

Sexual Abuse Statistics

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Wider Experiences of Sexual Violence in Aotearoa New Zealand

- The New Zealand Crime and Victims Survey (Ministry of Justice, 2023) findings estimate that more than one in four New Zealand adults (27%) reported being the victim of at least one act of sexual assault in their lifetime.
 - More than one in three women (36%) had experienced one or more incidents of sexual assault in their lifetime.
 - Almost half of the women (46%) had experienced one or more incidents of sexual assault or intimate partner violence in their lifetime.
 - 13% of men had experienced one or more incidents of sexual assault in their lifetime.
 - One in five women (22%) and one in 18 men (6%) had experienced forced intercourse (or attempts) in their lifetime (Ministry of Justice, 2022).
 - The New Zealand Crime and Victims Survey (Ministry of Justice, 2023) estimates an incidence rate of five sexual assault offences per 100 adults.
- The New Zealand Crime and Victims Survey (Ministry of Justice, 2022) estimated that about 78,000 adults had been sexually assaulted between November 2020 – November 2021, which is equivalent to almost one in 50 adults (1.9%).
 - These 78,000 adults experienced 176,000 sexual assault offences: there were about four sexual assaults for every 100 adults.
 - Women were three times as likely as men to have experienced sexual assault during the 12 month time period (2.9% compared with 0.9%). Over three-quarters of sexual assaults were against women (142,000 out of 176,000).
 - Almost two thirds of sexual assaults were perpetrated by someone who the survivor knew (63%). More than a quarter of sexual assaults were perpetrated by a family member of the survivor (26%).

Child Sexual Abuse in Aotearoa New Zealand

- Oranga Tamariki – Ministry for Children (2021) reported that female children and young people are far more likely to report as victims of sexual assault and related offences, and account for approximately 86% of all reported victims of sexual assault and related offences for people aged under 20.
- In a 2007 study (Fanslow et al., 2007) using retrospective report from a random sample of 2,855 women aged 18–64 years old, 23.5% of women in Auckland and 28% of women in Waikato reported having been sexually touched or made to do something sexual that they did not want to do prior to the age of 15 years old. In this sample, Māori girls were twice as likely to experience child sexual abuse than non-Māori girls.
- In an Otago-based community sample of women (Anderson et al., 1993), 85% of women who were victimised as children reported that the childhood sexual abuse was perpetrated by someone known to them. About 70% of these experiences of childhood sexual abuse involved genital contact.
- Results from the 2019 New Zealand Family Violence Survey (2,887 participants: 1464 female, 1423 male) found that more than one in four women (26%) and one in nine men (11%) experienced sexual abuse before age 15 (Fanslow et al., 2021).
- More than half of reported sexual violence victimisations in 2014-2018 related to children and young people. Of reported sexual violence victimisations, almost two-thirds (61%) occurred when the victim was a child or young person under 17 years old. More than half (53%) were reported when the victim was an adult. (Ministry of Justice, 2019)

Young Peoples Experiences of Sexual Violence in Aotearoa New Zealand

- In the What About Me? survey of secondary school students (Ministry of Social Development, 2022), almost one in five young people (19%) reported that they have been touched in a sexual way or made to do sexual things that they did not want to. Female, rangatahi Māori, rainbow and disabled young people were significantly more likely to report unwanted sexual contact.
- The latest results from the longitudinal Youth2000 study (Youth19; Fleming et al., 2021) suggested that 18% of secondary school students - 1,196 young people - reported ever having had unwanted sexual experiences, sexual violence or abuse. In 2019, more than one in four girls and almost one in ten boys reported that they had ever been touched in a sexual way or made to do sexual things that they did not want to do.

