

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

News media fact sheet 4: Police reporting in 2005

1. How much crime was reported to the Police?

Around a third of all offences (32%) were reported to the Police – particularly those requiring an insurance claim.

Those offences most likely to be reported were:

- thefts of vehicles (84%)
- thefts from vehicles (52%)
- burglaries (47%)
- assaults (36%)

Those least likely to be reported were:

- sexual offences (9%), and
- household thefts (14%)

Nearly half of all offences regarded by the victims to be 'crimes' (46%) were reported and just over half of the offences considered by victims to be the most serious (51%) were reported.

2. Is there more or less crime being reported to Police?

The survey cannot confirm for certain whether there was more or less crime reported in 2005 than in 2000. This is because of survey design changes in 2006 that makes comparisons with the 2001 survey difficult. The researchers conclude that there probably was not any change in levels of reporting to Police.

3. Why was crime not reported to Police?

In line with international experience and results from the previous New Zealand surveys, almost half of all offences (48%) were not reported to Police because, in the victim's view, the matter was not considered important enough to report.

Other reasons for not reporting include victims' perceptions that the Police could not have done anything about it or would not have been interested (34%), that it was a private matter (27%), there was not enough evidence (12%), or that it was inconvenient (7%).

Embarrassment deterred 6% from reporting, as did not wanting to get the offender into trouble (6%), and fear of reprisals (5%), with these more commonly affecting victims of sexual offences and those who knew the offender well. Very few (2%) mentioned dislike of the Police.

Offences committed by partners were less likely to be reported (21%) than offences where strangers were most likely to be involved (31%). For offences committed by partners that were judged by the victim to be at the most serious level, only 35% were reported to Police, in comparison with 50% of offences at the same seriousness level being reported if they involved strangers or people well known. Note, however, that this was not a statistically significant difference, due to the small number of victims involved.

4. Why do Police Crime Statistics show a different level of reported crime?

Police have recorded offences reported to them since 1878 and these are published every six months. They differ from the NZCASS because they include:

- crimes against those aged under 15 years
- commercial or public sector establishments
- those in institutions or the homeless
- victimless crimes (e.g. immigration, perjury, drug or alcohol misuse)
- murder and manslaughter
- fraud.

They do not:

- measure crimes that are not reported
- include reported incidents that Police have not recorded.

Police Crime Statistics are subject to changes in reporting patterns and possible changes in recording practices.

5. What do people think about the Police?

Sixty percent of people generally thought the Police were doing a good or excellent job. This compares favourably with the British Crime Survey that rates confidence in the Police at 48%. For both New Zealand, and England and Wales, the Police are rated highest of a range of criminal justice sector groups measured.

6. How do people rate the Police response when they report crime?

Four new questions were added to the NZCASS to aid our understanding of victims' experience of reporting crime.

Kept waiting

Just under 2 in 10 felt they had an unreasonable wait and 1 in 10 said the Police never dealt with the matter at all. More than half of all victims who reported to the Police said they dealt with the matter immediately, or said immediately that they would not deal with it.

Shown interest

Nearly two-thirds (64%) of victims felt that the Police showed an appropriate level of interest in their case. The 36% who did not think so were most likely to be victims of vehicle thefts, women, young people, and those in the most deprived areas.

Shown respect

Most people (71%) agreed that the Police had been respectful. Those most likely to disagree were victims of vehicle thefts, young people, and Maori.

Kept informed

Just over a fifth of those who reported to the Police said they were kept very well informed or well-enough informed. A third (32%) of victims felt they should have been kept better informed and another quarter (27%) did not comment as they said that the Police had not investigated.

Overall satisfaction

Following from previous surveys, there was a question on overall satisfaction. Half of the victims who reported crimes to the Police were satisfied with the Police response (51%)—the same as the previous survey (50%)—as were levels of dissatisfaction (from 28% to 26%).

Older people and Pacific peoples tended to be more satisfied than other victims with the Police response overall. Higher levels of satisfaction were most strongly associated with whether victims were kept informed or not.

When people were dissatisfied, the main reasons they gave were that there was a lack of Police effort and interest and they not being kept informed. Other reasons were that the Police were not quick enough to respond; and that they were unable to catch the offender or retrieve property. The Police being impolite, sexist, racist, or accusatory accounted for 14% of dissatisfied victims.

7. How are Police responding to the NZCASS?

There are a number of Police initiatives under way. First, there is the addition of 1000 new Police officers arising from the Confidence and Supply Agreement between the Government and New Zealand First.

The Police are also undertaking a number of initiatives, which include 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.