abuse his children - stop allowing this to go on!* ***Wahine Māori (straight)***
>
> *That having no contact with a parent is best sometimes and they should stand up to family court if they try to do harm.* ***Pākehā straight woman***
>
> *Stop calling CYFS. I know as a fact from many women I meet at refuges and courses in similar situations have stopped calling police, just as I did.. Many many people with children get abused more than ever gets reported because getting mildly to violently abused is a price that is paid to keep our kids.* ***Straight woman of unknown ethnicity***
>
> *Victims also don't know what all their terminology means and that they need to explain things like different types of police officers, different types of orders etc.* ***Another ethnicity, straight woman***

Understand that victim-survivors need police to act swiftly when they call for help

Taking violence seriously means acting swiftly, because victim-survivors usually do not call the police until they are in danger. Therefore, it is vital police respond as soon as they are called. Even if this is the first time police have been called, it's highly likely it is not the first episode of violence.

> *Every time i call the police , i am scared for my safety and my childrens safety. In that very moment that i call, ideally i would like to see the/a police officer at my house asap. I am ringing because i know my partner is at point where he is unpredictable, or so angry his threats are scaring the hell out of me… I want the police to know, you may hear my calls for help tonnes of times. Each time please treat it seriously and like its the first time ive called. It could be the call that saves my life.* ***Pākehā straight woman***
>
> *That often we don't feel like we can call them because we don't have visible injuries or witnesses and so know that they won't be able to do much. Therefore, when we do call them, it is often after long periods of abuse and we think that perhaps this time they can help. Therefore, to dismiss something as 'trivial' because it did not result in major physical injury, or to believe we are lying/exaggerating is often soul-destroying for us. We have spent so long waiting for a moment that we think we may be able to receive help, only to realise there is no help.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

Improving police cultural awareness and responsiveness

We asked participants who identified with ethnicities other than Pākehā - New Zealand European what police need to know to improve their cultural responsiveness. We heard from 33 women in the Backbone sample, eight sexuality diverse women and four trans and non-binary people.

Demonstrate respect – awareness of cultural differences and absence of racism

Many participants named police racism as an important barrier. Māori participants reported that current police responses fail to understand or recognise intergenerational trauma and related struggles for Māori (created by historic and ongoing colonisation).

> *Systematic racism for Māori/Pasifika is real.* ***Wahine Māori (straight)***
>
> *Don't judge someone because they've got a hood on and they're brown.* ***Pasifika straight woman***
>
> *Majority of our people [Māori] who are at fault is actually because of struggle it's not like these people are not trying, it's that they've been set back due to various reasons including our police force and people that are in power.* ***Wahine Māori (straight)***

Racism operates in complex ways, including towards those causing harm. Some participants felt that white men received different – and less serious – police responses.

> *Police do not seem to understand that Pakeha men can be DV perpetrators.* ***Another ethnicity, straight woman***

Others felt fear of police racism towards perpetrators stopped them reaching out for help.

> *Racism prevents victims going to the police if their abusive family member is non white because most victims care about this person and don't what to see them treated in a racist manner. They just want the abuse to stop.* ***Another ethnicity, lesbian woman***

Most participants who answered this question wanted clear demonstrations of understanding and respect from the police for victim-survivors of all cultures and ethnicities, which many linked to being aware of and responsive to cultural differences, including language barriers.

> *Knowledge about the barriers ethnic people face in reporting violence. Having more of an awareness from a cultural perspective is very much needed.* ***Wahine Māori***

> *Be aware of cultural differences and possibly a language barrier, if something isn't 100% clear double check if they understood the statement correctly.* ***Another ethnicity, bisexual woman***

> *Non judgemental and respectful of cultural practices.* ***Another ethnicity, bisexual woman***

Police should understand the morals, values and practices of diverse cultures. Participants want police to be more understanding about the cultural and language barriers faced by people from different ethnicities and, in particular, the difficulties in reporting particular types of violence and abuse or accessing support due to cultural beliefs about these types of violence.

> *Sexual violence is something which is taboo in many cultures, and so victims sometimes aren't safe or unable to reach out to family and friends for support.* ***Pasifika straight woman***

Participants explained that victim-survivors need help from police and therefore police need to be patient, kind and considerate when responding to people with language barriers or who come from diverse cultures. They ask police to listen to victim-survivors and give them time to understand the police process and the law. One participant explained that if someone doesn't understand straight away it does not mean they are lying about the abuse. Furthermore, one participant warned that people with language barriers might say they understand when they do not. Victim-survivors from diverse cultures may also not have support from friends and family, and police should therefore not assume they have safe places to go.

> *When I was removed from my home by the police, I had nowhere to go. Because I speak english well, it never occurred to the police I had no place to go - they did not ask either.* ***Another ethnicity, straight woman***

> *I think just realizing that people may not know how the police/justice systems work if they are not from nz. Also things which may be considered ok/normal here are definitely not tolerated and not ok in countries with lower rates of domestic abuse, and so victims may be coming from different 'norms' and so may be more affected by things than expected.* ***Another ethnicity, straight woman***

Specialist training in cultural safety and diversity

Participants suggested the need for training for all police staff on: cultural and religious practices; values; beliefs about and experiences of violence and abuse; and barriers to reporting for victim-survivors. Participants recommended such training should be informed by those working in Māori, Pasifika and ethnically diverse communities. Training must also address racism, because racism is a barrier to reporting violence for many communities, as discussed above, both racism towards victim-survivors, and also expected racism towards perpetrators, because people fear how perpetrators who are not white will be treated by the police.

One participant discussed the need for diversity training to assist police officers to understand their own culture, to practice in culturally safe ways.

> *A little more than just the basics of each culture and, the police need to know their own culture to be able to relate respectfully to other peoples.* ***Māori Takatāpui person***

Language and cultural support specialists

Several participants who answered the question about improving the cultural responsiveness of the police wanted culturally-appropriate support people or advocates available to improve police practices towards Māori, Pasifika and ethnic people.

> *Police need to treat everyone with the same level of respect and understanding as they would anyone else. If they find themselves unable to, they need to recruit assistance from elsewhere, such as support groups or advocates.* ***Another ethnicity, queer trans man***

> *Have culturally appropriate support people available and educate the police in culture safety/sensitivity.* ***Another ethnicity, straight woman***

Many participants wanted more available interpreters to assist police practice.

> *Availability of translators .... and explanations that prioritise the need to live within the law, NZ law.* ***Another ethnicity, bisexual woman***

In addition, the value of diverse police staff, including fluent speakers of te reo Māori and other languages, was recognised by some participants. Others wanted victim-survivors to be able to request a police officer for their case with the same ethnicity/culture as them.

Role of police?

One participant wanted to be able to heal within their own community, because of racism inside the criminal justice system.

> *That the police and the courts are inherently racist and that we should be allowed to heal within our own communities.* ***Māori queer Takatāpui person***

Improving the police response to children who have experienced family violence or sexual violence

We asked participants what the police need to know to improve their responses to children who have experienced family violence or sexual violence. We heard from 180 women in the Backbone sample, 33 sexuality diverse women and 18 trans and non-binary people, including participants speaking from the perspective of having been harmed as children, and those in protective parent roles. For some, particularly in the HTRK sample, the experience of having been harmed as children was relatively recent, as 8% of participants in the HTRK sample were aged 16-19.

Believe children

The most dominant theme, woven through most responses, simply asked the police to prioritise child safety by believing and listening to the experiences of children. Participants want children to be protected, understood, validated, and supported to be safe.

> *Believe children when they say/show that they are scared of an adult.* ***Another ethnicity, straight woman***

> *Make them feel heard, without judgement. Make them understand that it was in no way their fault, no matter what happened before, during, or after.* ***Another ethnicity, queer trans man***

Creating safe environments for children – trauma-informed policing

The trauma that can result from witnessing and/or experiencing family and/or sexual violence can make disclosing abuse difficult, and children may behave in multiple ways in response to abuse. It was well-understood by participants that a child may hide details, or lie out of fear of further abuse, manipulation and psychological abuse.

> *Be concerned if when they [police] attend the job, and the child is 'calm and happy to see police', the child has been exposed to violent family harm and if they are calm then that could indicate a bigger problem- the child is used to this behaviour and does not see anything wrong with dad hitting mum or the parents screaming at each other.* ***Pākehā straight woman***
>
> *A quiet child is a traumatized child.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

This means that a warm, welcoming environment and gentle and patient approach is key for children to feel safe, able to make sense of abuse, and build up enough trust to disclose details of violence to police. Participants suggested police in mufti would be less intimidating for children, and that they should not have tasers or other weapons, and should know how to build rapport with children. Reassuring children that any abuse that has occurred is not their fault, and that their concerns will be taken seriously, is key to supporting children. It is also crucial for child safety and trust in police that a perpetrator is given consequences when violence occurs.

> *Listen to them, take them seriously, and inform them of what you are going to do to help.* ***Pākehā straight woman***
>
> *Be really kind and gentle, explain things softly.* ***Pākehā straight woman***
>
> *Give them a contact number and easy ref number. Meet to chat and check up on how things are. Show they care the children are safe and it is responsible thing to report any fears they may have. To always call and they will simply check in on them or Eg their mother. Create a lasting connection of support.* ***Wahine Māori (straight)***

> *Less confrontational interviews and statement collections. Sat directly across from a stranger as they ask very personal questions is very intimidating. Having different seating options would allow for me to be more comfortable and more open to answering the questions.* ***Pākehā bisexual non-binary person***

Participants recommended developing trusting relationships in age-appropriate ways before a child is interviewed, including using toys but also making provisions for teenagers. They also felt that keeping older children well-informed could prevent youth from further abuse.

> *Create a safe, calm space away from the perpetrator.* ***Pākehā straight woman***
>
> *Make sure they are in a comfortable environment, use toys dolls or stuffed animals, don't hound the children or go straight in to questioning, build friendships and trust. Don't doubt the kids or say [they said] something they don't mean.* ***Wahine Māori (straight)***

Participants want kind, calm, trauma-informed approaches to interviewing and interacting with children which include understanding and maintaining boundaries around touch, particularly for neurodivergent children.

> *Stop segregating them, or sending them away with other family etc, don't put your hands near your taser anywhere near the children, do not touch the children, do not make the children leave their home if they don't want to.* ***Pākehā pansexual non-binary person***
>
> *I don't know if it's because I'm autistic / have ocd or if it's because we were being abused but please don't touch me without asking (hugs/pat on the shoulder/etc) it's uncomfortable when strangers touch me and overwhelming especially when I'm already stressed and anxious.* ***Pākehā pansexual non-binary person***

Participants had differing views on who should be present at child interviews, with some believing children should be interviewed alone and others wanting a support person, preferably the non-abusing adult/parent, to be present. There was consensus however that a child should never be interviewed or questioned with their abuser or the abuser's family present. Some participants also said it was important that children were not intimidated by the abuser before the interview, and this should be considered when deciding on interview location.

> *Listen, and remove them. Speak with them privately, explaining its safe to tell the truth.* ***Pākehā straight woman***
>
> *Have the parent who is not the abuser be allowed in the interview so the child can relax and give information.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

Prioritise the voice of the child

Many participants raised concerns that child witnesses of abuse were not interviewed. One woman was advised by police that 'we can't take the word of a [primary school aged child] over a grown man.' These kinds of responses do not value children's experiences and do not foster trust in police, or increased safety for children.

> *I just felt like they brushed us off.* ***Straight woman of unknown ethnicity***

Others had asked the police to forensically interview children when child sexual abuse was suspected, but this had not happened because their child was not believed.

> *By actually forensically interviewing them instead of just going to the father and believing every word he says.* ***Pākehā bisexual woman***

To keep children safe, it is critical that the police listen to children's needs – participants did not believe that a child's statement should be less important than that of an adult and did not want police forcing children to pick between parents. Participants also wanted Protection Orders to automatically include children and for the police to check in with children affected by abuse even beyond reported violent incidents.

> *Believe them no matter what their age. If they are too scared to speak then believe the parent, don't put them back into a dangerous situation until they can/will speak for themselves. It doesn't change the fact that the abuse is happening, all it means is that they don't trust you enough to say anything to are being threatened by the abuser.* ***Straight woman of unknown ethnicity***

Participants who were disabled or who had disabled children also raised the need for police to meet any support or communication needs, rather than place these children in the "too-hard basket".

> *Actually have things in places for non verbal children or children with limited speech as my child didn't get the help I believe they needed due to their limited speech even though they use a [aide] and NZSL they said well they can't talk so not much we can do.* ***Another ethnicity, bisexual woman***

Specialist training for police in child safety

Rather than generic officers, participants wanted trained police officers who specialise in child safety to better address the complex issues of balancing children's safety and whānau wellbeing. Suggested training in child safety included:

- Strategies that are victim-survivor informed
- Ways to discern when a child may be withholding the truth or desperately in need of protection
- Interpersonal skills and behaviours needed – patience, understanding, how to be non-judgmental and non-biased, honesty
- Respectful treatment of children and their parents – the way in which police speak with parents can affect how a child perceives the police
- Ways to build rapport and trust
- Ways to create preventative measures like education in schools
- How to provide children with tools to deal with trauma – for example, breathing techniques
- Up-to-date knowledge of the Child Protection Policy
- How to record interviews
- Understandings of litigation abuse.

