

Issue: Crime Rates in New Zealand

Research Questions:

- 1) What is the impact of an increase in crime in New Zealand
- 2) What are the different perspectives and viewpoints on why there has been an increase in crime in New Zealand?
- 3) What can New Zealand learn from how other countries deal with the causes of crime?

Sources:

Title / Topic	Publisher / Organisation	Publication Details
Rehabilitation Programmes	Corrections NZ	Published by the NZ Department of Corrections. Accessed on 25 May 2023.
Reports of retail crime nearly doubled in 5 years	NZ Herald	Interview with Greg Harford (Retail NZ CEO), published July 2022
Crime in the City: Political and city leaders respond to an increase in violent crime	NZ Herald	Interview conducted by Michael Neilson (2021) with Inspector Gary Davey (Auckland Central Area Commander)
Auckland councillor angry ram raids have escalated	RNZ	Published by Radio New Zealand, May 9 2022.
We must not sit on our hands when it comes to crime	Stuff.co.nz	Press conference featuring Arena Williams and Stuart Smith opinion piece. Published 1 December 2022.
Fines for parents rise as schools try to reach absent kids	BBC News	Published by BBC News on 7 June 2022

[The student had also hyperlinked in a copy of the notes they had taken from their sources]

Question 1: What is the impact of an increase in crime in New Zealand.

Over the past couple of years, a substantial increase in crime in New Zealand has occurred. This increase in crime has had severe effects on many people throughout the country.

According to the New Zealand Police, in late 2017 crime was up by 15%, and this has since increased to 65% in 2022. This increase in crime has impacted so many people in many different ways. NZ's most common crimes include theft, minor assault, and burglary. These, as well as many other crimes, have increased substantially over the past five years.

Victimisation of offences committed in NZ has reached a record high, with 30,000 as of mid-2022. Not only is an increase in crime affecting the victims of the offence, but it has also created immense pressure and anxiety on businesses throughout the country. Retail NZ's CEO Greg Harford explains that the biggest impact that comes with an increase in crime is the safety of people. Harford also mentions that particular businesses may see a loss in

people shopping at their shops due to nervousness that the shop could be targeted by criminals. This could have a further flow-on effect for businesses as they may see a decrease in sales and revenue. Community organisations such as social workers and Police are also highly affected by an increase in crime as they become under-resourced. This is shown by a survey created by RNZ which shows that 86 percent of Police staff feel that they are under-resourced. An increase in crime is a current nationwide social issue. A social issue is an issue that affects large numbers of people in society. An increase in crime is a social issue as it is currently affecting vast amounts of people living in NZ's society in many different ways. Since early 2021, crime has been on the rise throughout New Zealand, with substantial increases in larger cities such as Auckland, Wellington, and Christchurch. Auckland, for example, recorded crimes that leapt from 87,971 in the year to March 2022 to almost 110,000 this year.

An increase in crime in New Zealand is becoming more and more of an issue as months pass. It is an important issue as it deprives the safety and security of members of society and affects people and organisations mentally, physically, and financially in many ways. For example, with an increase in crime, many people become nervous and experience stress and anxiety as they worry about the safety of themselves and those around them. This negatively affects people mentally. With low levels of assault and sexual violence up by more than 94% in the last year, people are affected physically through injuries, and with robberies and burglaries hitting an all-time high throughout the country, many people and businesses struggle financially to repair or replace goods. Many people and officials believe that one reason NZ has seen an increase in crime since early 2021 is due to Covid-19 and the lockdowns that came with it. This has negatively affected people's mental health and has caused an increase in stress, anxiety, and tensions within communities, leading to crime being committed. Another contributing factor to an increase in crime in NZ is the fact that the cost of living has been rising over the past few years. An increase in crime means that members of communities need to take more responsibility to ensure the safety and stability of others until a change is made in society to fix a growing national problem.

Question 2: What are the different perspectives and viewpoints on why there has been an increase in crime in New Zealand?

