

The New Zealand Crime and Victims Survey (NZCVS) Cycle Five (2021-22)

Frequently Asked Questions

New Zealand Crime and Victims Survey

- The New Zealand Crime and Victims Survey is an annual survey of New Zealanders' experiences of crime. It measures interpersonal crime such as assault or threats and harassment, and household crime such as burglary and vehicle theft. It does not measure drug crime, homicide, traffic crime, abduction, crimes against children, commercial/white-collar crime or crimes against public sector agencies or businesses including ramraids. If an individual experienced interpersonal violence in their workplace this would still be covered by the survey.
- The latest findings are from surveys conducted between November 2021 and November 2022.
- Thirty one percent of New Zealanders experienced crime in the last 12 months. This is consistent with NZCVS findings in previous years.
- Adults identifying as LGBT+¹ (52%), separated adults (45%) and Māori (37%) are more likely to be victims of at least one crime than other demographic groups.
- A small proportion of New Zealanders (4%) experienced the most crime (56%). This 4% of adults represents 13% of all victims.
- Women, Māori, adults identifying as LGBT+, young people, people in large urban areas and people living in deprived areas or under financial pressure are disproportionately represented in the 4% of adults who experience the most crime.
- The most common crimes experienced were fraud and deception² (510,000 offences experienced by 10% of adults), burglaries (288,000 offences experienced by 10% of households), and physical offences including robbery and assault (253,000 offences experienced by 2% of adults).
- The rates of most crimes have remained steady compared to previous years, but fraud and deception have increased significantly. Fraud and deception were experienced by 6% of adults in 2020/2021 and 10% of adults in 2021/22.
- The survey doesn't measure violent crime as a category, but it found no increase in interpersonal violence (sexual assault, other assault, robbery, harassment and threatening behaviour, and damage to household and personal property where offender is known to a victim) among the adult population. Although the number of

¹ LGBT+ includes transgender adults, adults who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or other diverse sexualities.

² Fraud and deception captures incidents where a person is tricked or deceived to obtain money, goods or services, and the use of bank cards, credit cards, cheques or other documents without permission to obtain money, credit, goods or services.

adults who experienced interpersonal violence has decreased slightly (6% down from 7%), the adults who did experience interpersonal violence experienced more offences.

- A larger proportion of people reported at least one crime to Police than in previous years (35% up from 33%), but a smaller proportion of total crimes were reported (19% down from 25%).
- The decrease in the reporting rate was primarily driven by the reporting behaviour of highly victimised individuals who reported a smaller proportion of offences in 2021/22 compared with 2020/21 (16% down from 25%).

Questions and Answers

1. Is crime increasing?

Our survey results found the proportion of New Zealanders experiencing crime has remained around 30 percent over the five years since the survey began. We know there has been an increase in the total number of offences which means those impacted by crime, experienced more incidents in 2021/22.

Our analysis shows a small group of people (4 percent of adults) experience the majority of crime (56 percent of all incidents). We're now conducting further research to understand more about these people and their experiences.

2. Is violent crime increasing?

The survey found no increase in victims of interpersonal violence (sexual assault, other assault, robbery, harassment and threatening behaviour, and damage to household and personal property where offender is known to a victim) among the adult population.

Although the proportion of adults who experienced interpersonal violence has decreased slightly (6 percent down from 7 percent), those who experienced interpersonal violence experienced more offences (29 offences per 100 adults, up from 19 offences per 100 adults a year ago).

3. Why are the most victimised people experiencing more crime?

The NZCVS doesn't ask participants to detail their experience as victims. Nor does the data allow us to investigate the in-depth reasons behind crime and victimisation. We have commissioned research with those who are frequent victims of crime to find out more about their experiences. These findings will be available early next year.

The reasons behind crime and victimisation are complex. There is a wide range of factors that contribute to the increase in offences, including economic conditions, events such as Covid lockdowns and restrictions limiting victims' day-to-day support and safety systems or creating new pathways for abusers. There may also be an increased recognition of certain behaviours and incidents as crime or a willingness to disclose them.

4. Why doesn't this align with reports from Police that crime is increasing?

It's difficult to compare the NZCVS results with Police crime statistics because they measure different crimes and different time periods.

NZCVS doesn't measure drug crime, homicide, traffic crime, abduction, crimes against children (younger than 15 years old), or crimes against businesses.

Recent Police data shows a significant increase in shoplifting crimes including robbery, burglary and theft, which NZCVS doesn't record.

The NZCVS was designed to measure reported and unreported crime and victimisation in New Zealand at the personal and household level, to inform justice sector interventions that otherwise might not be meeting the needs of all victims.

