

IN-CONFIDENCE

SEXUAL VIOLENCE

***A CURRENT STATE VIEW – BUILDING OUR
UNDERSTANDING***

FEBRUARY 2026



**The Centre for Family Violence
and Sexual Violence Prevention**
Responding, healing, strengthening

Content Warning

This document contains information about sexual violence that some may find upsetting and triggering.

This includes definitions of sexual violence; data on sexual violence such as prevalence, who is affected and types of sexual violence; child sexual abuse; and descriptions of people who use sexual violence.



**The Centre for Family Violence
and Sexual Violence Prevention**
Responding, healing, strengthening

About this report

Taking action on sexual violence is a focus area of the Te Aorerekura Action Plan.

This means “*stopping sexual violence from happening; helping those who have been affected; and creating a safe environment for everyone*”. (Action Plan 2024 p20).

This report examines the current landscape of sexual violence in Aotearoa New Zealand. It is intended to increase understanding of sexual violence as a precursor to identifying areas of deeper focus for specific action by government.

It finds that high rates of sexual violence persist due to complex factors. Longstanding systemic challenges continue, against a backdrop of new and rapidly emerging ‘trajectories’ of concerning sexual violence, particularly regarding technology and AI.

Government responses remain fragmented, with direct investment primarily focused on healing, with prevention efforts limited and underfunded.

This report is not a comprehensive view of sexual violence, acknowledging that there is much we do not know, due to its hidden and underreported nature.

Further work is needed to deepen understanding by centering victims' voices, and collaborating with agencies and sector experts to inform appropriate and effective responses.

Specifically, this document:

- Defines sexual violence
- Summarises key insights
- Provides evidence and data on rates of sexual violence and its impact
- Reviews current and previous sector and government responses to sexual violence
- Seeks to align the priority of sexual violence with cross government strategies.

A second report will bring forward advice on recommendations for areas of action; the role of agencies; and how government can work in partnership with the sector.

Summary Insights

Sexual violence encompasses a broad ranging spectrum including behaviours and attitudes, harassment and coercion, and sexual offences.

Recognition of the **importance of behaviours and attitudes** towards sexual violence is necessary. This leads to normalisation of sexual violence, eroding social norms, increasing community tolerance for sexual violence, and reducing safety.

Sexual violence **disproportionately impacts** women, children and young people, tangata whenua, Pacific peoples, disabled people, older people, Rainbow communities, and ethnic communities, compounding forms of disadvantage and discrimination. That said it is **experienced differently across communities and population groups**.

Māori experience disproportionate harm due to structural inequities – particularly wāhine Māori and rangatahi – who experience higher rates of sexual violence, linked to colonisation, systemic disadvantage and breaches of whakapapa.

Sexual violence has **wide-ranging impacts** on mental health, education, employment, relationships, physical health, community wellbeing, and economic outcomes. These impacts can **persist across lifetimes and generations, contributing to cycles of harm**.

There is no **causal pathway for sexual violence behaviours but rather is driven by a complex set of factors**. It is also acknowledged that there is a significant overlap between sexual violence and family violence. However, the risk factors should not be conflated.

Victimisation as a child increases risk of later victimisation and perpetration. Data suggests that most people using violence and people going through the justice system are young people.

There are **concerning trajectories of sexual violence**, which are reinforcing existing patterns and creating new forms of sexual violence, particularly online harm and child sexual abuse material. These are **accelerating at pace and increasing exposure** to harm.

Summary Insights

While many agencies contribute to sexual violence work, there is **no system coordination of sexual violence**, and the system is primarily designed for response rather than prevention. Investment is heavily skewed towards **healing (ACC sensitive claims)**, with **only 3%** of direct investment going to primary prevention which is often time-limited.

The system requires a **refocus with greater emphasis on primary prevention** – particularly targeting children and young people – and **increasing efforts around stopping violence services and addressing harmful sexual behaviour**.

A strong platform of existing work exists, but gaps remain. Government has begun strengthening its response to sexual violence, however **sector and community recommendations remain consistent** across the years as to what needs to change.

There are **service gaps in the current response system** both in terms of capacity and accessibility, particularly in rural communities. **Services are not always designed to meet the needs of users** and there is a requirement for more culturally responsive services.

Improvements in justice sector responses are needed to better protect children and adults from sexual violence, support victims, reduce attrition, and reduce reoffending.

Workforce capability and capacity are insufficient.

The specialist workforce is small, stretched, and unevenly distributed. Generalist frontline workers often lack the confidence, skills, and training to identify risk and respond safely, with no formal qualification pathways.

New Zealand's sexual violence system is **overloaded, under-coordinated, and heavily weighted to crisis response**, while the scale and nature of sexual violence is **growing and changing faster than the system can adapt**. A flexible and adaptive approach is required.

Sexual violence intersects with multiple government strategies (child wellbeing, disability, policing, curriculum reform, Crown responses to abuse in care), demonstrating the need for **systemwide collaboration**, shared accountability, and joint planning.

Significant transformation is needed across **prevention, response, healing, workforce, governance, and investment** to ensure safety, equity, and wellbeing for all communities. There is a **need for coordinated, connected, cross-government leadership**.

Concerning trajectories of sexual violence that are accelerating and deepening harm.

New Zealand and international evidence shows that **sexual violence is evolving**, largely due to technology and digital platforms that support and facilitate existing harmful attitudes and behaviours, whilst also giving rise to new forms of harm. **Traditional responses are not keeping pace with the scale and speed** at which this occurs.

Concerning rates of sexual abuse and exploitation of children and children's exposure to harmful content

- Increasing reporting of sexual assaults towards children and young people - **3,230 children and young people victims reported sexual assault** to Police in 2022 (up from 2,592 in 2015).
- Exposure to sexualised, violent, or degrading material including pornography, extreme misogynistic content, or other material that normalises coercion, desensitises individuals to violence, or reinforces harmful gender and power norms.
- AI generated child sexual abuse material.
- Grooming, sextortion, and youth-on-youth image-based abuse online.¹
- 20%** of children in Europe report experiencing online solicitation or grooming.
- An international study found that **91%** of child sexual abuse material found to be criminal contained 'self-generated' imagery.²

Normalisation of strangulation and sexual aggression

- Sexual assault specialists report an increase in strangulation in the context of sexual assault and intimate partner violence.
- Many young people report sexual strangulation occurred without their consent or they were coerced or pressured.
- 57%** of Australians aged 18-35 had been strangled during sex – **61%** of women, **43%** of men, **79%** of non-binary or trans people have experienced strangulation during sex.
- The UK's Independent Review of Pornography, highlighted evidence such as a survey reporting **71%** of men said they had used such violence during consensual sex against their partner. One study found that **13%** of sexually active girls aged **14 to 17** had already been choked.³

The UK Government's independent pornography review in 2020 found *"four themes that were found to be influenced by pornography use **are viewing women as sex objects; shaping men's sexual expectations of women; acceptance of sexual aggression towards women; and perception of sexual aggression (such as being more permissive and a reduced willingness to intervene in a potential act of sexual violence)**".⁴*

Concerning trajectories of sexual violence that are accelerating and deepening harm.

