

New Zealand Police Association Report on Crime, Privatisation, and Budget Trends

1. Fear of Crime – Crime Trends

Please describe the general crime trend in your jurisdiction in recent years? If available please provide details before and after the Global Financial Crisis [2008].

Are there any exceptions to this trend?

What is the public reaction to the crime trend? Is fear of crime falling / rising in line with crime trends?

Is there any evidence of public calls for more police / law enforcement officers?

- “Fear of crime”, as measured by polling on “the most important issues”, is close to historic lows in New Zealand. The last three years have seen to longest sustained period of low fear of crime in recent history. See attached graph for details.
- Reasons for this trend have not been well studied by academia, however it coincides with the following factors which intuitively appear relevant:
 - Falling fear of crime from mid-2008, reaching historic lows from early 2011, coincided with record investment in policing 2005-2011 and police numbers peaking in 2011
 - Total recorded crime and violent crime dropping steadily and significantly since 2009. Total recorded crime is now 20% lower than five years ago, and nearly 25% lower than at its peak in 1996. Violent crime continued to rise until 2009, but has dropped steadily since then. See attached graph for details
 - Displacement of public fears from crime to concerns about economic security (employment, income, housing affordability) during and in the wake of the financial crisis, felt most severely in New Zealand 2008-to present
 - Successful efforts by the incumbent conservative government (2008-present) to change the political narrative to one that prioritises austerity and fiscal conservatism above all else; and which has tended to demonise public spending
 - Waning media interest in specific or general crime stories. Media saturation of crime reporting, often blamed for fuelling fear of crime out of all proportion to actual crime during the 1990s, is no longer present
- Low fear of crime has persisted despite a normal frequency of high-profile ‘shocking’ homicides and similar cases around which, in the past, media and public outrage would have centred.
- Law and order lobby groups now struggle to excite any media interest at all, and have lost all public profile.
- There is no public demand for increased police numbers generally; though reports of police station closures or local staff reductions tend to prompt brief, but very localised,

public disquiet. This does not translate to sustained media interest, even locally, or meaningful political pressure.

2. Role of the Private Sector

Please describe the influence (if any) the private sector is having on the delivery of police / law enforcement services in your jurisdiction?

How is the private sector viewed (for the delivery of police / law enforcement services) by;

a) Politicians

b) The public

c) The police / law enforcement community

d) Other commentators / observers / media

What is your Union's position on the potential for private sector involvement in the delivery of police / law enforcement services?

- Some Police tasks were contracted out during the 1990s. These include prisoner transport to and from court in some districts, and building/vehicle maintenance; and specialist services such as forensic science/analysis. Since then there has been no coordinated or significant programme of privatisation. There are however currently moves to contract out more technology related service and maintenance roles (IT/radio).
- During the high-crime/high fear of crime era of the 1990s, some suburbs/streets engaged private security in street patrols. This was a brief phenomenon which does not persist on any notable scale.
- The only significant private sector involvement in the justice sector at present is in prisons, where one of NZ's 17 correctional facilities is privately operated (by Serco). A further facility is presently planned under a design-build-operate private-public partnership contract. NZ's private prison (Mt Eden Corrections Facility) is rated highest on all current performance measures.
- There is no obvious political will to test the public's appetite for privatisation of policing services. Historically, the public and media commentators have tended to balk at private sector encroachment on public policing. Nevertheless, the trend towards consolidation of 'back office' functions such as HR, IT, and finance, may see tentative steps towards greater contracting in this area, driven either by government or by Police's own drive for internal savings.
- The NZ Police Association does not see an imminent threat from private provision of core policing services. A more immediate likelihood is the consolidation of support functions (and personnel) out of Police and into other or new government agencies. This may see membership numbers eroded and precipitate debate as to whether individuals engaged in policing tasks, but employed by other agencies, ought also to be covered by the Association.

3. Wages, Budgets and Allocation

Please describe the general trend in budget allocation for your police / law enforcement organisation in recent years? If possible please ensure you indicate if this is more or less favourable than other public sector organisations.

