



# Project Restore Evaluation



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# Executive summary

## Introduction

Project Restore uses restorative justice to provide an opportunity for victim-survivors of sexual harm, those who caused the harm and the friends, family, whānau, colleagues and professionals who support them, to talk about what happened, why it happened, the impact of the harm, and any actions which might help them heal.

## Purpose

The purpose of the evaluation is to assess Project Restore's efficacy in meeting the needs of all participants, including victim-survivors, those who caused harm, and their supporters. Key research questions focus on the process's ability to meet the participants' needs, identify successful aspects, highlight areas for improvement, and evaluate the contribution of the process to participants' sense of justice and well-being.

## Method

A multi-pronged research method was employed to understand the process and impact:

- Theory of change workshop: A facilitated discussion was undertaken with Project Restore staff to understand the programme's intended outcomes and mechanisms of change.
- Anonymous surveys: In December 2021 Project Restore sent an online survey link to victim-survivors, those who caused harm, and supporters to collect both quantitative and qualitative data on their experiences and perceptions. In total, there were 62 victim-survivors, 32 people who harmed, and 108 people supporting them who took part in the survey, although not all completed the questionnaires.
- Stakeholder interviews: In February 2022 Point conducted interviews with staff and stakeholders, including referral sources and justice sector representatives, to gather perspectives on the restorative justice process within the broader justice ecosystem.
- Data analysis: A comprehensive review and synthesis of survey responses, interview transcripts, and program data was undertaken to identify key themes, trends, and outcomes, along with areas which are working well, challenges and parts of the process and service which could be improved.

## Key Findings

- Participant motivations and experiences: The evaluation revealed a strong need

among victim-survivors for those who harmed them to understand the impact of their actions and accept accountability. Those who caused harm primarily sought participation to apologise and make amends. The referral process was found to be positive, although some felt that the process was protracted.

- **Outcomes:** Both victim-survivors and those who caused harm reported positive outcomes from the restorative justice meetings, including an increased understanding of the harm caused, emotional relief, and a sense of closure. Project Restore's supportive approach, characterised by respect, empathy, and thorough preparation, was highly valued by participants.
- **Challenges identified:** The emotional intensity of the meeting, the logistical complexities of the meeting, such as where it was held and travel costs, and the need for enhanced cultural pathways emerged as challenges. Some felt the process lacked teeth, with little ability to monitor or enforce agreed actions. The participants would have liked to know whether recommended actions had been implemented. For those not involved in court processes, there were questions as to how conversations in the meeting or conference might be used should victim-survivors choose to take a case against them in the future.
- **Supporting diversity:** The respondents identified a desire for Project Restore to further develop bicultural processes and a diversity of pathways, supports and facilitation processes to better meet their cultural needs.
- **Programme expansion:** Interviews with stakeholders highlighted Project Restore's restorative justice programme as a critical alternative to traditional justice processes and emphasised the need for wider awareness and availability of restorative justice options. Stakeholders advocated for the expansion of the program to encompass a broader range of settings and community needs, noting that the model and processes could be used in other settings, such as schools.

## Recommendations

Based on the evaluation findings, several recommendations are proposed to enhance Project Restore's effectiveness and reach:

- **Clarify the relationship between restorative justice and future legal action:** Ensure participants are aware of the implications of taking part in the restorative action outside of the legal system.
- **Follow up on agreed actions:** While the process may not have the teeth to be able to enforce follow-up actions, find out and let the participants know whether the actions have been undertaken.
- **Enhance cultural responsiveness:** Further develop cultural pathways which cater to

the diverse needs of participants.

- **Expand access and awareness:** Increase efforts to raise awareness about the program among potential participants and stakeholders and explore avenues to make restorative justice processes available at various stages of the healing and justice journey.
- **Continuous evaluation and adaptation:** Implement an ongoing evaluation to capture the evolving needs and outcomes of participants, using these insights to continually refine and adapt the program.

## **Conclusion**

Project Restore's restorative justice program offers a valuable and impactful approach to addressing sexual harm, emphasising healing, accountability, and in some cases, reconciliation. The approach is having a positive impact on victim-survivors, those who harmed and their families and communities. Clients are generally highly supportive of the process and report positive outcomes. While the evaluation highlights the program's significant impact and is highly valued by participants and those in the sector, the evaluation also points to areas for improvement and expansion. By addressing the challenges and implementing the recommendations, Project Restore has an opportunity to further enhance its contribution to the healing journey of victim-survivors, the rehabilitation of those who harmed them, and the growth of a more empathetic and restorative approach to justice.

# Introduction

Restorative justice provides an opportunity for people who have been harmed, and those responsible for the harm, to come together and talk about what happened, understand why it happened, the impact of the harm, and look collectively at how the needs that have occurred as a result of the harm can be addressed.

There are a range of ways that the victim-survivor, those responsible for sexual harm and their families can participate in restorative justice processes with Project Restore.

The evaluation seeks to understand the participants' experiences, how well the restorative justice process meets their needs, and how Project Restore's service might be improved.

The specific research questions are:

- How well is the restorative justice process meeting the participants' needs?
- What is working well?
- Are there parts of the process and service which could be improved?
- Was the process helpful to the participants' sense of justice and well-being?

## Method

The research was undertaken in four parts.

### Part One: A theory of change

For this phase Point undertook a Zoom meeting (during a COVID-19 lockdown period) with Project Restore staff to develop a theory of change on how restorative justice works and its impacts. This process began with identifying the long-term goals and then worked backwards to map out the preconditions, interventions, and assumptions essential for achieving these goals

### Part two: Surveys

The surveys used in this evaluation were adapted from the surveys designed by Associate Professor Shirley Jülich, ONZM of Massey University which were used for a research project on Project Restore that ran between 2016 and 2019.

An anonymous survey of victim-survivors, those who harmed, and those who supported either the victim-survivors or those who harmed, was undertaken. All participants in the process were invited by Project Restore staff to take part. Those who agreed were sent a survey link.

The survey included questions on the following areas:

- Referral pathways: Understanding how participants were referred to Project Restore, including through the court system, police, self-referral, or other agencies, to understand the diversity of entry points into the programme.
- Motivations for participation: Exploring participants' reasons for engaging with Project Restore, such as seeking accountability, wanting to be heard, or learning more about restorative justice, to assess what drives individuals to choose a restorative justice pathway.
- Referral process and expectations: Gathering feedback on the referral process and participants' initial hopes and goals, to identify areas for improvement and better align the program with participants' needs.
- Initial contact and decision making: Evaluating the effectiveness of the initial interactions with Project Restore, including the quality of information provided, responsiveness to participants' desires, and the supportiveness of the case worker.
- Preparation for the restorative justice meeting or conference: Assessing how prepared participants felt, including their understanding of the process, the level of input they had, and their confidence in the support provided.
- The restorative justice meeting/conference experience: Examining participants' experiences during the meeting or conference, including their ability to share their story, feel heard, and perceive any acknowledgements made by those who caused harm, to evaluate the effectiveness of the restorative process.
- Taking responsibility: Determining whether those who caused harm acknowledged their actions and took steps towards making amends, to measure the extent of accountability within the process.
- Outcomes and impact: Capturing participants' perceptions of the outcomes, including whether they felt a sense of closure and justice, and whether their cultural and individual needs were met, to assess the overall impact of the program.
- Post-conference follow-up: Understanding the extent and effectiveness of any follow-up actions taken by Project Restore, to ensure ongoing support and resolution.
- Recommendations for improvement: Soliciting suggestions for enhancing the program, including cultural responsiveness, communication, and the overall process,

to drive service and process improvements.

- General feedback and recommendations: Offering participants the opportunity to provide general feedback and rate their likelihood of recommending the program to others, to gauge overall satisfaction and potential advocacy for restorative justice.
- Demographic information: Collecting basic demographic data to understand the diverse backgrounds of participants to understand the feedback and help tailor the programme.

In total, there were 62 victim-survivors, 32 people who harmed, and 108 people supporting them who took part in the survey.

### Part three: Interviews with stakeholders

Interviews with eight stakeholders, and five staff at Project Restore, along with workshops with Project Restore staff were undertaken. The stakeholders invited to take part in an interview were those who make referrals or had experience with Project Restore's work, such as those from Corrections, the Police, the Parole Board, the Ministry of Justice and staff from NGOs who make referrals. The stakeholders were asked to reflect on their relationship and experience with Project Restore, how they saw the restorative justice process, what they considered worked well, how the process might be improved and about any outcomes and impact. Specifically, they were asked about:

- Their role, organisation and what they do
- How they and their organisation interfaces with Project Restore
- What works well, and what doesn't about Project Restore's restorative justice process, and for whom
- How it might be improved
- What difference, if any, it is making.

### Part four: Analysis and reporting

The anonymised data was grouped, analysed and reported to Project Restore in an evaluation report with findings and recommendations.

### Ethics

The project received ethical approval from both the NZ Ethics Committee and Massey

University.

Project Restore and staff from Massey University, in collaboration with Point, developed strong ethical protocols to ensure the safety, anonymity, and well-being of the participants. The following method outlines the measures put in place to uphold these ethical standards:

1. **Anonymity and confidentiality:** To safeguard participants' privacy and confidentiality, the survey was disseminated through a link accompanied by a unique identifier (ID) for each respondent. This ID system ensured that respondents could not be directly identified through their survey responses, thus maintaining anonymity. While Project Restore distributed the survey link and managed the list of unique IDs, Point, the entity responsible for data analysis, had access only to the anonymous IDs without any personal identifying information attached.
2. **Dual-layer privacy protection:** The separation of roles between Project Restore and Point created a dual-layer privacy protection system. Project Restore held the information linking unique IDs to individual participants, while Point processed the survey responses associated with these IDs. This division ensured that no single entity had simultaneous access to both the survey responses and the identities of the participants.
3. **Safety and support protocol:** Recognising the potential emotional impact of recalling and sharing experiences related to sexual abuse, a protocol was established to provide immediate support if a participant was at risk of self-harm or harming others. In such cases, Point could refer to the unique ID associated with the concerning response and contact Project Restore to identify the participant in need of support. This process was designed to enable swift intervention if needed while still maintaining the confidentiality of the survey data. Both entities committed to handling such situations with the utmost sensitivity and privacy, ensuring that the participant received the necessary support and care.
4. **Informed consent:** Prior to participation, all respondents were provided with detailed information about the survey's purpose, the nature of the questions, the confidentiality measures in place, and the protocol for providing support if needed. Informed consent was obtained, ensuring that participants understood their rights, including the right to withdraw from the survey at any point without any consequences.
5. **Ongoing support and resources:** Information about available support services was provided to all participants, ensuring that they had access to immediate and ongoing assistance should they experience distress at any point during or after their participation in the survey.
6. **Ethical oversight:** The process was developed in consultation with both ethical review

boards and followed best practices for conducting sensitive research. Continuous oversight ensured that the method adhered to these ethical standards, prioritising the safety and well-being of all involved.

## Limitations

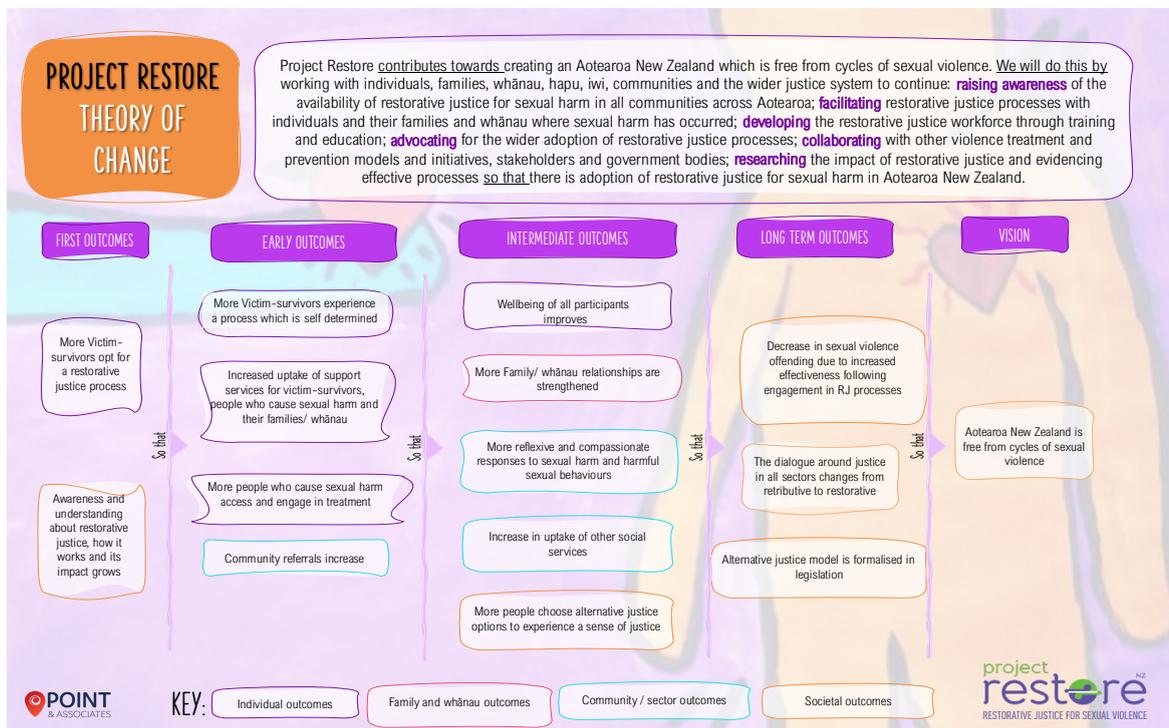
The evaluation has a number of limitations which need to be considered when reading the report.

1. **Participant Engagement:** Not all those who participated in the Project Restore restorative justice project took part in the process. The sensitive nature of sexual harm means that some individuals may choose not to engage with the survey or the project as a whole, due to the discomfort or trauma associated with recalling their experiences. This limitation acknowledges the emotional and psychological barriers that may prevent full participation and accurate data collection. This limitation may lead to a lack of representation.
2. **Survey completion rates:** The incomplete responses means the data collected may not fully capture the experiences, outcomes, or satisfaction levels of all participants, leading to an incomplete picture of the project's impact.
3. **Anonymity of responses:** While the anonymity of the survey was essential for encouraging participation and ensuring the safety and privacy of respondents, it also means that follow-up for more in-depth understanding or clarification of responses was not possible. This limitation may affect the depth and specificity of insights gained from the survey data.
4. **Difficulty in assessing long-term Impacts:** Given the complexity of sexual harm's effects on individuals, determining the long-term impacts of Project Restore is challenging. The project's evaluation, while going back a year, may not fully capture the ongoing or evolving needs, healing processes, or changes in the well-being of the participants over time. This limitation highlights the difficulty in measuring long-term success and the potential need for a longitudinal study.