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Increase in sextortion

Sextortion, or sexual extortion, is being blackmailed with nudes or sexually explicit material, that a person may have been tricked or pressured to share nude images or video, or this material may have been digitally faked.

- Netsafe has reported **an 88% increase in sextortion** since 2019⁵, and **43 reported cases** a week in New Zealand.⁶
- A recent survey found **8%** of New Zealanders have been sextorted.
- Those mostly impacted were **females**; young people **18-24 (40%)**; and **Māori (38%)**.
- **46%** was carried out by a **stranger**. Where the perpetrator was known, 65% was carried out by a 'friend'.⁷

Attitudes continue to reinforce sexual violence⁸

The 2025 Gender Attitudes Survey report found that a significant minority of respondents believe that we no longer need to work towards gender equality.

These results are underscored by concerning attitudes towards violence and violence against women:

- Men were more likely to agree with common rape myths than women e.g., **40%** of men agreed that false rape accusations are common compared with **27%** of women.
- Over time, agreement with "rape happens when a man's sex drive is out of control" has increased from **25%** in 2017 to **36%** in 2025.
- **11%** of people think that if someone doesn't physically fight back, you can't call it rape.

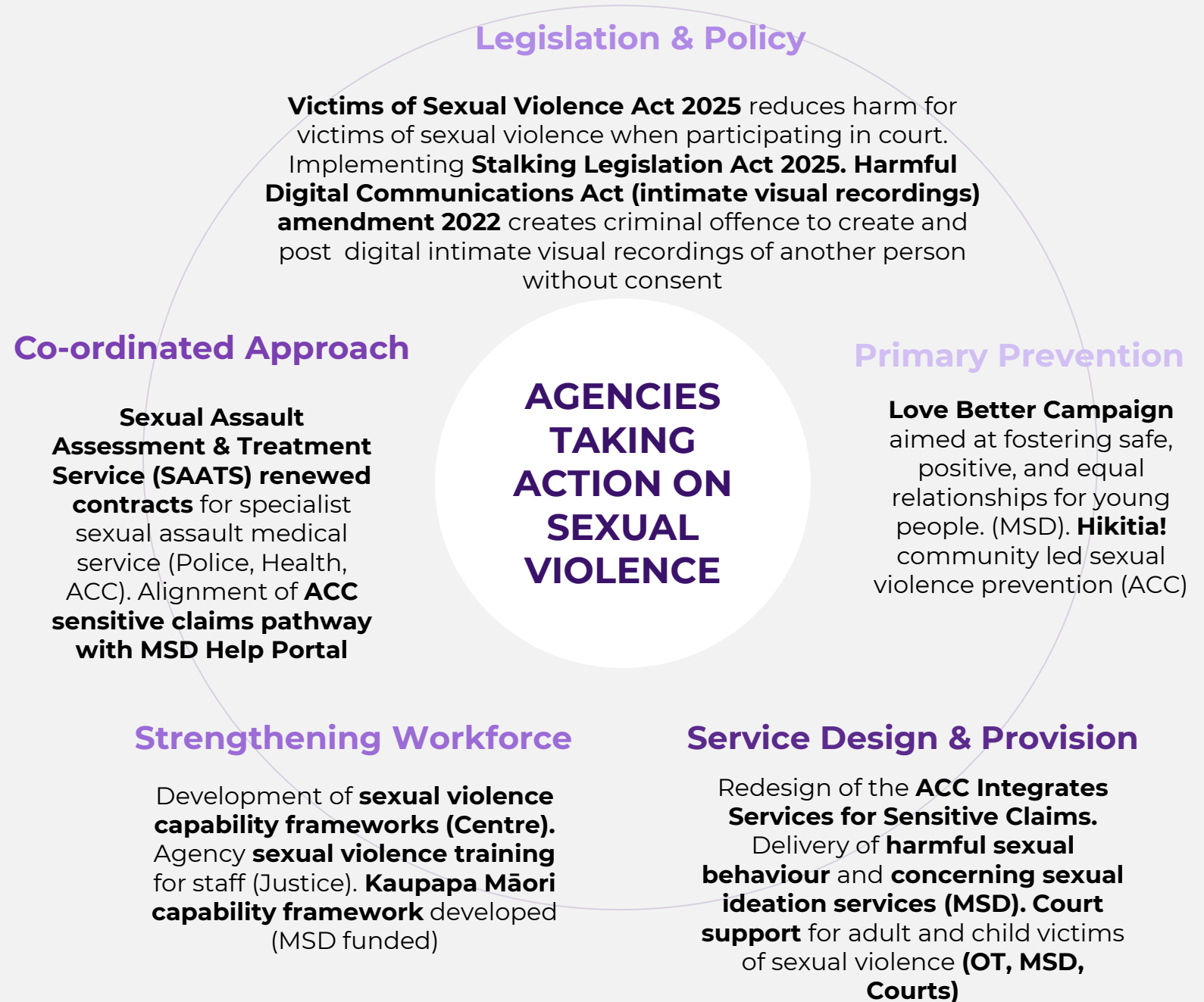
How Government is taking action on sexual violence.

Whilst barriers and challenges continue to exist, there is ongoing work by agencies to improve Government's approach to prevention and responding to sexual violence. There has been increased investment in sexual violence services.

This highlights some of the current example activities underway across Government.

What we need to know more about:

Specific actions agencies are undertaking or planning to address sexual violence.



Ways to improve Government's prevention of and response to sexual violence.

Successive task forces, reviews and inquiries have made a series of recommendations for Government to act. Some of these have been accepted, however, outstanding recommendations remain which should inform future actions.

This is **reinforced by what sector experts and communities have told us** what they need and what works.

Interested in more?

Appendices A and B summarise the recommendations from past reviews and stakeholders.

1

A coordinated approach for sexual violence

Strengthening dedicated coordination mechanisms for preventing and responding to sexual violence across government.

2

Sustainable sexual violence investment

An integrated approach to sexual violence investment, providing flexible and long-term funding to address service gap and removing burdensome contracting arrangements. .

3

Focusing on primary prevention and early intervention

Importance of enhanced primary prevention, behaviour change communications, community-led prevention and curriculum reform to challenge harmful beliefs and educate about identifying and responding appropriately to sexual violence.

4

Greater emphasis on people who use sexual violence

Increased rehabilitation and intervention options are needed, particularly focused on young people using harmful sexual behaviours.

5

Strengthening workforce capability and capacity

Uplifting collective workforce skills across agencies and sectors; growing specialist sexual violence workforce capacity, peer-support networks, formal qualifications and apprenticeships, and national level workforce development.

6

Legislation and policy reform

Strengthening legal protections by updating consent law and addressing emerging forms of harm (e.g. deepfakes, virginity testing); and improving the system e.g. court experiences; removing barriers to reporting.

7

Service design and provision

Addressing service gaps, particularly for children and young people; ensuring services are culturally appropriate; improving equity of access; and ensuring services are victim centred, holistic and flexible.