Please describe the general trend for police / law enforcement wage settlements in recent years? If possible please reference against other public sector wage settlements and include any other information you consider relevant (for example by reference to inflation and any changes in allowances, superannuation or pensions)

Has the budget allocation impacted on service delivery? Please explain

Has the budget allocation led to significant changes in your workforce? For example has there been a change to the sworn/unsworn mix? Have police / law enforcement numbers risen or fallen (by how much)?

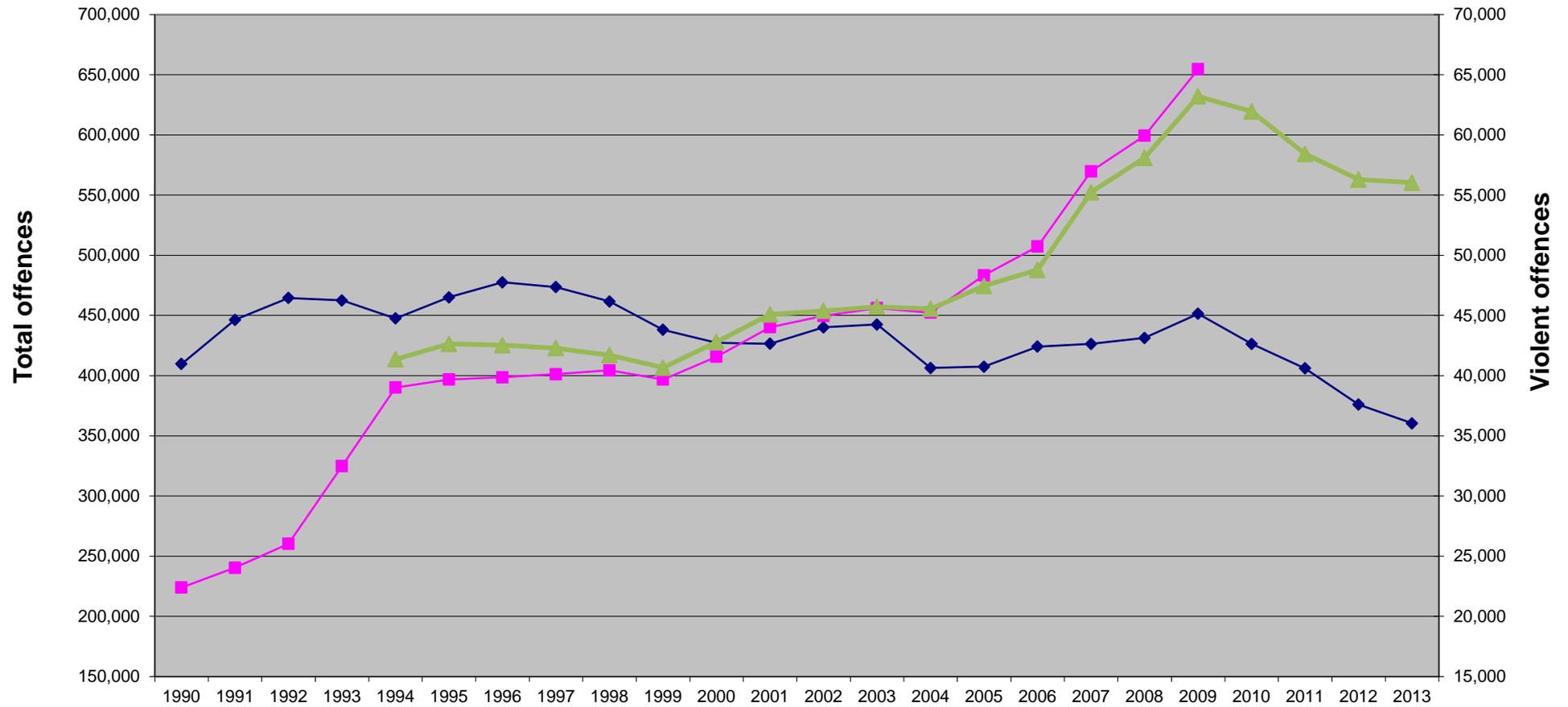
Has the budget allocation impacted on the approach to health & safety and/or equality? (Please explain)