# Theory of change

The project started with a theory of change, developed in collaboration with staff. Their vision is that Aotearoa is free from cycles of sexual violence. They see their work contributing to this by working with victim-survivors, those who have caused harm, and their friends, families, whānau, hapu, iwi and communities to raise awareness of the harm of sexual violence, to facilitate restorative justice processes and to collaborate with others working to prevent sexual violence. In the short term, it is hoped that victim-survivors and those who harmed will have an understanding of how restorative justice works, and to be able to access restorative justice pathways, should they choose to. In the short-term, it is hoped the participants find the experience self-determining and empowering, and get the support and treatment they need to support their healing. In the intermediate term, it is hoped that there is a more compassionate response to both sexual harm and harmful sexual behaviours, that the well-being of participants improves, relationships improve, and the participants experience a sense of justice. In the longer term, it is hoped the approach will decrease sexual violence offending, and that the conversations will change from a focus on punishment and retribution to a justice model offering restorative pathways.

## Theory of change



## The process

Typically, the restorative justice process involves several key stages:

### 1. Referral

Cases are referred to Project Restore by the courts, police, self-referrals and referrals from other agencies. Not all cases are suitable for restorative justice; they must meet certain criteria, including the admission of guilt by the person who caused the harm.

### 2. Assessment

Project Restore staff undertake an initial assessment to ensure the suitability of the case for the restorative justice process. This involves evaluating the willingness of all parties to participate, the safety of the participants, and the potential for a constructive outcome.

### 3. Preparation

Separate preparation meetings are held with the victim-survivor(s) and those who caused harm and their support people. These meetings are designed to build trust in the process and ensure that participants are fully informed and prepared for what to expect.

Participants are supported to articulate their needs and concerns, and to develop an understanding of the other's perspective.

### 4. The restorative justice meeting

A facilitated meeting between the victim-survivor(s), the person who caused harm, and often their families/support people is arranged. The meeting can be undertaken face to face or involve a shuttle mediation process where the facilitator moves between the victim-survivor and the person who caused the harm. The meeting provides a safe space for victims to express the impact of the crime, for those who caused harm to take responsibility for their actions, and for both parties to discuss how the harm can be repaired. This may involve apologies, agreements on restitution, and discussions on the rehabilitation of the person who caused the harm.

### 5. Agreement and follow-up

If an agreement is reached on the steps the person who caused harm can take to make amends, this is formalised in a written agreement. Project Restore then follows up to ensure the agreement is implemented and to provide further support if needed.

## 6. Report to the referring agency

A report is provided to the court, police, or referring agency detailing the process and outcomes, including any agreements made between the parties.

## Key Principles

Project Restore's approach is underpinned by several key principles:

- **Voluntariness:** Participation is voluntary for all parties.
- **Safety:** Measures are in place to ensure the physical and emotional safety of all participants.
- **Confidentiality:** The process is confidential, fostering an environment where participants can speak openly.
- **Inclusivity:** The process acknowledges and respects cultural and individual diversity.
- **Empowerment:** The process aims to empower victims and provide an opportunity for those who caused harm to take responsibility and contribute to healing the harm caused.

Project Restore contend that by focusing on dialogue, understanding, and mutual agreement, the restorative justice process can repair the harm caused by sexual offending in a way that traditional justice systems may not be able to achieve. They believe the approach not only supports the healing process for victims but also encourages meaningful change in those who harm, ultimately building towards a safer and more empathetic community.

## Findings

### Victim-survivors reason for participating

For victim-survivors, the most common reason for participating in the restorative justice process was that they wanted the person who caused harm to understand the impact of what they had done (n=36, 77%) and to be accountable for their actions (n=33, 70%). The victim-survivors also wanted to be able to ask questions of the person who had harmed them (n=33, 70%) and to be heard (n=28, 60%). Some wanted to be able to confront the person that had harmed them (n=26, 55%), to feel a sense of justice (n=22, 47%), to regain a sense of power (n=21, 45%), to stop it happening to someone else (n=25, 53%) and to negotiate future contact (n=21, 45%). Other reasons included finding out more about restorative justice (n=6, 13%), providing closure (n=1), enabling whānau to meet and have

their say (n=1), and gaining an understanding and bringing it out into the open (n=1).

“From the beginning I wanted the opportunity to talk about it and ask questions to understand why.” Victim-survivor

Most of the victim-survivors who commented found the referral process generally positive (n=5).

“The process was handled with sensitivity and discretion.” Victim-survivor

“I was very positive and optimistic about the Project Restore process I was entering.”  
Victim-survivor

One victim-survivor found the timing of the referral difficult and felt pressured to engage while going through the court process.

“I found it extremely difficult to be asked to engage with a restorative justice meeting while I was still going through the court process. No one (Police, [the NGO], court liaison) had made me aware of the fact that if a (person who causes harm) pleads guilty this automatically triggers a restorative justice referral. The court process is a highly emotional and uncertain time, which is incredibly triggering for survivors of sexual violation. You already feel like everyone else is calling the shots and it can make you feel vulnerable... Even though I was told it was a voluntary process, it felt like there was a lot of expectation that I should go ahead with the meeting and delay the sentencing to allow for this. I had to be quite strong in saying I did not think it was something I had the mental and emotional capacity to deal with at the time. It was only then that I was given the option to engage at a later time post-sentencing, if I felt it would be beneficial for my healing and recovery. It would have been helpful if the police had let me know the possible outcomes of a guilty plea and given me a chance to say how I felt about engaging with the restorative justice meeting at that point. It would have saved a lot of emotional turmoil at the time. However, when I came to 'self-refer' a year or so later, I was in a better place to cope with the emotions involved and my experiences with Project Restore were much more positive at this point in time.” Victim-survivor

## Reasons for those who harm participating

Almost half of those who caused harm were referred to Project Restore by the District or High Court (n=11, 43%) with a further third (n=8, 32%) approached by Project Restore in response to a referral. The remainder had been referred by Corrections (n=3, 12%), had received a letter inviting them to participate (n=3, 12%), had referred themselves (n=2, 8%), or

had been referred by a therapist or the police (n=1, 4%).

Most had been charged with an offence. Of those who had been charged, the majority (n=17, 81%) pleaded guilty, and four (19%) pleaded not guilty. While most said they had not felt pressured to plead guilty (n=18, 86%), three said they had. One felt the facts would not be fairly shown at the trial and that it would further damage their family, another pleaded guilty to two charges but felt pressured to plead guilty to three further charges.

“I pleaded guilty to 2 charges at that time, but I felt pressured by the police to plead guilty for the other 3 charges as I was under stress at the time, fighting with depression and had little support from people around me. My friends left me and turned against me because of the nature of the crime I did. My lawyer also suggested I compromise with the police by pleading guilty to those other charges.” Person who caused harm

When the people who harmed were asked what had made them decide to meet with Project Restore, almost half of those who commented said they wanted to apologise to the person or people they had harmed (n=9, 41%).

“I truly wanted to say sorry for the problem and harm I caused to the victims. I heavily realised my mistakes and wanted to apologise.” Person who caused harm

“I wanted to say sorry and make amends if possible and eventually be on better terms with the victim.” Person who caused harm

One-third (n=7, 32%) had restorative justice recommended by their lawyer (n=6) or by the court (n=1).

“My lawyer had made a referral to Project Restore I was already wanting to go through with PRJ program.” Person who caused harm

Two (9%) wanted to restore relationships and their family dynamic, while others wanted to be part of the solution rather than the problem (n=1), to get a resolution with the victim-survivor (n=1), and to provide the victim-survivor with answers (n=1).

“Primarily I wanted to open up to my family members who were affected, to allow them to gain some more understanding and allow them to heal, as well as hopefully bring the family closer again. My lawyer also recommended it as a good discount to my sentence.” Person who caused harm

Most of those who caused the harm felt it was a good decision and a positive thing to do. Some found it was a relief and gave them a sense of closure.

“I thought it was a good idea. Mostly because it would help my daughter.” Person who caused harm

“Upon hearing about Project Restore, I felt it had the potential to offer an actual resolution to past damage and grievances, in contrast to the courts' complete inability and unwillingness to do so.” Person who caused harm

“I am really thankful to (the Project Restore staff) who understood my side of the story without any judgment and helped me take the burden out of my chest by apologising to the victim. Everyone was very helpful throughout the process.” Person who caused harm

One person who caused harm felt it should be a “mandatory offer” for first-time offences.

Another, however, was concerned that “the final report sent to the judge was full of things I wasn’t charged for and rather damning.” They noted as a result the court “decided to disregard the Project Restore report.”

## Those supporting the victim-survivors and those who harmed

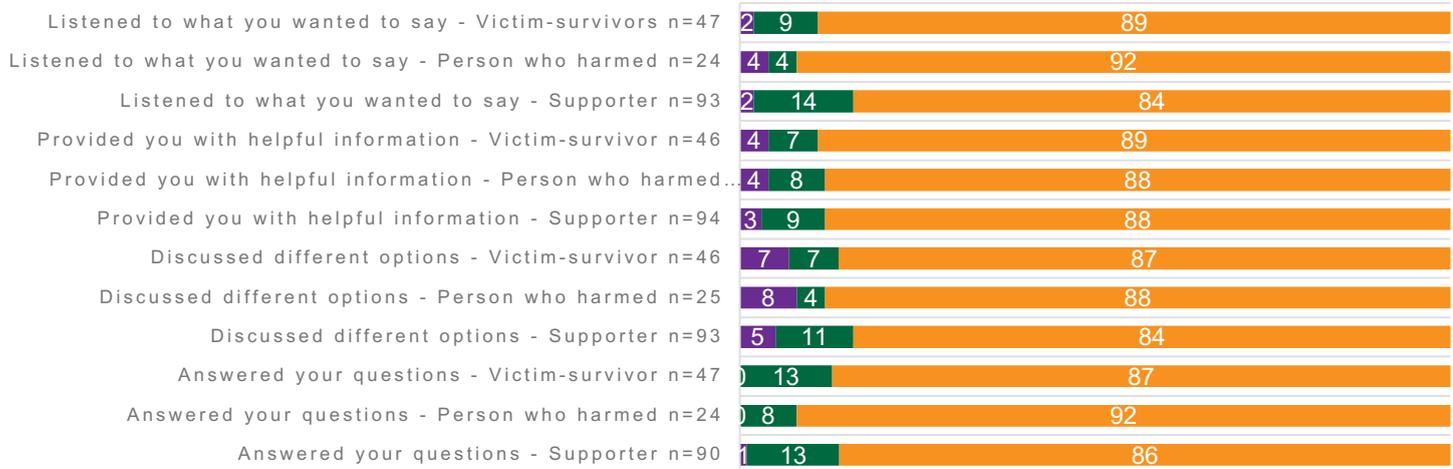
Over half (n=55, 61%) of those responding to the supporters survey, were supporting the victim-survivors. The remainder (n=35, n=39%) were there to support the person who caused harm. While some were friends (n=14, 15%), most were family and whānau (n=55, 60%). One-quarter (n=23, 25%) were psychologists, counsellors, company directors, colleagues, sexual violence crisis staff and police.

## Meeting the caseworkers

Most of the victim-survivors said the caseworkers listened to what they wanted (n=42, 89%), provided them with helpful information (n=41, 89%), discussed different options with them (n=40, 87%) and answered their questions (n=41, 87%). The differences between the groups were not significant (p>0.05).

## WHEN FIRST MET PROJECT RESTORE (%)

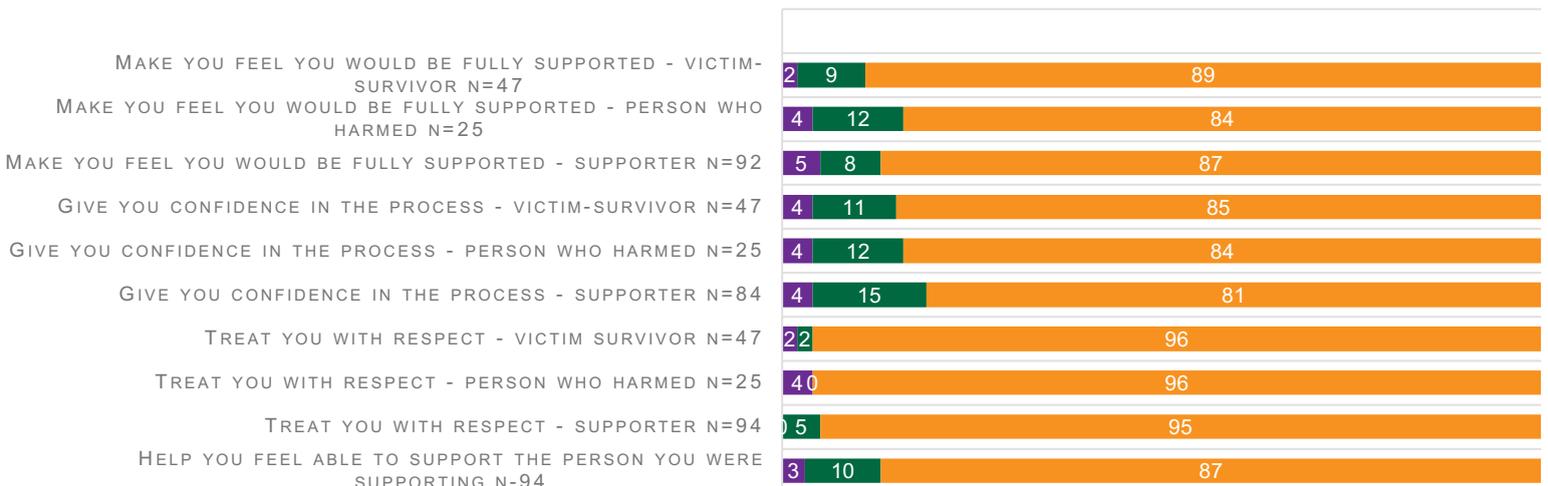
■ No ■ In part ■ Yes



The majority of victim-survivors felt the case workers fully supported them (n=42, 89%), gave them confidence in the process (n=40, 85%) and treated them with respect (n=45, 96%). Those harming and those providing support felt similarly. The differences between the three groups were not significant (p> 0.05).

