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Safety

Safety refers to both the reality of how safe Aucklanders are and their perceptions of safety. Safety is relevant across a range of environments: on the road, in the water, on the computer or phone, at home or on the street. The section also looks at which factors can increase or decrease the safety of Aucklanders.

Drugs and Safety

Alcohol

Alcohol impacts on the safety of Aucklanders in terms of their social interactions, violence and crime, physical safety, and water and road safety. Drinking is recognised as an important part of social life in Auckland, including recreation, celebrations, events and social gatherings (James, 2010, p. 11). Aucklanders have a greater tendency than other New Zealanders to overestimate how much they can drink: 42% compared with 32% nationally (UMR Research, 2010, p. 3).

Young Aucklanders who drink are more likely to injure themselves and others when they binge-drink. They are also significantly more likely to be violent when drunk (Clark et al., 2009, p. 28). Violent tendencies are also seen in adult drinkers. At least 30% of recorded violence offences in 2007/08 involved offenders who had consumed alcohol prior to offending (Stevenson, 2009, p. 7). Victims of crime are also more vulnerable when they have been drinking. In 2007/08, 28% of sexual assault victims were believed to have consumed alcohol before the assault (Stevenson, 2009, p. 46).

Illegal Drugs

The most commonly used illegal drugs in Auckland are cannabis (84% of frequent drug users), methamphetamine or 'P' (74%), ecstasy (65%), and crystal methamphetamine (48%) (Wilkins et al., 2008, p. 14). Illegal drug taking raises safety concerns for the people who use drugs, those who supply them, and the general public.

There has been growing concern in Auckland with the increase in violent crimes associated with methamphetamine. Much of this concern has to do with the psychological problems experienced by frequent users (drug psychosis) and the consequential violence which can arise (Wilkins et al., 2006, p. 10). A national drug survey found that obtaining methamphetamine in Auckland is 'very easy/easy' (Wilkins et al., 2008, p. 23).



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Road Safety

Road safety in Auckland is an ongoing challenge. While death rates have decreased over time, injury rates continue to increase (ARC, 2010a, p. 39). Aucklanders are aware of Auckland's road safety issues, and the majority (70–80%) consider dangerous driving, drink-driving and speeding to be problems in Auckland (MSD, 2008, p. 18).

Some groups of road users are particularly vulnerable, including cyclists, pedestrians, motorcyclists and children. In central Auckland, 26% of fatal/serious crashes involve pedestrians or cyclists and 18% involve motorcycles (Chambers, 2010, p. 3). It is unsurprising that only 21% of cyclists surveyed in 2010 felt safe cycling in Auckland, down from 26% in 2008 (Auckland Regional Council, 2010b).

From 1996 to 2000, New Zealand had the third worst rate of children's traffic fatalities in the OECD (Chambers, 2010, p. 3). However, in recent years Auckland has seen improvements in children's safety on the road. From 2000 to 2008 there has been a 70% reduction in hospitalisations of child pedestrians in central Auckland (Chambers, 2010, p. 4). The biggest risk times remain when children are travelling to and from school (Chambers, 2010, p. 3).

Water Safety

Drowning is a significant cause of unintentional death in New Zealand, with approximately 130 people drowning each year and another 650 people sent to hospital for water-related injuries (McCool et al., 2006, p. 1). Aucklanders make up a relatively small percentage of these, especially given Aucklanders' ease of access to aquatic environments (Moran and Mills, 2008, p. 11). In 2009 there were 16 drownings in Auckland. While this was the highest number of any region, it was one of the lower rates of drowning per population (WSNZ, 2009a).

From 2005 to 2009, 99 people drowned in Auckland. Just under half of these people drowned during recreational activities (WSNZ, 2009b). Auckland's West Coast beaches are known for strong surf and rips, and so pose a greater risk of drowning (McCool et al., 2006, p. 11).

Research of Auckland beach users has found that young people are more likely to take part in risky swimming behaviour (McCool et al., 2006, p. iv). This includes drinking alcohol at pool parties, drinking at the beach, and taking part in spontaneous water activities when intoxicated, the most common being skinny-dipping (Moran and Mills, 2008, p. iii).