- The Police budget was effectively frozen through the late 1990s by the then-conservative government. It grew strongly through the 2000s, first in crisis response to shortages highlighted by operational failures arising from the budget freeze; then in order to fund electoral commitments to a major staff expansion between 2005 and 2008.
- The incoming and still current conservative government in 2008 made further staffing commitments, which led to continued expansion of the Police budget between 2008 and 2011. Following the conclusion of that expansion, the Police budget has been frozen and has now begun to decline. It is widely known that the government and central agencies (eg Treasury) are sceptical of Police expenditure and desire to reduce it over time.
- The Police budget escaped public sector cuts during the 2008-2011 period, owing to the need to fund the electoral commitment to further staff. However, in recent years (and particularly this year) Police has done worse from the Budget than most government agencies.
- Police wage growth over the last five years has tended to be around the 1-1.5% per annum mark, plus an annual salary increment equivalent to a similar amount. This has made police wage growth roughly equivalent to other major public sector work groups such as teachers and nurses, who have tended to achieve around 1.5-2.5% per annum. This wage growth has tended to be below inflation, or roughly equivalent to inflation when including salary increments. The government has made clear its belief that police officers are overpaid; and that the 'automatic' wage bill growth driven by salary increments is unsustainable and must be ended. This attitude is reinforced by the frozen budget and a determination that pay rises must be met by internal savings. This has made, and continues to make, for an extremely challenging negotiating environment.
- Police has also attempted to negotiate the end of many allowances in favour of a 'total remuneration' approach. This has so far been resisted. From time to time, changes to superannuation (lower employer contributions in return for higher 'cash in hand' wages)

in have been floated; however these have not been pursued at negotiation. NZ Police Superannuation has been a defined contribution scheme since the early 1990s.