Multi-disciplinary teams to meet child safety

Participants suggested a range of child specialists including child lawyers, advocates, psychologists, social workers, teachers, youth mentors, and specialist women officers would support child safety, and help mitigate trust issues with the police. Children should also have access to counselling and talk therapy and support at their schools.

> *Police shouldn't be dealing with children. Children should be supported by agencies specializing in child abuse and perpetrators should not be able to access children until they have concluded any criminal proceedings against them.* ***Another ethnicity, straight woman***

> *Believe them, have a specialist family/sexual violence child worker available to support the child who the child can build a relationship with before making statements if they want.* ***Pākehā bisexual woman***

> *When my dad first committed family violence my mum was told by police that that they'd let the school know and that I would receive counseling. I never received it... Because I was a kid I didn't understand what those services were for and that I actually really needed them. It would've been good if the police told my school and required me to go get counseling. It took [several] years for me to talk about that incident to anyone and it took me [an even longer time] to talk to a Professional about it. It is very much an event that shaped my life.* ***Māori pansexual woman***

Education at school regarding grooming and red flags

Some participants in the Backbone sample wanted the police to be involved in violence prevention programmes at schools, particularly focusing on grooming and red flags. Children should also be informed of where they can go to feel safe and disclose abuse.

Compulsory live-in facilities for abusers

Several participants described incidents where they, rather than the abuser, were asked by police to leave the home with their children so that the abuser could 'calm down'. This did not feel just; nor did participants feel it prioritised the safety of children and the non-abusive parent. Some participants wanted a compulsory live-in facility to be available to perpetrators. These facilities would ideally be equipped with services that can address and prevent further abusive behaviours.

> *Provide live in compulsory facilities that help the abusers really deal and own their own shit.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

Improving responses to Takatāpui, trans and non-binary people

We asked trans and non-binary participants (and only these participants) what they think the police need to know to improve their responses to Takatāpui, trans and non-binary people after family violence or sexual violence. Twenty-four trans and non-binary people offered their ideas, many in generous and considerable depth. We also include comments made by trans and non-binary people under the general question about what police need to know that were specifically relevant to trans and non-binary people.

Demonstrate respect – no slurs, misgendering or deadnaming

The near-universal theme from responses to this question was that the police should demonstrate respect when responding to trans and non-binary victim-survivors. At its most basic, this means avoiding derogatory terms of any kind.

> *If they could just not call me a faggot for a moment that would be cool.* ***Māori pansexual non-binary person***

Trans and non-binary victim-survivors want their correct gender, names and pronouns to be used by the police. This requires the police to be trained to question their own assumptions and ask victim-survivors for their pronouns, recognising that considerable barriers exist for trans and non-binary people having access to legal identity documents that match who they are.

> *Use our preferred pronouns, NEVER out us, ALWAYS ASK, Never assume gender, Don't judge us at all, not on anything as that's bias and creates a huge level of mistrust, Don't criticise what we look like, how we dress/ present etc, Listen to us and educate yourselves.* ***Pākehā pansexual non-binary person***
>
> *Don't use my deadname. Ever. Refer to it as my birth name if you are unsure and ask if you don't know. Know how to use they/them pronouns consistently. Don't make assumptions based on my appearance or age.* ***Pākehā bisexual non-binary person***

While the need to stop misgendering was the single most important issue named by trans and non-binary people, the context of wider assumptions was also commented on by many.

> *Training around gender and sexuality and how to keep their transphobia/queerphobia/ religious beliefs out of it. Cease to enact further violence on trans bodies. Ask and use correct pronouns. Understand these issues in many racial contexts.* ***Pākehā pansexual person***

One participant had not shared their gender while reporting violence from a partner, due to fear of discrimination.

> *I am non binary. And I'm leaving that out of my involvement with the police regarding my ex partner. It's going to court. And I don't want to lose the trial because the judge/jury is biased against trans people.* ***Pākehā bisexual non-binary person***

Another raised that the police misgendering an abuser could also lead to more violence for victim-survivors.

> *They need to know and understand that our given name may not match our legal name. To really listen and pay attention when we call about a trans person who's name doesn't match because I don't like misgendering/deadnaming them either and I know that if the police misgender/deadname the person who is hurting me they'll probably get even more angry and stuff.* ***Another ethnicity, bisexual trans man***

Specialist training in dynamics of violence towards Takatāpui and Rainbow people

Most participants believed that for the police to demonstrate respect for trans and non-binary victim-survivors, they needed access to specialist training, including in showing respect for gender journeys.

> *The police need to undergo thorough training, and to show our community to real action that they have understood and are committed to changing. Irrelevant questions regarding ones gender, medical transition (or lack thereof), absolutely cannot take place. Neither can casual misgendering (especially not when the identify of the victim has been clearly established). Police need to understand that words have immense power, especially when coming from someone of authority (and the people who are meant to protect us).* ***Another ethnicity, queer trans man***

Trans and non-binary participants stated that training for police must address dynamics of violence towards Takatāpui and Rainbow people, including difficulties with help-seeking due to existing heteronormative and cisnormative understandings of violence.

> *Trans people experience sexual and domestic violence at the highest rates. The rate increases when they are not white. Among cis women, bisexual women experience domestic and sexual violence at the highest rates. Yet the police respond in ways that imply queer people are less credible… at the very least, police need to be adequately trained in sexual violence, consent, abuse dynamics, systems of oppression, power and resistance.* ***Pākehā queer non-binary person***
>
> *That we do not deserve sexual violence any more than a cis white woman does. That we are just as afraid of being disbelieved, if not more due to our takatapuitanga.* ***Māori Takatāpui person***
>
> *There is a history of police abuse towards our community and that's not going to disappear overnight. Police need to be educated in this history to understand it.* ***Pākehā trans man***

Participants also wanted to see training for ordinary police as well as Diversity Liaison Officers.

> *Honestly it would be great if police had proper training on diversity, not just designated diversity officers like. Teach the beat cops about gender and sexuality and diversity. 90% of the cops I've dealt with have been Cis white guys. The police need to consult with different communities, learn what we need and understand how to better talk to queer people. That training should be mandatory and taken seriously.* ***Another ethnicity, pansexual trans woman***

Diversity within the police

Several trans and non-binary participants felt that police do not relate to Takatāpui and Rainbow communities because police officers are seldom from these communities.

> *Quite a few queer people are difficult to communicate with, and extremely idiosyncratic. Police need to understand this is not a crime in itself! Probably having more queer people in the police force would assist, and making sure those people are a variety of personalities.* ***Māori pansexual non-binary person***
>
> *That there aggressive, dominating style is intimidating AF! And that they don't look like any of us. The uniforms, but even the way the majority hold their bodies, screams heteronormativity and I do not relate to these people.* ***Māori queer Takatāpui person***

One participant wanted a greater role for Diversity Liaison Officers. Several participants wanted referral processes to services that were safe for them. They did not support existing Rainbow community groups receiving referrals unless they had specialist knowledge of violence dynamics.

> *It's not safe for trans people to use any of the services suggested for LGBTQA people by police … In particular [Rainbow community group] is very harmful to trans people.* ***Pākehā lesbian trans woman***

Role for police?

Two trans and non-binary participants did not see any role for police in responding to violence towards trans people, due to historical and ongoing transphobic discrimination.

> *I don't believe the police can be reformed, I think we need community-led and community-focused law enforcement, staffed by those who actually care about the community and the most vulnerable.* ***Pākehā queer non-binary person***
>
> *It's not about what they know, the police need to be abolished entirely. They've demonstrated that they'll never voluntarily stop misgendering and deadnaming trans people. Even if that did seem possible, the long, long history of police abuse against trans women and sex workers has poisoned the well too thoroughly to ever recover from.* ***Pākehā lesbian trans woman***

Improving responses to people who are not straight

We asked sexuality diverse participants (and only these participants) about how police could improve their responses to sexuality diverse people after family violence or sexual violence. Twenty-two trans and non-binary people and 36 sexuality diverse women responded to this question. We also include comments made under the general question about what police need to know that were specifically relevant to people who are not straight. The overwhelming theme was a desire to be treated as well as anyone else – while acknowledging this required considerable shifts in police practice and police understanding of family violence and sexual violence in Takatāpui and Rainbow communities.

Demonstrate respect – no assumptions of gender or sexuality

As for gender diversity, the overwhelming majority of participants wanted to be treated with dignity and respect in terms of their sexuality. One participant pointed out that having to educate police 'on the job' about sexuality diversity while reporting violence is inappropriate due to trauma.

> *Treat us with no less respect or understanding than you would someone who is straight. Understand that our sexual experiences, and culture, differs in many ways, but are also similar in many ways. Familiarise yourselves with queer sexual behaviour, in a non-judgemental way. Learn our lingo, so we don't have to explain it to you during some of the most painful and vulnerable conversations we will ever have in our lifetimes.* ***Another ethnicity, queer trans man***

Participants who responded to this question highlighted problems with heteronormative assumptions of gender, relationships and violence.

> *Family violence happens in gay relationships so believe it even if it doesn't fit into your gendered understanding of violence (ie man=perpetrator, woman = victim) - if you're uncomfortable with that get a different job.* ***Pākehā bisexual woman***

Assumptions that violence in Rainbow relationships is not as serious as men's violence towards women and default assumptions of heterosexuality were also identified as problems by some participants.

> *Just to not ask uncomfortable and unrelated questions, not to assume that they can't be abusive just because they're queer and therefore "kinder" or "more open minded", and not assume everyone they're talking to is straight like if someone who they perceive as a girl is asking for help with their violent partner, the police shouldn't just assume that their partner is a "husband" etc.* ***Pākehā pansexual non-binary person***
>
> *Don't assume my genitalia. Don't assume the nature of the sexual assault and allow me to explain how and what happened without words being put into my mouth. It will take time.* ***Pākehā bisexual non-binary person***

Finally, specific assumptions about bisexual people that excuse violence, such as bisexual people being promiscuous or untrustworthy, were identified as unhelpful by some participants.

> *Don't assume bisexual people are promiscuous. Or take people making complaints less seriously if they are. Also remember that offenders acting against the opposite gender aren't necessarily straight either. People could attack anyone. Regardless of gender/sexuality. Violence isn't always about attraction. also, people hurt people. Not man vs woman. Straight vs gay etc.* ***Pākehā bisexual non-binary person***

Specialist training in dynamics of violence towards Takatāpui and Rainbow people

Most participants believed that for the police to demonstrate respect for sexuality diverse victim-survivors, they needed access to specialist training which addresses dynamics of violence towards Takatāpui and Rainbow people, including difficulties with help-seeking due to existing heteronormative and cisnormative understandings of violence.

> *That violence can happen regardless of the relationship dynamic and that some people will use different tactics that they might not be trained in as much (Psychological, physical, etc) to recognize it.* ***Pākehā bisexual woman***

Participants also wanted training to support police to be comfortable talking to sexuality diverse victim-survivors.

> *Everyone has prejudices, and everyone can feel uncomfortable, when they're learning something new. It's good to recognise that too. Learning how to be professional and careful, even when you feel unsettled or shocked, would assist police with their communication, I would imagine.* ***Māori pansexual non-binary person***

Police also need training in recognising specific forms that abuse may take inside Rainbow relationships – and not just same-sex relationships. One participant also raised Takatāpui and Rainbow children and young people growing up in unsafe families, including conversion environments.

> *Acknowledge that any demographic of people has people who commit domestic violence. It is not just a straight or queer issue. Be aware of heterosexual couples containing a queer (LGBTQ) person. Some abusers will use a victims queerness as a means of abuse. This can look like: - Threatening to out the queer person - Being homophobic/biphobic, ect to their partner. - Banning partners from being part of queer communities or events. Be aware of parents commiting abuse against their Queer/LGBTQ children. - Physical and emotional abuse against their kids. - Conversion Therapy Practices - Parents banning their kids from attending LGBTQ groups Some parents will abuse their straight kids if they suspect them of being queer. Let those kids know that its not their fault, it is their parents fault for their intolerance towards others.* ***Māori pansexual woman***

Others wanted police to recognise internal dynamics in Takatāpui and Rainbow communities that may be part of partner and sexual violence.

> *They need to be aware of how stereotypes they have been exposed to their whole lives may be affecting their perceptions. They also need to be aware that there are hierarchies of privilege within the LGBT community - for instance, that trans and bi women are much more likely to be victims of violence than lesbians.* ***Pākehā bisexual woman***

Many linked training to better understanding and a kinder approach to Takatāpui and Rainbow victim-survivors, including for less well-known Rainbow identities.

> *Understand the nuances of asexual experience.* ***Pākehā asexual person***
>
> *Have all police trained in these things. Every officer should know this stuff.* ***Pākehā trans man***

Police culture and diversity

Several victim-survivors wanted police responses to sexuality diverse people to show awareness of different life experiences, including: not being homophobic or biphobic; not making assumptions about gender and relationships; and not "outing" people without their consent.

> *They shouldn't be homophobic towards a 16 year old lgbtq who's just endured domestic violence for 2 years and got the courage to speak up just to get shut right down.* ***Pākehā lesbian woman***
>
> *That they are different from straight people and that we should not be processed in the same way.* ***Māori queer Takatāpui person***

One participant thought this could be achieved with more police from Takatāpui and Rainbow communities.