While there are many concerns about young people's water safety, it is also important to promote water safety to older Aucklanders because since 2005, just under half of those drowned in Auckland have been adults over 45 years old (WSNZ, 2009b).



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Crime

Feeling Safe

Crime is an important factor influencing Aucklanders' feelings of safety. The vast majority (92%) of Aucklanders feel safe in their own homes. However, only 57% feel safe to walk alone in their own neighbourhood after dark, with the most common reason for feeling unsafe is fearing people who seem dangerous (Reid, 2009, p. 19). Aucklanders feel significantly less safe walking alone at night than people in other major New Zealand centres. In Wellington, for example, over 70% of people felt safe to walk alone in their own neighbourhood after dark (Ministry of Transport, 2009, p. 49).

There are significant differences in perceptions of safety based on location. Those who live in north Auckland feel the safest, while those who live in south Auckland feel the least safe (see Appendix table B5). Ethnicity, gender and income also influence feelings of safety, with women, Asian Aucklanders and those on lower household incomes more likely to feel unsafe (Social and Economic Research and Monitoring Team, 2008, p. 9).

Perception and Reality

It may be that Aucklanders fear for their safety more than they should given Auckland's crime statistics. Media coverage of criminal activity in Auckland is often cited as a reason for increasing fear of crime. Approximately 43% of Aucklanders (more than 550,000 people) did not report feeling safe to walk in their neighbourhoods at night, yet in 2008 only 146,202 crimes were reported in Auckland (Auckland Council, 2010).

The 146,202 reported crimes represent a rate of 1033 crimes per 10,000 people across all of Auckland. However, the crime rates vary across the three police districts: Auckland has the highest rate (1328 crimes per 10,000 people), then Counties–Manukau (1094) and then Waitemata (776) (New Zealand Police, 2010, p. 9). It is also important to realise the limitations of these statistics as they fail to consider factors such as under-reporting and the inability to determine the seriousness of a particular incident (Social and Economic Research and Monitoring Team, 2008, p. 10)

Crimes against Property

Aucklanders are significantly (15–25%) more likely than other New Zealanders to be the victims of burglary and vehicle offences (25–50%). The greatest at-risk group for burglary is solo parents (Mayhew and Reilly, 2007b, pp. 12, 52).

Crimes of Violence

Despite the decline in reported crime in Auckland since its peak in 2002/03, there has been an increase in the number and rate of reported violent crimes (Auckland Council, 2010; MSD, 2010, p. 20). In 2008, there were 20,350 violent crimes reported to police in Auckland (Auckland Council, 2010). Reported



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violent crimes have increased significantly across all three police districts in the past decade, with the greatest increase in Counties–Manukau (MSD, 2008, p. 19).

Family Violence

Police report that the increase in reported violent offences has been driven by an increase in recorded family violence (Auckland Council, 2010). Even so, most family violence is not included in violent offences statistics: it is estimated that only 12% of family violence is reported to police and these are usually the most serious cases where there are great fears for victim safety (Mackenzie and Carrington, 2007, p. 12).

There is a perception that family violence in Auckland is about men being violent to women and children. The research confirms this is most often the case, with men overwhelmingly presenting as perpetrators of family violence and their partners as the main victims (Mackenzie, 2009, p. 1). However, there are a small percentage of adult children and women who are perpetrators.

Elder-abuse

Elder-abuse is a form of family violence which sees elderly victims abused and neglected by people close to them. Almost half the perpetrators of elder-abuse are the adult children of the elderly victim (New Zealand Family Violence Clearing House, 2009). The issue needs to be addressed, especially as the Auckland population ages and potentially more Aucklanders become vulnerable to elder-abuse.

Female family violence offenders

Female offenders make up a small percentage of family violence perpetrators. Female offenders in the Auckland District Court were recently studied for a six-month period. During this time there were 60 female offenders, less than 10% of the total offenders over that period. More than half of the women who offended against male partners had previously come to attention as victims of their partners. Only one female offender, out of the 60, presented as a high-risk dangerous offender and only two were charged with assault on a child (Mackenzie, 2009, pp. 5, 7, 11, 18).