## WHEN THEY FIRST MET PROJECT RESTORE ... (%)

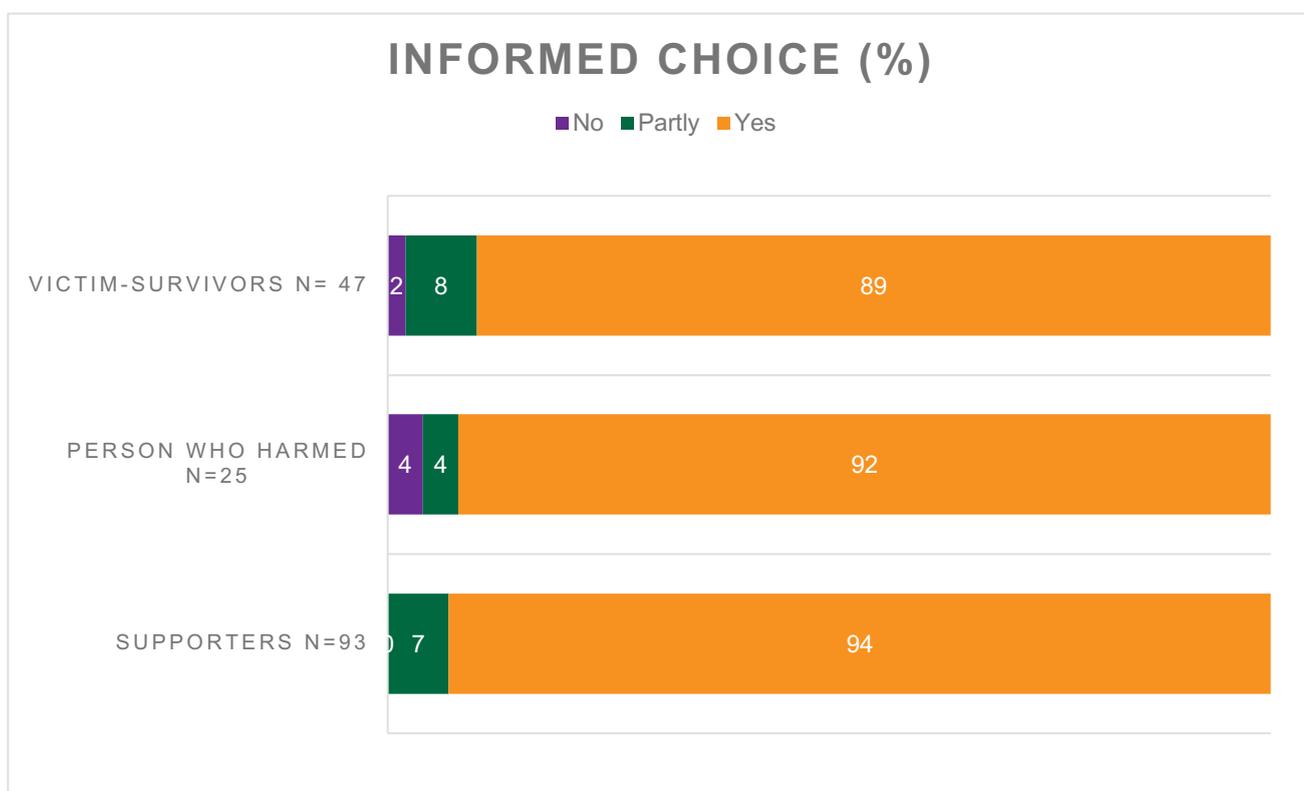
■ No ■ IN PART ■ YES



While most victim-survivors (n=38, 81%) were asked whether they had a support agency or ACC counsellor, four (9%) were not. Seven (15%) did not have a counsellor and were referred to one, however, a further 12 (26%) did not have a counsellor and were not referred to one.

## Informed choice

Most of the victim-survivors (n=42, 89%), those who harmed them (n=23, 92%) and those supporting them (n=87, 94%) all felt they could make an informed choice in taking part. The differences were not significant (p>.05).



## Victim-survivors’ initial contact

The victim-survivors who commented on the initial contact and decision-making process found the communication good, the process well structured, and felt they were given time to make a decision.

“A lot of information was given at the start it took me a long time to take everything in. Following up with an email including key points and important information I needed to take in at the start allowed me to process in my own time.” Victim-survivor

“I felt it worked well that they gave me time to make a decision about whether I wanted to do RJ or not because initially, I didn't want to.” Victim-survivor

Several, however, felt pressured in some way or did not feel that the process they agreed to was followed.

“I felt like I was very clear with what I expected, and that this expectation was taken on board. It was not.” Victim-survivor

## Those who caused harms' initial contact

Those who harmed said they felt hopeful the process would be positive, and although they “didn't know what to expect” they found it respectful and helpful. They found the staff approachable and understanding, and appreciated that they were given options. One felt that the case worker “appeared to have a perceptible leaning (understandably) to the plight of the complainant”, and another felt that “the first meeting was explaining the process, so my opinions were of no value, I just had to listen”. Most, however, were generally positive.

“(The caseworker) was extremely helpful and made every part of the process much easier to handle.” Person who caused harm

“It was comfortable to talk about what I had done and I felt I could make a difference to my daughter's life by my participation.” Person who caused harm

## Supporters' initial contact

Friends, family, colleagues and professionals providing support to the victim-survivors found the initial contact to be positive. They were impressed with the level of communication and found it helpful, informative and respectful. They felt safe and heard, and found the staff to be professional and competent. Any initial reservations they had were allayed, as the staff made them comfortable, and were friendly, calm and easy to talk to.

“It was very helpful. Everyone felt supported and it is not a blaming game.”  
Supporter of Victim-survivor

“PR is always helpful and takes time to personalise services. I was really touched that

they thought about my clients' needs and anticipated the needs of the person-who-harmed by providing an appropriate support person for them. PR has also been amazing at providing support in helping my clients engage in RJ through a kaupapa Maaori lens which has helped clients and decision-making immensely.” Supporter of Victim-survivor

While some (n=7) of those who were supporting the person who caused the harm were positive about the initial contact and felt the process was efficient and well explained, others (n=9) did not feel they got a thorough understanding of the process, felt unprepared, that the meeting was biased and they would have liked more information.

“Initially, we were a bit intimidated, but after speaking with the RJ person, we gained confidence and understanding of the process.” Supporter of person who caused harm

“Could have expanded more on what was required as a support person.” Supporter of person who caused harm

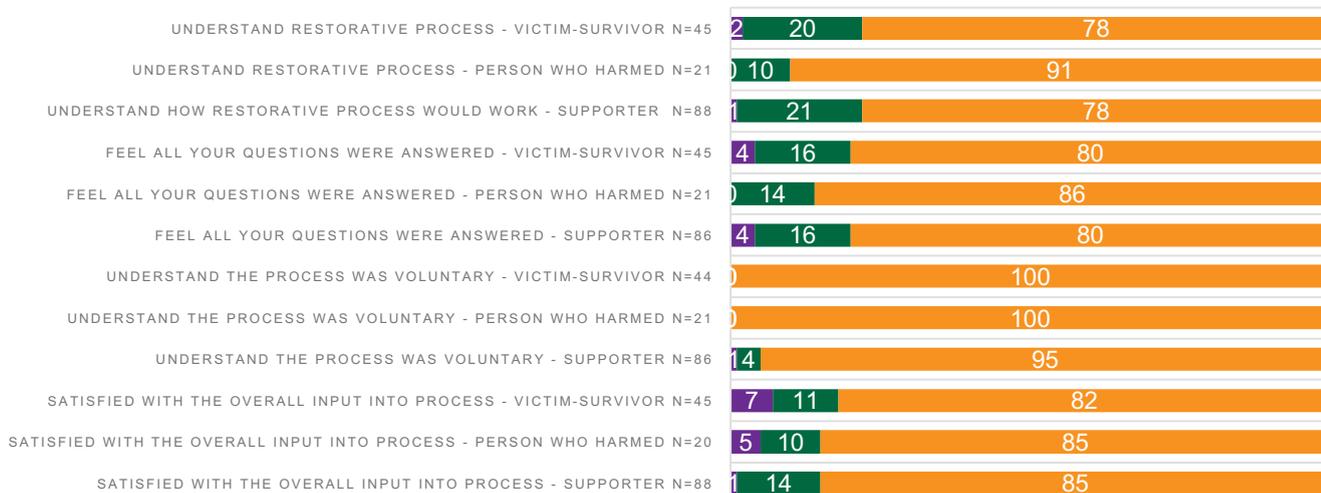
## Restorative Justice Meeting

Almost all of the victim-survivors (n=45, 96%), those who harmed (n=23, 92%) and the friends, family, colleagues and professionals supporting them (n=92, 98%) decided to proceed to prepare for a restorative justice meeting.

Most (n=35, 78%) of the victim-survivors felt they understood how the restorative justice process would work, that their questions were answered (n=36, 50%) that they understood the process was voluntary all the way through (n=44, 100%), and were satisfied with the overall input they had into the restorative process (n=37, 82%). The differences between victim-survivors, those who harmed and the supporters, were not significant ( $p > 0.05$ ).

## PREPARATION (%)

■ No ■ In-part ■ Yes



The victim-survivors felt they would be supported by their caseworkers (n=43, 96%), listened to (n=44, 98%), and treated respectfully (n=44, 98%). They also felt that the relevant people were invited to attend the restorative justice process (n=41, 93%). Of the three who did not feel that way, one would have liked their friend there, one was uncomfortable someone attending was invited without their consent, and in one case the person who caused the harm chose not to proceed.

“It all fell flat - as the perpetrator chose not to participate - I was left feeling ripped open & raw & extremely disappointed. Worse still, I was informed of this by 'text message'! Heartless & without compassion!” Victim-survivor

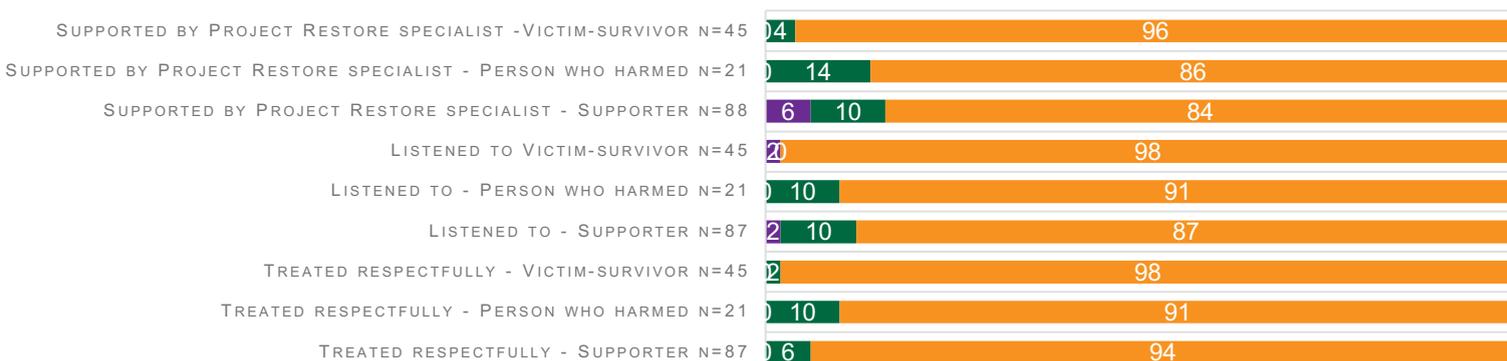
The differences between the victim-survivors and those who harmed were not significant (p >0.05). The respondents who harmed were also confident they would be supported by the specialist (n=18, 86%), listened to (n=19, 91%) treated respectfully (n=19, 91%) with most having confidence the specialists would treat them well. They too believed the right people were invited to the restorative justice meeting (n=19, 91%).

“I felt ashamed and sorry for what I did in front of the victim. But thanks to all the support from restorative justice people for making it a comfortable place for everyone.” Person who caused harm

There were, however, significant differences ( $p < 0.05$ ) between the victim-survivors ( $n = 43$ , 96%) and the supporters' beliefs ( $n = 74$ , 84%) that they would be supported or listened to.

## CONFIDENCE IF THEY PROCEEDED THEY WOULD RESPECTED, LISTENED TO AND SUPPORTED BY THE SPECIALIST (%)

■ No ■ In part ■ Yes



## Meeting the caseworker who supported those who caused harm

Three-quarters of the victim-survivors ( $n = 58$ , 75%) felt it was helpful to meet the caseworker who supported the person who had harmed them. Those who found it helpful felt better prepared for the meeting. It helped them understand what the person who caused harm was thinking, where everyone was at, and to get an appraisal of the person who caused harm's ability and willingness to answer questions.

"It was helpful to hear about the current thinking of the person who caused harm, so I knew what I wanted to say." Victim-survivor

"Being informed, that that person who harmed me was having trouble expressing himself." Victim-survivor

It helped them to set realistic expectations going into the meeting. They also found it helpful to understand the process and the work the caseworker had been doing with the person who had harmed them. The empathy and respect the caseworker showed them was appreciated. The victim-survivors, while reassured that the person who caused harm's support person wasn't just telling the person who caused harm what to say, did not necessarily understand aspects of the process, such as how long the meeting might take.

“It was nice to meet him and understand that he wasn’t there to just tell the offender what to say but also to find ways to support me as best as possible and help the offender to face up to his actions and answer my questions.” Victim-survivor

Those who did not find it helpful (n=2, 4%) found the meeting uncomfortable and overly casual.

“I didn’t like how casual he was about it all.” Victim-survivor

## Working with the Harmful Sexual Behaviour Specialist

Of the eighteen respondents who harmed and who commented on what it was like working with the harmful sexual behaviour specialist, seven said they found it an emotionally challenging experience.

“Emotional, as I was in a very remorseful frame of mind and heart.” Person who caused harm

“It was hard and extremely emotional. My offence happened nearly 2 years ago, and restorative was the only place that I could start the healing process before I was sentenced.” Person who caused harm

“Emotionally difficult bringing up my extreme trauma from my childhood, but (the specialist) was very supportive and understanding.” Person who caused harm

Others described it as confronting and hard, but informative and they found the specialist to be supportive.

One felt the specialist was only concerned with the victim-survivor and believed their views and issues were dismissed.

