



Antisocial Behaviour

What is this?

Definitions of antisocial behaviour vary across contexts and cultures depending on social norms and values. The term incorporates a range of behaviours from minor socially unacceptable behaviours such as swearing and noisy behaviour, to serious criminal acts such as physical assault or property offences.¹

In New Zealand there is no precise definition of antisocial behaviour. However, the Inter-Agency Plan for Conduct Disorder/Severe Antisocial Behaviour (2007-2012)² describes 'severe anti/social behaviour' as behaviour that is severe, persistent across context and over time, which involves repeated violations of societal and age-appropriate norms.

In Christchurch, common forms of antisocial behaviour include, bullying, littering, vandalism, alcohol-fuelled behaviour, dangerous driving and graffiti. Behaviours associated with "boy racers" continue to be a concern, with a recent spike in some local areas.³ Issues of alcohol and noise, which are also forms of antisocial behaviour, are covered in other papers.

Bullying is a form of antisocial behaviour directed at particular individuals. It can happen in workplaces, public places, schools or even homes and has been defined as an intimidating behaviour that tends to be repeated over time. The right of students to learn in a safe, respectful and supportive environment is acknowledged in by many schools. The Safe Schools: Strategies to Prevent Bullying Report (2007)⁴ recognises bullying as a risk to be managed for students.

Why is it important?

Direct impacts of antisocial behaviour on people's quality of life include fear, alarm and distress to victims and witnesses. Indirect impacts include disruption to local businesses and public transport services.⁵ In severe cases people may feel too scared to leave their homes, or walk through some public spaces, leading to isolation.

Data

The Inter-Agency Plan noted that the long term costs associated with severe antisocial behaviour are significant. A New Zealand study estimated that the lifetime cost to society of a chronic adolescent antisocial male is \$3 million².



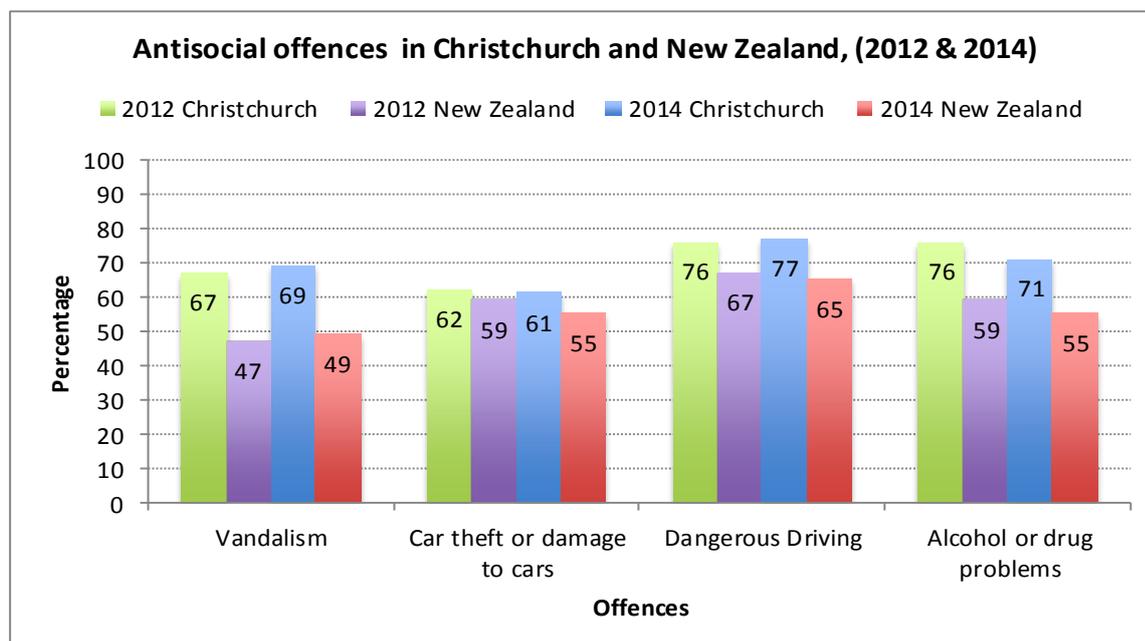
In the Canterbury region, police recorded 6,749 adults convicted in court for the 2014-2015 year. This was a slight reduction from 7193 for the 2013-2014 year. Convictions included 180 public order offences, 447 theft and related offences, 221 property damage, 643 acts intended to cause injury and 202 illicit drugs offences. Traffic offences made up almost half, with 3015 convictions.⁶

Negative perceptions of problems such as dangerous driving, car theft and damage, alcohol and drug problems and vandalism contribute to negative perceptions of safety, leaving people feeling unsafe in their local environment.

