

Juvenile Offending

What this is about...

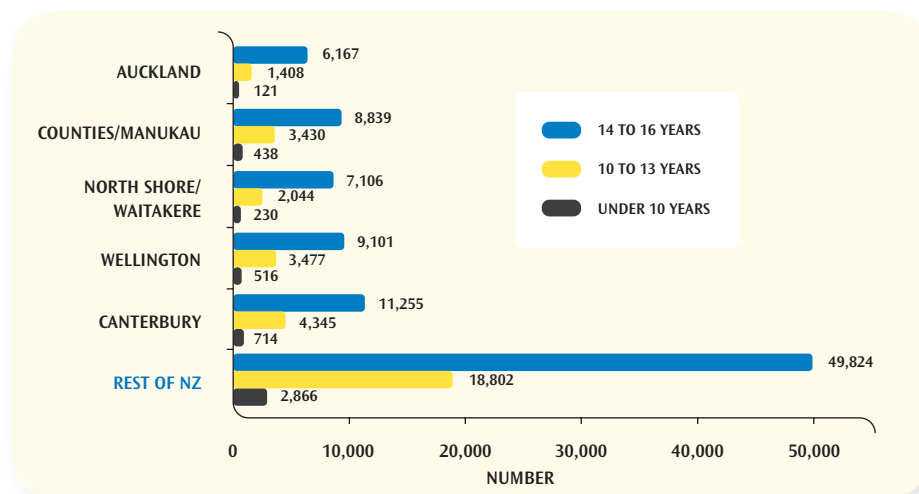
Juvenile offending is an indicator of the present health of the community, reflecting safety of people in their homes and on the streets. It also tells us about the direction the community is heading - young people involved in crime in their youth are more likely to continue to commit offences into adulthood. In addition, they may move from committing dishonesty offences in their youth to more serious offences as they get older¹⁴⁶.

The indicator shows the total number of reported juvenile offences committed by age groups within Police Districts between 1996 and 1998. The data measures the number of offences, not the number of individuals committing offences. Therefore, it does not reflect the possibility that few individuals may commit many offences. Indeed, UK research suggests about 5% of known young offenders commit 50% of all solved crimes.¹⁴⁷

What did we find ?

- The data indicates that most juvenile offences are committed by 14 to 16 year old males.
- Across New Zealand, the type of offence most commonly committed by juvenile age groups is dishonesty, followed by property damage for the under 10, and the 10 to 13 year age groups, and drugs and anti social behaviour for 14 to 16 year olds.
- Auckland and Manukau/Counties police districts tend to have a higher youth population compared to other areas. Therefore, the number of juvenile offences in Auckland and Manukau appear low given those cities' high youth populations.

TOTAL NUMBER OF REPORTED JUVENILE OFFENCES WITHIN POLICE DISTRICTS, BY AGE (1996 TO 1998)



Data Source: New Zealand Police

A number of issues may be associated with increased risk for juvenile offending including exposure to truancy and school drop out, leaving school with no qualifications, alcohol and drug misuse and peer pressure.¹⁴⁸ A study undertaken in New Zealand found a link between unemployment and juvenile offending - young people who had been unemployed for six months or longer had higher levels of offending, arrest and conviction than those of young people who had not been unemployed. However, unemployment was also associated with a range of adverse social, family, school and individual factors.¹⁴⁹

146 Personal communication with NZ Police and co-ordinator, Safer Auckland City.

147 West and Farrington. 1977. Cited in Crime Prevention Unit. 2000. Using Population Census Data for Planning Local Community Crime Prevention Action. Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

148 Ministry of Justice. 1997. Directory of Criminal Justice Research: Part 2 Cohort Studies.

149 Fergusson, D.M., M.T. Lynskey and L.J. Horwood. "The effects of unemployment on juvenile offending". Submitted to: Criminal Behaviour and Mental Health. Available from authors at Christchurch School of Medicine.