“It is what it is! They were only concerned with the victim and I felt that it was made clear to me that my views were not of any relevance, it was about making it right for the victim. They told me that I would have to address my own issues as a result of the charges and their impact quite separately, they were only there to address the needs of the victim.” Person who caused harm

Most people who harmed (n=12, 63%), however, felt it was helpful meeting with the specialist who was supporting the victim-survivor, with the remainder thinking it was at least helpful in part.

## Supporters meeting with the Project Restore specialists

The majority of friends, family, colleagues and professionals (n=74, 87%) also found it helpful to meet with the Project Restore specialists, with a further nine (11%) finding it at least partly so.

Those supporting the victim-survivors who commented positively (n=51) said they felt respected, and that the specialists were informative and kind. They appreciated being included and updated and felt meeting the specialist helped to build rapport. Most considered communication to be a key strength of those they met, with the specialists listening, answering questions and clarifying aspects of the process they were uncertain about. While some said they found the meeting challenging, harrowing and emotional, it helped them to understand what the victim-survivor had been through and felt it gave them an opportunity to speak.

“They were supportive in helping my daughter with her questions, and helping her be confident in what she was needing to be answered.” Supporter of victim-survivor

“It was a very supportive experience, challenging at times due to the nature of the reason being there but (the specialist) was amazing at supporting us.” Supporter of victim-survivor

“It helped me see a different perspective on the restorative justice system. I was very against the idea before everything that happened but after having gone through it, I would recommend it where it can be seen as helpful.” Supporter of victim-survivor

Those supporting the victim-survivors who felt it was only partly helpful (n=3) said they found it challenging and emotional, and felt it was more about the person who caused harm than the victim. They said they were not updated on the process, and there was a mismatch between the specialist’s enthusiasm for the process, and the emotional tone of the client’s experience, in particular the victim-survivor’s nervousness.

Those supporting the people who had caused the harm generally commented positively (n=28) saying they too had found meeting the specialists to be helpful. They noted that although it was hard, challenging and emotional as it was such a traumatic issue, the specialists explained the process, were easy to connect with, and they felt it helped the person they were supporting understand the impact and take accountability for their actions. The support people believed it made their role easier.

“Supportive for all involved. Respectfully asking for accountability and seeking growth.” Supporter person who caused harm

Those who only found it partly (n=5) or not at all helpful (n=2), thought that the specialist

was unhelpful in explaining the overall process, found the process inflexible, and felt the specialist had little input which they found frustrating, or had a closed mind.

“They came to the meeting (thinking) that he was already a criminal and it was not a comfortable space to be in.” Supporter person who caused harm

“A very (steep) learning curve if there was information out there that you could read ahead of a meeting and questions that may help in the way things could be better handled for the person who has to be a part of the restorative meeting.” Supporter person who caused harm

“It became very clear that the process was very inflexible. When we objected to some parts of the process, we were told that we could just ignore them, because they DEFINITELY were going to be included.” Supporter person who caused harm

## Overall preparation

Overall, the victim-survivors who commented felt the preparation was “challenging, difficult but worth it,” and they were well prepared. They found it helpful meeting the caseworkers in person as “(it gave) me greater confidence than over the phone as to their ability to support me through the steps” and they appreciated that the caseworkers “explained things every step of the way and were clear.”

“I felt well supported and will be eternally grateful for their communication throughout the process.” Victim-survivor

Similarly, those who harmed felt well-prepared and supported.

“There was clear communication of how the program was going to go.” Person who caused harm

“It seemed to go very smoothly, although it took a long time to happen. This did allow me time to be emotionally prepared for the meeting though.” Person who caused harm

“I felt ashamed and sorry for what I did in front of the victim. But thanks to all the support from restorative justice people for making it a comfortable place for everyone.” Person who caused harm

Most of those harmed (n=19, 91%), felt that the relevant people were invited to attend the

conference.

“It was good to have the support people attend and speak. I felt this was beneficial to the whole process and outcome.” Person who caused harm

Most of those who supported the victim-survivor and commented (n=18) felt that the preparation was detailed, appropriate, well planned, and every step was explained. They felt the victim-survivor was well supported and congratulated Project Restore on doing a good job.

“I felt as prepared as I could have been - other things came more naturally once we were in the meeting.” Supporter of victim-survivor

“I was pleased how they made the time to come and see us and my daughter and explain everything to us so we could understand the process.” Supporter of victim-survivor

A further four commented that they had no prior contact with the facilitator, the conference was delayed, took time to get a meeting, and they would have liked staff to ensure the equipment such as recorders were working properly to capture the conversations.

While ten who supported the person who caused harm indicated they were positive about the process and preparation, some (n=12) felt the process could have been streamlined a little better, or been more flexible. They noted that there were several parts of the process which changed at the last minute, which they found unnerving. One noted they would prefer the meeting to be held at a neutral venue, not in their home. Several would have liked more preparation, a brochure or some form of paperwork outlining the process, and more information about the timing of the conference.

“I felt very uninformed about the timing of the conference, COVID restrictions didn't help. It cost loss of sick leave.” Supporter of person who caused harm

## The conference

### Proceeding to the conference

Most victim-survivors (n=30, 89%) and people that harmed (n=20, 95%) said they proceeded to the restorative justice meeting or conference.

Three of the victim-survivors who did not proceed also commented, saying it was because

the person who caused harm withdrew from the process.

“The 'gutless wonder' the perpetrator chose not to participate.” Victim-survivor

One quarter (n=4, 24%) of those who harmed still had doubts about taking part in the conference.

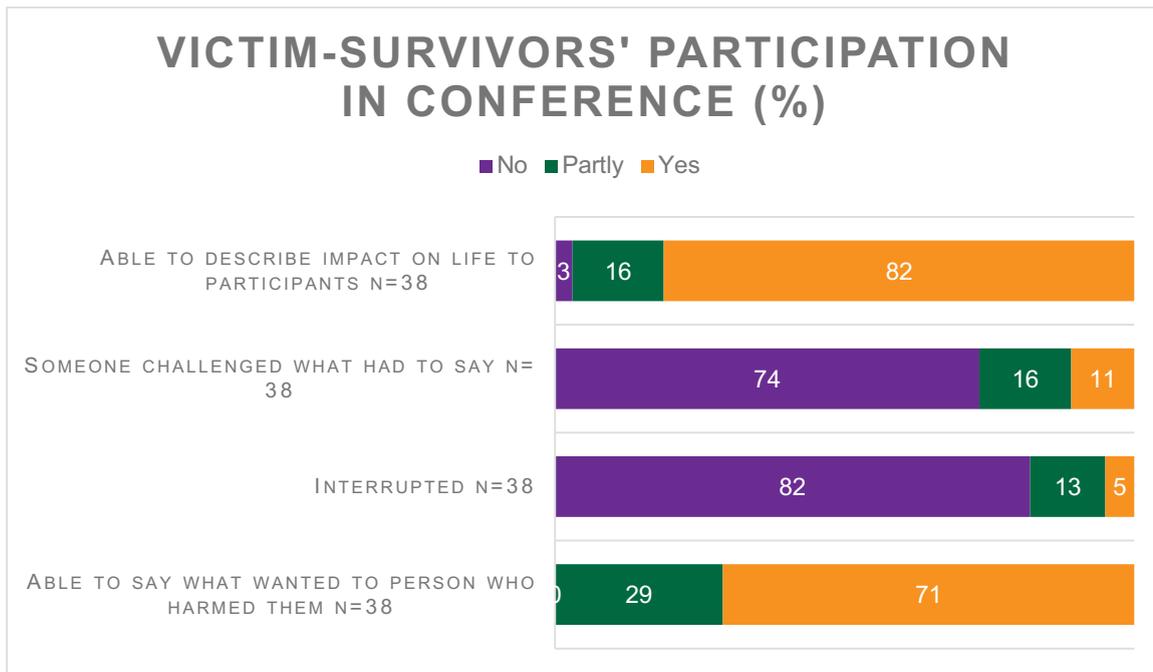
“I wasn't sure if I would process adequately enough to reassure the victims.” Person who caused harm

One person who caused harm who did not proceed “wanted to (proceed) but after support people went back to the victim they declined to go ahead.”

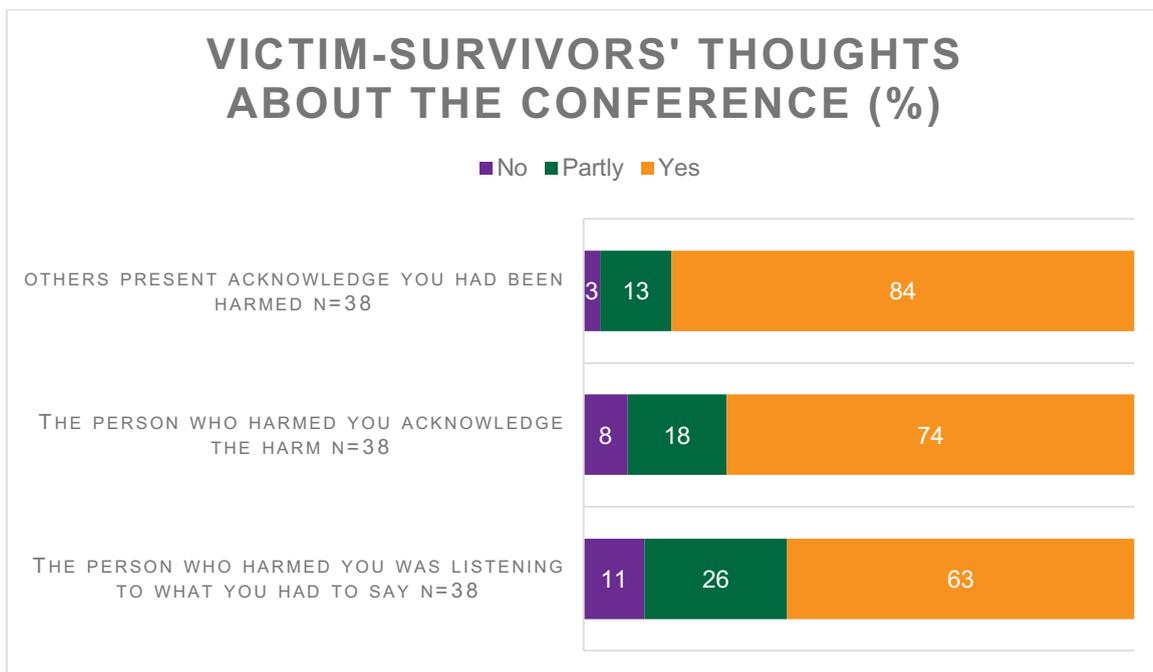
## Victim-survivors' experience of the conference

Generally, the experiences of the conference or meeting were positive.

Most of the victim-survivors said they were able to say what they wanted to say to the person who caused harm them (n=27, 71%) with the remainder feeling they were able to do so at least in part. Most felt they were not interrupted (n=21, 82%), they were able to describe the impact the harm had on their lives (n=21, 82%), and no one challenged what they had to say (n=28, 74%). A minority commented they felt interrupted (n=2, 5%), challenged (n=4, 11%) and not given an opportunity to describe the impact of the offending on them (n=1).



Most of the victim-survivors also agreed the person who caused harm listened to what they had to say (n=24, 63%), acknowledged the harm (n=28, 74%) and others present also acknowledged the harm (n=32, 84%).



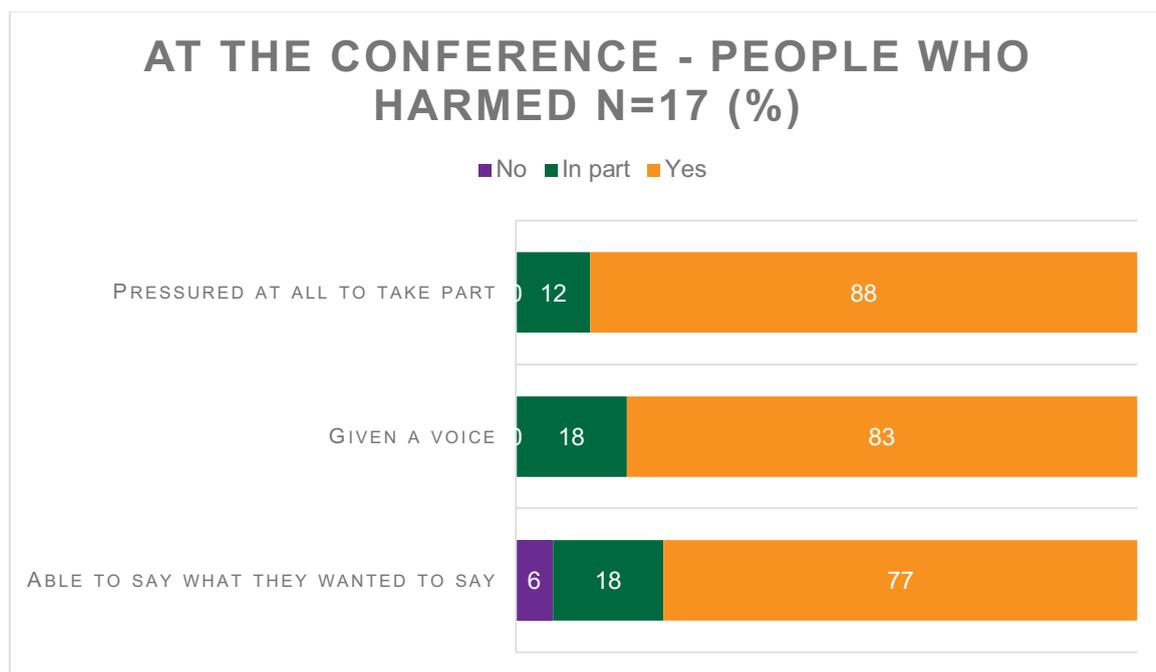
## The experience of those at the conference who caused harm

The experience of those who caused the harm was similarly encouraging. The majority said they did not feel pressured at all to take part in the restorative justice process (n=15, 88%). Most felt they were given a voice (n=14, 82%) and that they were able to say what they wanted to say, at least in part (n=16, 95%). Although one said they found the whole process to be helpful and positive, most found it challenging. In particular, they found facing the victim-survivors difficult knowing how angry they would be. They also found it hard to talk about what had happened, to hear the victims’ point of view, and to hear how the abuse had affected them.

“For myself (it was) hard to talk about what had happened.” Person who caused harm

“Communicating was initially challenging, particularly at the start.” Person who caused harm

They said meeting the parents of the victim-survivors was difficult. One said how hard it was to hold themselves with respect. All (n=17, 100%), however, felt they received the support they needed to face these challenges.