5. Are some regions safer than others?

The NZCVS consistently finds that the region New Zealanders live in has little effect on whether they become a victim of crime. The only region where fewer adults experienced victimisation was the South Island, excluding Canterbury (24 percent compared to the national average of 31 percent).

6. Is your finding that Māori experience more crime due to the New Zealand Crime and Victims Survey interviewing more Māori?

No. The finding that Māori are more likely to be victims of crime than the national average (37 percent compared to 31 percent) reflects the current New Zealand population. We deliberately interview more Māori to allow us to do analysis that wouldn't be possible with a smaller sample, but all findings that compare Māori to the national average have been scaled to reflect the correct population proportions.

7. You mentioned that sexual assaults were significantly less likely to be reported to the Police. What are the reasons for this?

People choose not to report crimes to Police for a variety of reasons. In the survey, we ask participants to select from a list of options why they chose not to report. In the case of sexual assault, the most common answer selected for not reporting to Police was 'too trivial/no loss or damage/not worth reporting' (59 percent).

Shame, embarrassment, further humiliation (22 percent) and fear of reprisals/would make matters worse (12 percent) were also more likely to be cited as reasons for not reporting for sexual assaults compared to other offences.

21% of victims of sexual assault said that they did not report because they believed 'Police couldn't have done anything'.

We also asked respondents what they thought about what happened to them. Most sexual assault victims answered that their experience was 'wrong but not a crime' (49 percent). Others stated their experience was a crime (29 percent), while some answered that it is 'just something that happens' (21 percent). According to our reporting to Police data, incidents that are not perceived as crimes are far less likely to be reported to the Police.

Each of these findings doesn't necessarily reflect a belief that sexual assault is trivial or not worth reporting and may reflect people's assessments about evidence and what may be asked of them if they report to Police. Additionally, victims might access the support they need from their whānau or wider community and/or feel reluctance to initiate criminal proceedings against the perpetrator.

8. Were the results impacted by Covid-19?

Overall, most trends in crime and victimisation remained stable during the Covid-19 pandemic.

During the survey period experiences of burglary decreased from 12% to 9% of households, while the proportion of adults who experienced fraud and deception increased from 6% to 8 percent.

These findings are consistent with victimisation surveys in other overseas jurisdictions, like in England and Wales where lockdown behaviours such as staying at home, working from home and online shopping also impacted results.

There were also some shifts in perceptions of crime and reporting behaviour which are explored in more depth in the Impact of COVID-19 report.

Covid-19 has also impacted survey response rates. We usually sample 8,000 New Zealanders and achieve a response rate of 80 percent. In this latest survey we interviewed 5,326 New Zealanders and had a response rate of 71 percent.

9. Why do we need a Crime and Victims Survey?

Most crime isn't reported to Police, so data from Police or the courts is unable to illustrate to true volume of crime in New Zealand. NZCVS fills this gap and provides crucial information about who is impacted by crime, both reported and unreported.

NZCVS data is used by the Ministry of Justice, Stats NZ, Ministry of Social Development, Te Puni Kokiri, the Police, Department of Corrections, Oranga Tamariki, the Ministry for Women, academic and independent researchers, and NGOs.

Findings from the survey help:

- Contribute to our understanding of the wellbeing of New Zealanders, as reported in Stats NZ's living standards dashboard and Treasury's Living Standards Framework
- Illustrate patterns and changes in crime and victims over time
- Inform policy and investment decisions within the justice sector and wider social sector
- Inform projection models that the Ministry of Justice use to assess future crime and victimisation trends

10. What do you do with the information from the NZCVS?

NZCVS data is used by justice sector agencies and others to inform decisions about investment and interventions in the sector. The results are also incorporated into the Stats NZ's Integrated Data Infrastructure so they can be compared to other data collected by government agencies such as health and education data. This is used by policy makers as well as researchers.

11. Who was asked to take part?

We randomly select 8,000 households to take part. If they consent to participating, one adult from each household completes the survey. People did not need to have experienced a crime to respond to the survey.

12. How do you ensure that the people who complete the survey are representative sample of New Zealanders?

We randomly select participants, and then use the latest census data to weight the results. Both household and individual weights are applied so that the final results represent the New Zealand population.

13. When did interviews take place?

Face-to-face interviews with participants took place in people's homes between November 2021 and November 2022. They were asked about crime and victimisation that had occurred over the last 12 months from the day of the interview.