- In the Youth'12 survey with a representative sample of 8,500 students from secondary schools throughout New Zealand (Clark et al., 2016), 20% percent of female and 9% of male secondary school students reported that they had ever been touched in a sexual way or been made to do unwanted sexual things.
 - Over half (55%) of the students who reported unwanted sexual contact reported that it happened when they were 14 years or younger.
 - 84% of students had been victimised by a peer, i.e. a boyfriend/girlfriend (40%), a friend (30%), or a young person that they knew (14%).
 - However, only a small proportion (3%) of students reported forcing someone to do sexual things that they did not want to do. Males were twice as likely to report this than females. Between 2001 and 2012, the proportion of young people who reported that they had forced someone to do sexual things decreased from 6% to 3%.
- 56% of students had not told anyone: 71% of male students, 53% of female students, 61% of younger students (12-15 years), and 52% of older students (16-18 years). Of the students who had told someone about their unwanted sexual experience, 69% had told a friend and 38% had told a parent.
- In 2021, Christchurch Girls' High School commissioned an online survey (Gordon, 2021) due to concerns about student experiences of sexual harassment. Almost 60% of the 725 participating students reported being sexually harassed, with some locations of the estimated 2,677 incidents including school, work, around town, at social events, and on public transport. 91% of the harassers were male, with almost half of them being school age males. Less than 10% received any help or support. Head girl, Amiria Tikao, shared that "The behaviours that were identified have been pretty normalised, especially throughout my past years at high school. So when I read the survey, it was nothing I hadn't known before."
- In the 2022 Survey of Sexual Harassment at Avonside Girls' High School (Gordon, 2022), 70% of participating 572 students reported experiencing more than 5,000 incidents of sexual harassment, including receiving unwanted comments and images electronically, catcalling, unwanted touching, and sexual assault. 78% of the students reported that the harassment was by school age males. Additionally, 78% of students reported knowing someone who had been sexually harassed over the past three years.
- One in four young people aged 15–19 (25%) had experienced sexual assault at least once during their lifetime: More than one in three (37%) young women and about one in seven (14%) young men (Ministry of Justice, 2023). One in four girls aged 15–19 (28%) and one in nine boys aged 15-19 (11%) have been sexually assaulted (Ministry of Justice, 2022).

- The Ministry of Justice estimated that 4.9% of adults aged 15–19 were sexually assaulted in 2020/21.
- Of the total 176,000 sexual assaults in 2020/21, about 90,000 sexual assaults (51%) were against adults aged 15–29.
- Young women are at high risk of sexual assault: 9% of females aged 15–19 and 6.7% of women aged 20–29 had been sexually assaulted in 2020/21.
- Of sexual violence victimisations reported in 2021, over half (56%) of the victims were aged under 18 at the time of the assault (Ministry of Justice, 2023).

Tertiary Student Experiences of Sexual Violence in Aotearoa New Zealand

- Preliminary findings suggest that approximately one in three tertiary students experienced sexual violence while in study (Stewart, 2019).
- The Thursdays in Black (2017) Students' Survey findings reflect the experiences of 1,403 respondents.
 - 83% of students experienced sexual harassment during their tertiary studies.
 - 53% experienced some forms of sexual assault during their time in tertiary education.
 - 29% of men experienced some forms of sexual assault during their time in tertiary education.
 - 57% of women experienced some forms of sexual assault during their time in tertiary education.
 - 61% of people who identified with a minority sexuality experienced some forms of sexual assault during their time in tertiary education.
 - 67% of people who identified with a minority gender experienced some forms of sexual assault during their time in tertiary education.
 - Sexual assault was often reported as being perpetrated by someone intimately known to them and taking place within familiar social or living spaces.
- A New Zealand university campus study (Beres et al., 2020) found that more than one in four (28%) students reported experiencing some form of sexual assault while at university, including 15% who reported experiences that meet a definition of rape.