1. UNDERSTANDING THE SEXUAL VIOLENCE SYSTEM IN AOTEAROA

Sexual Violence is a cross-government responsibility.

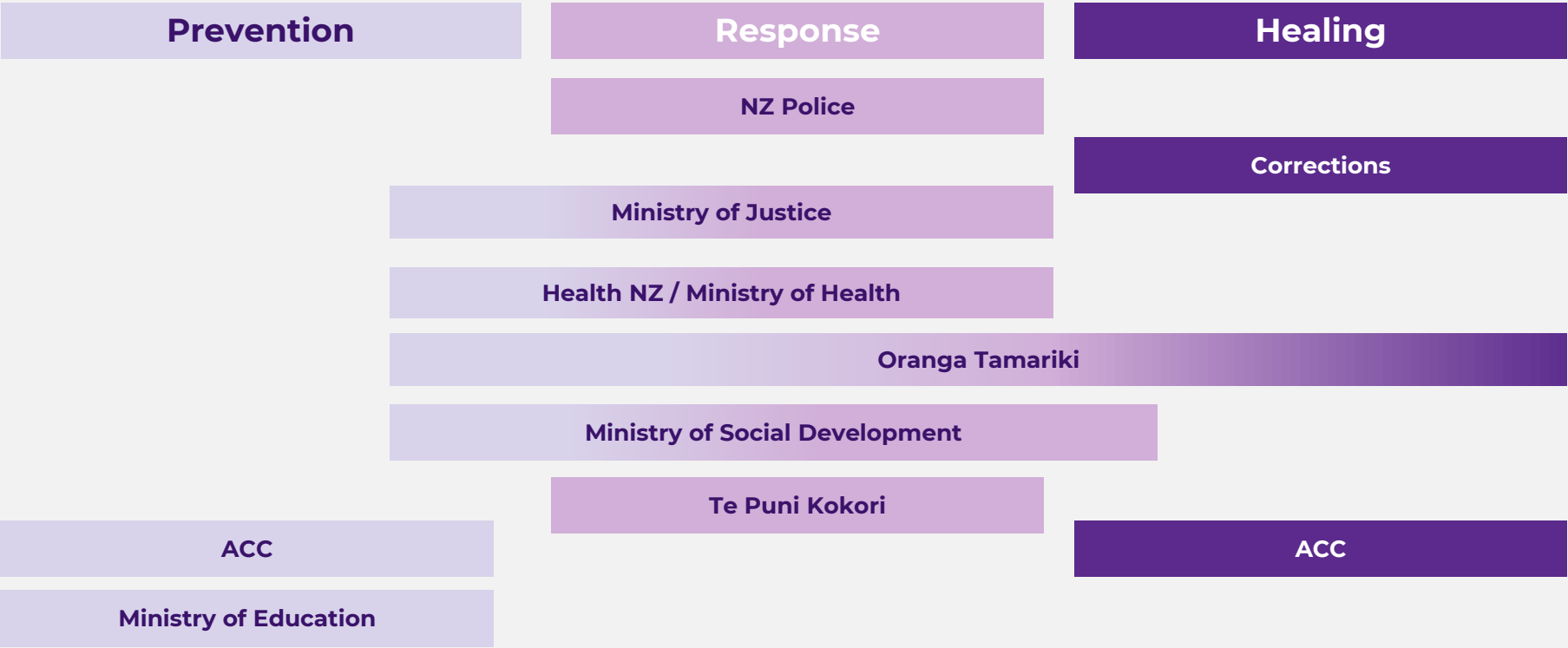
No single agency is responsible for sexual violence. **Each agency plays a unique role relative to its accountabilities.** This is how we understand the role of each agency in preventing and responding to sexual violence. It shows that the **system is geared towards response**, whilst **ACC is the lead for healing**.

Government provides a range of core sexual violence responses and services across the prevention continuum.

This includes primary prevention; medical support; criminal investigations and proceedings; therapeutic help and support to treatment and specialist support for those who engaged in harmful or concerning sexual behavior is also provided.

Interested in more? Appendix C has a more detailed summary of agency role and activities.

How agencies show up in the prevention continuum



Distribution of the role of IEB agencies across the prevention continuum.

How much government invests directly in preventing and responding to sexual violence.

\$386m

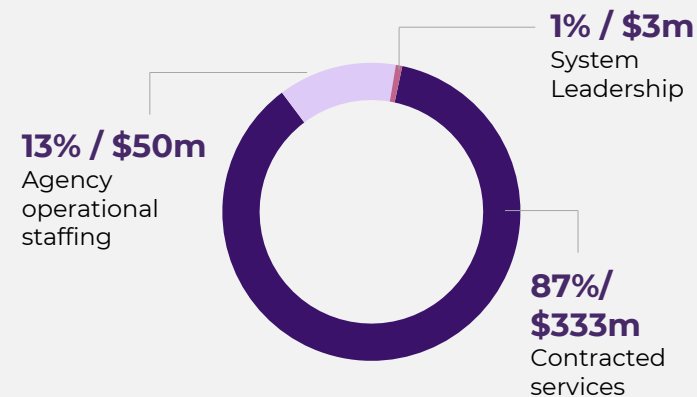
Total estimated government **direct** investment for FY 2026 in preventing and responding to sexual violence as of October 2025.

Government's direct investment in sexual violence is predominately focused on crisis response and healing.

The largest funder of sexual violence services is ACC which accounts for \$296m. This relates to support for victims/survivors and sensitive claims. This is reflected in the high proportion of contracted services.

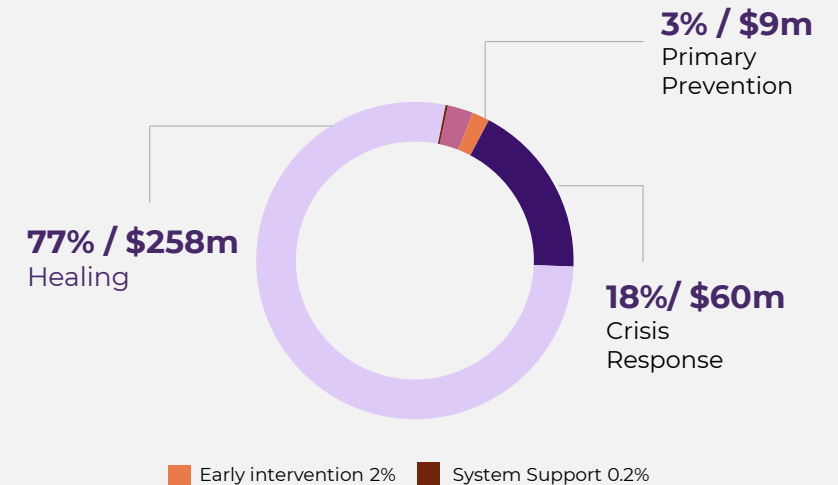
Primary prevention and early intervention is underfunded, accounting for just 5% combined of direct spend.