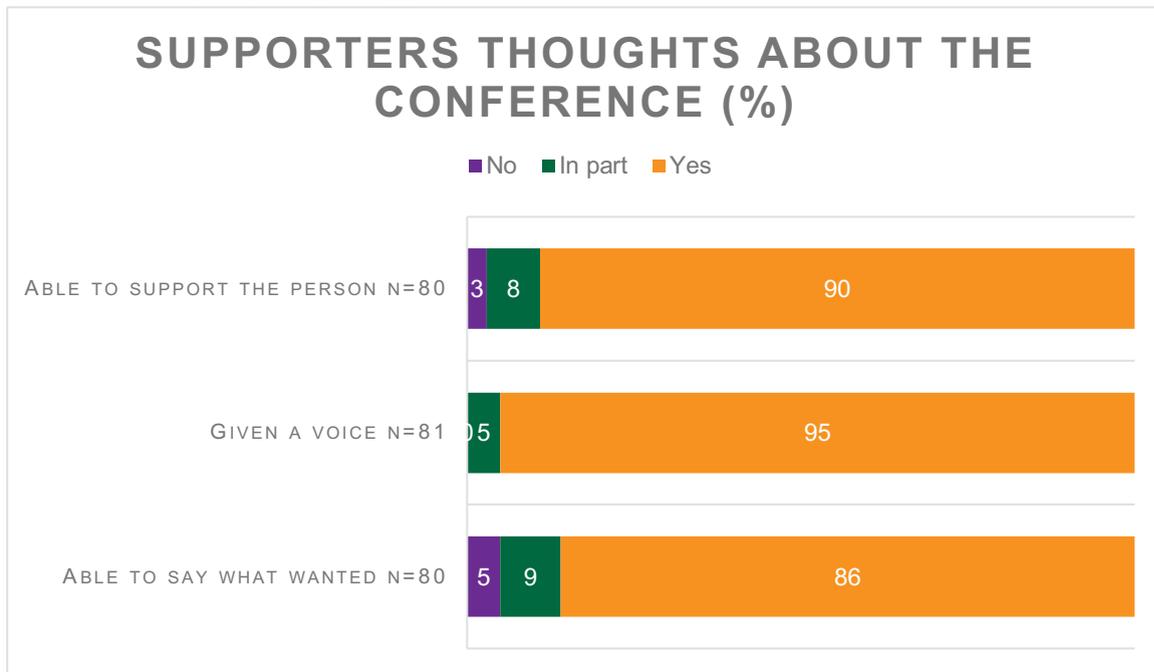


### Supporters’ experience of the conference

Most of the supporters felt the meeting or conference was a generally positive experience. Friends, family, colleagues and professionals felt able to support the person (n=72, 90%), given a voice (n=77, 95%) and able to say what they wanted to say (n=69, 86%). Those who

did not feel that way felt they had not been adequately prepared, felt that the focus was on the person who caused harm, and that they were not listened to.

“I wasn't prepared to be asked any questions, so I was a little taken by being asked if I wanted to say anything.” Supporter



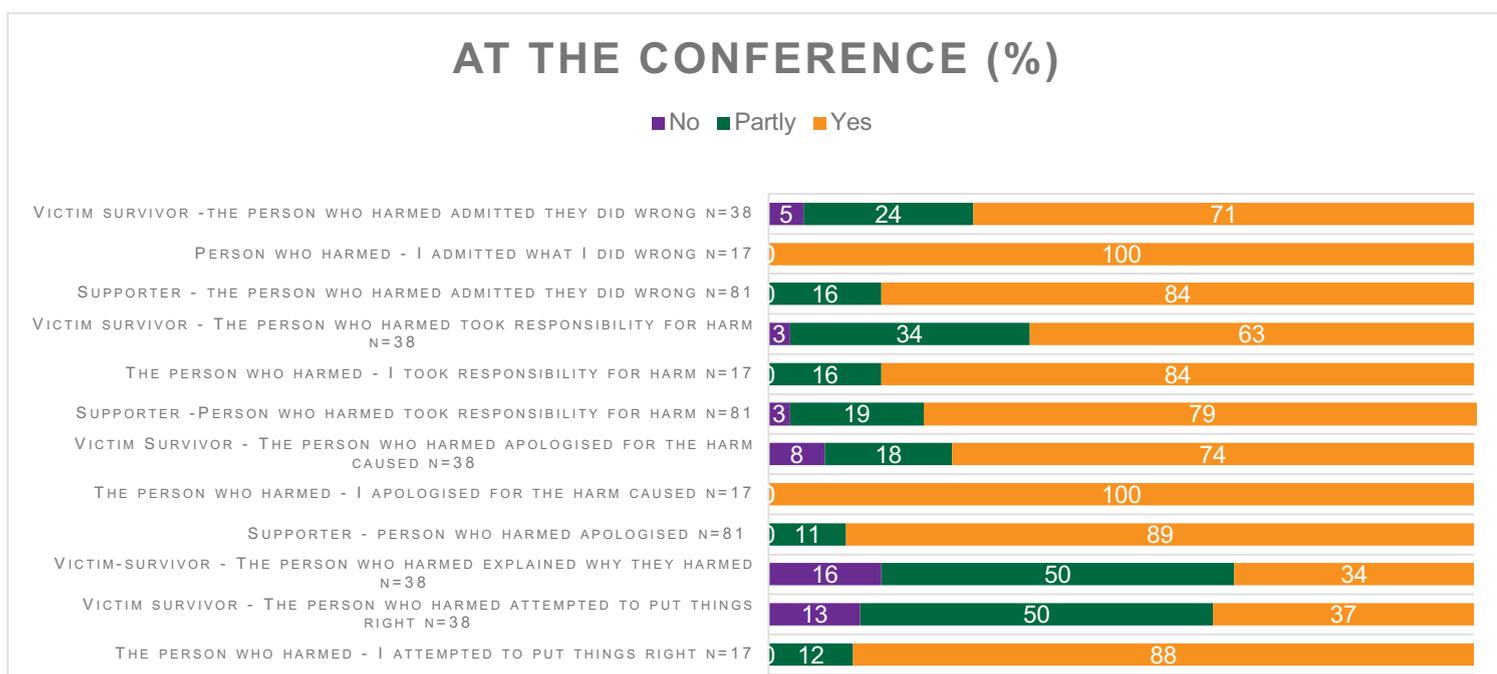
## Blame, minimisation and responsibility

A minority of victim-survivors felt someone at the meeting fully or in part blamed them for the harmful behaviour (n=8, 21%), that the behaviour was minimised (n=14, 37%) and they were told that the person who caused harm was not fully responsible (n=7, 18%).

Most victim-survivors said however, that the person who caused harm admitted what they did was wrong (n=27, 71%), took responsibility for the harm they caused (n=24, 63%) and apologised (28, 74%). Fewer felt those who harmed explained why they had harmed them (n=13, 34%) or made attempts to put it right (n=14, 37%).

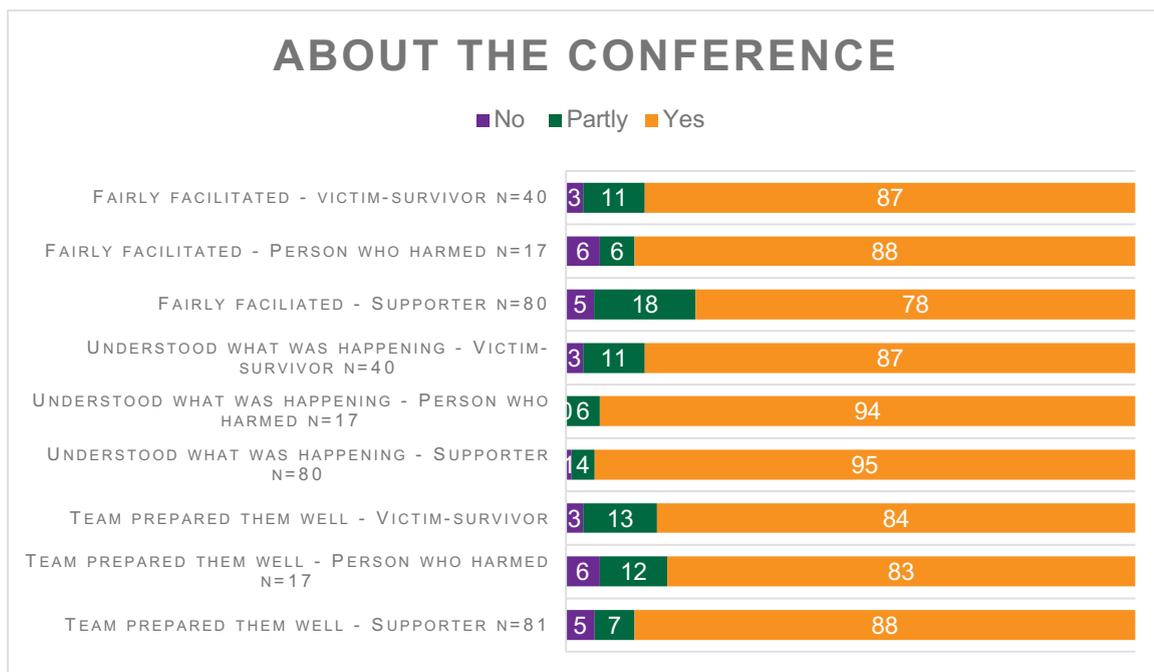
Interestingly, those who harmed were significantly more likely to believe they admitted what they did was wrong (n=17, 100%), that they took responsibility for the harm (n=16, 94%), they apologised for the harm caused (n=17, 100%), and they put things right (n=15, 88%). While the differences between the victim-survivors and those who caused harm across each of these dimensions were statistically significant (p<0.05), it is noted that the victim-survivors and those who harmed may not have attended the same conferences, hence their responses are not directly comparable. It is noted that the differences between

the victim-survivors and the supporters on these dimensions were not significant ( $p>0.05$ ).



## Preparation, understanding during the conference and facilitation

The victim-survivors felt the Project Restore team prepared them well for the restorative justice process (n=32, 84%), they understood what was happening during the restorative justice process (n=33, 87%) and felt it was facilitated in a fair way (n=33, 87%). The differences between the three groups of respondents were not significant ( $p>0.05$ ).

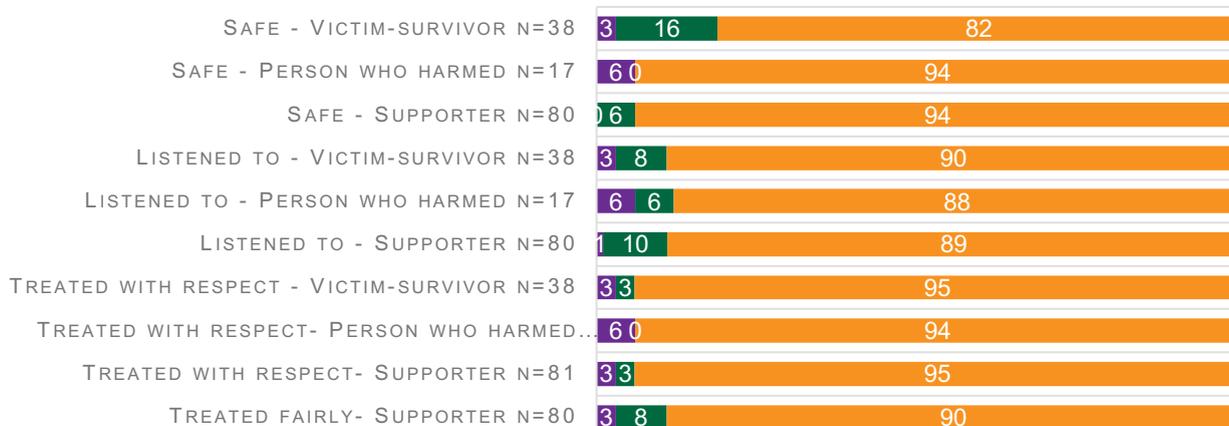


## Treatment during the meeting

The victim-survivors also felt safe (n=31, 82%), listened to (n=34, 90%) and treated with respect (n=36, 95%). The differences between the groups were not significant (p> 0.05).

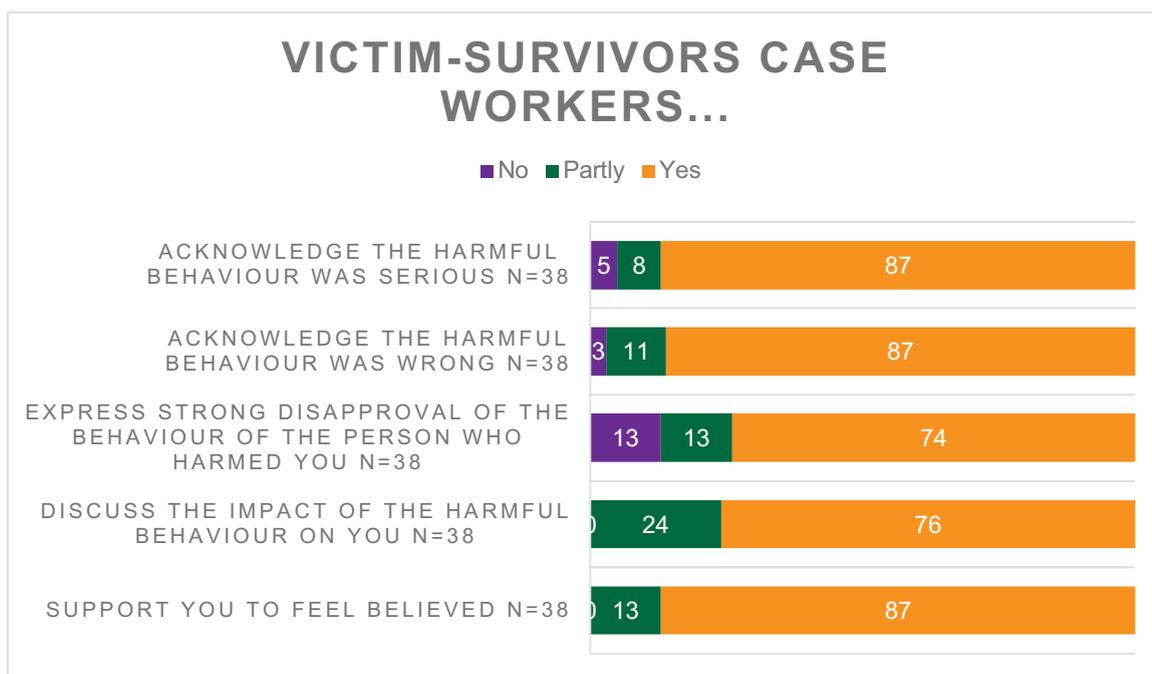
## HOW THEY WERE TREATED DURING THE MEETING (%)

■ No ■ Partly ■ Yes



### Victim-survivors and the case workers

The victim-survivors felt that the case workers acknowledged the harmful behaviour was serious (n=22, 87%), wrong (n=33, 87%), expressed strong disapproval of the behaviour of the person who caused harm (n=28, 74%), discussed the impact of the harmful behaviour with them (n=29, 76%), and supported them to feel believed (n=33, 87%).