> *Perhaps have police who are LGBTQIA be the responders or as responders on every family violence call-out so we know there is one person we can actually talk to who gets it and won't breach our trust, or out us, or use the wrong pronouns who will actively ask us whatever they need to know and will not misgender us, unless we ask they not out us and we give them permission to misgender us for our own safety.* ***Pākehā pansexual non-binary person***

Role for police?

Unlike responses to the question about gender diversity, participants responding to questions about sexuality diversity generally believed that police could learn to respond appropriately to them. The one exception was a trans woman who repeated her response, saying her sexuality was eclipsed by the poor treatment she had experienced as a trans woman. However, issues to do with historic and ongoing poor practice were raised as a concern that needed to be acknowledged by NZ Police.

> *Accept and acknowledge that many of us have lost our faith and trust in you, due to how some of your peers have treated us. Not just directly, but historically. Know that when we are skeptical of you, it is because allyship can look a lot more like infiltration when it's done without an established, mutual trust.* ***Another ethnicity, queer trans man***

Three participants reported that their recent experience reporting abuse from a woman partner to the police had been positive for them. All three were lesbian/gay women, not transgender, living in large urban areas.

Improving responses to disabled people

We asked participants who indicated they lived with an ongoing health condition or problem: "What do you think the police need to know to improve their responses to people who experience a health problem(s) or condition(s) that causes difficulty for them?". We received responses from 110 disabled participants, of whom 67 were women from the Backbone sample, 24 were sexuality diverse women and 19 were trans and non-binary people.

Participants gave comments that were both pan-disability and specific to different kinds of disabilities. Unlike the gender-diverse and sexuality diverse cohorts, disabled participants made no comments suggesting disabled victim-survivors should not rely on police interventions.

The mamae (hurt) of being subject to family violence and/or sexual violence for disabled victim-survivors was exacerbated by general feelings of being misunderstood, ridiculed, and rushed by police when they tried to report violence or abuse.

> *Life is harder for us. We need higher levels of safety. We struggle more with basic tasks and can't be agile in our response* ***Pākehā straight woman***
>
> *Police need to leave their bias at the door and believe that no matter what the persons condition, their life is already full to the brim with "hard" they don't need the police to be adding to it.* ***Wahine Māori (straight)***

Disabled participants highlighted police response could be improved via specialist training, specialist support, human rights approaches, and time accommodations and communication.

Specialist ongoing training

Participants gave extensive information on the need for police to have specialist training about disabilities, so they would understand disabled victim-survivors better.

> *I would be worried about if I had to talk to them about my [impairment] and using a wheelchair sometimes that they wouldn't understand and think that I don't need a wheelchair because I can walk sometimes (even though I'm still in pain when I'm walking just less than when I need to use my wheelchair).* ***Pākehā pansexual non-binary person***
>
> *Be trained for these situations, even perfunctory, to prep. Understand the effects of certain sickness or disease.* ***Asian straight woman***

Some participants wanted training in specific disabilities, such as autism, particularly in relation to communication and responses to trauma and violence.

> *Autism doesn't make us dumb, autism is a spectrum, much like a pie, not linear like a line, we have somethings we are great at, some which we may need support in/with, it doesn't make us violent, we do have meltdowns-which police need to know they can look different for everyone on the spectrum, we may mask well, but still have trouble understanding some things and processes, we can be very emotional, it's not manipulation, we are blunt and want to get things over and done with, we stim-vocally as well as physically, we get exhausted, some more easily than others, but for sure dealing with police at all is overly exhausting.* ***Pākehā pansexual non-binary person***
>
> *I am on the autism spectrum though with mild behavioural symptoms compared to others I know. My insistence on detail can be overwhelming for people. My anger rather than victim tears in emotional situations has perhaps lent police to viewing me as the problem rather than a victim.* ***Pākehā bisexual woman***
>
> *Always ask if they have a health problem and not assume that because of their behaviour they are drunk or high on drugs. The police need education on what illnesses can be displayed as being drunk or on drugs.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

Several participants wanted police training in the concept of being overwhelmed, and how it manifests in behaviour people may not expect.

> *Sometimes the person is utterly overwhelmed from their health and it can come out in strange ways, e.g. tones of voice, being confused on details, etc.* ***Another ethnicity, bisexual woman***
>
> *Yes I have ASD [Autism Spectrum Disorder] and PTSD and they didn't recognise when I was in overwhelm. They weren't listening to my story.* ***Another ethnicity, bisexual woman***

> *If you put pressure on me or let your impatience show, it's more likely I will have even more difficulty finding an acceptable word for what I'm trying to say or that I will be unable to speak at all. I understand that being patient, taking time, etc must be very hard for you. Trust can be hard for me. I've learned that there's very little point continuing to try to communicate with people who don't care so if I sense that from you, it may make it even harder for you to do your job. I'm very aware that you're busy but, unfortunately, that's just the way things are for me. You could be grateful you didn't have to live my life & that you don't have my disabilities. I'm doing the best that I can here.* ***Pākehā straight woman***
>
> *I suffer from PTSD from the abuse I received. I may seem frantic, lost, cannot string my words together properly. I sometimes have a panic attack mid sentence. Every time I have spoken to a police officer this has happened and they all look at me like i am crazy, They need people trained to respond to the victims.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

Many participants also wanted the police to have specialist training which explored the ways in which violence impacts disabled people differently, including often making it more difficult for them to escape abusive situations.

> *Understand that disability stops people leaving abusive situations. That includes both mental and physical disabilities. And realise that having a disability affects people in far more complex and extensive ways than most realise.* ***Pākehā bisexual non-binary person***

> *More training on mental health and understanding that mental health challenges are often a result of trauma. because someone may be presenting with a mental health condition, does not mean they are at fault and/or lying.* ***Another ethnicity, straight woman***

Other areas that were recommended for trainings included the following:

- Gender-based violence[109]
- PTSD (and how it may present itself when first meeting the victim-survivor e.g., challenges in communicating and describing and reporting events of abuse)
- Family violence
- Trauma-informed approaches on responding to victims of abuse who are disabled
- Building rapport and building trust with more at-risk communities and individuals.

Specialist support

While participants recognise police are not health professionals, they believe police should have a basic understanding of the different illnesses, disabilities, and specialised supports that disabled victim-survivors in New Zealand may require.

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109 Gender-based violence refers to harmful acts directed at an individual or a group of individuals based on their gender. It is rooted in gender inequality and the abuse of power and harmful norms, but expands understanding from the structural, gender-based power differences which make women and girls more likely to experience multiple forms of violence, to including violence targeted at Takatāpui and Rainbow communities, which often includes violence related to norms of masculinity/femininity and/or gender norms. See for example: https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/faqs/types-of-violence

> *They should leave the person with a 'police companion' who is trained in supporting victims without needing to be in their face. While the interviewing officers get themselves up to speed via doctors or psychologist about the victims limitations, how this would impact interviewing and how it was likely used against the victims by the offender. They can't understand every illness but they should have a doctor and psychologist that they can talk to to gain insight into the victims difficulties on a case by case basis.* ***Wahine Māori (straight)***
>
> *Police should not interview anyone without understanding any medical issues.* ***Another ethnicity, straight woman***
>
> *That speech impediment and loss balance etc are quite often caused by head hits or ptsd and clear communication is very difficult so it can b helpful for police to have breathing techniques and a educated response to diff mental / health needs.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

In addition to guidance from medical professionals, disabled participants also called for access to paramedic or medical support if needed, and support/community workers with specific skills to ensure their needs are understood and communicated to police.

> *If they [police] don't understand a particular disability they should get another person to assist.* ***Pākehā straight woman***
>
> *Know where to get help support for these people. Basic health assessment skills.* ***Pākehā straight woman***
>
> *Never question why someone needs a support person. It's none of your business and it's my right to have one.* ***Pākehā bisexual non-binary person***
>
> *If they can't help, have someone with them that can, like a mental health professional for example.* ***Māori bisexual woman***
>
> *I think there needs to be a support or community worker who specializes in being able to bridge the gap for a person who struggles with communicating/difficulties due to mental illness or health problems.* ***Pākehā bisexual woman***

Human rights-based approaches

Disabled participants identified specific risks that are further exacerbated by family and sexual violence, and called for a rights-based approach that is respectful, considerate and recognises the particular needs of disabled people. One woman described it as an 'empathy vs. ignorance' issue. One simple example is that being told to come down to the police station and make a statement is near impossible for some disabled victim-survivors. It is not practical, nor helpful, in ensuring a thorough investigation can proceed.

Several participants described challenges in the early stages of reporting abuse to the police, including having PTSD, or being in a state of distress and panic that inhibited their ability to clearly articulate and convey their experiences of abuse. Police should always check that information, details, and available support are understood by victim-survivors. Further, police should approach the behaviour of victim-survivors with understanding, patience, and a lack of judgement. Police need to understand the acute and ongoing mental distress caused by experiences of violence and recognise these for what they are – not pathologise them as symptoms of mental illness – which immediately discredits the victim survivor and their experience (this is due to stigmatisation which makes victim-survivors who are in fact mentally unwell particularly at risk of being disbelieved).

> *We are not crazy, we are just very broken.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

> *Do not be judgemental and hold assumptions about a person's mental health. Everyone manages mental health differently, we are not all the same.* ***Māori non-binary person***

For many participants, abuse and violence has been disabling, including leading to mental health conditions such as PTSD, anxiety and depression. Unfortunately for many disabled people, their abuser is the only support they can access.

> *The offenders are sometimes the only support the victim has, making it hard and/or complicated to cut off communication with them.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

> *Understand that if you have a disability or are elderly, abuse makes a woman so much more vulnerable, but we can't just leave, we may not have an alternative but to continue to live? with our abuser.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

Participants said diagnoses were used by abusers, and sometimes police, to discredit or harass victim-survivors. Several participants talked about police needing to challenge assumptions surrounding mental health to demonstrate respect.

> *Mental health shouldn't discredit victims. My abuser used my bpd [bi-polar disorder] diagnosis [public status] to discredit me, and it worked.* ***Pākehā queer non-binary person***

In some cases, interviews held by police with victim-survivors have triggered panic attacks and anxiety later in life when participants did not feel heard or understood.

Time accommodations and communication

Comfort and safety should be of upmost importance when interviewing victim-survivors. Many disabled participants wanted more kindness, respect, consideration and understanding for their needs from the police.

> *Create systems that allow for neurodivergent people to give interviews and statements in their own way, without feeling like they are rushed or having words put into their mouths.* ***Another ethnicity, queer trans man***

> *Check in that the person is understanding everything, ask if the environment is comfortable enough, whether they need a break or more support etc.* ***Pasifika woman***

Disabled victim-survivors described communicating their needs, hurt, and experience of abuse to police as challenging. Many participants highlighted the need for police processes to allow for time accommodations with disabled victim-survivors, to facilitate more effective communication, and ultimately, evidence gathering. Feelings of being rushed often added to the anxiety and fear already present because of the abuse.

> *Understanding and time. Time I understand they may not exactly have. I've had experience with police later on as I have PTSD and I found it difficult to talk or express myself clearly.* ***Māori bisexual woman***

> *Patience, take a moment, pause if needed, don't rush.* ***Wahine Māori (straight)***

> *Patience, recognising that it takes time to get all the words out, recognising what a "meltdown", or "overload" looks like. Don't touch people who are struggling, just don't. Respect our space. Don't bully us. Give us time. Don't act like we're wasting your time.* ***Pākehā bisexual woman***

For disabled participants, the importance of offering accessible spaces, private meeting rooms and communication choices may also be critical. Many spoke eloquently of their communication needs.

> *Just how difficult practical tasks can be - it's all very well telling me to go to the police station and speak to someone but physically that's a major thing for me and I just can't practically do it. Also how an apparently small incident can have an overwhelming effect on the victim because of the trauma from the abuse which adds up over the years.* ***Another ethnicity, straight woman***

> *…be patient, know that when I'm struggling to communicate I can't regulate my tone. Also offer a meeting room so I don't have to stand at the front desk and try to talk through the plastic thing [the screen in front of the counter].* ***Another ethnicity, bisexual trans man***

> *…just to be patient and accommodating when they can be, especially when I'm overwhelmed I go mute or when I am able to speak I usually really struggle to communicate what I mean, when I'm struggling to communicate I need the listener to be very patient with me using my phone to communicate and to not try to guess what I'm trying to say because it can really throw me off and make me feel worse for not being able to communicate clearly and then I just get more overwhelmed and struggle more.* ***Pākehā pansexual non-binary person***

Disabled participants also said more consistent communication from the police would improve their safety. This included wanting better information about police processes and case status. Referral to other agencies for holistic support should be genuine help and not a band-aid approach to get rid of the victim-survivor.

Chapter 9: Structural change

In chapter 8, we shared victim-survivors' recommendations to improve police knowledge and cultural responsiveness to diverse communities. Many participants, when asked how police could improve their response to family violence and sexual violence, also shared serious structural concerns about the New Zealand Police, particularly related to historical and ongoing sexism and misogyny, racism, ableism, and homophobia, biphobia and transphobia. The following section details key themes that emerged throughout the survey responses in calls for police to review their current policies and practice, create organisational cultural change, and develop a genuine commitment to creating a response that holds victim-survivors at the centre.

