

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

News media fact sheet 3: Victims in 2005

1. What does the NZCASS tell us about victims?

It confirms that:

- most people did not experience crime
- the estimated number of victimisations disclosed was much higher than the number of offences recorded by Police
- many people did not consider offences they experienced to be crimes
- a small number of victims accounted for a large number of offences
- those less economically and socially well-placed were at greater risk of experiencing criminal victimisation.

The pattern of results is comparable with other crime surveys overseas.

2. What was the risk of experiencing crime?

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.

There is no 'average' risk of experiencing crime. The total number of victimisations was unevenly distributed with 6% of adults experiencing five or more offences, which accounted for half of all the offences measured by the survey, and represented 15% of all victims. An even smaller group (2%) of adults experienced three quarters (76%) of the number of partner threats and assaults to themselves or to their personal property.

Around 18% of adults experienced a personal offence in 2005 and around 30% of all households experienced a household offence.

The NZCASS shows that those less likely to be victimised were people who were widowed, retired, aged over 60, living alone, couples without children, home owners (rather than renters), and people living in rural or secondary urban areas. There were also low risks for people in rural and small urban areas. Some of those in these areas have low socioeconomic status based on occupational status (measured by the NZ Socioeconomic Index) - rural workers for instance.

There was a concentration of risk among the less economically and socially well placed. In 2005, the risks of experiencing crime were consistently high for sole parents, students, people aged 15-24, those unemployed or on a benefit, people renting properties, living in the most deprived areas (measured by the NZ Deprivation Index), Maori and Pacific peoples, and people whose marital status was single, de facto, divorced or separated.

The risk of crime varied a little by type of offence, but broadly the picture of risks is similar. In 2005, those most at risk of burglary were sole parents; vehicle owners who were most at risk of offences involving vehicles were flatmates, beneficiaries and students; young women aged 15-24 were most at risk of sexual offences; and sole parents were most at risk of confrontational offences involving threats or assaults.

3. Were Maori more at risk of being victims of crime?

Crime surveys collect information on both the characteristic of the respondent and on their victimisation experience. This is put together to see which types of people were more, or less, at risk of victimisation. For instance, the average risk for all those aged 15-24 is compared with the average risk for other age ranges. The average victimisation rate for the younger group was higher than for the older groups. This does not definitely mean that the young will be victimised. The same applies to risks identified by ethnicity. Generally speaking, the more risk factors, the higher the statistical risk, but this does not mean that all people with that profile will be victims.

Maori were shown as being at higher risk of victimisation in the 2006 survey than other ethnic groups. However, they share many other characteristics associated with higher risks of victimisation. For example, the Maori population contains proportionately more young people, beneficiaries, and renters. These are groups that have higher than average risks of victimisation.

The NZCASS does not collect data to identify what underlies risk, such as lifestyle (how often someone goes out, how much alcohol they consume when they are out, etc). However, further analysis of the 2006 data will be carried out on the determinants of victimisation risk. This may help us better understand some of the group differences that have been identified.

4. Were the poor more likely to be victims of crime?

There are two complementary measures of deprivation and socioeconomic status: a measure of deprivation based on the area where people live (NZ Index of Deprivation); and a measure of socioeconomic status based on an individual's occupational status (the New Zealand Socioeconomic Index of Occupational Status, NZSEI).

The NZCASS showed that those living in the most deprived quintile (NZ Index of Deprivation) had above average risks of experiencing crime—in particular, assaults and threats.

However, the survey also found that those with the lowest socioeconomic status based on occupational status, as measured by the NZSEI, were least likely to be victimised. This group includes a large number of rural workers.