- 30% of cisgender female respondents reported experiencing at least one form of sexual assault.
- Queer cisgender females were more likely to report experiencing sexual assault (38%) compared with straight cisgender females (30%).
- Sexual assault was twice as frequent among queer cisgender male respondents (23%, over one in five) compared to straight cisgender male respondents (10%).
- Male perpetrators were reported in 98.2% for female victims, 22.2% for male victims and 6/8 of gender diverse victims. Of the queer respondents who reported victimisation 97.6% of queer female victims and 12/21 of queer male victims reported male perpetrators. It can be inferred that 77.8% of male survivors were victimised by a non-male perpetrator.
- Of those who reported experiencing any type of sexual assault, 41% told no one about their experience and 42% told one supporter. 1.6% reported their experience to the university sexual violence support service.

Māori Experiences of Sexual Violence in Aotearoa New Zealand

- Pihama et al. (2016) explains that sexual violence within Māori understandings is an absolute violation of the mana of the person and the collective mana of whānau, hapū and iwi. It is a violent transgression against a person's whakapapa that reaches back to past generations and has direct impacts on future generations.
- Pihama et al. (2016) state that sexual violence is a violation of te whare tangata (that is the house of the people) which has physical and psychological impacts as well as causing cultural and spiritual distress.
- Māori suffer higher rates of victimisation than any other ethnic group in Aotearoa (Ministry of Justice, 2023). In the recent New Zealand Crime and Victims Survey, almost one in three Māori (31%) reported victimisation in their lifetime.
- In a study using retrospective report from a random sample of 2,855 women aged 18–64 years old (Fanslow et al., 2007), Māori girls were twice as likely to experience child sexual abuse than non-Māori girls.
- Te Puni Kōkiri – Ministry for Māori Development (2017) cited that of the reports of concern to Oranga Tamariki between 2009 to 2012, 37% of children who were found to be sexually abused were Māori.
- About three in 100 Māori adults were victims of adult sexual assault, compared with about two in 100 adults overall (Ministry of Justice, 2022).

- Thirty percent of Māori adults experienced sexual abuse during their lifetime, with 20% experiencing forced intercourse and 30% experiencing non-consensual sexual touches (Ministry of Justice, 2021).

SOGISC (sexual orientation, gender identity and sex characteristics) Experiences of Sexual Violence in Aotearoa New Zealand

- The Counting Ourselves study (Veale et al., 2019), with a sample including 1178 trans or non-binary peoples, found that:
 - almost half of the participants (47%) reported that someone had tried to have sex with them against their will.
 - trans women (23%), trans men (33%) and non-binary (38%) participants reported someone having had sex with them against their will. This is two to three times higher than that for women in the general population and seven to 12 times higher than for men in the general population.
 - only 2% of these people received support from a specialist sexual violence service at the time, and 9% received support from a specialist sexual violence service later.
 - participants who had someone have sex with them against their will since age 13 were twice as likely to have attempted suicide in the past year (18%) than participants who did not report this (9%).
 - only 2% received support from a specialist sexual violence service at the time, and 9% received support from a specialist sexual violence service later.
- The New Zealand Crime and Victims Survey (Ministry of Justice, 2022) reported that people with diverse sexualities were more than six times as likely as heterosexual peoples to have been a victim of sexual assault between November 2020 – November 2021. About one in nine people with diverse sexualities (11%) were victims of sexual assault compared to one in 60 heterosexual people (2%). People with diverse sexualities were victims of about two of ten sexual assaults (40,000 out of 176,000).
- The New Zealand Crime and Victims Survey (Ministry of Justice, 2023) estimates that more than one in two people who identify as LGBTI+ (59%) have been victims of sexual assault in their lifetime, compared to one in four (25%) people who identify as non LGBTI+.
 - 67% of people who identified as bisexual reported being victimised once or more in their lifetime. 24% of heterosexual peoples and 45% of gay or lesbian people reported being victimised once or more in their lifetime.

- More than one in three gay men (38%), almost one in two bisexual men (49%), and about one in eight (12%) heterosexual men have been victims of sexual assault in their lifetime.
- More than one in two lesbian women (54%), three in four bisexual women (76%), and about one in three (35%) heterosexual women have been victims of sexual assault in their lifetime.