Community response to family violence

There have been prominent campaigns to increase community awareness of family violence. Recent research on community awareness of family violence in west Auckland found that many people were willing to act but did not know what to do in cases where violence did not seem serious enough for police or other agencies' help (McLaren, 2010, p. 6).

The impact of family violence on children

Family violence has a huge impact on children's safety in Auckland, with young people who experience or witness family violence being more likely to show depressive symptoms and attempt suicide (Clark et al., 2009, p. 26). There has been an increase in substantiated cases of neglect and abuse in Auckland in recent years (MSD, 2008, p. 18). Longitudinal studies have suggested that between four and ten per cent



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of children experience physical abuse in New Zealand (St John and Wynd, 2008, p. 98); however, the Youth '07 survey suggests rates could be even higher (Clark et al., 2009, p. 17).

Youth Offending

Youth are overrepresented in police apprehension statistics. Youth represent less than 5% of the population, but they make up 15% of all apprehensions (Bellamy, 2009, p. 6). These numbers can be misleading, however, as police statistics are reported based on the number of individual offences, rather than the number of offenders (Ministry of Justice, 2010, p. 15).

'Boot camps' have been proposed to reduce reoffending amongst youth. However, Judge Andrew Becroft said, '[Boot camps]made them healthier, fitter, faster, but they were still burglars, just harder to catch' (Watt, 2009). Alternatives to prisons and boot camps need to be found.

As with adult crime figures, although the crime rate for youth has been decreasing, the crime rate for violent offending by youth has been increasing (Ministry of Justice, 2010, p. 15). Over the past decade, Auckland has had the most youth manslaughter convictions nationwide (Justice Sector Strategy, 2010, p. 1). One contributing factor to Auckland's violent youth offending is the presence of youth gangs.

Youth Gangs

The number of youth-gang members in Auckland is difficult to determine. In 2007 it was estimated there were around 2000 members, with 1000 in south Auckland, 700 in central Auckland, and 300 in the north and west (Bellamy, 2009, p. 4). In the same year, 6% of youth surveyed in Youth '07 reported belonging to some kind of gang (Clark et al., 2009, pp. 22–23). The majority of youth gangs are predominantly male, although two all-female youth gangs were identified in south Auckland, and they were reputed to be extremely violent (Roguski, 2008, p. 22).

There may be more of a gang presence felt in south Auckland than actually exists. This is because of the high profile and violent nature of the gangs, combined with non-gang youth being mistaken for gang members. The majority of young people who make up the apparent youth-gang population are not actually gang members – they are 'wannabes', i.e. young people who are in the same friendship group, are not driven by criminal activity (although they may commit some petty crime), and have their own social norms such as dress codes (Roguski, 2008, pp. 20–21).

Research of south Auckland gangs has discredited some popular myths about these youth gangs. For example, members report there are no significant barriers to leaving a gang, although members of the gang would try and entice them back (Roguski, 2008, p. 23); there is little evidence of violence between ethnic groups (Bellamy, 2009, p. 6); and, contrary to the stereotypes of long-term benefit-reliance contributing to gang affiliation, the majority of youth-gang members' parents were employed (Roguski, 2008, p. 30).



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There is a lot to be learnt from what gangs are providing for young people that they may not be getting at home or in their community. This includes a proxy family unit, support, financial or material gain, entertainment, status, pride and protection (Bellamy, 2009, p. 5).

White Collar Crime

White collar crime, or fraud, is costing millions of dollars each year. In the first half of 2010, 26 large frauds were brought before the courts in New Zealand, covering frauds of more than \$90 million (KPMG Forensic, 2010b, p. 1). The top types of fraud in New Zealand are accounting fraud, fraudulent loans, investment scams, tax fraud, deception and false invoicing (KPMG Forensic, 2010b, p. 1).

The total amount being lost to fraud has seen a marked increase during the recession (KPMG Forensic, 2010a, p. 2). Because Auckland is the commercial hub of New Zealand, and white collar crime is more likely to happen in larger organisations, more businesses are affected in Auckland than the rest of the country (KPMG Forensic, 2010a, p. 2).