How much we invest



The high percentage of contract services reflects ACC funding of sexual violence healing services e.g. therapeutic and psychological support for victims/survivors. ACC investment also reflects a high volume of historical claimants.

What we invest in

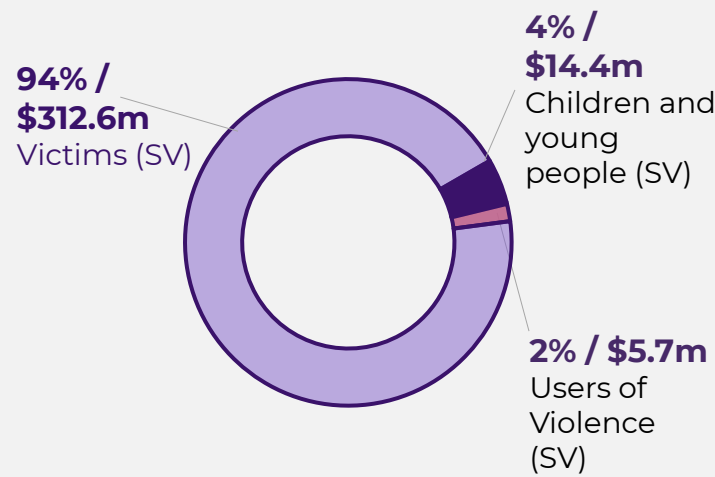


Low levels of investment in primary prevention reflect underfunding of preventative initiatives designed to promote positive healthy sexual behaviours and reduce harmful sexual actions.

How and where government invests directly in preventing and responding to sexual violence.

Government investment can be further categorised in several ways to **understand how it is invested**. This includes digging into who and where we are investing.

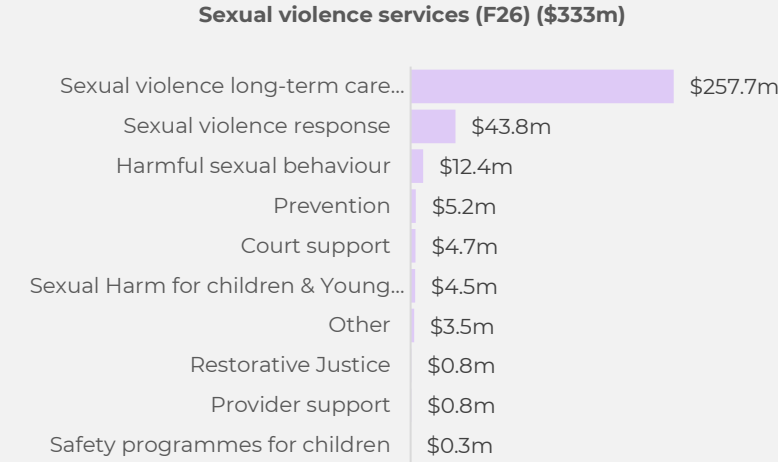
Who we are investing in



Overall, **victims receive the highest level of investment in contracted services**. Harmful sexual behavior services make up a significant portion of services for users of violence and children and young people.



How we invest



Response and care services for victims make up over 90% of SV services. This spend is driven by ACC sensitive claims (with additional services funded by MSD and OT). Services that do not come through in direct investment, reflect areas where the system relies on wider social and health services for recovery or may have gaps.

Sexual violence contracted value F26 (Forecast) – Excludes ACC

Where we invest



Spending across regions, broadly maps to higher population areas. With exceptions such as the almost \$6m spending in Northland.

Taking action on sexual violence is a **cross-government priority.**

Understanding **the alignment and connections across government** to other strategies, actions and interventions, **reinforces the importance of addressing sexual violence and identifies opportunities for points of collaboration** in the system for greater impact.

Consistent across these strategies and actions is a clear focus on protecting children and young people, improving integrated responses and developing workforce capability.

- Government Targets
- Transforming the system
- Strategy / Action Plan
- Policy

Target Four: Reduced Violent Crime 20,000 fewer victims of violent crime including assault, robbery and sexual assault by 2029.		Abuse in Care Crown Response Recommendations include safeguarding and workforce capability building. Early intervention support for families / whānau; prevention campaigns and programmes.		Dame Karen Poutasi Review Strengthening child protection systems and safeguarding including mandatory reporting, risk assessment, information sharing and improving workforce capability particularly specialist workforce.	
Better Later Life (2019-2034) Strategy and Action Plan include actions to protect older people from abuse.	Child and Youth Well-Being Strategy (2024-2027) Priority 3: preventing child harm includes a focus on abuse and neglect, addressing risk factors, and increasing protective factors and early interventions for those at risk.	Disability Strategy (2026-2030) Disabled people are safeguarded from abuse and violence. Including improving accessibility to services and access to justice and improve reporting pathways.	Health and Physical Education Curriculum (Draft) Age-appropriate learning about relationships, consent, staying safe online and harmful sexual behaviours.		
Te Aorerekura Action Plan – Breaking the Cycle Taking action on sexual violence to stop sexual violence from happening; helping those that have been affected; and creating a safe environment for everyone.					
Te Aorerekura National Strategy for Elimination of Family Violence & Sexual Violence, and OMF					
Shift 1: Towards strength based well-being	Shift 2: Towards mobilising communities	Shift 3: skilled, and sustainable workforces	Shift 4: investment in primary prevention	Shift 5: accessible, integrated responses	Shift 6: Towards increased capacity for healing



2. UNDERSTANDING SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN AOTEAROA

There are many ways in which **understandings of sexual violence** are expressed.

Using a shared system-wide understanding which carries the voice of victims/survivors is crucial. **The language used informs the way risk and safety are understood** and inform prevention approaches, service responses and delivery.

Sexual Violence (SV) is any sexual behaviour towards another person without that person's freely given and informed consent, or where they are unable to provide consent (e.g. all children).

Sexual violence is hugely complex and nuanced. It is experienced differently by individuals and communities.

It extends across a wide range of non-consensual sexual violence behaviours which include physical violations, unwanted touching and non-contact behaviour.

Spectrum of Sexual Violence*

Concerning and harmful behaviours and attitudes

Inappropriate language, jokes & actions; sexist & demeaning comments; rape myths; victim blaming; gendered stereotypes; misuse of power; developmentally inappropriate behaviours of children.

Sexual harassment or coercion

Unwanted sexual behaviour that is repeated, and/or makes the other person fearful.

Coercing, threatening or intimidating someone to engage in sexual behaviours.

Sexual offences

- Rape, indecent assault, stalking, incest, grooming and other offences under the Crimes Act 1961;
- Child sexual abuse material; any sexual activity with a child;
- Offences under the Harmful Communications Act;
- Sexual exploitation and trafficking.

Mahi Tūkino

Sexual behaviour that transgresses tapu and whakapapa; it is influenced by ongoing impacts of colonisation and requires (re)establishing whānau well-being and healing

**Adapted from the Sexual Violence Capability Framework Companion Document developed in partnership with agencies and sector experts.*

The prevalence of sexual violence helps us start to understand **the scale of sexual violence in Aotearoa.**

Prevalence can help us understand the impact on the population in a year, as well as over a lifetime.