The police response urgently needs improving

Survey participants were clear that to improve the police response to family violence and sexual violence, police must accept that their current response is not working well. Victim-survivors rely on police for protection and they urgently need police to reflect on their beliefs and practices and make the decision to improve the current response.

Many participants in the Backbone sample stated that the current police response is neither safe nor effective in family and sexual violence cases. Too many victim-survivors are less safe after poor police responses, including police failing to act.

> *The current response is a shambles. It supports abusers to abuse, minimizes and dismisses abuse, fails to identify risk, offers no safety or accountability and retraumatises those who seek help.* ***Pākehā straight woman***
>
> *I remain stalked but afraid to call the police. My ex tells everyone if there was substance to what I say he'd have been arrested.* ***Straight woman of unknown ethnicity***
>
> *We trusted them, we needed help, but we found out that they would not help, and it was demeaning, embarrassing and demoralising.* ***Pākehā straight woman***
>
> *Why do we have to keep living with the abuse while the abuser is more enabled by a system that literally makes him above the law? We moved out of the family home to get away from it, but the police and family courts didn't free us from it.* ***Another ethnicity, straight woman***

The police response is not working well but it could make all the difference

Despite the issues, there was a sense of hope from some women in the Backbone sample, who saw potential for improved police response by centring victim-survivor needs and experiences. Several women shared positive feedback about their experience with police and reiterated that when police got it right they were safer.

> *Police are one of the few agencies with statutory authority to keep women and children safe and make abusers accountable. They need to use that authority more effectively. I know by personal experience when the police take action they can transform people's lives. It took many years, many police callouts and way too much perseverance and self confidence from me and perhaps a healthy serving of luck to get there though. My child and I should have been made safe from the first call out.* ***Another ethnicity, straight woman***

> *I was stoked by our most recent experience. Only thing that has gotten my kids safe.* ***Pākehā straight woman***
>
> *Thank you NZ police for helping me and my children. The experience I had was the best i could hope for in the situation.* ***Pākehā straight woman***
>
> *Please take in the fact that the Police do the best they can with the resources they are given. 90% of the job is thankless.* ***Wahine Māori (straight)***
>
> *Only one out of the four times that I contacted the police was my abuser arrested and had to face court (The last time). Those 2 officers were amazing! They treated me with respect and dignity.. But sadly, it took a major event like that for police to take my allegations of abuse seriously. The next step would have been that he killed me.* ***Wahine Māori (straight)***

Alongside hope and thanks, some women expressed ambivalence. They hope the survey recommendations will result in better policing but simultaneously they feel despondent due to the response they had received.

> *I hope that the Police and general system take this work of survey seriously.* ***Pākehā straight woman***
>
> *It would be amazing if this makes some changes but I'm not hopeful as my last experience with the police showed me that they take no accountability for their actions/behaviour and have no interest in improving their response to family violence.* ***Pākehā straight woman***
>
> *They have potential to be the only catalyst for a change of behaviour.* ***Pākehā straight woman***
>
> *We need some hope.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

Make family violence and sexual violence a specialist response

Some participants discussed the need for specialist police working in family violence and sexual violence, who are qualified and trained to work in these areas and recognise the intersections, and who have the personal commitment and determination to help keep victim-survivors safe.

> *It's complicated mahi - there are no absolutes but at least have training. Didn't meet anyone who I could say was trained except one officer.* ***Wahine Māori (straight)***

Participants also wanted to see police work with other organisations to enhance protection for victim-survivors and children, including working more closely with the courts to respond to breaches of Protection Orders and with Lawyer for Child to promote safe care arrangements for children.

Participants acknowledged that the wider justice system, particularly the courts, sometimes undermines the 'good work' police do.

> *The police don't take domestic violence very seriously because they know their work will be undone in the courts.* ***Pasifika straight woman***
>
> *I found the police (and I) were frustrated by the court system and the belief that every assault was the first one and a " one- off" and would never recur.* ***Pākehā straight woman***
>
> *Police are heaps better than what they used to be. Now people are reporting things but the justice system is letting them and us down so they have a hard job.* ***Pākehā straight woman***

Victim-survivors need to be at the centre

A dominant theme that emerged from participants' responses to the question about how police can improve their response to family violence and sexual violence was the critical need for police to centre the needs, safety and wellbeing of victim-survivors and children when responding to family violence and sexual violence. Participants reiterated comments from previous sections in the survey explaining that police must treat victim-survivors well. That means with respect, empathy, compassion, concern for their safety and comfort, belief and a lack of blame for experiencing violence and abuse. Victim-centred practice requires police to: uphold victim-survivors' privacy and not share their information with others without their permission; not use their mental health history against them; and not push victim-survivors to do things that do not feel safe for them, such as apply to the Family Court for a Protection Order.

Participants want police to keep victim-survivor safety at the centre of their response. It entails police understanding the different forms of family violence and sexual violence, and that they can happen to anyone, regardless of their background.

The police is a last resort – so please don't make things worse

Many participants in the HTRK sample said police are a last resort for victim-survivors in Takatāpui and Rainbow communities. When police are contacted, most participants wanted thorough investigations to take place, and many felt retraumatised by responses that they described as causing as much harm as the original abuse.

> *I'm still more traumatized by police actions than I am from the abuse. The police have conducted themselves so badly that myself and every trans woman I know currently just let's abuse continue because we are too afraid of the police to call them at all anymore.* ***Pākehā lesbian trans woman***
>
> *In no circumstance, ever, should the perpetrator's words be used as facts against the victim. Never can the words "you consented" come out of a police officers' mouth. The damage hearing those words did to me is irreparable.* ***Another ethnicity, queer trans man***
>
> *While the officer who interviewed me the night my partner was arrested felt like he was entirely on my side, I found the experience completely disempowering. I was lied to about what was happening on the night, and told my statement wasn't evidentiary, but would just be used if there were problems in future. Throughout the process of my partner going to trial, I was kept completely in the dark, and found out more from information given to him than what was told to me. Also, I specifically asked [service] (who called me once) for counselling, and never received anything. I was left to cope with the results of that night entirely on my own.* ***Pākehā bisexual woman***

Police responses have a lasting impact

When victim-survivors are wrongly judged by police, future incidents may not be responded to or investigated, and people around the victim-survivor may not support them, which may increase danger.

> *They made their minds up based on conversations with my ex and built their case around that rhetoric rather than follow the evidence to the detriment of mine and my childrens mental health.* ***Pākehā straight woman***
>
> *Yeah prosecuting sexual violence seems very unfair to the victim. The offenders seem to be able to manipulate well here and once you have laid a complaint that is unsuccessful it alters everyone's perceptions of you even women's refuge which greatly affects your life going forward.* ***Pākehā straight woman***
>
> *Police need to understand many victims have had character assassinations done to them in and by the system and family court this is a serious issue that is resulting in children being left to be abused.* ***Asian straight woman***

It's just so broken it can't be fixed

Some participants in the HTRK sample believe that historical and ongoing discrimination from the police system means it is too broken to respond safely. They did not want police involved in responding to family and sexual violence in Takatāpui and Rainbow communities.

> *The cops have a long history of racism; whorephobia; misogyny; homophobia; and especially domestic violence, sexual violence, and transmisogyny, much of which continues today. This is far, far too important of a matter to trust to them. Until it's taken out of their hands, trans women in particular will never be safe reporting sexual violence (or any other crime against us, for that matter).* ***Pākehā lesbian trans woman***
>
> *I think matters of family and sexual violence are too nuanced for police and that I don't think they should be the ones that lead a response to these events. They are not discrete events can than easily be dealt with by punishing people. They require a lot more care and support and I do not believe the police can, do, or will, ever provide that.* ***Māori queer Takatāpui person***
>
> *Because of the diverse and sensitive nature of sexual harm, I think they need to seriously overhaul the way that the police interact with survivors of sexual harm and/or family violence. I do not think that police are necessarily equipped (or always appropriate) to address either sexual harm and/or family violence. Even less so with marginalised communities.* ***Pasifika bisexual woman***

Others did not want to see punitive responses to perpetrators as the only response.

> *Please please please do not put someone in prison or take the children away as their immediate response, however please focus on immediate education to the abuser to not repeat it as well as family members to not feel guilty for standing up for ourselves when we reported them.* ***Asian non-binary person***

Improving police culture

Many participants suggested improvements to police culture, including ways of working with other agencies that would result in safer responses to victim-survivors. These concerns were particularly voiced in relation to responses to Māori, people of colour, women, and Takatāpui and Rainbow people. Participants described these concerns both as systemic and as operating through the unconscious bias of individual officers.

> *Realise that Police themselves are seen as threatening and violent and so are not seen as a solution to domestic violence. Police need to change their own culture in order to help the culture of N.Z. society.* ***Pākehā straight woman***
>
> *Change the internal culture of the police so they are less misogynistic.* ***Wahine Māori (straight)***
>
> *Examine their own privilege and culture, position of power and how that plays out in their role.* ***Wahine Māori (straight)***

> *I have yet to meet a police officer with much compassion... I understand policing is a hard job. And that police are under trained, over worked and constantly deal with terrible situations. But this wears them down and they lose their compassion. I think it would be really great if police listened to victims of sexual violence and made us feel cared for and supported. A simple "I believe you" would be a good start.* ***Pākehā trans pansexual woman***
>
> *I think the police need to look at their own structures organizationally because their structure is based on violence and coercive control.* ***Another ethnicity, queer non-binary person***

Several women expressed their concerns about not being believed due to their own or the abuser's socioeconomic status (particularly being middle class and white). There was a general feeling from some participants that police did not believe a middle-class white man could be an abuser, which implies of course the racist idea that violence is only perpetrated by Māori, Pasifika and other people of colour.

> *I strongly suspect people get treated differently depending on their race or ethnicity, and level of English speaking.* ***Another ethnicity, straight woman***
>
> *The abuser is white, upper class, well educated, and charming.* ***Another ethnicity, straight woman***
>
> *The police also need to make no difference what social background the perpetrator is and treat a banker, surgeon, psychologist and judge the same way as a sheep-shearer.* ***Another ethnicity, straight woman***

Overall, many participants did not trust the police. The contributing factors to that lack of trust have been discussed throughout this report, including not being believed, being blamed for the abuse, police being reactive rather than preventative, previous bad personal experiences with police including police acting violently to enforce arrest, and previous and ongoing community reasons to distrust police for Māori, and for Takatāpui and Rainbow communities. This lack of trust also hinders the ability and confidence of victims to speak out.

> *We don't trust they will make good decisions.* ***Wahine Māori (straight)***
>
> *Police should gain the trust and confidence of victims, including children.* ***Wahine Māori (straight)***

Chapter 10: Police response to victim-survivors from ethnic communities

As explained in our 'approach' section, on-line survey participation is more challenging for ethnic including migrant victim-survivors who: may not speak English as their first language; fear speaking out about powerful state institutions such as police due to social and political conditions in their country of origin; and/or lack access or connections to online information. Therefore, we approached Shama Ethnic Women's Trust, a member of the project advisory group, and asked their social workers to provide a summary of issues that ethnic victim-survivors[110] experience regarding police response to family violence and sexual violence in Aotearoa, New Zealand. "Ethnic" means Asian, African, Continental European, Latin American and Middle Eastern; where statements are most relevant to migrants (rather than, for example, third-generation New Zealanders of non-Māori, non-Pacific and non-Pākehā descent) this is noted.

The following section sets out key issues based on Shama social workers' understandings of clients' feedback as to why they are not contacting the police and how the police response to ethnic communities can be improved. Shama provide counselling, programmes and support services to women and families from a diverse range of ethnicities including Indian, Fiji Indian, Columbian, Afghani, Somali, Chinese, South African, Pakistan, African, Filipino and many others.[111]

Barriers to contacting police

Scared of police

Some ethnic people may have had poor interactions with the New Zealand Police and encountered police racism or cultural prejudgements, which may reinforce negative views about police. In addition, new migrants may have a fear of authority based on their experiences in other countries, and therefore may be reluctant to call the police in New Zealand. In many other countries, public expectations about how police will treat people are different to expectations of police conduct in Aotearoa New Zealand. In some other countries, police can exert their authority overtly towards the public and are not expected to show patience to listen to victim-survivors or help direct victim-survivors to options and services. This means some people think they may be treated by the New Zealand Police in the same dismissive or frightening way they are familiar with elsewhere.

Even the idea of 'the police' can be frightening for some victim-survivors. Former refugees may carry distress and trauma related to the ways police behaved in their country of origin. For example, in some countries there is corruption in the police and/or police may have close contact with guerrilla groups. They may hold fear that police in New Zealand will behave in similar ways. Children may get scared if police become involved.

110 The Ministry for Ethnic Communities defines ethnic communities as Asian, African, Continental European, Latin American and Middle Eastern.