14. What questions were asked?

We asked participants if they had any experience of the crimes that NZCVS records. Drug crime, homicide, traffic crime, abduction, crimes against children, large-scale financial crime or crimes against businesses are excluded. If they say yes to any of the questions about crime, they are also asked:

- What happened
- How it affected them
- Whether they have told anyone about their experience

We also ask survey respondents for their demographic information including gender, ethnicity and income.

15. How were the questions asked?

The interviewers used laptops rather than paper questionnaires.

- For non-sensitive questions interviewers recorded survey answers on laptops.
- For sensitive questions, the respondent answered the questions directly on the laptop themselves, providing additional confidentiality and reducing the need for them to explain possibly traumatic experiences to someone else. Participants were also provided the contact details of a variety of relevant services, should they need to talk to someone or get some help after completing the survey.
- Computer-assisted video interviewing, where a participant was interviewed remotely using a computer or tablet was introduced last year so the survey could be conducted more safely during Covid-19 restrictions.

In these cases, respondents were provided a secure, private online 'room' where an interviewer and respondent could meet to complete the survey together.

For interviewer-led portions of the survey, the respondent was able to see answer options on their screen. For the portions that would traditionally be self-completed by the respondent, the respondent was able to take control of the survey and answer the questions themselves privately, without the interviewer having visibility of the questions that were being served up, or the answers provided.

16. How long did interviews take?

Interviews normally took between 20 to 30 minutes.

17. Is the privacy of participants protected?

The information provided to the interviewer is strictly confidential and protected by the Privacy Act 2020. The interviewer cannot discuss information collected with anyone else. Only approved researchers can use NZCVS data. Individual responses will never be identified, all contact details are removed from the data set, and participants' names and identifying details are not included in the published material.

Survey results that apply to only a very small number of people and could therefore be identifiable such as ethnic groups or certain crimes are either reported in combination with a similar finding or not reported at all.

18. What kinds of crime does the New Zealand Crime and Victims Survey not cover?

Our survey does not ask participants about:

- Homicide
- Abduction
- Crimes against children 14 years old and under
- Drug offences
- Commercial crime/white-collar crime/crimes against businesses or public-sector agencies
- Retail crime
- Crimes against people who do not live in permanent private dwellings
- Crimes against people living in institutions.

19. Why is homicide not included in the survey?

The NZCVS collects information about personal and household crimes that individuals (and their households) may have experienced. It also records patterns of reporting and help-seeking, and how victims think and perceive the crimes that they have experienced. Homicide is out of scope of the survey, as the direct victim is deceased.

20. Who administers the survey?

An independent, New Zealand based research company, Reach Aotearoa Ltd (formerly CBG Health Research Ltd) conducted interviews and completed offence coding on behalf of Ministry of Justice. A criminologist at Victoria University of Wellington, and experts from New Zealand Police provided quality assurance support during the offence coding.

Ministry of Justice Research and Evaluation staff drafted the key findings and topical reports.

21. How did Ministry of Justice officials develop the survey methodology?

Research and Evaluation staff at the Ministry of Justice designed the survey and sought feedback from Stats NZ and Police. Thirteen government and NGO organisations were consulted throughout this process.

The methodology was also reviewed by criminologists at Victoria University of Wellington and by Pat Mayhew OBE, who serves on the UK Statistics Authority's Crime Statistics Advisory Committee and who was director of the Crime and Justice Centre at Victoria University.

A pilot survey was conducted in advance of the main survey to test the methodology.

For further details on the methodology please go to: <https://www.justice.govt.nz/justice-sector-policy/research-data/nzcvs/resources-and-results/>

22. How much does the survey cost?

The survey total cost was about \$1.2 million.

23. What about comparing NZCVS with international criminal research?

International comparisons are difficult due to differences in legislation, offence coding systems, and the design of crime surveys and how they are conducted.

24. What are the limitations of the NZCVS?

The NZCVS gathers information on a range of personal and household offences that are not captured elsewhere, but it does not report the total amount of crime in New Zealand. This is because the survey doesn't cover all groups of the New Zealand population and every type of crime that someone may experience.

25. The NZCVS is a sample survey. What does this mean?

A sample survey means that not all New Zealanders give information about their experiences. The NZCVS is not a population census. Not all respondents want to talk about their experiences, remember past incidents and/or provide accurate information about incidents.

26. Where can I obtain more information about this survey?

Survey results are available from the Ministry of Justice website:

<https://www.justice.govt.nz/justice-sector-policy/research-data/nzcvs/resources-and-results/>

Enquiries about the survey method or feedback from participants in the Survey can be directed to Reach Aotearoa Ltd., phone: 0800 478 783

Enquiries about the purpose, results and use of the Survey can be emailed to NZCVS@justice.govt.nz