

# New Zealand Crime & Safety Survey 2006 (NZCASS) Key Findings report

## News media fact sheet 1: Responding to crime trends

### 1. Is crime going up, down, or staying the same?

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The NZCASS cannot provide a definitive answer in respect to all forms of crime. This is due to significant methodological changes in the survey design from the two previous surveys (the NZ National Survey of Crime Victims) in 1996 and 2001.

The NZCASS provides a benchmark for the 2005 year that, in the future, will enable measurement of changes over time. It cannot be fully compared with the two previous surveys due to significant changes in the survey design. Future surveys will be needed to provide more certainty about whether crime gone up, down, or stayed the same.

The researchers have considered the possible effects of the survey design changes as far as possible. Having done so, they concluded that the respondents to the survey did not experience more personal crime compared to the respondents to the previous survey in 2000. However, the households they represented did experience an increase in offences, but not a large one. They consider that the increase is about five extra offences per 100 households since 2000. Adjusting for the effects of design changes, however, cannot be exact. It is not possible to be statistically certain about the real differences.

Most New Zealanders did not experience crime during 2005. The NZCASS showed 61% of adults did not experience crime in 2005, while 19% experienced one offence and 20% experienced two or more offences.

### 2. Why can't you say what the crime rate is?

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The survey cannot say what the crime rate is because it does not cover all the crimes that occur. For instance, it does not include crimes against people aged under 15 years, those in institutions, crimes against commercial premises, or crimes that people do to themselves (e.g. drug use). Therefore, the actual number of crimes will be higher than that measured by the survey.

At the same time, police figures do not tell us what the crime rate is either. The Police only record offences reported to them.

What the survey does is to provide a close estimate of the experience of crime by the 5,416 respondents to the survey and the households they represent—including crimes not known to the Police. Using the best survey and statistical methods available, it is

estimated that the number of crimes in scope of the survey in New Zealand in 2005 was 2.75 million.

What the survey doesn't include in its estimate are the crimes against people aged under 15 years or those in institutions, crimes that people do to themselves (e.g. drug use), and crimes against commercial premises. Therefore, the actual number of crimes will be higher than that measured by the survey.

### **3. What are the design changes that made a difference?**

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The survey design changes mean that more offences were included in the total count of crime than in the last two national crime surveys. One simple reason for this was that the current survey was carried out much earlier in the year than the previous two surveys. People will have remembered events better over the shorter time period they had to recall offences. Additional survey prompts have also increased recall. For example, for sexual offences, four additional prompts were added from that used in previous surveys.

The definition of 'partner' when categorising threats or assaults committed by partners was changed to include former partners, and partners of the same sex, rather than just current heterosexual partner. Changes in the legal definition of burglary also required adjustments to the data when making multi-year comparisons.

While the total number of offences has increased in the 2006 survey compared to previous surveys, this is misleading. The researchers have considered the possible effects of the survey design changes and concluded that New Zealanders have not experienced more personal crime, including violent crime, since the previous survey in 2000. In their view, there appears to have been an increase in the offences experienced by the households that individual respondents to the survey represented, which includes such offences as burglary and vehicle crime, but not a large one. They consider that this would probably be about an extra five offences per 100 households since 2000.

Adjusting for the effects of design changes, however, cannot be exact. It is not possible to be statistically certain about the real differences.

### **4. What are you planning to do about the findings?**

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The justice sector has been working on a range of long-term initiatives to address criminal offending, support victims and work within communities to improve safety. The findings of the NZCASS will inform a number of projects that are currently under development or being delivered.

The survey provides important information and feedback for the justice sector, particularly in the areas of crime prevention and reduction, services to victims, Police and Court services, family violence services, and the development of policy and legislation.

Further analyses of the survey data are expected over the coming year to provide insights into community safety, family violence, the high risk of victimisation among sole parent families, the main determinants of victimisation risk, information on the needs of victims, victimisation through e-crime, and the cost of crime to victims.

A follow-up study of the high risk of victimisation among sole parent families is already in progress. This will explore further why some sole parents are heavily victimised and others are not.

## **5. What have you done since the last survey?**

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The justice sector has been working on a range of long-term initiatives to address criminal offending, to support victims, and to work within communities to improve safety. The findings of the NZCASS will continue to inform a number of initiatives that are currently under development or being delivered, such as:

- The Effective Interventions package that touches on some of the issues raised in the NZCASS. These include crime prevention initiatives and action plans for Maori and Pacific offending.
- The information in the survey will aid the development of new initiatives currently being investigated such as the “Hot Families” project in Christchurch, which comes under the umbrella of Effective Interventions.
- Situational crime prevention initiatives such as Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED), which is about improving public spaces to reduce opportunities for violence and threats.
- Alcohol-related violence initiatives such as Project CARV, which is improving local coordination of responses to alcohol-related violence, and ALAC’s culture change programme targeting binge drinking. These initiatives all go to reducing the incidences of violence that result from drinking.
- Theft of vehicles was identified as a crime considered serious and frequently reported. The Whole of Vehicle Marking project, compulsory use of immobilisers and an accredited parking scheme are being progressed to reduce the number of thefts.
- Family violence and interpersonal violence is being addressed through the Government’s Taskforce on Violence within Families. This is a large project coordinated by the Ministry of Social Development and involving a range of government departments and NGOs.
- The coordinated work on South Auckland Youth Gangs has resulted in a range of actions to be delivered to address issues in that area.
- Police initiatives for the addition of 1000 new police officers arising from the Confidence and Supply Agreement between the Government and New Zealand First, improvements to the 111 system, work on a community policing initiative, and review of the Police Act which looks at the role and governance of Police.

- In February 2007, Government announced nearly \$1 million for research into sexual violence, conviction rates and victim support, including looking at ways to improve the likelihood of victims making formal complaints.