Perspective and Viewpoint #1: Chris Luxon

Christopher Luxon is the leader of the New Zealand National Party and in a press conference he shared his point of view on the increase in crime in New Zealand and what he believes needs to be done to fix this issue. Being the leader of the National Party, Chris Luxon viewpoint is shaped by a conservative perspective in relation to crime. He sees crime as a major threat to society and believes that a lack of strong punishment and people taking less personal responsibility has been a main reason for the increase in crime and as such his values are on the role of law in order in the community. His point of view is that there need to be harsher punishments for offenders, in particular youth offenders.. He explains, "National says, enough is enough, and I'm also telling young serious offenders under National, there will be consequences for your actions." From this, we can see that Luxon and the National Party think that to combat an increase in crime in NZ, there need to be harsher punishments for offenders, so they do not re-offend and to keep them out of communities. Luxon has also argued that crime has risen because the system is too soft, saying "violent

crime has increased by 33 per cent, retail crime has doubled, and gangs are growing faster than Police,” and that a National government would make sure “the justice system holds offenders accountable through sentences that better reflect the seriousness of a crime.” In 2022 he also said, “we just clearly haven’t got the appropriate consequences in place for serious offending,” and that “the primary job of Government is to protect its citizens,” which shows his focus on law and order and personal responsibility. Luxon and the National Party also targeted youth offenders and explained that they believe youth offenders need to have more serious punishments, such as military style boot camps, with Luxon saying “Enough is enough” and that under National young offenders “would face consequences for their actions.” Luxon’s background has also likely shaped this viewpoint, as he comes from a wealthy background it is unlikely he has ever experienced crime or been around criminals in his community and so may not fully understand the underlying reasons that people may commit crime. Being a conservative politician, he wants to appeal to his voters and offer quicker solutions to the issue and National has historically always been the party that has been harder on crime

Perspective and Viewpoint #2: Alf Filipaina

Alf Filipaina is an Auckland Councillor and former Police Officer. In an article, he shared his point of view on the increase in crime in New Zealand and what needs to be done to combat this issue. In contrast to Luxon, he has more of a left-wing progressive perspective towards crime – believing that the focus should be on addressing the root of the crime, rather than just enforcing harsher punishment. He values a more community and human rights focused approach and, being Pasifika has a strong family and cultural values. A such, his point of view is that there a reason for the increase in crime has been the increase in poverty in many communities and the lack of social support and isolation that occurs. He feels their need to be more social and youth workers in communities across the country working with offenders and their families. In this role, they would also be looking at the wider contributing factors of crime. He explains “We need youth workers working with our youth, but also working with our families, because if we fix the families we then fix the wider issue. Filipaina believes that if families are sorted and supported, it will reduce the chances of family members committing crimes. He also focuses on an increase in youth offending. He believes that if youth have a safe and stable family environment, then that will decrease the chances of them committing crime. This would be through social workers looking at the wider contributing factors, such as family violence and poverty. From this point of view, we can see that Filipaina values human rights, as he believes that everyone should have a safe living environment. Without this, he feels youth and family members will be more inclined to commit crimes are shown here as Filipaina believes that everyone should have access to a safe living environment, which includes safe housing and being free of family violence, which relates to equality and social justice, which is a more progressive view on the issue.

Question 3: What can New Zealand learn from how other countries deal with the causes of crime?

What New Zealand can learn from other countries is that dealing with the causes of crime works best when there is a clear balance between personal responsibility and strong social support. From a conservative point of view like Christopher Luxon’s, we can see how countries use tougher and more certain consequences to restore order and reassure the

public. International research shows that the certainty of being caught is more effective at deterring crime than simply increasing sentence length, which means visible and consistent enforcement helps reduce offending more than harsher penalties alone. For example, the idea of enforcing school attendance through clear penalties for unjustified absences shows how accountability can lift engagement and reduce the chances of youth drifting into offending. In England, councils issued about 487,300 penalty notices to parents for unauthorised absences in 2023–24, up 22 percent on the previous year, which shows how governments use attendance penalties to reinforce responsibility and keep students connected to school. Also, through doing this when there is increased attendance, it also increased overall educational attainment, which is also known to reduce crime.