111 See Shama's 2022 annual report for a breakdown of ethnic diversity of their client base (pg 8).

Fearful of negative outcomes

For many migrants, involving police risks their immigration status, and most particularly if they are reliant on the abuser for their residency status. This means calling police might impact on the victim-survivor's ability to stay in New Zealand, or result in deportation. Some mothers fear that they will be judged harshly about their parenting or their children will be separated from them if police are involved. This fear can be particularly frightening if her children have been born in Aotearoa New Zealand but she does not have permanent residency status. Calling police might also impact negatively on relationships with other family members, and victim-survivors might worry their neighbours and friends might think badly about them if police are involved. Victim-survivors are concerned that calling police will bring shame on them and their family, and worry that their community may isolate them as a result.

The language barrier

Within communities, victim-survivors have a very diverse ability to speak and understand English. Many migrant clients who come to Shama struggle with English. There are also words in English that have many meanings and are difficult to translate. People understand that they will be asked a lot of questions if they contact the police. If they struggle with English and find it difficult to respond to verbal questioning or written questions, this becomes a significant barrier. Sometimes police will not have an interpreter available.

Practical barriers

Many former refugees and others have very low incomes. It can be difficult for victim-survivors to get to police stations due to having to rely on buses (cost and timetables) and get childcare. There can be many little things that make it difficult to contact police.

Fear of escalation

Some victim-survivors may be scared that if they call police for help the issue will get escalated and they will have no control over the information that is shared following the callout. Furthermore, victim-survivors may be fearful that calling police will result in prosecution and then conviction of the abuser which could negatively impact other parts of their lives. It might be that more people in their community find out about the violence and abuse, either the victim-survivor or the abuser may lose their job as a result of a conviction, or there may be other negative outcomes as discussed below.

Lack of confidence in an effective police response

Like other victim-survivors, victim-survivors from ethnic populations may have a lack of confidence that calling police will improve anything for them and/or their children, and fear it may make things worse. If victim-survivors have experienced a delayed or poor response from the police in the past they can be hesitant to call again as the time between calling police, and police attending and responding, may have put the victim-survivor in more danger. They may no longer trust the police.

Improving the police response to ethnic communities

The following recommendations to improve the police response to ethnic communities have been shared by social workers from Shama, based on their experience working with victim-survivors from ethnic and migrant communities.

Build a specialist response to ethnic and migrant victim-survivors

- Be available to work with community organisations when requested to meet with ethnic and migrant communities to help community members become more comfortable with the idea of talking with police.
- Have women police officers available
- Have flyers and information available in multiple languages and in easy-to-read formats – trauma can make comprehension more challenging
- Understand the significance and timing of cultural celebrations/events and the impact of those on victim-survivors and their families
- Have ethnic police officers available who can build rapport and trust within the community
- Consider a range of responses to ensure victim-survivors have residency options available
- Enable victim-survivors to have an independent advocate with them when they meet with police
- Refer victim-survivors to local support services and lawyers who understand family and sexual violence and immigration law and processes
- Actively refer victim-survivors to ethnic support services where possible – they are more important because support networks are often fewer
- Ensure victim-survivors have longer times set aside with interpreters to explain what happens when cases go to court
- Have more interpreters available so that victim-survivors do not have to rely on their own family members i.e. their children, as interpreters
- Access training to understand how to work with interpreters (important considerations and what to look for)
- Understand the impact of violence and abuse on victim-survivors including that an abuser may make false allegations that the victim-survivor has mental health issues, or that they may have proactively applied for Protection Order to be seen as the 'victim'
- Consider what might be happening for wider family outside New Zealand – e.g. threats to the family, repercussions for reporting, pressure from other family or community members
- Gain victim-survivor's consent before sharing information with Immigration NZ or anyone else.

Respond effectively to abusers

- Ensure that there is a strong response system in place otherwise it is not safe to promote the idea that victim-survivors should speak out about the violence and abuse
- Enforce effective consequences for abusers so that the risk of reporting to police is outweighed by the benefits
- Make more Police Safety Orders, especially in situations where ethnic victim-survivors do not want to make statements – this is likely because they are too scared to but they still need protection
- Ensure the abuser understands what the Protection Order or Police Safety Order mean and what the consequences of breaching the order are; do not assume they can understand English.

Train police

- Encourage and train police in active listening techniques – people sometimes say they understand, when they do not
- Improve police cultural awareness and cultural responsiveness
- Train police in how to work with interpreters
- Train police officers in cultural humility – address unconscious bias and racism and ensure that officers understand the impact of colonisation on tangata whenua and people from ethnic communities (land, language and culture loss, discrimination and racism)
- Information about consent and safety needs to be written by and for each ethnic community, asking what consent and safety mean for this community. For victim-survivors safety might be:
    - A house
    - Having their children with them
    - Having support from their wider families
    - Children being able to attend school
    - Being respected by others in their community
    - Being able to live in Aotearoa New Zealand
    - No racism

Conclusion

Throughout this report, detailing the responses from 599 victim-survivors to a comprehensive on-line survey, we have highlighted the importance of a police response that is safe and does not cause further harm. We named the report 'Make it About us' because the overwhelming message from victim-survivors was that the police response must be urgently improved and designed with the needs and experiences of victim-survivors at the centre.

Survey participants provided a wealth of experience in their responses which highlight the critical role police play in ensuring victim-survivor safety. Victim-survivor hopes regarding how police would respond to the abuser are strongly geared towards action that increases their own safety. Victim-survivors called police because they wanted the violence and abuse to stop; they were scared, they needed protection for themselves and/or their children and they wanted police to use their statutory powers to help make them safe. Many also wanted the person who used violence and abuse to be held to account in some way. However, we found that the hopes of victim-survivors have little to no correlation with (or likely impact on) police actions taken. Victim-survivors reported low rates of actions in terms of arrest of the abuser, Police Safety Orders being made, provision of information or referrals to services to victim-survivors and follow up of cases.

Responses brought into view the very real and long-term consequences for adult victim-survivors and children when the police response is poor. The outcome of police involvement was poor for many participants with one in four women in the Backbone sample, 29% of sexuality diverse women and 51% of trans and non-binary people who said police involvement made them less safe. Survey participants were far more likely to say police involvement made no difference to their children's safety or their children were made less safe as a result. Most participants said police involvement had not disrupted the abusive behaviour, or had made the abuser more abusive. Many participants said that because police took no action towards the abuser, nothing changed. Abusers were emboldened by police involvement, putting the victim-survivor in greater danger and in some cases reducing support from people around them.

Overwhelmingly participants described unhelpful responses from police and many regretted calling police. Overall nearly half of participants said police minimised the violence and abuse and 30% said police took the side of the abuser. Only close to half of participants said the police believed them and many participants had experienced mistreatment or bias from police, particularly trans and non-binary participants. Failures of an effective police response resulted in a worse outcome for victim-survivors who then felt unsafe, traumatised and hopeless and some described being treated as the wrongdoer, not being able to see their children or having to leave their homes.

However, some participants shared examples of police improving victim-survivor safety through helpful actions such as acting promptly, removing and arresting the abuser, issuing Police Safety Orders, enforcing no contact bail conditions or keeping the abuser in custody and returning children to their mother's care. Furthermore, the way some police responded was perceived as helpful by some participants when police officers showed compassion, understanding about family and sexual violence and were supportive or provided practical support.

The detailed responses from participants help to show where the police response is failing to uphold victim-survivor safety and offender accountability. They also provide a detailed roadmap for improving those failures by showing the actions police can take in response to family violence and sexual violence. We have discussed the unique power police have in their ability to use statutory actions to respond. Survey participants were most likely to favour arrest as the appropriate police response over the use of Police Safety Orders or warnings, demonstrating, we believe that victim-survivors contact the police because they are seeking protection and accountability for the person causing harm, when other strategies are no longer sufficient for their safety. Participants want the police to uphold best practice principles which promote a serious, safe and specialist response to family violence and sexual violence. This includes believing victim-survivors, using trauma-informed approaches, taking the needs of children seriously,

responding to family violence and sexual violence as crimes not civil matters and improving all police record keeping and processes to ensure victim-survivors are kept up to date with cases and their safety needs are prioritised. Police can do more to improve their practical response by having more women police officers, independent advocates, alternative places to report violence and abuse, more specialist officers, better information, and more tools and services available. It is also clear that significant upskilling is required, particularly when working with trans and non-binary victim-survivors, who consistently rated the police more poorly in the vast majority of questions in this survey. The overwhelming majority of participants (80 – 90%) say consent for information sharing must be sought by police.

Participants identified training needs to ensure police know how to respond safely to victim-survivors, understand abusers and their behaviour, improve their own practice and understand the importance of getting the response right. This included specific suggestions and identified training needs to help the police improve their cultural awareness and responsiveness, their response to children, Takatāpui, trans and non-binary people, people who are not straight, and disabled people. Family violence and sexual violence are both specialist areas, illustrated in victim-survivor comments about more experienced police officers providing better responses to them.

Many participants shared serious structural concerns about NZ Police, particularly related to historical and ongoing sexism and misogyny, racism, ableism, and homophobia, biphobia and transphobia. Victim-survivors called for police to review their current policies and practice, create organisational cultural change and develop a genuine commitment to creating a response that holds victim-survivors at the centre.

Expertise lies in lived experience and victim-survivors have made it clear that the current police response is failing them. We have done our best to provide a road map for positive change based on the recommendations from hundreds of victim-survivors who took part in our survey. There is no better time to decide to improve and place victim-survivors at the centre of the police response. We look forward to seeing the recommendations brought to life. Our belief is that victim-survivors and children will be made safer as a result and people who use violence and abuse will be held to account and supported to stop using violence and abuse. Everyone in Aotearoa, New Zealand has a right to be safe and live without fear or violence.

Appendix 1: Demographics of Backbone sample participants

The following section sets out the demographic details of the participants in the Backbone sample (i.e. those survey participants who identified as women, and of straight/heterosexual or undisclosed sexuality). We found very little difference in demographic profiles for participants who had or did not have police involvement. However, women in the Backbone sample were far more likely to have children if they had police involvement than those who did not have police involvement. The difference between these two cohorts was particularly evident regarding women who had dependent children with 57% of women with police involvement and 35% of women who had not had police involvement having dependent children. Only 16% of participants who had police involvement said they had never had children in comparison with 32% of participants who have not had police involvement.

Participants were not required to answer demographic questions so we have included the number of responses for each demographic factor.

Gender

All 384 participants in the Backbone sample identified as a 'woman'; this was a defining characteristic for the sample.

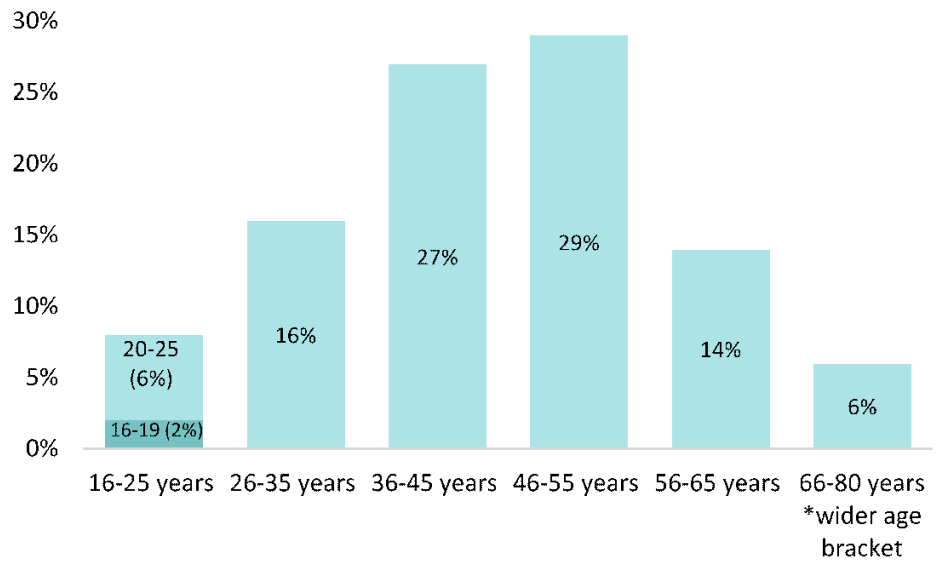
Sexuality

By definition, the Backbone sample is made up of women participants who either described their sexuality from a list of drop-down options as being 'straight (heterosexual)' (97%) or preferred not to answer the question (3%). It also included one participant who volunteered another term to describe their sexuality in a way that was not applicable to be included in the Hohou Te Rongo Kahukura sample for analysis.

Age

Participants ranged in age from between 16-19 years to 66-80 years (these were age-bracket options), with those aged 36-65 years making up the bulk of participants in the Backbone sample. There were smaller numbers of participants in younger age groups (16-25 years) and older age groups (66-80 years) as shown in Figure 17 below.

Figure 17: Age of Participants in Backbone sample (n=384)



Region

Of the 384 participants, the majority (98%) currently live in Aotearoa New Zealand, and six participants lived here when the violence and/or abuse happened but currently live elsewhere. Participants were asked which region they currently live in.[112] Participants live throughout Aotearoa New Zealand as shown in Table 32 below. Higher numbers of participants live in main cities including Auckland (27% for Auckland City, Waitematā and Counties Manukau combined) and Wellington (12%) but also a reasonable number of participants in this sample are from Bay of Plenty and Waikato regions.