Sexual Violence (SV) is a major issue in New Zealand.

A group equivalent to the population of Dunedin experienced sexual violence in 2024 alone, and the lifetime experience of sexual violence in the population is even higher.

Yet, in the 2025 Gender Attitudes Survey 40% of men agreed that false rape accusations are common (compared with 27% of women).⁸

Sexual violence starts with the attitudes of our society and translates into harm at unacceptable rates.

2.1% (90,000) of adults experienced sexual violence in 2024 (3% of women and 0.9% of men).⁹

Almost **1 in 4 (24.5%)** have experienced sexual violence in their lifetime.⁹

1 in 5 girls (19%) and **1 in 15 (6%) boys** aged 12-18 years have experience unwanted sexual contact in their lives (1 in 8 or 12.5% of all children).¹⁰

~10,000 sexual assaults reported to Police 2023.¹¹

27% of Māori have lifetime experience of sexual assault. **43% of wāhine Māori have lifetime experience of sexual assault.**⁹

2022 Human Rights Commission report found **30% of workers have experienced sexual harassment in the workplace** in the last five years.

What we know about people experiencing sexual violence.

Children, women, disabled and transgender people most likely to experience sexual violence. Victims of sexual violence are at **increased risk of further victimisation and unlikely to report to the Justice system.**

Sexual Violence (SV) reaches into the lives of every part of New Zealand.

However, some of our most vulnerable groups disproportionately experience harm, through compounding forms of disadvantage and discrimination.

Compared to crime victims overall, sexual assaults victims were five times as likely to attribute their victimisation at least in part to discrimination (59% in 2024).⁴

- **36% of women** have experienced one or more incidents of sexual assault in their lifetime.¹²
- **43% of wāhine Māori** have lifetime experience of sexual assault.¹²
- Child victims of sexual assault reported to police in 2019, **a third were under 12 years old** when they were assaulted, **84% were girls**.¹³
- **Almost half (45%) of the people who reported sexual violence victimisations reported to police in 2021 were children and young people aged under 18.** Another 15% were historic childhood victims.¹³
- **13% of men** have experienced one or more incidents of sexual assault in their lifetime.¹⁴
- **More than half of reports made by male survivors** were for sexual assaults that happened when they were children.¹⁵
- **1 in 5 Pacific young people had been sexually assaulted** (19%).¹⁶
- **Adults with a disability are almost twice as likely (40%)** to have been subject to sexual assault in their lifetime.¹⁷
- **51% of lesbian, gay or bisexual adults** have lifetime experience of sexual assault.¹⁸
- **62% of transgender and non-binary people** have ever experienced unwanted or offensive sexual contact.¹⁹

The **chances of being a victim again, after experiencing sexual assault, increases with each subsequent victimisation** from 1.4% after the first victimisation, 29.5% after the second, and 73.7% after five or more victimisations.²⁰

9% of reported sexual assaults lead to conviction within two years. 53% of sexual violence reported to police are not progressed after an investigation.²¹

What we know about people who use sexual violence.

Sexual violence is more likely to be **committed by men, typically younger men and are often known to their victims.**

Men are more likely to use sexual violence.

- **Men accounted for 97.1% of those reported as perpetrators** in the 18,371 sexual assaults reported in New Zealand between 2014 and 2024.²¹
- Mainly young men – **48.7% aged 15-34**, with rates declining with age.
- **45% were European** (27.9% Māori).²²
- We know from NZ Harmful Sexual Behaviour service data **that 70% of sexual violence offenders start harming before the age of 17.**²³

People who use sexual violence against children²⁴

- An Australian study found **1 in 5 men have sexual feelings for children** and/or have sexually offended against a child. This would equate **to 260,000 New Zealand men.**
- **Those with sexual feelings towards children were:**
- **3 x** more likely to be working with children.
- **6 x** more likely to report own sexual abuse.
- **11 x** more likely to watch violence porn.
- **26 x** more likely to watch bestiality porn.
- **16 x** more likely to purchase sexual content online.

Perpetrators are often known to victims/survivors.

- 3 out of 4 victims reporting sexual assault to police knew the perpetrator.²⁵
- Children are more likely to be abused by a known family member.²⁶

“A decrease in the number of actual and potential perpetrators in the population is necessary to achieve measurable reductions in the prevalence of sexual violence.”²⁷

What we need to know more about:
Findings from the review of effectiveness of stopping violence.

There is no linear escalation of sexual violence behaviours and there are many pathways to perpetration but there are some agreed risk and protective factors that can be the focus for prevention work

Sexual violence occurs in multiple forms of sexual violence and arises through different pathways to perpetration. This requires a comprehensive approach that brings together effective healing and recovery, response and prevention.

COMMON RISK FACTORS FOR THE PERPETRATION OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE ²⁸

1 Early experiences of trauma and abuse including histories of child physical, sexual and emotional abuse and neglect, can disrupt healthy child development.

3 Family and social contexts where secrecy, limited protections, family conflict and/or power imbalances are present can create environments where some people are able to target and exploit others

6 Problematic sexual development, including early sexual initiation or exposure to pornography or sexual violence, can distort sexual boundaries.

2 Exposure to harmful social norms and beliefs such as hyper-masculinity, male entitlement, and rigid gender attitudes can mean sexual violence is accepted or excused.

4 Peer and social influences where violence is normalised including media violence, can sanction the use of violence and sexual dominance.

7 Environmental and situational risks e.g. substance use, social isolation, unstable living conditions, and neighbourhood poverty can contribute to the use of sexual violence.

Interested in more?

Appendix D profile of how these factors influence different forms of sexual violence.

5 Emotional, cognitive, or developmental challenges — including limited emotional regulation or social skills—can increase risk of harmful behaviour.

8 Structures, systems, and beliefs that enable the misuse of power (e.g. inequality, racism, sexism, ableism, ageism, homophobia, and transphobia) can enable violence to occur and allow people who use violence to target particular people without negative consequences.

Māori experience high rates of sexual violence and trauma which extends from the past, to the present and future.

Māori experience disproportionate rates of sexual violence **due to colonisation, deepening inequities and intergenerational trauma in communities already affected by structural harm.**

“Mahi tūkino is a violation of te whare tangata...Not only is this a violation of the woman herself, but also a violation of her tipuna and her future generations.”