## How the supporter felt the person they were supporting was treated

In addition to thinking about how they felt they were treated, the friends, family, colleagues and professionals were asked if they thought the person they were there to support was treated well. Most felt the person they were supporting was treated with respect (n=72, 91%), listened to (n=66, 86%), treated fairly (n=65, 84%) and the process was safe for them (n=61, 79%).

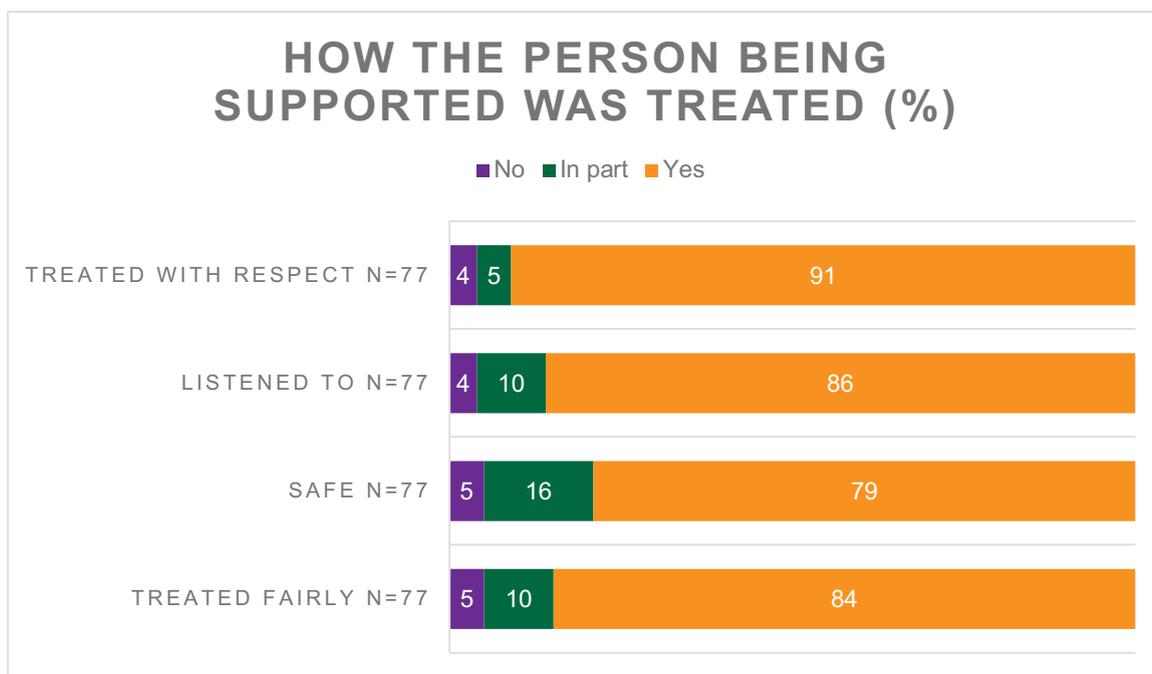
One support person, while acknowledging the scariness of the process, felt it was handled well.

“This was a difficult situation for him and I think at one point it felt a bit scary. I also think that was necessary for him to understand the emotional impact of what he had done. It was handled very well.” Supporter of person who caused harm

Those who did not feel the person they were supporting was treated well were concerned that the defendant was not treated respectfully and that the person they were supporting was not able to have the support person they wanted.

“No respect was given to the defendant. The energy was heavy, it felt like there was no one listening or wanting to accept the genuine words and sincere apologies. This

was a voluntary process, which we had already gone through an indigenous restorative process. The Project Restore was voluntary, but I felt there was tremendous pressure and stress during this process because it was too one-sided.”  
 Supporter of person who caused harm



While the majority (n=64, 81%) said they thought the person they were supporting was not pressured into agreeing to outcomes, a minority disagreed (n=10, 13%), with a further five (6%) believing they were pressured at least in part.

## Victim-survivors’ reflections about the preparation

When asked to comment on what else could have helped them to feel more prepared for the conference, one victim-survivor noted it would have been helpful to understand more about meeting in a prison environment.

“It would have been helpful to know more about the prison environment beforehand. I did not know I would see (or be seen by) other prisoners while walking through the prison. This made me feel like I was being gawked at and quite exposed while already highly emotional. It made me very uncomfortable that we were being watched as we made our way to the building where the meeting would be held.”  
 Victim-survivor

They would also have liked to be told it can be overwhelming seeing the person who caused harm to them.

“Maybe a warning of how shocked you can get by seeing the person who harmed you.” Victim-survivor

One commented they would have liked a few more meetings with their caseworker, and another would have liked a last-minute chance to prepare what she/he was going to say.

“A last-minute prep of what I was going to say spoken out loud may have helped with my confidence may not have though.” Victim-survivor

Most, however, commented positively about the conference.

“I am so grateful that Project Restore took our case on, I feel very seen and heard throughout the whole process and even though I was nervous for the conference, it felt extremely therapeutic.” Victim-survivor

“It was a great opportunity. It would be great to do this in all areas of harm, not just sexual.” Victim-survivor

Three victim-survivors said that it enabled them to express the harm to the person who had harmed them, gave them a voice and enabled them to be heard.

“The support was beyond what was expected. Most of all, I felt respected. It didn’t feel rushed, and I felt heard. The only change would be to meet the person working with the person who harmed earlier - that would have presented more certainty on the day.” Victim-survivor

“I feel it helped me to openly Express the harm and impact directly to the person that hurt me.” Victim-survivor

Another three victim-survivors noted that it helped them to move towards closure, although one was unsure of the depth of the remorse.

“Very scary and perhaps not for all victims although it did help me to understand. Not that, that takes the pain or fear away it was a step towards moving on.” Victim-survivor

“It was good to have closure but I don't think he truly understands the harm caused to me and was just saying what he thought was needed. There may be some remorse but it was more that he was found to admit guilt to avoid jail (time).” Victim-survivor

“It helped bring a sense of closure that was not achieved through the court process. As hard as it was the work you do is highly beneficial for the healing process. Thank you.” Victim-survivor

One victim-survivor noted that although it went well there was something they forgot to say. Another suggested it would have been helpful if they had known the person who caused harm was in the next room.

“It would have been helpful if I could have arrived before he was brought into the same building. I did not know the (person who caused harm) was already in the next room until we had already been talking loudly for a while about what lay ahead and how I was feeling”. Victim-survivor

It was also suggested that the travel arrangements to the venue be carefully considered.

“Though I was grateful for all the help given with accommodation and travel arrangements, I found it difficult to travel by taxi to the prison. This was a crucial time of preparation for me - mentally, emotionally, and physically, but I couldn't talk to my support person about what I was thinking or feeling because we were in the car with a stranger who was making small talk about the weather. I felt awkward and found it hard to keep my emotions and anxiety in check. It would have been better if we had personally hired a car or if possible, one of the Project Restore representatives were able to drive us there.” Victim-survivor

Two of the respondents did not feel at all in control of the process; one feeling “told off.”

“I was confused as to what the conference was going to do for me as I was told I may get answers to my questions or feel a weight lifted off my shoulders, by the time the conference finally came along I was already well into my healing process. I almost feel like the conference restarted my healing process and I didn't feel a weight lifted and got no answers to my questions. I felt that after all those hours I ended up in the same place that I started in. Also, I wasn't a fan of the fact that even if I didn't attend the meeting it would still go forward with my mum representing me even though that wasn't what I wanted. It felt like the meeting would happen with or without me but with what I had been through I was the only person who could accurately speak for myself.” Victim-survivor

“I felt that it was a disgrace. I was taken multiple times to another room to be told off for something I had said. I also felt extremely uncomfortable with one of the support people for my abuser, and had made that crystal clear, but felt like I needed to accept his presence for the meeting to go ahead.” Victim-survivor

One would have liked more administrative information and better communication about whether the conference was going ahead as scheduled.

“Communication the week leading up to the conference needed improving. I had to reach out to make sure everything was still going ahead and any last-minute things that we needed to know, like everyone having a photo ID to enter the prison (even though we had all sent out photo IDs in weeks prior). At the actual conference, I personally felt that the facilitator was just there to tick boxes.” Victim-survivor

It was also suggested that there are caseworkers and facilitators available to culturally support victim-survivors, and to enable those who wish to, to express themselves in te reo Māori.

“From a cultural perspective, I was disappointed with how my culture (Māori) was just in place to open and close with a karakia... I think case workers and facilitators of Restorative Justice really need to have people in place who are culturally aware and will ensure that the families feel culturally safe. Luckily my case worker could read the room and jumped in at the right times. So big thank you to her.” Victim-survivor

The majority (n=18) commented, however, that they felt the preparation was detailed, helpful, appropriate respectful and appropriate. They found it comforting to understand how the day would unfold. They also felt the needs of the victim-survivor were placed at the centre of the process.

“The victim was well supported. The support was personal, comforting, and they were so attentive. They really put the victim first.” Supporter of victim-survivor

“There was nothing I could or would change. It was all very helpful and a good process.” Supporter of victim-survivor

## The supporters’ reflections about the preparation

Many of those supporting the person who caused harm appreciated the groundwork undertaken by the specialist to prepare them (n=8) and felt well-prepared.

“There was a lot of groundwork and the work done by the specialists to make sure we understood what would happen was excellent.” Supporter of person who caused harm

“They helped a lot for the preparation, explained step by step and guided us well.” Supporter of person who caused harm

Others (n=11), however, expressed dissatisfaction with an aspect of the process. They felt that they were not well prepared, were uninformed about issues such as the timing of the conference, they felt things changed at the last minute which was unnerving, would have appreciated some paperwork to explain the process, and they felt uncomfortable and judged.

“I do not feel as the supporter and part survivor that there were enough conferences with me personally to prepare.” Supporter of person who caused harm

“They needed to come in with an open mind and not be so judgemental.” Supporter of person who caused harm

## After the conference

After the conference, most of the victim-survivors and those who harmed were contacted to debrief how it went for them (n=32, 84%, and n=13, 81% respectively), and they said someone checked in on them to see how they were (n=33, 89% and n=13, 81%). A further four victim-survivors (n=4, 11%) who were not contacted would have liked an opportunity to debrief or to have someone check in (n=3, 8% victim-survivors and n=2, 13% of those who harmed).

Most (n=13, 64%) of those who harmed said an agreement to undertake some form of action had come out of the restorative justice process. All of those who had caused harm said they would honour the agreement. Most (n=11, 58%) had agreed to and sought treatment for harmful sexual behaviour, with a further five (26%) wanting treatment but not having received it. Of those who had received treatment, 11 (92%), said that counselling had helped them. Those who had not had treatment had yet been able to get an appointment.

Importantly, almost two-thirds (n=13, 62%) of those who harmed said that their understanding of harm had changed as a result of taking part in the restorative justice process, with a further three (14%) saying that it had changed at least in part. They better understood the emotional distress and impact on the victim-survivor and their families. One noted it was at a visceral level.

“It offered me a more solid understanding of the affected peoples' experience.”  
Person who caused harm

“Now I (have) become a better person and help others not to understand the impact of such harm that how it can change your life upside down and making awareness about how such crime can harm people.” Person who caused harm

Around half (n=20, 53%) of the victim-survivors would have been interested in receiving feedback from the agreements.

“(I would have liked) follow-up meetings with our case worker to make sure promises were followed through, also follow-up meetings for the person who harmed me to ensure they are getting the help they need and for them to follow through with promises made.” Victim-survivor

One suggested it might be helpful to let people know it is an exhausting process which takes time to process.

“It was a physically, mentally and spiritually exhausting process, so to let other people know beforehand to take more time to process everything, recover, grieve.” Victim-survivor

It was noted that transcribers need to be able to transcribe te reo Māori.

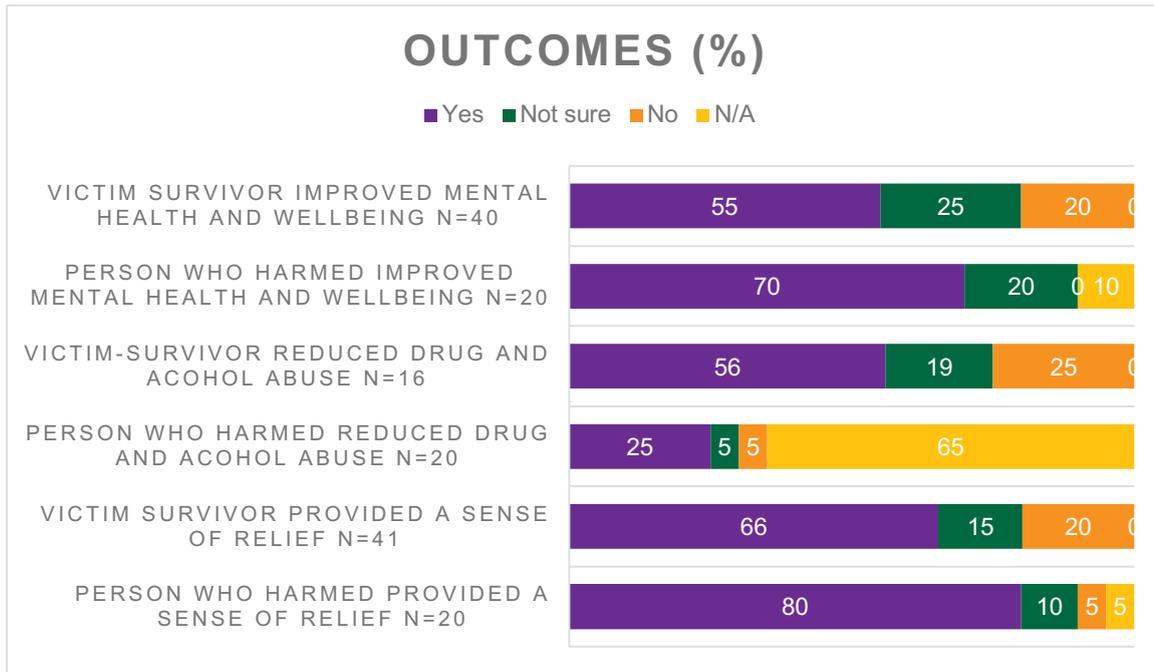
## Outcomes of the restorative justice process

### Wellbeing outcomes

Most victim-survivors (n=27, 63%) felt the restorative justice process had provided them with the ability to move forward, with a further quarter (n=11, 26%) saying it had at least in part. Half (n=21, 50%) said they had experienced a sense of justice, with a further third (n=13, 31%) feeling it had done so in part.