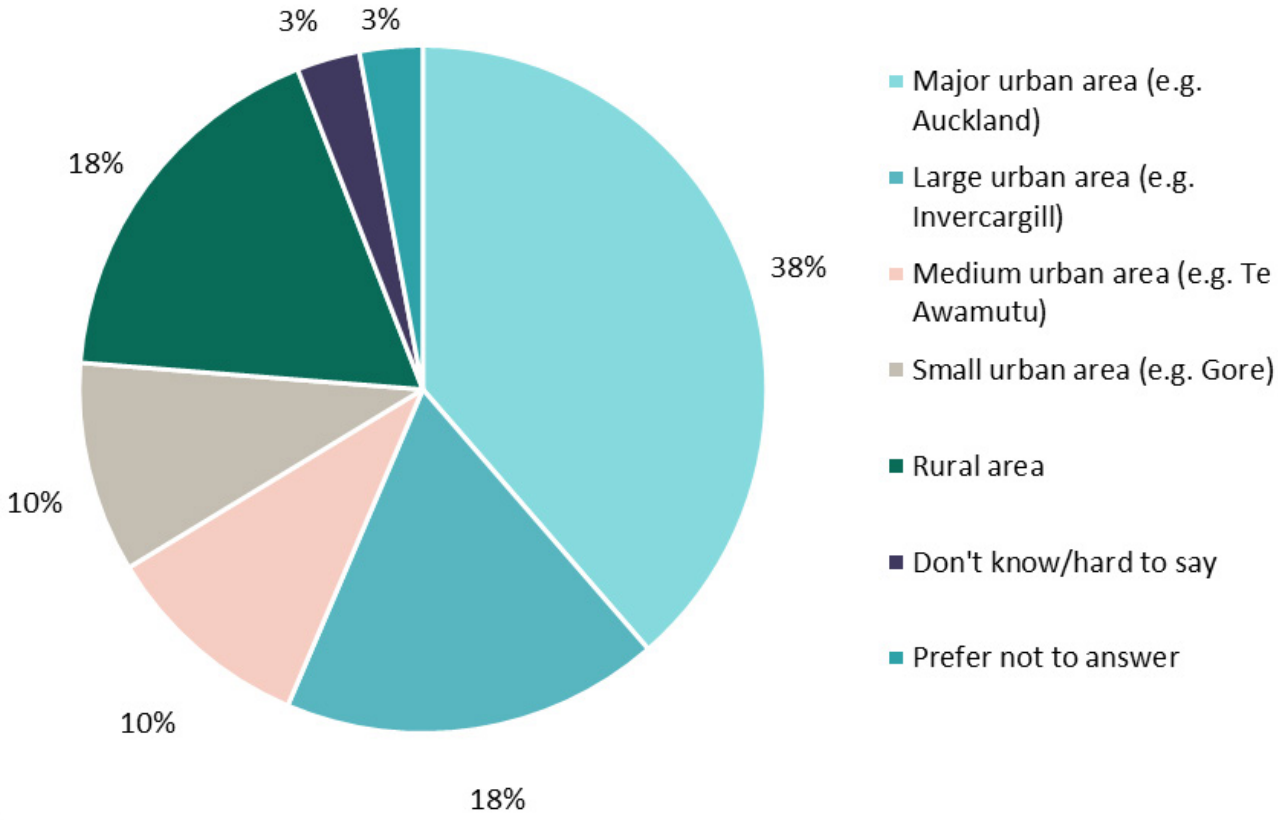
Table 32: Region (NZ Police district) where participants in the Backbone sample currently live (N–384)

Region	Percent
I am in hiding and would rather not say	1%
Northland	3%
Auckland City	12%
Waitemata	10%
Counties Manukau	5%
Waikato	9%
Bay of Plenty	11%
Central	9%
Eastern	3%
Wellington	12%
Tasman	7%
Canterbury	12%
Southern	6%
I no longer live in NZ	2%
Prefer not to answer	0% (3 participants, rounded)

112 Participants were asked to select which Police District they lived in (detail of each District was provided in the survey). We received responses from each of the 12 Districts, however some districts attracted low response rates (Northland and Eastern districts).

Participants were also asked to describe the population size of the area they lived in. A large proportion of participants live in major urban areas (38%) and 18% live in a large urban area, e.g. Invercargill. Notably, 18% of responses are from women who live in a rural area which is positive as rural women can be disadvantaged by poor internet services, and be isolated from information sources making online survey participation more challenging. Furthermore, rural women often have less support and services available in their area making them more isolated and vulnerable. It is vital to learn more about their experiences of police involvement.

Figure 18: Population size of area in which survey participants live (n=384)



Ethnic and cultural belongings

Survey participants were asked to select which ethnic or cultural group/s they identify with from a drop-down menu. Participants could choose more than one option and were provided with an open text option as well. While those answering our survey belonged to diverse ethnic groups, our sample has lower percentages of Pasifika and Asian participants, and a higher percentage of Māori participants than New Zealand census data.[113]

The majority of the Backbone sample (82%) identified at least one of their ethnicities as Pākehā/NZ European, while 18% identified as Māori. Of those who selected the option "Pākehā-New Zealand European", 22% also selected another ethnicity so the figure in brackets in Table 33 is included to show participants who selected only Pākehā/ New Zealand European. There were a small number of participants who identify as Pasifika (5%) or Asian (2%).

113 See StatsNZ (2019) "New Zealand as a village of 100 people: Our population" (infographic)

There were 22 participants who used the 'other' open-text option and these participants described themselves as people from specific countries or ethnic backgrounds. Of these participants, 27% also selected 'Pākehā/NZ European' from the drop-down options.

Our ethnicity data is summarised to avoid identifying individual participants.

Table 33: Ethnic or cultural identity for survey participants (n=383)

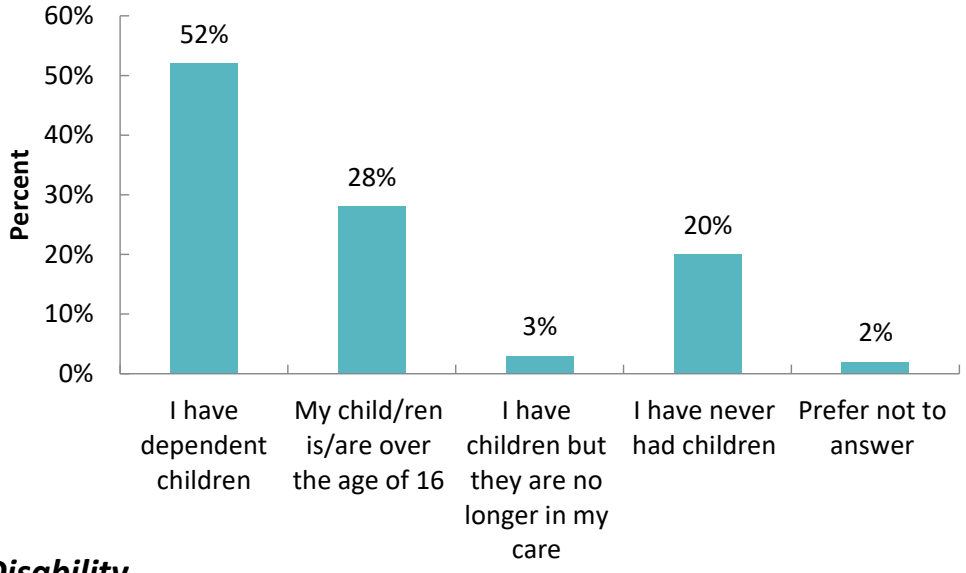
Ethnicity	Percent (>100% due to multi selections)
Māori	18%
Pākehā - New Zealand European (Only Pākehā - New Zealand European)	82% (63%)
Pasifika (participants identified as Samoan, Cook Island Māori, Tongan, Tokelauan and/or Niuean)	5%
Asian (Chinese, Indian, Other Asian)	2%
Another ethnicity (MELAA - Middle Eastern, Latin American, African - Other European, Other)	14%
Prefer not to answer	1%

Children

Survey participants could choose more than one option to describe their responsibility towards children. In the Backbone sample, 79% of women had children, but they were not always dependent children currently in their care. Over half (52%) said they currently had dependent children, 28% had children over the age of 16 years, 3% had children who are no longer in their care and 20% have never had children.[114]

114 Total percentage for this question is higher than 100% due to rounding and three participants selecting both that their children were over 16 and that they had children who were no longer in their care.

Figure 19: Percentage of survey participants who have or don't have children (n=383; total > 100% as participants could choose more than one option)



Disability

Survey participants were asked if a health problem or a condition they have (lasting six months or more) causes them difficulty with or stops them from a range of activities. Participants could select as many options as were applicable. Over half of the participants in the Backbone sample (58%) indicated that they have no difficulty with any of the activities listed. However, 39% of the survey participants indicated they experience at least one of the health problems or conditions listed –a high proportion compared to overall NZ population disability rates of around 24%.[115] Of the Backbone survey participants living with a health problem or condition, 52% experience more than one health condition or problem. Table 34 below shows that participants reported a range of health conditions or types of disability which could impact on their ability and confidence to contact the police, and to communicate their specific safety needs.

Table 34: Survey participants who live with a disability or health condition (n=371, >100% due to multi selection)

Participants with disability or health condition	Percent
No difficulty with any of these	58%
Learning, concentrating or remembering	21%
Communicating, mixing with others or socialising	18%
Walking, lifting or bending	15%
Other	8%
Using your hands to hold, grasp or use objects	8%

115 New Zealand Disability Survey 2013. There were 13 participants in the Backbone sample who did not answer the question about disability. The percentages presented here have not been adjusted to include these women and only relate to those 371 women who did answer the question.

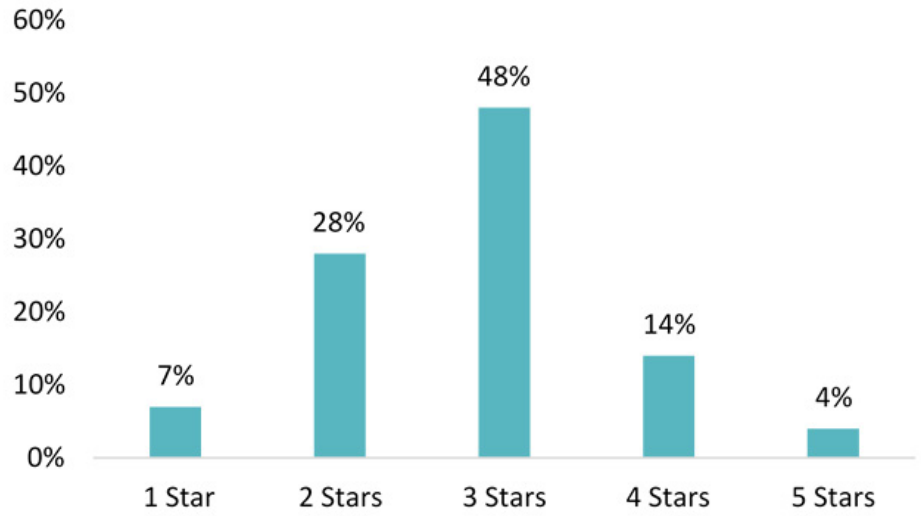
Seeing, even when wearing glasses or contact lenses	5%
Hearing, even when using a hearing aid	2%
Prefer not to answer	3%

Socio-Economic Group

Survey participants were asked to describe their socio-economic status. We asked participants to imagine a scale ranging from 1 to 5 stars which represents all people living in Aotearoa New Zealand. At the bottom (1 star) are those who are seriously struggling and don't have enough to make ends meet. At the top (5 stars) are the wealthiest – they have more than enough. Participants were asked to select the number of stars that best describe their situation from 1 to 5.

Figure 20 shows that participants are represented from each socio-economic group. However, the largest proportion of responses (48%) were for star level 3 (mid-range). More participants reported being in the lower socio-economic groups (1-2 stars, 35%) than the higher groups (4-5 stars, 18%). There were no differences in the levels of socio-economic status as reported by wāhine Māori compared with those of tauiwi women.

Figure 20: Survey participants' self-selected socio-economic group (n=374; total > 100% due to rounding)



Socio-economic status of abuser

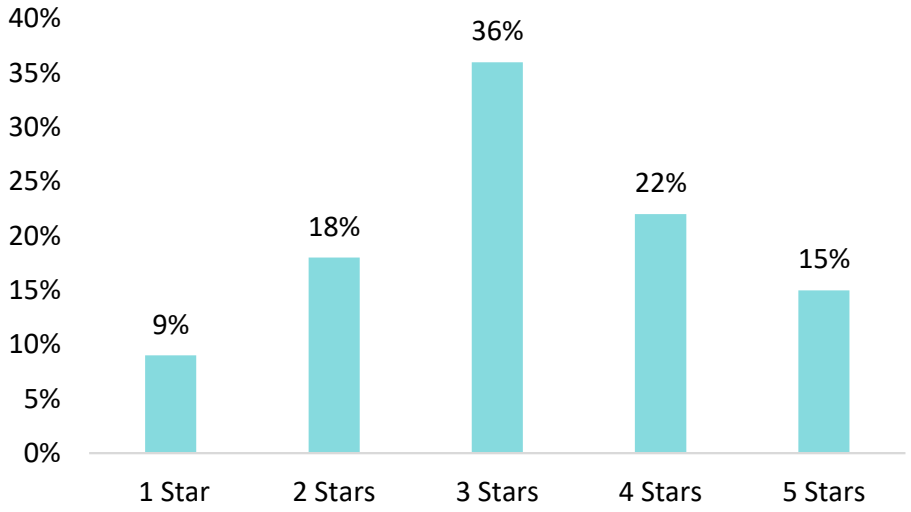
Unlike the previous question, only survey participants who had police involvement were asked to describe the socio-economic status of the person who abused/hurt them.[116] In the same way as we asked about their own socio-economic status, we asked participants to select the number of stars that best describe the abuser's socio-economic situation from 1 to 5.