“Tangata whenua solutions to violence within whānau and mahi tūkino lie in our customary mātauranga, beliefs and values and in connecting whānau culturally.”²⁹

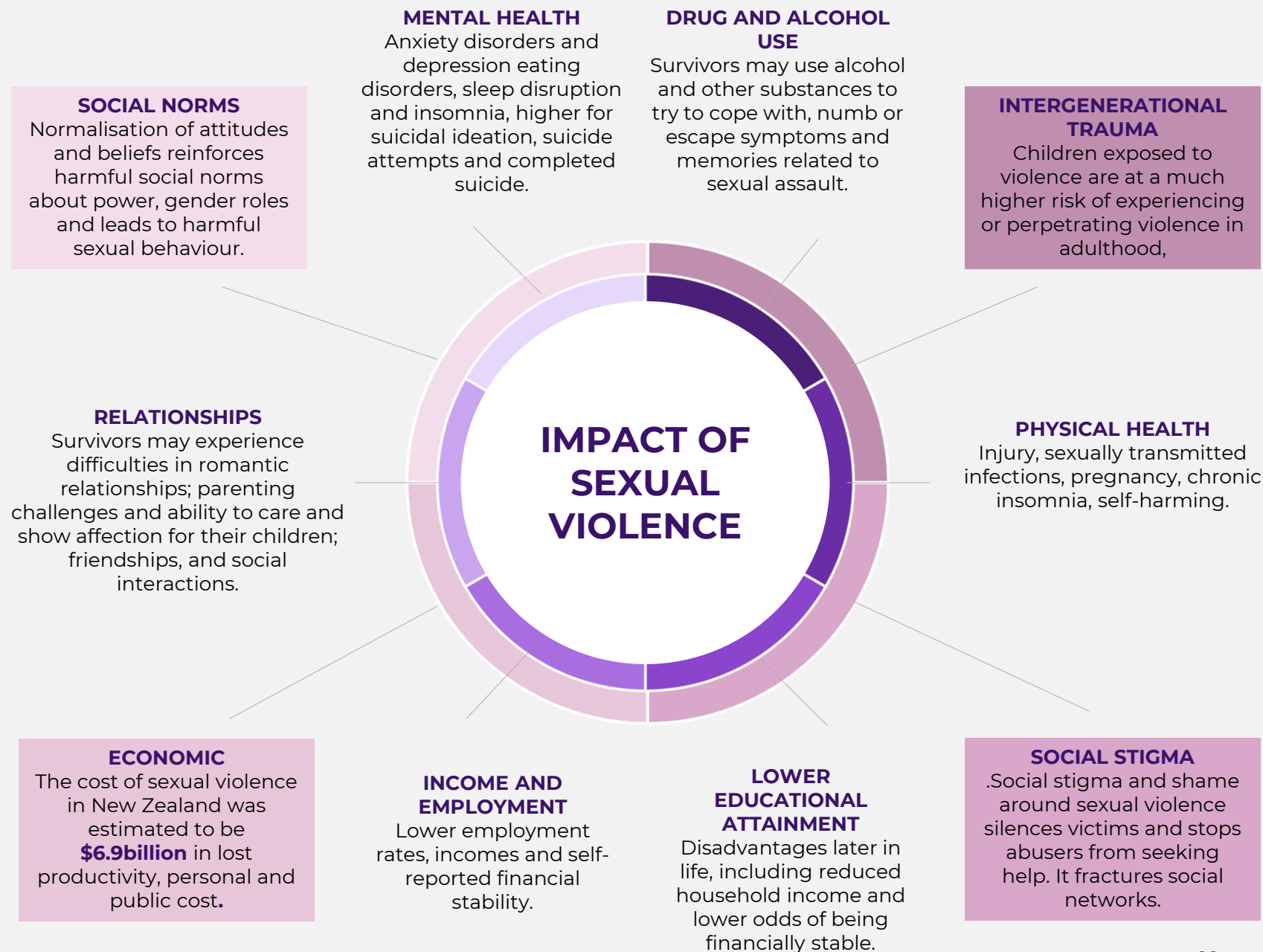
What government has heard

Acts of violence against wāhine Māori are violations of whakapapa. To understand and respond effectively to these violations, it is important to acknowledge structural issues, such as the ongoing impact of colonisation.³⁰	Western worldviews are prioritised over indigenous worldviews, meaning individualism is prioritised over collective wellbeing which is not strengthened, and mātauranga Māori is misinterpreted.³¹	Government responses can contribute to harm, increasing pressure for holistic responses and trauma-informed reform. Survivors report that Aotearoa’s legal system continues to feel outdated, unsafe, and emotionally harmful.³²	There is disproportionate harm for Māori communities. Rangatahi Māori experience higher exposure to trauma, sexual and family violence, and systemic disadvantage.³³	Mahi Tūkino involving tamariki and rangatahi requires specialised, culturally grounded responses.³⁴
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Directly or indirectly, sexual violence impacts us all. Its impacts are far reaching and last generations.

The impact of sexual violence has far-reaching consequences for victims/survivors which extends to communities and New Zealand as a whole.

“Children and adolescents who are sexually abused are **more likely to experience negative social, economic, psychological, spiritual and health effects** that have long-term costs for individuals, families, whānau, communities and society.”³⁵



APPENDICES

A: Summary of Government commissioned reviews on sexual violence.

B: Recent recommendations from lived experience and sector experts.

C: Role of agencies.

D: Common Factors and profiles of people who use sexual violence.

Appendix A: Summary of Government commissioned reviews on sexual violence.

Consistent recommendations have been identified through successive government reviews on sexual violence.

There have been three formal reviews into the Government response to sexual violence since 2009.

In parallel there have been other institutional reviews that have identified recommendations that related to sexual violence prevention including:

- Commission of Inquiry into Police Conduct (Louise Nicolas case) (2007)
- NZDF – Operation Respect (2016) - OAG monitoring reports
- Parliamentary Services – Bullying and Harassment in workplace (2019)
- Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in State Care (2018-2024)
- Police ISPC report (2025)

2009 Sexual Violence Taskforce Report

Key recs:

- SV prevention plan
- Primary prevention funding
- Consent legislation reform
- Review funding arrangements
- Non-mandated sexual violence perpetrator treatment
- Improve victims' rights in criminal processes
- Sector involvement in decision and resourcing
- Lead agency for sexual violence

2015 Law Commission Report: Justice response to victims of sexual violence

Key recs:

- Changes to court processes and environment, include sexual violence court pilot & workforce education
- Out of court processes for victims
- Improving social support for victims

2015 SV Social Services Committee Report

Key recs:

- National violence prevention framework and action plan would include sexual violence prevention
- Sexual violence policy framework for integrated whole-of-system approach to SV – lead agency
- Sexual violence workforce capability, training and accreditation
- Integrated purpose-built funding and service delivery model

Other:

- Auditor General Report - Meeting the needs of people affected by family violence and sexual violence (2023)
- Education and Workforce Select Committee - Inquiry into harm young New Zealanders encounter online (2025)
- WAI 2700 - Mana Wāhine Waitangi Tribunal Inquiry (MfW and TPK co-leading Crown's response)

Appendix B: Recent recommendations from lived experience and sector experts.

Advice from sector experts and people with lived experience.

TOAH-NNEST (SV peak body)

- Flexible long-term funding contracts so that providers can respond to service gaps in their area & provide earlier, tailored supports e.g. children's services, harmful sexual behaviours, holistic responses
- Mobile crisis response teams to respond to SV alongside Police & community safety hubs to meet rural needs
- Coordination of SV cases to address fragmented govt services
- Training for generalists to recognise, respond and refer to kaupapa Māori and other specialist SV services
- Develop the workforce, build tertiary qualifications (currently none exist) & apprenticeships
- Legislate to address emerging forms of SV harm
- Recognising the potential role of specialist court models in improving both victim experiences and offender accountability.