Peoples with Disabilities Experiences of Sexual Violence in Aotearoa New Zealand

- The Ministry of Justice (2023) reported that adults with disability (40%) were significantly more likely than adults without disability (24%) to have been subject to sexual assault in their lifetime.
- The Thursdays in Black (2017) Students' Survey findings reflect the experiences of 1,403 tertiary student respondents.
 - 90% of those who considered themselves to have a disability experienced some forms of sexual harassment during their time in tertiary education.
 - 65% of the participants who considered themselves to have a disability had experienced some forms of sexual assault during their time in tertiary education, of which: 48% of those with a sensory disability; 61% of those with a physical disability; 64% of those with a learning disability; 68% of those with a mental illness.
- 65% of disabled participants in the Counting Ourselves survey (Veale et al., 2019) reported that someone tried to have sex with them against their will, and about half (49%) of disabled participants reported that someone had sex with them against their will.
- Roguski (2013) identified two forms of sexual harm experienced by people with disabilities:
 - Family/whānau perpetrated sexual harm. In this instance, participants related a sense of extreme violation and a heightened sense of vulnerability. Because of their physical disabilities, they had not been able to avoid the perpetrator and were, thus, unable to escape.
 - Abuse within residential services. Within this context, care workers and clients were cited as perpetrators.
- Compared to non-disabled women, disabled women are more likely to be subjected to physical and sexual abuse, have experienced greater levels of violence and suffered abuse for a longer period of time (Roguski, 2013).

- A New Zealand Human Rights Commission investigation (Mirfin-Veitch and Conder, 2017) found that people with disabilities were victimised in State care, experiencing high levels of unwanted sexual touching, sexual coercion, threats of sexual harm, and abuse of authority positions. Recurring experiences of sexual violence was a common theme.
- In the Hohou Te Rongo Kahukura – Outing Violence study (Dickson, 2017), more than half of the people with disabilities responding had been touched in places they did not want to be touched or been pressured to be sexual in ways they did not want during otherwise consenting sexual encounters, with at least one in five people experiencing these behaviours from three or more people.
- More than one in three SOGISC disabled respondents had experienced sexual violence from a stranger, which is significantly higher than other research on stranger rape in New Zealand (Dickson, 2017).

Technology-facilitated Sexual Abuse in Aotearoa New Zealand

- Netsafe (2019) reports that nearly 5% of New Zealand adults have experienced image based sexual violence (IBSA).
 - IBSA is more common among young adults, especially those aged under 30.
 - Men and women were equally as likely to experience IBSA online, but the nature of the experiences differ.
 - Among those who have had someone threaten to or share their intimate pictures or videos online, this was most commonly done by an ex-partner (40%).
- In comparison, the Australian Office of the eSafety Commissioner (2017) reported that one in ten (11%) Australian adults have experienced their nude/sexual image being shared without consent.
 - One in five women aged 18-45 have experienced their nude/sexual image being shared without consent.
 - Women are twice as likely to have their nude/sexual images shared without consent than men.
 - Women are considerably more likely to report negative personal impacts as a result of image-based abuse.

- In many cases, perpetrators were friends of the victim. The research shows that abuse is also being inflicted by those other than ex-partners, contrary to common understanding of 'revenge porn'.
- Women are more likely to experience image-based abuse at the hands of a former intimate partner than men.
- Netsafe (2017) found that 18% of youth aged 14-17 have received unsolicited nude images.
 - Of girls aged 14-17, 20% have received unsolicited nude images.
 - Of boys aged 14-17, 17% have received unsolicited nude images.
 - Nearly 1 in 4 Māori teens have received unsolicited nude or nearly nude content.
 - Teens with disabilities have been more likely to be asked for nude content of themselves, and receive unsolicited nude images than their abled-bodies peers.

Attitudes and Beliefs about Sexual Violence

- The 2023 Gender Attitudes Survey (National Council of Women of New Zealand, 2023) found that 30% of respondents thought that 'rape happens when a man's sex drive is out of control'. This significantly increased from 25% in 2019.
- The 2023 Gender Attitudes Survey (National Council of Women of New Zealand, 2023) found that 33% of respondents thought 'false rape accusations are common'. This increased from 28% in 2019.