The Quality of Life Survey 2014⁷, found that dangerous driving was the most commonly perceived crime-related issue. It was identified by 77% of Christchurch residents, followed by alcohol or drug problems (71%), vandalism (69%), and car theft or damage to cars (61%). While this does not tell us specifically about the behaviour, it does provide some idea of the issues of concern to communities.

Respondents living in Christchurch rated vandalism as the third most commonly perceived crime related issue. Almost seven in ten Christchurch residents view vandalism as a problem within their city over the last twelve months, with 21% describing it as a big problem and 48% as a bit of a problem.

Figure 1 Residents' Perception on issues or problems in NZ and Christchurch, 2014 & 2012⁵



In 2010, the Christchurch City Council estimated the cost of dealing with issues around vandalism such as graffiti and tagging (removal of graffiti, justice system costs, graffiti programme funding, and formal and informal interventions) to be in the order of \$4 - \$5 million. Graffiti or tagging refers to images that are scratched, scrawled, painted or marked in any manner on property without the owner's consent. It may appear in various forms from simple written words and/or symbols to elaborate wall paintings, and can express social and/or political messages. In some areas where unsightly or obscene graffiti has been left unchecked and not removed, it creates an environment that some people find intimidating and/or unsafe, and as a consequence will avoid using. Some graffiti is considered street art however, and street murals have been a major feature of the transitional city in Christchurch since 2012.⁸

Impact on inequalities

Antisocial behaviours are not confined to any one particular socioeconomic sector of society. However, some reports do indicate the impacts tended to be felt more acutely by those living in deprived areas, who are more likely to experience high levels of antisocial behaviour, and who considered it a greater problem than those living in more affluent areas.⁶ To some extent, people who are new to the area and are afraid of retaliation, may also be affected by such behaviour. Some affected people may not know where to seek help, especially new migrants who do not speak English, and may feel particularly vulnerable.

Solutions

Central government agencies (i.e., Child Youth and Family, Education, Police, Corrections and Health) provide specialist support to minimise the harm children and young people with behavioural difficulties can do to themselves and to others, and to improve their long-term outcomes.⁵ The support provides treatment programmes for an increasing number of antisocial youth and help vulnerable families stay engaged, strengthen the adoption of effective parenting strategies, and improve outcomes for both the children and families.

In Christchurch, local government and many community groups have initiated several programmes to ensure a safe and clean environment within the city. The Safer Christchurch Inter-Agency Group includes members from central and local government and community representatives. Their 2016 - 2021 Strategy⁹ aims to make Christchurch the safest city in New Zealand by focus on five priority areas;

- Proactive partnerships that have a shared commitment to a Safe City
- Reducing and preventing injuries
- Reducing and preventing the incidence and effects of crime
- Enhancing safety on our roads
- Building in safety



Bylaws are also an avenue for addressing some antisocial behaviour. The Council's Alcohol Restrictions in Public Places Bylaw 2009¹⁰, and subsequent amendments aims to reduce alcohol-related harm, damage, disorder and crime to improve community safety. The Bylaw prohibits the consumption of alcohol and restricts the possession of alcohol in some public places in the city and this is enforced by Police.

The Cruising and Prohibited Times on Roads Bylaw 2014¹¹ aims to deal with "boy racers" by restricting cruising of motor vehicles. Cruising is prohibited on certain roads at specified days and times. The racing of motor vehicles, and activities associated with the racing of motor vehicles that may cause a nuisance to the public are also controlled. This Bylaw is also enforced by the Police.

The Christchurch City Council has established programmes to reduce and control graffiti.¹² The graffiti office encourages the community to participate in graffiti removal and works with taggers to encourage them to use legal avenues for expressing their art (such as through murals).

Westfield, which operates nine shopping malls across New Zealand, including Riccarton Mall in Christchurch, has had a youth protocol in place for about a decade.¹³ The protocol covers a wide range of incidents, from minor scuffles to criminal behaviour.

Data limitations

Anti/social behaviour is difficult to measure and regular monitoring is important. Information on its incidence and which residents are affected by behaviours is limited.

Connections with other issues

Alcohol, Illicit Drug Use, Social Connectedness, Noise, Community Initiatives.

Last updated August 2016

Prepared by Community and Public Health, a division of the Canterbury District Health Board.

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Read about the Te Pae Mahutonga Māori Health Model at
<http://www.hauora.co.nz/resources/tepaemahutongatxtvers.pdf>