The victim-survivors said it had improved their mental health and well-being (n=22, 55%), reduced their drug and alcohol abuse (n=9, 56%) and provided them with a sense of relief (n=27, 66%).

Those who harmed felt a similar sense of relief, with the only significant difference ( $p < 0.05$ ) being a higher reduction in alcohol and drug abuse amongst victim-survivors (n=9, 56%) compared with those who harmed, (n=5, 25%)



Those who harmed, too, were satisfied with the outcome of the process, saying they were a little (n=3, 17%) or very satisfied (n=15, 83%) with the process.

## Agreements reached

Friends, family, colleagues and professionals felt that the agreements reached went some way to meeting the needs of the person who was harmed (n=62, 78%) with a further 17 (21%) feeling this way. They also felt that the agreements were fair and in proportion to the harm caused (n=53, 67%) at least in part (n=21, 27%).

Several supporters noted that while the agreements were fair and felt good after the conference they could only hope that the agreed actions were genuine and would be undertaken.

“The 'jury is still out' as to whether they are genuine and will result in real change in both the short and longer term.” Supporter of victim-survivor

“Because there is no way to ensure that the agreement is upheld by the other party, it was devastating when the client wasn't able to receive the benefits of the agreement that had been reached. They felt that the person who caused harm had been giving lip service and they felt that they had been "suckered again" by the person, and that 'everyone' present had fallen for the person's 'fakeness'. To some extent that caused additional harm, but it did allow the client to explore other areas related to the abuse they had experienced and allowed them to see how easily the

person could 'trick' others.” Supporter of victim-survivor

Most of those supporting the person who caused harm (20 of 45) who provided commentary believe that the agreements reached were fair.

“Even though mistakes were made, both parties met up, talked about it, accepted the mistakes, apologised, took actions to make things right, and ensured that things won't repeat ever again.” Supporter of person who caused harm

Others, however, were less sure, feeling “That remains a big question.”

Some were hopeful that the process would start the process of healing.

“The RJ that I engaged in, and the harm caused could not be fixed in a fair way in one RJ process. This was a start to allowing the survivor to move on.” Supporter

One described having gone through a restorative justice meeting, contacting the police, a marae-based procedure, and then having to respond to another request for a restorative justice meeting, and wondered if the victim-survivor would ever feel that a process would be enough.

“I'm unsure if any agreements will appease the victim... I don't know when she will feel fulfilled. I am exhausted by her requests during this process.” Supporter of person who caused harm

## Challenges

The supporters were asked what the most challenging part of the process had been for them.

Those supporting the victim-survivor felt that seeing the person who had harmed the victim-survivor was challenging, as many had not seen them for some time.

“The morning of the conference I felt very anxious, as I hadn't seen the (person who caused harm) for a long time. I wasn't sure how he would react, and I don't feel comfortable speaking in a group of people... but I did, and I am pleased I pushed through my anxiety and emotions to do it.” Supporter of victim-survivor

Many found the process emotionally challenging. Hearing the details and impact of the harm caused, including the emotional fallout, long-term and widespread effects, was hard for their supporters to hear. They also found it difficult to talk about the impact of the offending on their own lives.

There was a lack of trust that the person who caused harm was genuinely remorseful.

“Facing the (person who caused harm) and trying to make them accountable and admit their wrongdoing without appearing to 'be reading from a script'.” Supporter of victim-survivor

As a result, they found listening to the person that caused harm say sorry challenging, as they were unsure or did not believe the apology was authentic. They were not sure if the person listened or understood the gravity or impact of their actions on others, rather than themselves.

“The person who caused harm was not able to listen to or accept the harm they have caused. They were more concerned with how their actions had and would impact on themselves rather than understanding that their actions had caused significant harm and distress to my family member.” Supporter of victim-survivor

“HE GOT CAUGHT, he would have carried on which he denied, said he wouldn't have gone any further than what he had done to her. LIES.” Supporter of victim-survivor

“Most challenging for me was wondering if the person who did the harm was genuinely sorry or if it was just to get a good report for court to lessen his sentence.” Supporter of victim-survivor

Some felt that the person who caused harm actively attempted to sabotage the process.

For those who harmed, the most challenging part of the process was facing the victim-survivor; “hearing her point of view and how it affected her.” They found it hard to talk about what happened, to hear the anger and to face the parents.

“During the meeting - communicating was initially challenging, particularly at the start.” Person who caused harm

Friends, family, colleagues and professionals of those who had caused harm also found hearing the story of the victim-survivor and the harm the person they were supporting had caused to be emotionally difficult and draining.

“Having to listen in detail about each individual act that was committed to the victim from the offender.” Supporter of person who caused harm

“Hearing about the struggles of the victim and her family. No one wants to hear that their family member caused someone harm.” Supporter of person who caused harm

“Hearing the details. Seeing and hearing the hurt. The emotional aspect of it.”

Supporter of person who caused harm

They also found it difficult both anticipating and meeting the families of those who had been harmed.

“Anxious that the victim would not want to attend the meeting. Anxious the victim (victim’s father) would be too angry, to make the meeting helpful.” Supporter of person who caused harm

“Meeting the father of the victim-(survivor).” Supporter of person who caused harm

The respondents talked about the challenges of dealing with their own past, having accusations outside of the parameters of the meeting brought up, not having the apology accepted, and the exhaustion of ten-hour days.

“Personally, I was surprised by the level of doubt that I felt towards the genuineness of the person who harmed. I wasn't so sure if it was my own 'stuff' coming up, or because I had picked up on something about the person. Later when the agreement wasn't upheld, I was able to understand better what I had been feeling at the time.” Supporter of person who caused harm

Three-quarters (n=62, 77%) felt that they got the support they needed to meet the challenges, with a further 15% (n=12) feeling they were at least partially given it. One suggested:

“Give supporters a handout as to what is expected of them and that. Are they there to help the perp tell the truth? Remind them when they can’t think of what to say? Take time to check in after and stay in contact with them etc. A few suggestions would be a great help.” Supporter

## What worked well

The victim-survivors commented that they felt encouraged and supported. The restorative justice meeting was well facilitated and the communication and preparation leading up to the conference was regular and helpful. They found the team to be caring and understanding. They also considered them to be professional, well-prepared, patient and knowledgeable, walking them through the process. The preparation, right down to having a list of questions they wanted answers to, and choosing where people sat, helped them to feel prepared and secure.

“Every aspect. The structure, the patience, the communication, the support, the consideration around what could impact my emotions.” Victim-survivor

“I was able to provide a written list of questions that require(d) answers. I hadn’t formalised the questions on paper prior to this process.” Victim-survivor

Many of the victim-survivors commented on the significance of being able to tell the person who caused harm directly about the harm they had caused, not only to them, but to their family and whānau. They appreciated being listened to and having the harm acknowledged. They also valued having supportive family members there to help talk to the person who had harmed them.

“Just being listened to was wonderful, after (years) of not doing anything about the unwanted sexual advances I endured as a child.” Victim-survivor

“For me, this process gave my whānau the opportunity to confront the man that harmed me and to have their say. What he did not only affected me, but it was my whānau who were there to pick up all of the broken pieces and not even asking what happened. So this was more for them and allowed me to shut that door forever.” Victim-survivor

Those who harmed also felt the process worked well. There was a “clear structure that was communicated at each step of the process” and they were kept aware of what was going to happen and expectations. They were also able to talk about what had happened in a safe environment.

“It allowed both of us to meet in a way that was as comfortable and safe as possible, which probably couldn’t have happened in any other setting.” Person who caused harm

“The support of the team and my individual support person; good explanation; helpful processing on the day (worked well).” Person who caused harm

Many of those who supported the victim-survivors also said they felt the entire process went well. They considered it to be supportive and well facilitated and they appreciated the parties being brought together in a safe space.

“The entire process - it was well managed and the people facilitating the meeting took control where needed and interjected where appropriate.” Supporter of victim-survivor

While they found it hard, they also said they found it healing, particularly when the person

who did the harm accepted they were in the wrong and was regretful.

Those who supported those who harmed felt that the specialists, the engagement between the parties and the resolution worked well. They too felt it gave everyone the opportunity to talk together in a safe and supportive way, and pointed out it helped the person who caused harm understand the extent of the damage.

“Allowing the victim and her partner to voice their feelings as well as allowing my friend to acknowledge his wrongdoing and to apologise.” Supporter of those who harmed

## How could the process be improved

Most of the victim-survivors, people who caused harm and supporters did not think the process needed improvement.

Several victim-survivors, however, would have liked the conversation to carry on, with fewer interruptions and potentially for longer.

“One scenario that came to me of it going better was letting the natural flow that the conversation started with carry on but there could have been reasons why we got pulled to the structure and it may have been for the best. My notes that I pre-planned were written before he had apologised. I had much more to say but was anxious to hold to the notes like a safeguard there (and) held myself back and was not able to be quite as present and authentic as I could have been.” Victim-survivor

“I found a few times dad wasn't spoken to clearly which confused him a bit. I took away from the moment a bit, dad was interrupted a lot.” Victim-survivor

One victim-survivor would have liked more open communication around the person who caused harm's response to the list of questions provided.

For one victim-survivor, having the conference held outside the prison would have been helpful.

“Considering he had a prison case worker with him all day anyway, I don't understand why this can't be done in a more neutral environment. It is a horrid feeling for the survivor entering the prison and feeling almost like you're being locked up for the day, when this is meant to be a freeing experience. Even my support person commented on how this feels anything but survivor-focused. It is not a comfortable

environment for anyone to enter, but especially difficult given the circumstances.”

Victim-survivor

Others would have liked the communication and administrative arrangements leading up to the conference to be more organised.

“Better organised in terms of venue, travel arrangement and all confirmed in letter/email.” Victim-survivor

Some victim-survivors felt that the process lacked teeth. One felt it was like a tick-box experience, and rather than listening to the needs of the victim-survivor, it “pandered” to the abuser.

One person who caused harm said they would have liked an opportunity to speak to people who were not in attendance in order to make amends. Another would have liked to have been given an opportunity to explain themselves better.

“These people were obviously just trying to do their jobs and I'm grateful for their support of the victim, but I would have appreciated them letting me explain myself better and not jump to conclusions so quickly.” Person who caused harm

On the whole, the supporters (n=14) of the victim-survivors felt the process could not be improved.

“I really appreciate that PR caters to the cultural, spiritual and sexual orientation needs of my clients. I love that they anticipate need before it even becomes a question in my mind and liaise so we'll to work together to support the client. Everything is so completely transparent, too, which makes the process feel even more safe.” Supporter of victim-survivor

“As my first experience very engaging and found all aspects with the highest standards to get points taken and analysed to help your own questions ... most of all having you all there to be angels of mercy thank you so much.” Supporter of victim-survivor

Those supporting the people who had caused the harm also agreed that the process met their needs, was professional and well facilitated (n=6).

“I believe the process was very professional, and I cannot think of a way it could be improved. The RJ Team were all very kind and professional. Our RJ Specialist was extremely professional and compassionate. We are very grateful to him.” Supporter of person who caused harm.

Those seeking improvements reiterated concerns about wanting to understand their role more clearly, being heard, feeling that the person they were supporting was not treated as a criminal, having it held at a neutral venue and providing better kai (n=5).

## Cultural needs and understanding

For Māori victim-survivors, seven of the eleven Māori respondents felt the process was sensitive to their needs, including their cultural needs, and one felt it was partially responsive. Of the three who did not feel their cultural needs had been met, two commented. One suggested just asking the question, “how can we ensure we are doing everything culturally correct or appropriate”? “Ko au taku ahurea, ko taku ahurea ko au” – “I am my culture and my culture is me”.

The other said they had received a negative comment from the facilitator “questioning my tikanga, which insults my culture, values and iwi.”

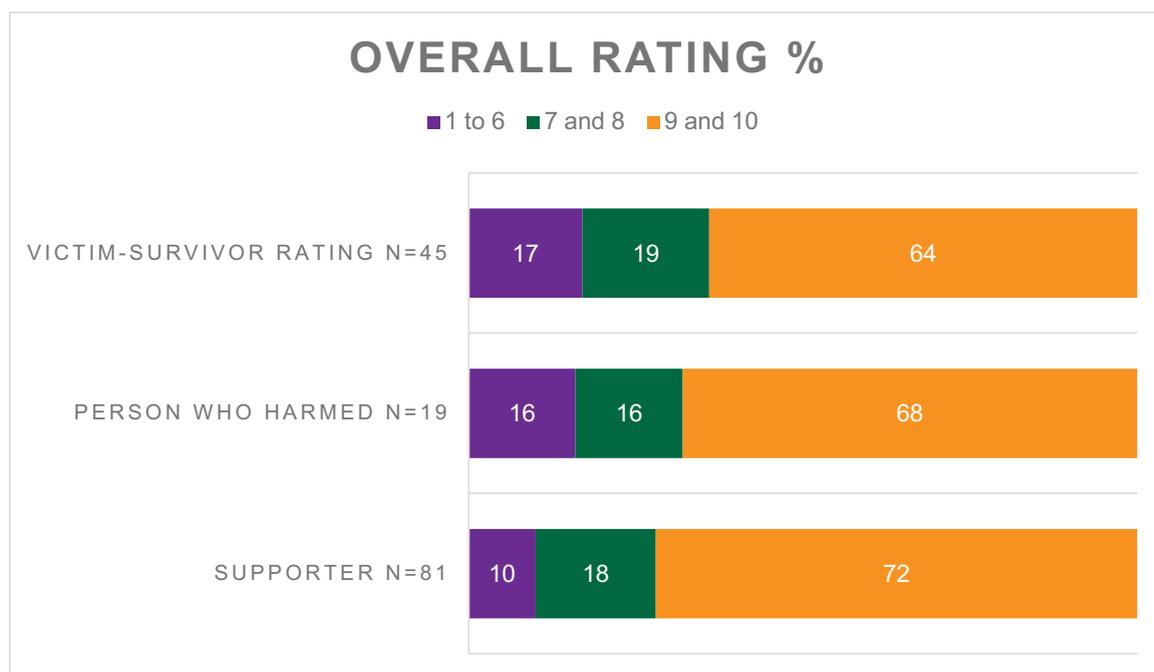
While the Pasifika, Asian and victim-survivors from other ethnicities felt the process had met their needs, one felt it had only done so in part as they had not been able to afford a translator.