Figure 21 shows that victim-survivors reported abusers from every socio-economic group. However, the largest proportion of responses (36%) were for star level 3 (mid-range) and a greater proportion of abusers are reported as being in the higher socio-economic groups (37%) than the lower socio-economic groups (27%).[117]

116 Participants were asked to focus on just one person who has used violence or abuse against them or their children – the one most relevant to them.

117 Lower socio-economic group refers to stars 1 and 2, higher socio-economic group refers to stars 4 and 5.

Figure 21: Socio-economic group of the person who abused/hurt victim-survivors, as reported by victim-survivors (n=265; 1 star = lowest socio-economic group; 5 stars = highest)



In comparing the overall socio-economic status of survey participants who had police involvement with overall socio-economic status they perceived of their abusers we found that victim-survivors are far more likely to report their abusers as being in the higher socio-economic groups (37%) than themselves (18%). Conversely victim-survivors were more likely to report themselves (35%) than their abusers (27%) as being from the lower socio-economic groups.

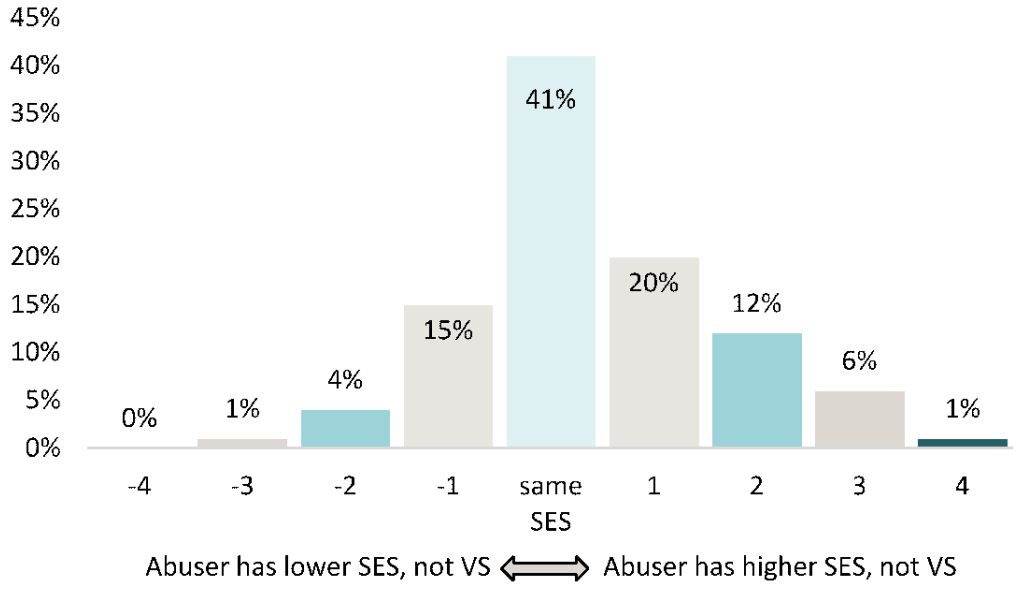
Further analysis was undertaken to establish trends among individual survey participants who had police involvement as to the variation between their own socio-economic status and that of the person who abused/hurt them or their children. There were 263 survey participants who ranked their own and the abuser's socio-economic status. The proportion of participants who reported that the abuser was in a higher socio-economic group than themselves (39%) was about the same size as the proportion who reported they were of the same socio-economic group as the abuser (41%). Participants were almost twice as likely to report that the abuser was in a higher socio-economic group than themselves (39%), than to report that their abuser was in a lower socio-economic group than themselves (20%).

Figure 22 below shows the difference between each participant's socio-economic status against that of their abuser by the number of points between the star ratings the participants chose for each. The analysis highlights that abusers are more likely to be rated as being of a higher socio-economic status than to be rated as being of a lower socio-economic status than their victims, as rated by victim-survivors.[118]

118 For example, a 2-point difference could apply if the participant rated her socio-economic status at level 2 and the abuser's at level 4, or alternatively if she selected 3 and the abuser was rated at 5. There were no occasions of a participant (victim-survivor) recording a 4-point difference i.e. she was socio-economic level 5 (the most well off) and the abuser was level 1 (the least well off/struggling). However, there were three occasions of the abuser being reported as having a 4-point difference to the victim-survivor i.e. the abuser is socio-economic level 5 and the victim-survivor is level 1.

Abusers were close to four times more likely than victim-survivors to be reported as being two or more socio-economic points above the other on a 1-5 points scale: that is, participants reported nearly one in five (19%) of abusers as being two or more socio-economic groups above them, compared to only one in 20 (5%) victim-survivors reporting their abusers as being two or more socio-economic groups below them. This finding may have implications for the resources available to victim-survivors, the way police respond to them and the way their community, friends, whānau and family react to the violence and abuse and/or the involvement of police. It also challenges the stereotype that people from higher socio-economic groups do not perpetrate family violence or sexual violence.

Figure 22: Difference in socioeconomic status (SES) between each victim-survivor and their abuser, as perceived by Backbone sample victim-survivors (1-5 points scale; expressed as 'abuser is perceived as X points higher in SES than victim-survivor') (n=263)



Appendix 2: Demographics of the HTRK sample

The Hohou Te Rongo Kahukura (HTRK) sample is made up of the 215 responses from victim-survivors who are trans and non-binary people, and/or sexuality diverse women.

Gender

Participants were asked to describe their gender with a selection of set options, and the ability to self-identify using their own words if they wished. All participants answered this question.

As discussed earlier, we did not offer 'cis woman' as an option, as that language is not always understood outside of specific Rainbow, urban, younger, Pākehā and middle-class contexts, and this survey was seeking to attract responses from diverse ethnic, location, age and class contexts, including women not part of Takatāpui and Rainbow communities.

In the HTRK sample, as per Table 35 below, 139 participants (65%) chose the option to describe themselves as a 'woman.' Thirty-five percent (76 participants) described themselves using terms other than 'woman', including 12 participants who volunteered their own term/s. We refer to these 76 participants as 'trans and non-binary' or 'gender diverse' for the purposes of this analysis. Based on free-text answers we believe trans women participants have predominantly, if not exclusively, self-identified as 'trans woman' or 'transfeminine' in these survey responses.

The identity selected by the second-largest group in the HTRK sample after 'woman' was 'non-binary', selected by 19% of HTRK victim-survivors. Many responses given in free text were also specifically outside gender binaries, including 'genderfluid', 'genderqueer' and 'queer'.

'Trans woman' was selected by 5% of participants, and 'trans man' by 3%. Two percent identified their gender as 'Takatāpui'[119] and one percent as 'don't know/questioning/ unsure.'

Four participants described themselves using multiple terms and another three participants reported no specific label or term felt right.

Table 35: Gender in HTRK sample (n=215; 220 responses, > 100% due to multi-selections)

Gender	Percentage
Woman	65%
Non-binary	19%
Trans woman	5%
Trans man	3%
Takatāpui	2%
Other responses (Volunteered terms when asked 'please specify' included 'Genderfluid', 'genderqueer', 'femme/fem-presenting', 'no specific label', 'queer', 'transfeminine', 'tangata ira tane')	7%
Don't know/Questioning/Unsure	1%

119 For both gender and sexuality, most Māori participants chose identity terms other than Takatāpui. For gender, the most common identity term for Māori was 'woman' and then 'non-binary', similar to non-Māori participants.

Sexuality

Participants were asked to describe their sexuality with a selection of set options with the ability to self-identify using their own words if they wished. As with the question about gender, free text options allowed several participants to use multiple terms to describe their sexuality, so there were 228 responses given by 215 participants and the total is more than 100% in Table 36 below.

There are several features of note in the sexuality responses. Firstly, HTRK participants were considerably more likely to identify with terms outside of binary identities than terms within it (such as 'lesbian/gay'). Nearly half of all HTRK victim-survivors identified as 'bisexual' (46%); and 'pansexual' was selected by 17% of victim-survivors.[120]

Secondly, in this survey, all trans and non-binary people were sexuality diverse as well as gender diverse with one exception who identified as straight. Therefore, nearly all trans and non-binary participants in this survey were dealing with police responses to both gender diversity and sexuality diversity.

'Lesbian/gay' was selected by 18% of participants in the HTRK sample. Nine percent described themselves as 'asexual,' as well as people identifying with other terms under the asexual umbrella such as 'demisexual' and 'greyromantic' in free text. 'Queer' (7%) was the most common identity named in free text, often in combinations with other identities. 'Takatāpui' was selected for sexuality by 1% of participants.[121]

Table 36: Sexuality in HTRK sample (n=215)

Sexuality	Percentage
Bisexual	46%
Pansexual	17%
Lesbian/Gay	18%
Asexual	9%
Takatāpui	1%
Other responses (participants volunteered terms such as 'Queer', 'Demisexual', 'Coeosexual', 'Greyromantic', 'Omniromantic', 'Polysexual', 'Depends', 'Not relevant')	13%
Straight (Heterosexual)	0.5%
Prefer not to answer	0.5%

120 Bisexual people are the most likely to experience sexual and partner violence of all sexualities, according to the New Zealand Crime and Victimisation Survey, with 68% of bisexual people reporting partner or sexual violence across their lifetimes. See for example MoH 2021 media release: "LGB+ community experiences higher levels of victimisation than average New Zealand adult".

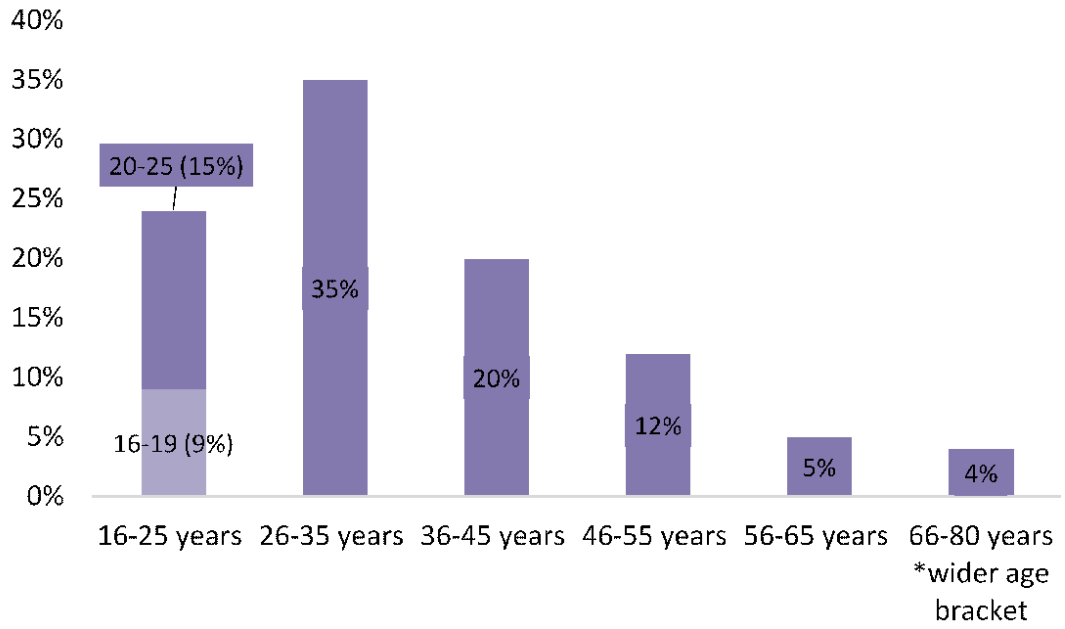
121 For both sexuality and gender, most Māori participants chose identity terms other than Takatāpui. For sexuality, the most common identity term for Māori participants was bisexual. It was also the most common term used by non-Māori participants.

Age

Participants in the HTRK sample reported ages from 16-19 years to 66-80 years (age bracket drop-down options). It was a younger sample than the Backbone sample: just over four out of five participants (82%) were aged between 20 years and 55 years. Both sexuality diverse women (38%) and trans and non-binary people (29%) were most likely to select 26-35 years.

More than one in three trans and non-binary participants (37%) and just under one in five sexuality diverse women (18%) are under 25 years, which is significant because it is often difficult to reach younger people with regards to family and sexual violence experiences. However, Takatāpui and Rainbow populations in Aotearoa New Zealand are, on average, younger than non-Rainbow populations,[122] and Takatāpui and Rainbow young people express specific concerns over unwanted sexualisation and coercive control in relationships, including wanting more information and resources to leave unhealthy relationships.[123] This may mean younger Takatāpui and Rainbow people, particularly trans and non-binary people, are more motivated to ensure their voices are heard in surveys such as this one about family violence and sexual violence.