Sexual violence in the Aotearoa New Zealand Criminal Justice System

- Sexual assaults have the lowest likelihood of being reported to the Police (8%). 92% of sexual assaults are not reported to Police (Ministry of Justice, 2022).
 - The reasons "shame/embarrassment/further humiliation" and "fear of reprisals/would make matters worse" were significantly more likely to be given for not reporting sexual assault.
- Ministry of Justice (2019) found that of the sexual violence victimisations reported to Police in 2014-2018, less than one-third (31%) result in Police charging the perpetrator. Of these, 11% result in conviction, with 6% being imprisonment. This had been stable for ten years (Trigg et al., 2009).

- Attrition is the proportion of reported sexual violence victimisations that do not progress through the criminal justice system to a conviction. Ministry of Justice (2019) say that the proportion of reported sexual violence victimisations that progress to court and subsequently to a conviction is low, meaning victims may feel they do not get justice. By early 2019, 11% of reported victimisations that occurred in 2014-2018 had resulted in a perpetrator being convicted; no perpetrator was convicted for 89% of reported victimisations.
- The Ministry of Justice (2019) suggests that if only 10% of sexual violence victimisations are reported to Police, for every 100 victimisations only three results in a perpetrator being charged, and only one results in a conviction.

Sexual Violence Convictions in Aotearoa New Zealand

- The investigation and court process takes a long time. In 2019, the Ministry of Justice reported that only one-fifth (21%) of victimisations with a charge outcome received the outcome within six months of reporting, whilst for half (51%) it took up to a year in total to receive a charge outcome. Most charges (87%) had an outcome after a total of two years, and for the remaining 13% of victimisations it took two years or more.
- Sexual violence victimisations that make it to court are increasingly spending more than two years in court before reaching a final charge outcome, almost doubling from 2017 (21%) to 2020 (40%) (Ministry of Justice, 2023a).
- Ministry of Justice (2023a) data shows that between 2013/14 – 2022/23, 13,926 people were charged with sexual offences (in total there were 56,018 charges). 6,197 people were charged with sexual violation (47%).
 - Between 2013/14 – 2022/23, 7,517 people were convicted of a sexual offence. 2,649 people were convicted of sexual violation. This means that between 2013/14 – 2022/23, 54% of people charged with a sexual offence were convicted of such, and 43% of people charged with sexual violation were convicted of such.
 - Of these people who were charged with sexual offence, 98.2% were male, 1.6% were female, and 0.2% were unknown.
 - Of these people who were charged with sexual offence, 47% were Pākehā, 31% were Māori, 11% were Pacific Peoples, 8% were Asian, 3% were 'Other', and 4% were ethnicity unknown.
 - Of these people who were charged with sexual offence, 13% were 19 or younger, 28% were 20–29, 23% were 30–39, 17% were 40–49, 10% were 50–59, 6% were 60 years and older, and 3% were age unknown.

- This means that statistically, the most common offender to be charged with a sexual offence is male, Pākehā, and aged between 20-29.
- Of the 56,018 sexual offence charges, 69% of the victims were children (under 16), 23% were adult females, 2% were adult males, and 7% were unknown age and/or gender.
- Between 2013/14 – 2022/23, 7,517 people were convicted of sexual offences: 57% of people who were convicted of sexual offences were sentenced to imprisonment and 21% were sentenced to home detention.
- Therefore, the majority of reported victimisations do not progress through the criminal justice system to a conviction. Of victimisations reported to Police in 2020, 12% have resulted in conviction with 7% being imprisonment.

Note: Incidence rates are based on what was found in particular samples used in particular research projects at particular times, so only tell us that – what happened to those people, back then. We use them as a guide to what might be happening now, but they do not predict the future, so they cannot tell us what will happen.

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