At the same time, a progressive approach like Alf Filipaina's shows why many places invest in the drivers of crime so that fewer people end up offending in the first place, which highlights it's not just enough to focus on the consequences. South Africa is a clear warning that when poverty is extreme and not addressed, crime can rise to very high levels. In 2022, South Africa ranked first in the crime index among African countries with a score of 74.5 on the index. The leading cause of crime in South Africa is extreme rates of poverty. With poverty still being a leading underlying factor for crime in New Zealand, if it is not addressed, NZ's crime rates could increase similarly to South Africa's. New Zealand can learn from that by strengthening support around families and young people, for example by putting more youth workers and social workers into communities, improving access to safe housing, and making sure mental health and trauma support are available. For example, in Scotland when crime peaked in the mid 2000s, they put in a public health approach invested in prevention across schools, health and community services, and Scotland's homicide victims fell from over 130 in 2004/2005 to 57 in 2023–24, one of the lowest totals since records began. Which shows that although addressing underlying causes takes a long time, it can be the most effective way of reducing crime rates.

Putting these lessons together suggests a general approach that can apply outside this inquiry as well. Where social disadvantage is high, governments should tackle poverty, housing and education so the next generation has real opportunities. At the same time, there need to be clear, consistent consequences when people do offend so communities feel safe and the justice system is respected. Finding a way to incorporate both perspectives and also learn lessons from other countries is a keyway that New Zealand crime rates can improve in future.

Evaluation

What were the strengths and weaknesses of your inquiry process:

Given how topical the issue is in the media, it was really easy to find a wide range of research that related to my inquiry – and many were from well respected websites such as BBC and NZ Herald. However, at times I did find it trickier to know if I was finding reliable information when I was looking at progressive v conservative approaches to how crime is treated overseas as I wasn't as familiar with those countries' websites. It was also challenging to find direct primary sources, as many articles which were looking at causes and ways of addressing crime and the statistics were behind paywalls, so I had to rely on what I could access for free. However, some of the secondary sources did include direct quotations and primary sources. For example, the opinion piece "We must not sit on our

hands when it comes to crime”, although not about Luxon’s opinion – linked in a full video clip from his press conference, which allowed me to gather direct quotes and capture his view directly.

What further information could have been added? What more did you need to know?

I felt I had a good overview of the different points of view and that it was easy to distinguish them because they were so contrasting. However, it was a bit trickier when trying to explore how these viewpoints and perspective shaped addressing crime in other countries because this wasn’t explicit within different articles, so I had to use what I knew about their values and the general approach of each perspective to try and tell if it was a ‘progressive’ action or a ‘conservative’ and this took a bit more time.

How reliable were the sources that you used?

5 out of my 8 sources were NZ media outlets, all of which I knew had robust journalistic ethics and integrity and would have been peer checked like Stuff and NZ Herald/ However, I found that at least three of my sources had a slight left-wing bias according to the Media Bias Fact Check website. This means that some of my information could have been slightly altered to a left-wing point view. Next time I could look at gathering information from only websites that are neutral to ensure that my information is credible, or work on ensuring I had a balance from each view. Something else that I was mindful of was that as the topic of crime is such a big concern for New Zealanders at the moment, and something lots of people are interested in, it is possible that a lot of what the media were saying was an exaggeration, or they were exaggerating people’s points of view in order to get a readers interest This may mean that some of my resources are exaggerated meaning that some information may not be entirely correct.

Grade: Excellence

For Excellence, the student needs to conduct a reflective social inquiry comprehensively.

In addition to the Achieved and Merit criteria, this requires them to make justified generalisations that can be applied beyond the immediate context of the inquiry.

The student has clearly met the requirements for Achieved and Merit through accurate explanation of perspectives, points of view, and values. They clearly articulate how progressive and conservative worldviews relate to the selected individuals' values and, in turn, their viewpoints on crime. They have also reflected on their inquiry process at a depth consistent with the Achieved criterion at curriculum level 7, including commenting on source reliability, limitations, and improvements for future inquiries.

The final focus question, *“What can New Zealand learn from how other countries deal with the causes of crime?”* has been thoughtfully developed to give the student appropriate scope to form a justified generalisation. In this section, they draw on earlier findings to argue for a balanced approach that pairs accountability with prevention. They use international examples, including attendance enforcement in England, prevention-focused strategies in Scotland, and links between poverty and crime in South Africa, to show how a mix of actions could inform New Zealand’s own response. This constitutes a justified generalisation because it is grounded in the perspectives and evidence established in Questions 1–2 and transfers these insights beyond the original cases to guide action in New Zealand.