Figure 23: Age of Participants in HTRK sample (n=215)



Region

Participants were asked which region they currently lived in, which was answered by 214 participants. Three people reported they were in hiding and five preferred not to answer.

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122 See Olsen, B. (2022) "Better understanding New Zealand's rainbow population" Infometrics newsletter In Stats NZ data from 2020, nearly two thirds (62%) of the LGBT+ population was aged below 40, compared to 39% of the non LGBT+ population.

123 See for example Dickson, S., Fraser, B. and Bramwell, N. (2021) Healthy Relationships and Consent: Through the lens of Rainbow identifying youth. NZ: Waikato Queer Youth and Hohou Te Rongo Kahukura.

Of those that specified a region, Wellington was the most common, followed by the wider Auckland region (Counties Manukau, Waitematā, Auckland City), Waikato and Canterbury. Tasman and Northland were selected by very few participants. It's important to remember that where our participants are living now may not be where they experienced violence and/or had involvement with the police. However, it's useful to see we reached trans and non-binary people and sexuality diverse women all over Aotearoa New Zealand.

Table 37: Region where participants in the HTRK sample currently live (n=214)

Region	Percentage
I am in hiding and would rather not say	1%
Northland	0.5%
Auckland City	12%
Waitemata	6%
Counties Manukau	2%
Waikato	13%
Bay of Plenty	8%
Central	11%
Eastern	3%
Wellington	21%
Tasman	2%
Canterbury	13%
Southern	5%
Prefer not to answer	2%

We also asked participants how they would describe the area where they lived. Half our sample reported living in a major urban area (50%), and just over two-thirds (69%) in a major or large urban area. 13% were in medium urban areas; 5% in small urban areas and 9% in rural areas. Three participants did not know, and four participants preferred not to answer this question. The needs of those living regionally may need further investigation, as risks of isolation may be very different for sexuality-and gender-diverse people living outside of urban settings.

Table 38: Current Living Situation in HTRK sample (n=215)

Living situation	Percentage
Major urban area (e.g. Auckland)	50%
Large urban area (e.g. Invercargill)	19%

Medium urban area (e.g. Te Awamutu)	13%
Small urban area (e.g. Gore)	5%
Rural area	9%
Don't know/hard to say	1%
Prefer not to answer	2%

Ethnic and cultural belongings

Participants were asked which ethnic or cultural groups they identified with, and were offered the chance to tell us more if they wished. They were able to tick multiple belongings, and 215 participants gave 274 responses, which means the total is more than 100% in Table 39. While those answering our survey belonged to diverse ethnic groups, our sample has lower percentages of Pasifika and Asian participants, and a higher percentage of Māori participants than New Zealand census data.

Many of those who selected Pākehā/New Zealand European also selected other ethnicities, so the figure in brackets in Table 39 is included to show participants who selected only Pākehā/New Zealand European.[124] Ethnicity was fairly consistent across the two samples, though trans and non-binary participants were less likely to be only Pākehā/New Zealand European, and more likely to describe themselves inside Māori, Asian and especially Another ethnicity categories.

Māori participants in the HTRK sample significantly outnumbered those who identified as Takatāpui, as many Māori used other terms to describe their sexuality or gender. The 'other' ethnicity group included people from specific ethnic backgrounds inside other countries. Our ethnicity data is summarised to avoid identifying individual participants.

Table 39: Ethnic/Cultural Groups of HTRK sample (n=215)

Ethnic/Cultural	**HTRK sample n=215**	**Sexuality diverse women n=139**	**Trans and non-binary people n=76**
Māori	19%	18%	21%
Pākehā - New Zealand European (Only Pākehā - New Zealand European)	80% (58%)	81% (60%)	76% (53%)
Pasifika (Samoan, Cook Island Māori, Tongan, Fijian)	5%	5%	4%
Asian (Chinese, Indian, Other Asian)	5%	4%	7%
Another ethnicity (Middle Eastern, Latin American, African, Other European, Other)	17%	13%	25%
Prefer not to answer	2%	1%	4%

124 See StatsNZ (2019) "New Zealand as a village of 100 people: Our population" (infographic)

Children

Just over one in four people (27%) in the HTRK sample had dependent children at the time of the survey, and 41% indicated they either currently had dependent children; had children over the age of 16 or had children no longer in their care.

Sexuality diverse women (33%) were about twice as likely as trans and non-binary people (16%) to say they had dependent children. Nearly half of the sexuality diverse women participants (47%) indicated they had ever had children, compared with just under one in three (29%) trans and non-binary participants.

More than half (59%) of all HTRK participants had never had children, with 53% of sexuality diverse women, and nearly three quarters of trans and non-binary people (70%) reporting they had never had children. The relatively young age of those responding, as well as barriers in access to appropriate healthcare particularly for trans and non-binary people who transition at younger ages, are likely to be factors in these differences.[125]

Table 40: Dependent children of HTRK sample (n=215)

Dependent children	HTRK sample n=215	Sexuality diverse women n=139	Trans and non-binary people n=76
Yes	27%	33%	16%
My child/ren is/are over the age of 16	12%	14%	9%
I have children but they are no longer in my care	4%	4%	4%
Yes *or* over the age of 16 *or* children no longer in my care	**41%**	**47%**	**29%**
I have never had children	59%	53%	70%
Prefer not to answer	0.5%	0	1%

Disability

We asked participants if they had any health problems or conditions (lasting 6 months or more) which caused them any problems. Participants could select multiple options. This question was answered by 210 participants, and results suggest, consistent with other research, significant overlaps between disability communities and Takatāpui and Rainbow communities.[126]

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125 See for example: Parker, G., Ker, A., Baddock, S., Kerekere, E., Veale, J., and Miller, S., (2023) "It's Total Erasure": Trans and Nonbinary Peoples' Experiences of Cisnormativity Within Perinatal Care Services in Aotearoa New Zealand", Women's Reproductive Health.

126 See: StatsNZ (2022) LGBT+ population of Aotearoa: Year ended June 2021

Te Ngākau Kahukura (n.d) "Rainbow communities, mental health and addictions: a submission to the Government Inquiry into Mental Health and Addiction – Oranga Tāngata, Oranga Whānau"

Veale J., Byrne J., Tan K., Guy S., Yee A., Nopera T. & Bentham R. (2019) Counting Ourselves: The health and wellbeing of trans and non-binary people in Aotearoa New Zealand. NZ: Transgender Health Research Lab, University of Waikato. See: www.countingourselves.nz/2018-survey-report

Forty percent of sexuality diverse women and 22% of trans and non-binary people reported no difficulties, significantly lower than general population rates.

Trans and non-binary participants were more likely than sexuality diverse women to report disabilities for every measure except 'hearing,' which was the same for both groups.

The most common options chosen by participants in the HTRK sample were problems with 'communicating, mixing with others or socialising' (42%) and 'learning, concentrating or remembering' (39%). Both were much higher for trans and non-binary people, with more than half (55%) reporting difficulties with 'communicating, mixing with others or socialising' and just under half (49%) reporting difficulties with 'learning, concentrating or remembering.'

Table 41: Disabilities of HTRK sample (n=210)

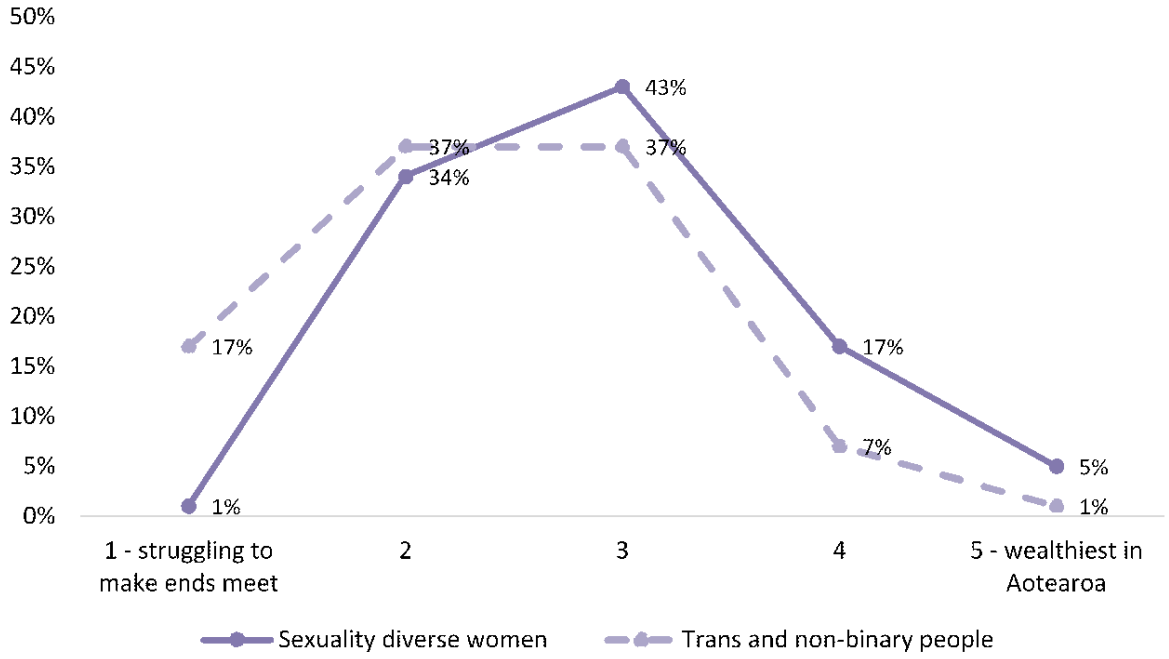
Disability	HTRK sample n=210	Sexuality diverse women n=136	Trans and non-binary people n=74
Seeing, even when wearing glasses or contact lenses	10%	7%	16%
Hearing, even when using a hearing aid	4%	4%	4%
Walking, lifting or bending	25%	25%	26%
Using your hands to hold, grasp or use objects	13%	11%	16%
Learning, concentrating or remembering	39%	34%	49%
Communicating, mixing with others or socialising	42%	35%	55%
No difficulty with any of these	33%	40%	22%

Socio-economic status

We asked participants to rate their socio-economic status on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 representing not having enough to make ends meet, and 5 representing the wealthiest people in Aotearoa, New Zealand.[127] This question was answered by 213 participants. Participants were most likely to rate their socio-economic status as 2 or 3. Trans and non-binary people overall were much less likely to than sexuality diverse women to rate themselves as 4 or 5, and nearly one in five trans and non-binary participants rated themselves as seriously struggling. More than half of trans and non-binary participants rated themselves in the lowest two ratings.

127 The exact question was: "Imagine a scale ranging from 1 to 5 stars. It represents all people living in Aotearoa, New Zealand. At the bottom (1 star *) are those who are seriously struggling and don't have enough to make ends meet. At the top (5 stars *****) are the wealthiest - they have more than enough. Where do you fit on this scale? Please select the number of stars that best describe your situation from 1 to 5."

Figure 24: Socio-economic status of HTRK participants (n=213)



Socio-economic status of abuser

Survey participants who had police involvement were asked, if they knew it, to describe the socio-economic status of the person who abused/hurt them, using the same scale as for themselves.[128]

The largest proportion of responses were for star level 3 (mid-range) for both sexuality diverse women (44%) and trans and non-binary people (30%).

Comparing the overall socio-economic status of victim-survivors with socio-economic status with abusers, sexuality diverse women and trans and non-binary people both gave an average rating for their abusers of 2.9. This was slightly higher than sexuality diverse women gave themselves (2.8) and significantly higher than trans and non-binary people gave themselves (2.1).

128 Participants were asked to focus on just one person who has used violence or abuse against them or their children – the one most relevant to them. This question was answered by 99 participants.

Appendix 3: Police Employees by Ethnicity

The following graphic is taken from the NZ Police Annual Report 2022[129] and shows the breakdown of police employees by ethnicity. Information was not available to show the breakdown of ethnicity of constabulary staff only. The data does highlight that Māori, Pacific and Asian peoples are significantly less likely to be represented in the NZ Police force, based on 2018 census population data. In order to be representative of the general population, the police force needs to increase its proportion of Māori staff by 28%, Pacific staff by 8% and Asian staff by 115%. The NZ Police state that they are focussed on improving their cultural responsiveness and discuss two cultural work programmes in their annual report.

All employees: by ethnicity

Table 4: Ethnicity profile of Police 2017 – 2022

Ethnicity	2018 census population base (%)	As at 30 June					
		2017 (%)	2018 (%)	2019 (%)	2020 (%)	2021 (%)	2022 (%)
New Zealand European/Pākehā	65.1	69.4	68.9	68.1	68.2	68.0	68.7
Māori	16.5	11.4	11.8	11.9	12.0	12.3	12.9
Pacific peoples	8.1	5.7	6.5	6.4	6.6	6.8	7.5
Asian peoples	15.1	3.8	4.6	5.4	5.7	6.0	7.0
European	5.1	14.8	15.3	16.2	16.6	16.6	17.1
Other ethnic groups	2.7	0.6	0.7	0.9	1.0	1.1	1.2

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