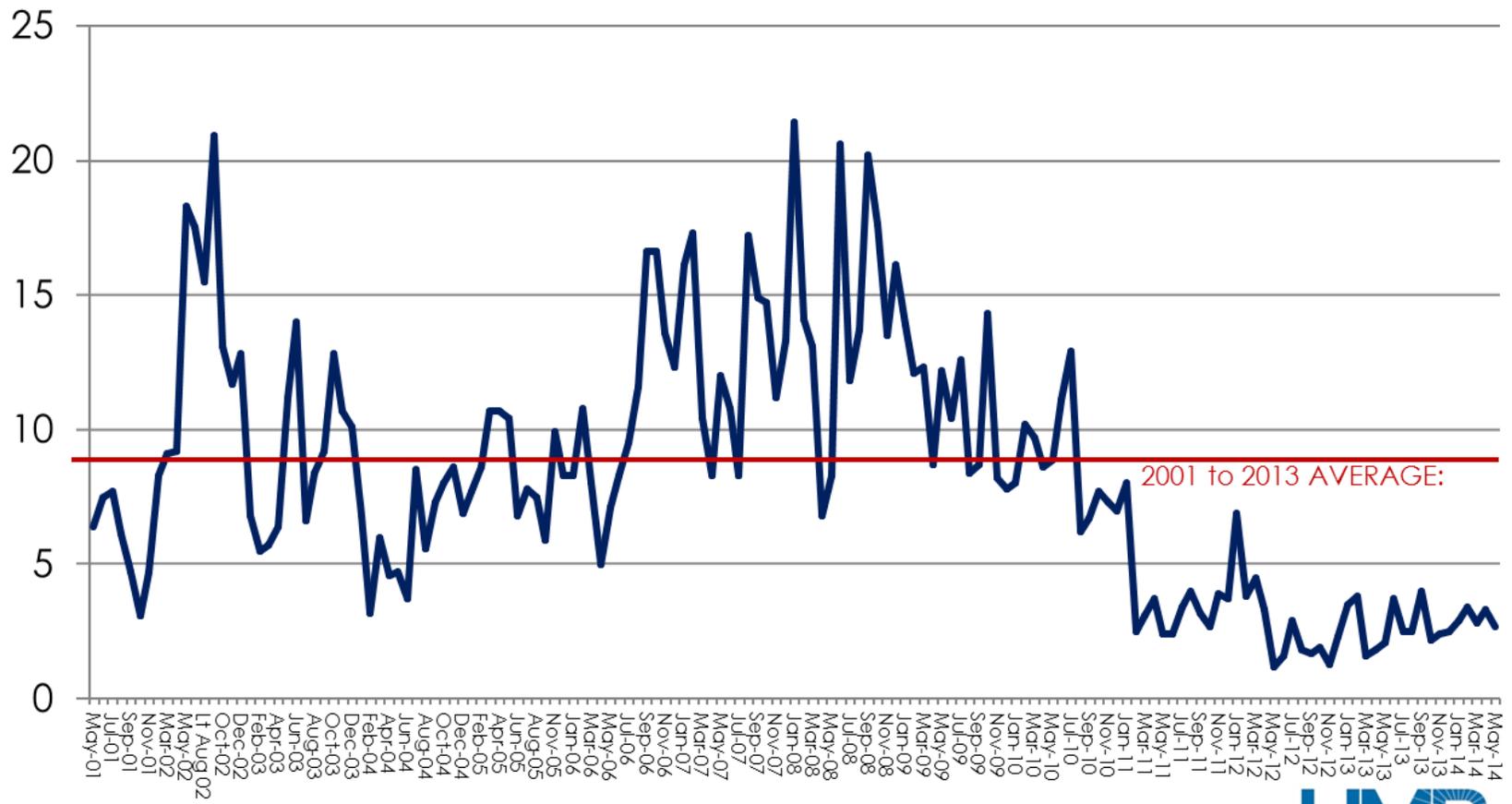
- There is no widespread evidence yet of public service delivery impacts; however, there has been widespread restructuring, including centralisation of non-constabulary support staff and reductions in support staff numbers. This has certainly increased pressure on frontline officers; though some of the restructuring initiatives have alleviated some work at the same time (for example, file preparation).
- A strategic shift to prevention policing has placed added pressure on response sections, as staff have been transferred to establish the new teams within existing resources. There is now also some evidence of shortages in investigative squads in some areas, with resources being shuffled from drugs and organised crime to higher political priorities such as child abuse and sexual assault.
- There has been slow but steady growth since 2008 in the 'second tier' of limited powers officers (known in NZ as 'authorised officers'). Authorised officers are somewhat cheaper than constables, particularly in terms of initial and ongoing training, and equipment overheads. Controversially, authorised officers are reported as constables for the purposes of political accountability for police strength. Authorised officers have so far tended to 'free up' (or displace) constables from tasks such as prisoner transport and supervision, and scene/location guarding; however there is now some evidence of growth into specialised non-constabulary roles such as electronic and computer crime where (for example) low-risk 3rd party search warrants/production orders may need to be executed.
- Constabulary strength has dropped since its peak in 2011, due in part to increased attrition as economic confidence begins to return. Constabulary strength is now about 5% below target (excluding authorised officers; 2.5% below including).
- There is no evidence of any material change to the health and safety approach. Despite the budget constraints, police are currently well equipped, and have gained safety footwear, more effective pepper spray and Tasers, and better access to firearms and Tasers, over the last 5 years, following Association lobbying. The Association is concerned at the apparent increase of single-crew unit attendance at incidents, which we believe is due to frontline response shortages; however we do not presently have enough evidence of a systematic problem to apply strong pressure on the issue.

Recorded Crime 1990-2013



Crime and violence tracking - historical

} What do you think is the most important problem facing this country today?



NZ Police output expenses 2006-2014