Tautoko Tāne-male survivors

- Develop the Purposeful Peer Support Aotearoa framework & build the peer support workforce
- Drive education and training for SV workers from the national level
- Ensure contracts for services that enable full wrap-around support including healing & social work
- Promote services & ensure there is equitable access to support & healing services for male survivors

“At present, the education young people receive on topics relating to sexual violence is uneven, disjointed, and not keeping up with changing societal norms, nor is it addressing increasing harms.” (1)

“Survivors move fluidly between crisis, stability, and readiness for deeper work; services must reflect this reality... Experience shows that wraparound responses are more effective and ultimately cost-efficient.” (2)

“Without training pathways to build much needed capacity in our workforce, New Zealand risks a national shortage of qualified sexual violence therapists.” (3)

“Perpetrators could also be victims themselves (in the past) therefore helping them is important in breaking the cycle.” (4)

“Action is needed to establish a ‘front door’ into the SV system that will point people towards the right SV service to meet their need.” (5)

Helen Clark Foundation Report

- Change the justice system to reduce underreporting and increase the number of cases continuing to resolution
- Update the definition of consent in the Crimes Act 1961 to an affirmative consent model
- Address the harm caused by sexually-explicit deepfakes
- Legislate to ban the practice of ‘virginity testing’ & educate medical practitioners
- Change education curriculum & run public campaigns, to challenge harmful beliefs and promote positive behaviour

Summary of community engagement for Action Plan

- Build skills and knowledge in the allied workforces (teachers, health, counsellors, courts) for better responses where people seek help
- Provide SV responses for children and young people
- Make changes in the Justice system to make it victim-centred including more victims advocates & compulsory training for Police and court staff
- More options for intervention and rehabilitation for people using SV, particularly young people offending
- Invest in primary prevention and early intervention
- More kaupapa Māori and tailored services are required
- Address online harm
- Improve coordination of government agencies in service delivery and contracting

Appendix C: Roles and Responsibilities of individual agencies.

Addressing sexual violence extends beyond the core agencies of the IEB. This provides further detail of the role of activities and the types of activities they carry out.

Agency	Role	Primary Prevention	Response, protection and safeguarding	Healing support	Legislation & Policy Reform	Partnerships, funding, stewardship
IEB						
ACC	ACC provides support for anyone in Aotearoa New Zealand, including visitors to the country, who has experienced sexual abuse or assault. Contributes to SV prevention.	I	I	I		I
Police	Law enforcement, criminal investigations, targeting and apprehending offenders and providing a priority service to victims.		I	I		I
Corrections	Provides offence-focused rehabilitation and treatment programmes including non-violence programmes, child sex offender treatment and psychological treatment.		I			I
Ministry of Justice & Courts	Prosecution of people using SV; justice proceedings through administration of the courts. Improving experience of victims/ survivors and whānau; policy advice on key legislation.		I		I	I
Oranga Tamariki	Respond to reports of concern for children and young people (under 18); youth justice system; international child protection; provision of statutory services (alongside other agencies).	I	I	I	I	I
Health NZ / Ministry of Health	Responsible for the delivery of health services to victims of sexual violence, including specialist services and prevention initiatives. Alongside providing guiding information health professionals to support decision-making.	I	I			I

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IEB						
Ministry of Social Development	Funds crisis victim support services & court support; specialist support for people using harmful sexual behaviour; funds peak body; limited SV primary prevention.	I	I	I		I
Ministry of Education	Statutory obligations for children protection and safeguarding through schools. Primary prevention through PSE curriculum design and education on health relationships and consent.	I	I		I	I
Te Puni Kōkiri	Te Puni Kōkiri leads policy advice to the Government on Māori development, and Iwi and Māori relations with the Crown.				I	I
IEB & the Centre	Strategic leadership, specialist FVSV expertise and partnership building.					I
Whaikaha	Lead and coordinate cross-government strategic policy to ensure the rights and needs of disabled people are considered.				I	I
Ethnic Communities	Government’s chief advisor on Ethnic Communities. Influences policy design to better reflect the specific needs of Ethnic Communities.				I	

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Agency	Role	Primary Prevention	Response, protection and safeguarding	Healing support	Legislation & Policy Reform	Partnerships, funding, stewardship
Non-IEB						
Department of Internal Affairs	Detects, investigates, and prosecutes those who produce, distribute, and possess child sexual abuse material. Activity to prevent child sexual exploitation and provide education to help people stay safe online	I	I		I	I
Ministry of Business Innovation & Employment	Responsible for workplace safety legislation and policy advice that protects people from sexual harassment. Responding to trafficking of people. Develops ACC policy.	I			I	
NZ Customs Service	Enforcement of both physical and digital borders, identifying, investigating and prosecuting those who import, export, and distribute child sexual abuse material. Coordinate with other enforcement agencies.		I		I	
Pacific Peoples	Government advisor on policies and interventions aimed at improving outcomes for Pacific peoples in New Zealand.				I	

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Addressing sexual violence extends beyond the core agencies of the IEB. This provides further detail of the role of activities and the types of activities they carry out.

Agency	Role	Primary Prevention	Response, protection and safeguarding	Healing support	Legislation & Policy Reform	Partnerships, funding, stewardship
Non-IEB						
Ministry for Women	Provide system leadership to improve outcomes for women and girls, and wāhine Māori, to increase women and girls’ leadership, participation, safety, and wellbeing.				I	
Classification Office	Make determinations based on the Classification Act, inform and empower New Zealanders to watch and read content in a positive way while safeguarding them from harm.				I	
Social Investment Agency	New approaches to investment and implementation of outcomes-based contracting and community led commissioning.					I

Appendix D: Example profiles of those who use violence and factors that influence behaviour.

These profiles show that there are **common factors that increase vulnerability to using sexual violence as well as specific factors**. There is no linear progression across the spectrum of sexual violence. Someone who uses harassment for example may not go on to use physical sexual violence.

Person who uses sexual violence	Individual Level Factors	Family Level Factors	Peer/Social Network Factors	Community / Sociocultural Factors	Sexual Development & Behaviour Factors
A man who often sexually assaults their partner or ex	- Aggressive behaviors - Hyper-masculinity	- Family history of conflict and violence - Childhood history of physical, sexual, or emotional abuse - Poor parent-child relationships, particularly with fathers.	Association with sexually aggressive, hyper-masculine, and delinquent peers	- Rigid gender attitudes - Adherence to traditional social norms about how men and women behave	
A person who perpetrates child sexual abuse	Impulsivity	Childhood history of abuse	- Anti-social behaviors - Lack of community support and social connection	- Substance use - High-risk living situation	- Early sexual initiation - Sexual attraction to children - Interrupted sexual development
A person who sexually harasses people online or in public	- Aggressive behaviors - Association with sexually aggressive, hyper-masculine, and delinquent peers	- Family history of conflict and violence - Childhood history of physical, sexual, or emotional abuse - Poor parent-child relationships, particularly with fathers.	Association with sexually aggressive, hyper-masculine, and delinquent peers	Adherence to traditional social norms about how men and women behave	

Appendix D: Example profiles of those who use violence and factors that influence behaviour.