“Translation was too expensive so we had to get a family member who was not very supportive, so it was awkward sometimes.” Victim-survivor

The supporters felt similarly with seven of the eight Māori participants feeling the process was culturally sensitive, and all the Pasifika and Asian supporters agreeing that this was the case.

## Would they recommend the process to others

Two-thirds of the victim-survivors were highly likely to recommend others experiencing harm to Project Restore (nine and ten on a ten-point scale), with a further 19% likely to recommend it (7 and 8). The net promoter score (NPS) was positive (NPS+47). A similar percentage (68%, NPS+48) of those who had caused harm and supporters (72%, NPS +62) were highly likely to recommend it to others who had caused harm. The differences were not significant.



When asked why they rated it that way, the victim-survivors highly likely to recommend it said they found it helpful in healing and recovery, even though some found it hard. They felt like they “got some justice” and that it “seemed like the best outcome for both parties.” The victim-survivors also felt like they were able to face the person who caused harm in a safe environment, ask questions and have them answered, say what they wanted to say about the impact on them, and have their voice heard. They found the process positive, helpful, and empowering and felt mentally and emotionally supported by the process. It has helped them to move forward on their healing journey and provide a sense of relief.

“It more than met my expectations and 99% of my fears proved to be unfounded. It was an empowering experience in so many ways.” Victim-survivor

“Project Restore is 100% a step in the right direction for giving victims and those who have caused harm an opportunity to learn what is and isn’t okay and how to heal and grow from that so harmful things don’t happen again. I believe if we weren’t given this opportunity, a harsh sentence on the person who caused harm would have had little to no effects on their future behaviour and there could have been repeated harm.” Victim-survivor

Those who gave it a moderate rating (seven to eight on a ten-point scale), felt it was important for both the victim-survivor and person harming to be heard and while they saw

their experience was positive and helped them on their journey towards healing, noted it is not for everyone.

“I don’t believe it is for everyone. It was a helpful process to allow me to change the way I saw my offender from a monster to more human, but in no way does it change what happened (not that anything will) it just allowed me to feel less scared and begin to move forward with my life and heal.” Victim-survivor

Those who rated their experience poorly (one and two on a ten-point scale) were concerned about a lack of progress and found the wait too long which delayed the healing process.

“The wait for the conference was too long and I would’ve done better just continuing on my healing process, the meeting was just a burden to my process and I wouldn’t want other people to experience it the same way I did.” Victim-survivor

“I was left, dropped, after rather incompetent processes to progress it. My feelings after this 'failure of process' are that I am very disappointed in this system of justice - for me, it was a 'lack of justice'. I consider that the PR person I dealt with was not sufficiently trained to have this responsibility - she 'dropped the ball' so to speak.” Victim-survivor

Another was concerned that the process had “no teeth.”

“It has little to no effect. My offender withdrew and that was that. I was not offered any further options to pursue.” Victim-survivor

Those who caused harm rated it highly (9 and 10) agreed it was a very good, well-structured process and a positive step forward. They felt the staff were experienced, professional and respectful, and they were able to speak to their harm-doing. It helped them realise their mistakes and “become a better person.”

“I feel it has been very beneficial to both of us, and it's offered me the chance to speak up about my offending and the whole situation - something I've wanted to do for years but have been unable to.” Person who caused harm

Those who gave it a poorer rating had either not been through the whole process, or acknowledged the person would have to be “in the right headspace” before they would recommend it.

Similarly, the supporters who rated the experience highly, in addition to finding it helpful and the facilitators informative and professional, said it had provided relief to those they were supporting.

“Watching my family member walking out with a weight off their shoulder and feeling they were empowered was so good to see.” Supporter

The supporters who would not recommend the process to others felt it was emotionally draining and that the process was poor.

“I was very hopeful at the start of the process. The defendant liaison was supportive. Unfortunately, as the process continued I had red flags pop up: - being judged when they came to our house - unfair questioning at the conference - being present at the sentencing hearing - placing more pressure and stress on the defendant at the sentencing hearing by wanting further meetings. The process is too one-sided. There needs to be more balance.” Supporter

## Overall

When asked if they had any further comments victim-survivors, those who caused harm and the friends, family, professionals, and colleagues who commented thanked Project Restore for their professionalism, support, and help.

“Thank you so much to the team that helped facilitate this and all the effort that went into making this happen I see only part of your efforts. You really are making a difference in people's lives.” Victim-survivor

“I very much appreciate Project Restore for their role in allowing (people who cause harm) and victims to come together and resolve the issues between them. I may be engaging in the process with another family member and hope it will have as good results as this time.” Supporter

One victim-survivor was highly dissatisfied and wanted to make a formal complaint about the process to “actually get the justice I need” while two others felt the process would be more effective if there was a requirement to participate, and it was “more purposeful.” Another felt that they would like it to be more ethnically supported. One, victim-survivor, although finding it helpful, felt they had left it too late as the person who caused harm had dementia. “I don't think he really understands the impact this has had on me.” They did acknowledge nonetheless it had helped their family members “understand my mood swings and odd behaviour over the years.”

It is suggested a pamphlet might make it easier to understand the process.

Most, however, were positive about their experience.

“Thank you for your time and for allowing me to face him again while feeling supported and safe.” Victim-survivor

“You make a difference and appreciate the big job you undertake every day.” Person who caused harm.

“Thank you for helping my family member finally come to terms with their abuse.”  
Supporter

## Interviewees

Eight stakeholders, from Corrections, the Parole Board, the Ministry of Justice, and a range of other organisations which have referred clients to Project Restore were interviewed along with five Project Restore staff. Several workshops with staff were also undertaken to develop the theory of change, report on the purpose of the evaluation asked, and to feedback early results. These interviews provide further context to the evaluation findings.

The interviewees believe that Project Restore is providing an important alternative to the court process.

“For many, they want something different and don’t want to go through reporting the matter to police. They don’t want to go through the court process, which we now know - it has been documented just how difficult it is to retell your story in that adversarial way.” Interviewee

There is a gap, they argue, between what the legal system offers and what restorative justice can provide. While acknowledging that neither process will meet everyone's needs, they believe it should be offered as part of a suite of options. Because the impact of sexual violence is so intense and can span the life course of victim-survivors, they believe restorative justice processes should be offered at every point of their healing journey.

“It is intense in terms of the impact. People stop working and it affects their ability to parent, it affects their employment, and everything is affected so everything is affected. We need really good and meaningful ways to deal with it.” Interviewee

“Restorative justice should be available to anyone at any time, not just at particular points in their pathway through the criminal justice system.” Interviewee

One interviewee pointed out that often barriers were put in the way of those who would have liked to engage in a restorative justice process.

“Often those who cause harm would say to the Board, really, I am experiencing guilt about this, it was a terrible thing and I have been through the sexual offending programme, I now understand what made me do what I do. I would really love the opportunity to be able to meet with the victim and apologise. I would like to talk about my behaviour and so on. The general response from members was to say no - even though the victim was open to that process.” Interviewee

Despite opposition from some Corrections staff, judges and Parole Board members who believed that victim-survivors and the person who caused harm should be kept apart, they had witnessed victim-survivors saying that post-sentence restorative justice practices were healing and had helped them move forward. For Māori in particular, they pointed out “that is part of their Justice Kaupapa. You sit down and resolve issues face to face.”

The interviewees believe that restorative justice allows people to be heard and valued.

“ If you want to put it into a sexual context, victims of sexual offending are very rarely heard. People speak for them but not many people listen to them and value what they say.” Interviewee

The interviewees say most of those who harm have also been victims themselves. They believe the restorative justice movement isn’t just about repairing hurt and harm, but about building a more compassionate culture.

“People that have harmed people are still people, they are not “less than” people. Their behaviour we should acknowledge and look at - is not right, (it is)despicable or whatever you want to say - but it doesn’t mean they are not valued as a human being.” Interviewee

“If you look deeper into it in other areas of health or in schools for example, it is about building and creating a culture where individuals are able to react and interact with each other in a more empathetic and passionate way.” Interviewee

One interviewee described the impact of the restorative justice process on a young person Project Restore had worked with. The interviewee said the process, which was undertaken over a series of meetings, had helped this young client to understand the impact of their actions.

“They held my young man well in the sense that he is a victim in his own world - but that has also played out as him being a perpetrator and he has caused harm. There wasn’t blame, there was a lot of grace in the conversations and in the presentation of the content of what really happened.” Interviewee

The interviewee said the impact of the person that caused harm's actions were not excused or minimised but enabled "what can be some potentially hard and awkward conversations out into the open" in a safe space. They felt the process, questions and reflections had helped the person who caused harm to become self-aware of their actions.

The interviewee attributed the success of the approach to the space to allow the young person who caused harm to be honest and open, and reflect in a direct manner with an advocate who "wanted the best for (them)." The young person who was filled with self-loathing, while held to account, was treated respectfully.

"The advocate from Project Restore prior to the meeting was really straight up and spoke some real blunt truths to him but did it in a really loving and honouring way. He did it in a non-judgmental way and was able to hold that line really well so that my young man could trust him to be honest, to listen and respect his position of a wider knowledge of harm, cause and effect - but also he sensed the advocate from Project Restore really thought he was okay and thought the guy was valuable, was worth the pain and effort to go through this process because he could see this guy from Project Restore seemed to value him, seemed to want to journey through some healing with him and just gave him a lot of respect while not letting him off the hook." Interviewee

Many of the interviewees who referred clients to the service, or who were aware of the approach argue that the approach was world-leading.

"I think they are world leaders in many regards in relation to that and they probably are star providers at understanding victim's trauma and understanding victims' readiness along with safety concerns. I think they are very well positioned just because they prioritise that and have it in the forefront with the work, they are doing all the time which I think is way ahead of the other providers." Interviewee

There was concern from several interviewees that everyone is put through one process, and indigenous voices are not driving the process. Like some of the survey respondents, the interviewees would like to see a wider range of choices of restorative justice models, processes and pathways, including authentically bicultural pathways.

"I think they just lump everybody into one process. I think that the Indigenous voices. I think they just lump everybody into one process... I think it always has been because their belief in what they are doing is right for everybody, but it doesn't acknowledge other cultures." Interviewee.

"The choices people have are limited. In one location there is not a range of sexual

violence restorative justice providers that perhaps have unique aspects to their service whether it is Kaupapa Māori or whether it is au fait with other diverse ethnic groups or whatever. There is no choice for people, it is just one thing. I don't know if it is good or bad, but it is a fact." Interviewee

They note that early attempts at a Māori response to restorative justice have tended to involve Māori facilitators adapting to the Pakeha model.

Almost all the interviewees, including funders, felt that a restorative justice approach had wider application and could be extended into a range of settings and reach more communities. For example, the knowledge that some of the facilitators within Project Restore have could be very useful in preventing sexual harm in youth spaces and schools.

The Ministry of Justice pointed out that in specialising in sexual violence, Project Restore is a critical provider because they are delivering a service that no other Restorative Justice provider is delivering.

Most felt that it was important to grow awareness of the service. As an interviewee from Corrections pointed out:

"I think there needs to be more promotion of what restorative justice is, the value and benefits so more victims can come forward if this is something they think could be useful for them. If you don't know about it, you are not going to put your hand up." Interviewee

## Conclusion

Project Restore offers a crucial and transformative restorative justice process for addressing the consequences of sexual harm. Through engaging both those who have been harmed and those who have caused harm, along with their families and communities, the process offers the participants a pathway towards understanding, healing, and resolution. It is designed to empower victim-survivors, giving them a voice and a sense of control over their healing journey.

Interviewees argue that Project Restore's approach is world-leading.

Project Restore's supportive approach, characterised by respect, empathy, and thorough preparation, is highly valued by participants. The participants have been able to express their experiences, impacts, and needs in a safe and supportive environment. Those who harm are held accountable, are able to apologise and make amends.

Almost two-thirds of victim-survivors felt the restorative justice process had provided them with the ability to move forward, with a further quarter saying that it had helped. It also helped improve their mental health, helped to reduce drug and alcohol abuse, and provided them with a sense of relief.

Many of the victim-survivors described the significance of being able to tell the person who had harmed them the impact of the harm they had caused, not only to them but to their family and whānau. They wanted to be listened to and have the harm acknowledged. Those who have caused harm have been able to apologise and agree to undertake actions which help make amends. They too indicate they have experienced improvements in their mental health and wellbeing and believe the process has provided them with a sense of relief. As interviewees pointed out, many of those who harm have also been victims themselves.

The interviewees believe the restorative justice movement isn't just about repairing hurt and harm, but about building a more compassionate culture.

The findings suggest that the restorative justice approach is not only catering to the immediate needs arising from the harm but appears to be fostering a deeper sense of justice and well-being among the participants.

The evaluation of Project Restore's restorative justice process demonstrates its alignment with the underlying theory of change. Feedback on the importance of developing cultural pathways echoes Project Restore's vision to offer a compassionate response that honours diverse identities and needs.

By addressing the challenges and implementing the recommendations, Project Restore can further enhance its contribution to the healing journeys of victim-survivors, the rehabilitation of those who have caused harm, and the broader vision of a more empathetic and restorative approach to justice.

## Recommendations

Based on the evaluation findings, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance the program's effectiveness and reach:

- *Clarify the relationship between restorative justice and future legal action:* Ensure participants are aware of the implications of taking part in the restorative action outside of the legal system.
- *Follow up on agreed actions:* While the process may not have the teeth to be able to enforce follow-up actions, find out and let the participants know whether the actions have been undertaken.

- *Enhance cultural responsiveness:* Further develop cultural pathways which cater to the diverse needs of participants.
- *Expand access and awareness:* Increase efforts to raise awareness about the program among potential participants and stakeholders and explore avenues to make restorative justice processes available at various stages of the healing and justice journey.
- *Continue evaluating and adapting:* Implement an ongoing evaluation process to capture the evolving needs and outcomes of participants, using these insights to continually refine and adapt the program.

# Appendix One: Demographics