Prisoner Rehabilitation and Transitioning Back to Work and Community

There are concerns about prisons' effectiveness in rehabilitating prisoners. Nationwide there is a 30% re-imprisonment rate for first-time prison inmates. This rises to 60% for those who are recidivist offenders (Department of Corrections). This does not take into account those who leave prison and offend without being apprehended or convicted.

Employment plays a significant role in helping prisoners rehabilitate, yet there are very limited options for transitioning back into Auckland's communities and workforce after prison. Prisons do offer a variety of programmes aimed at increasing employment opportunities and positive reintegration; for example, Auckland Prison offers living- and parenting-skills classes and five different educational programmes, and they also have visiting kaumatua and spiritual leaders. However, once released, there are very limited accommodation or support options for the ex-inmate. In Auckland, support organisations include New Zealand Prisoners Aid and Rehabilitation Society (NZPARS), Prison Fellowship, and the Salvation Army (Department of Corrections).

Child Safety

Outside of the home, approximately 68% of Aucklanders feel their local neighbourhood is 'very safe' or 'fairly safe' for children under 14 to play unsupervised. Aucklanders were more likely to feel it was unsafe if they were living in south Auckland, had a household income of under \$20,000 or were Maori and/or Pacific Aucklanders (Reid, 2009, p. 21).

The main cause of death for children in Auckland is road death, with children receiving fatal injuries as pedestrians, cyclists and passengers (Chambers, 2010, p. 2). Auckland has a high rate of vehicles hitting



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children in driveways, with 71% of these occurring at the child's own home (James and Saville-Smith, 2010, p. 50). Other main causes of accidental death include drowning, burns and falls (Chambers, 2010, p. 1).

Youth Safety

The Youth '07 Survey provided important insights into the safety of young Aucklanders. More than 41% of students said they had been hit or physically harmed deliberately in the previous year, with approximately 24% saying the violence was 'pretty bad', 'really bad' or 'terrible'. Violence was from friends (37%), peers who were not friends (41%), parents or those acting as parents (25%) and siblings (42%) (Clark et al., 2009, p. 17).

Bullying is a common threat to young people's safety. Many students reported lies and false rumours had been spread about them (48%), sexual jokes or comments (40%), name calling (41%) and threats of physical violence (33%). Six per cent said they were bullied at least once a week. Most students didn't know why they were bullied. For those who did, the main reasons were size, ethnicity and sexuality (Clark et al., 2009, pp. 18–19). Students who are attracted to others of the same sex or to both sexes are more at risk: they are more likely to feel unsafe at school, fear people hurting them at school, and to be more frequently bullied (Clark et al., 2009, p. 27).

Internet/Mobile Phone Safety

Technology is changing the way Aucklanders communicate, but it is also another avenue through which safety can be threatened. This is particularly so for those who do not have a great deal of technological skill or understanding. In addition to worldwide scams, there is concern about local scams, particularly those targeting the elderly. For example, in 2010, elderly people in south Auckland were targeted by scammers pretending to be police or banks (Donnell, 2010).

The internet and mobile phones have been wonderful tools for social connection amongst young people, but have also created a new medium for bullying and harassment. Of nasty or threatening messages sent to students, 72% were by mobile phone and 24% by the internet, with only a very small percentage from the more traditional medium of letters or notes. The internet was more prominent for unwanted sexual messages, with 52% sent by mobile phone, 44% via the internet, and 4% in letters and notes (Clark et al., 2009, p. 16).



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Safety and Deprivation

One of the most significant factors across the different areas of safety in Auckland is deprivation. Those who experience deprivation and live in areas of deprivation are more likely to face a range of threats to their safety: they are more likely to witness violence (Clark et al., 2009, pp. 20–21), be part of a youth gang (Roguski, 2008, p. 28), experience homicide in the family (Martin and Pritchard, 2010, p. 25), and are more likely to feel unsafe in their homes and neighbourhoods (Social and Economic Research and Monitoring Team, 2008, p. 9).

The two exceptions in this section are bullying and internet safety: bullying affects a high proportion of Auckland students regardless of socio-economic status (Clark et al., 2009, p. 19), while internet safety threats, such as exposure to viruses and offensive material online, are more likely to happen to Aucklanders of higher socio-economic status (Mayhew and Reilly, 2007a, p. 6).



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