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Person who uses sexual violence	Individual Level Factors	Family Level Factors	Peer/Social Network Factors	Community / Sociocultural Factors	Sexual Development & Behaviour Factors
A person who accesses child sexual abuse material	- Underdeveloped social skills and/or emotional regulation - Alcohol or drug use - Cognitive differences and/or disability - Mental health issues	- Strict or rigid parenting / family relationships - Attachment issues - Adverse childhood experiences - Childhood history of trauma and/or sexual abuse	- Antisocial influences from family or peers - Low level of social connection		- Exposure to pornography/CSAM - Sexually compulsive behaviours - Low sexual knowledge - Lack of appropriate modelling of relationships and/or intimacy - Emotionally immature - Early sexual initiation
A young person who uses inappropriate, harmful or violent sexual behaviour	- Underdeveloped social skills, emotional regulation and/or emotional maturity - Hypermasculinity - Alcohol or drug use - Cognitive differences and/or disability - Mental health issues	- Childhood history of trauma and/or sexual abuse - Exposure to family violence - Adverse childhood experiences	- Disrupted attachments or social connections - Antisocial influences		- Sexually compulsive behaviours or inadequate sexual boundaries - Exposure to/use of pornography - Sexual attraction to children - Low sexual knowledge - Lack of appropriate modelling of relationships and/or intimacy

Appendix E: Data Quality

Data quality measures how well data is fit for purpose through aspects such as accuracy, completeness, consistency, and timeliness. This annex summarises known data quality issues in this report, including gaps, for the purpose of supporting risk awareness and appropriate decision making.

There are system-wide data limitations.

Sexual violence is under-reported. Many of the datasets used in this report capture only a proportion of experienced harm.

There is no single dataset that tracks individuals across prevention, harm, disclosure, justice, and healing processes. This makes it difficult to understand individual experiences, effectiveness of these systems, and long-term outcomes

The evidence available is drawn from multiple sources, each with different strengths and limitations, particularly in terms of representativeness, consistency and accuracy of measurement, and the limited availability of robust longitudinal data to track change over time.

There is incomplete coverage of perpetrator data

Data on people who use sexual violence is strongest for **detected offenders**, but weak for undetected perpetrators, desistance, or prevention effectiveness.

There are coverage gaps for children, men and some ethnic groups.

Sexual violence affecting **children** is not comprehensively captured by population surveys. Available data sources such as Police and service records, reflect disclosure and detection, not prevalence. Peer-on-peer, sibling, and online-facilitated harm are likely under-represented.

Stigma, social norms, and reporting pathways historically designed around female victimisation mean sexual violence experienced by **men and boys** has reduced visibility in the data. Survey and administrative data is likely under-capture female-to-male sexual violence and childhood abuse disclosed later in life.

Data for **MELAA and some ethnic communities** is constrained by small sample sizes, limiting reliability and trend analysis. Coverage can also be affected by cultural barriers to disclosure.

There is evidence that **Disabled, Rainbow, and gender-diverse communities** experience disproportionate harm, whilst feeling less able to report it. Data is often episodic or single-source, with limited longitudinal comparability.

Data quality for intersectional groups

Statistics for intersectional groups (defined by several characteristics at once such as ethnicity and gender and disability) are difficult to report because the number of people surveyed in each combined group is very small. Some intersectional breakdowns cannot be published because they are not confidential or statistically sound.

There is a lack of qualitative research that would allow us to gain insight into intersectional experiences through understanding lived experiences

Online and technology facilitated sexual violence is evolving faster than official data collections.

We currently rely on NGO reporting, platform intelligence and international studies to assess the prevalence of online and technology facilitated sexual violence in New Zealand. Reporting volumes may reflect increased awareness or reporting, rather than true prevalence. The cross-border dimension of online and technology related violence presents additional challenges to measuring prevalence in New Zealand. We may need to focus more on patterns of exposure, impact and risk across platforms and communities, rather than traditional jurisdictional boundaries.

End Notes

1. Netsafe Sextortion Survey Insights Report July 25 [Microsoft PowerPoint - Netsafe Sextortion Survey Report - Read-Only](#)
2. Internet Watch Foundation, 2024
3. [Independent review of pornography p69](#)
4. [Independent review of pornography p64](#)
5. Netsafe submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry into the harm young New Zealanders encounter online, and the roles that Government, business, and society should play in addressing those harms.
6. Netsafe Annual Report 2022 <https://resource.netsafe.org.nz/10-December-2022-Netsafe-Annual-Report-released.pdf>
7. Netsafe Sextortion Survey Insights Report July 25 [Microsoft PowerPoint - Netsafe Sextortion Survey Report - Read-Only](#)
8. "Gender Equal NZ (National Council of Women of New Zealand – Te Kaunihera Wāhine o Aotearoa), Gender Attitudes Survey 2025. The nationally representative survey (n=1,250 adults aged 18+, fieldwork May 2025) found that men were more likely than women to agree with common rape myths, including the belief that false rape accusations are common (40% of men compared with 27% of women). The survey also shows an increase over time in agreement with the statement “rape happens when a man’s sex drive is out of control”, rising from 25% in 2017 to 36% in 2025, and that 11% of respondents agreed that if someone does not physically fight back, it cannot be called rape."
9. Ministry of Justice. (2025c). New Zealand Crime and Victims Survey: 2024 (Cycle 7) - Sexual Violence and Family Offence. Sexual assault defined using police definitions, excluding indecent exposure
10. What About Me? The national youth health and wellbeing survey 2021
11. Progression of reported sexual assaults through the criminal justice system - Ministry of Justice 2025
12. Ministry of Justice. (2026c). New Zealand Crime and Victims Survey: 2025 (Cycle 8) - Sexual Violence and Family Offence. Sexual assault defined using police definitions, excluding indecent exposure
13. Ministry of Justice - <https://www.police.govt.nz/about-us/publications-statistics/data-and-statistics/policedatanz/victimisations-demographics>
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20. Ministry of Justice - [Understanding re-victimisation through an intersectional lens](#)
21. Ministry of Justice 2025 - Progression of reported sexual assaults through the criminal justice system
22. New Zealand Police (2024). Proceedings (offender demographics). Retrieved from: Proceedings (offender demographics) | New Zealand Police
23. Data provided by STOP - October 2025.
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25. Ministry of Justice. (2025c). New Zealand Crime and Victims Survey: 2024 (Cycle 7) - Sexual Violence and Family Offence. Sexual assault defined using police definitions, excluding indecent exposure
26. Ministry of Justice - Factsheet-Child-victims-of-sexual-violence-in-the-criminal-justice-system.pdf
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33. (Grey, Lambie and Ioane 2023)
34. (Grey, Lambie and Ioane 2023)
35. (Clarke et al., 2023; Khadr et al., 2018).