



MULTIPLE VICTIMISATION IN NEW ZEALAND:

Findings from the 2009 New Zealand Crime and Safety Survey

June 2011

Summary

This focus paper expands upon the findings of the 2009 New Zealand Crime and Safety Survey (NZCASS). The paper provides an analysis of the nature and extent of multiple victimisation in New Zealand in 2008. A multiple victim is defined as a person who experienced more than one offence within a 12 month period.

- One in five (19%) New Zealanders reported that they were multiple victims of crime in 2008 (ie they experienced two or more offences).
 - Multiple victims were more likely to characterise crimes as being 'serious' and reported being more seriously affected by crime incidents, compared to those victimised only once.
 - In 2008, 6% of New Zealanders were chronic victims of crime (ie they experienced five or more offences), and this group experienced 54% of all crime.
 - Younger people, Māori and those who were unemployed and/or on benefits were more than twice as likely to be chronic victims of crime.
 - Preventing multiple victimisation (so that fewer people are repeatedly victimised) has the potential to reduce significantly the total volume and impact of crime in New Zealand.
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1. Introduction

This paper provides an overview of the nature and extent of multiple victimisation in New Zealand, drawing on the 2009 New Zealand Crime and Safety Survey (NZCASS). NZCASS measures how much crime there is in New Zealand by asking respondents directly about the crimes they experienced. In doing so, it captures crimes that are not reported to the Police and therefore are not included in the Police recorded crime statistics.

Crime victimisation surveys, both within New Zealand and internationally, have consistently shown that a small proportion of people experience multiple offences and that collectively these offences comprise a significant proportion of total crime (Farrell and Pease, 1993; Mukherjee and Carcach, 1998; Sparks, 1981a). This finding has been consistent across different crime types, locations, and types of data (eg police statistics as well as survey data). In short, regardless of the type of offence, research has routinely shown that past victimisation is one of the best predictors of future victimisation (Farrell and Pease, 1993).

The finding that crime is mostly concentrated among particular groups of people and places has been hailed as the most important policy contribution made by victim surveys (Skogan, 1999; Sparks, 1981a). Such findings have been used to justify targeting crime prevention resources on the basis of need and have been empirically proven to both reduce levels of re-victimisation and

overall crime levels (see Robinson, 2006; Laycock, 2001; Pease, 1995; Anderson, Chenery and Pease, 1995).

2. Defining multiple and repeat victimisation

Although the terms *multiple* victimisation and *repeat* victimisation are often used interchangeably, they refer to slightly different phenomena. For the purposes of this paper:

- a multiple victim is a person who experiences more than one offence within a 12 month period, regardless of the type of offence
- a repeat victim is a person who experiences the same type of offence more than once within a 12 month period (eg two or more burglaries).¹

This paper also refers to *chronic* victims, a term regularly used in international literature to refer to people who experience five or more offences within a 12 month period (see, for example, Williams, 1999).

To date, the amount of research undertaken on multiple and repeat victimisation in New Zealand has been relatively limited. Police statistics have historically not been collected in a way that readily permits the identification of multiple or repeat victims (Farrell and Pease, 1993). Most studies of multiple or repeat victimisation have instead drawn on victim surveys. There are, however, a number of methodological challenges with victim surveys with regard to multiple or repeat victimisation. Victim surveys tend to ask respondents about a specific period of time, such as the past year. This makes it difficult to monitor people's cumulative victimisation over the longer term (Hope et al, 2001). In addition, victimisation surveys also typically impose an artificial limit on the number of crimes recorded per victim (ie counting a series of similar events as a single offence). This means that the true levels of multiple and repeat victimisation are significantly under-estimated within victim survey data (Genn, 1988). These limitations should be kept in mind when interpreting the results presented below.

As noted in the first NZCASS Focus Paper², comparing the findings from NZCASS 2009 with other national-level victim surveys is difficult. This is particularly so for multiple victimisation. Different countries can use different recall periods, offence truncation limits, and treat series of offences differently, which can have a significant impact on the levels of crime concentration and ultimately the amount of multiple victimisation measured (see Rand, 2009; Walker et al 2009; Skogan, 1986; Sparks, 1981a). For these reasons, this paper does not attempt to directly compare rates of multiple victimisation across different countries.

3. The extent of multiple and repeat victimisation in New Zealand

As Table 1 demonstrates, crime in New Zealand was not evenly distributed across the population in 2008. While most people (64%) experienced no crime, one-fifth (19%) of the population were multiple victims. Collectively, multiple victims experienced 85% of all crime.

¹ These definitions are consistent with those used by the British Home Office (see Walker et al 2009).

² NZCASS in an International Context (Morrison, B. 2010).

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Table 1: The concentration of crime in 2008

Number of offences	Number of people (000s)	% people	% of victims	% of offences
None	2,176	64	-	0
One	600	18	48	16
Two	240	7	19	13
Three or four	202	6	16	18
Five or more	207	6	17	54
Total	3,425	100	100	100

Notes:

Percentages do not necessarily add up to 100% because of rounding

The numbers of people shown are based on the weighted NZCASS sample.

In 2008, 6% of the population, and 17% of all victims, were *chronic* victims of crime (ie experienced five or more offences). Chronic victims experienced 54% of the crimes reported in the survey.

There was no significant change in the proportion of the adult population who were multiple or chronic victims between the 2006 and 2009 surveys.

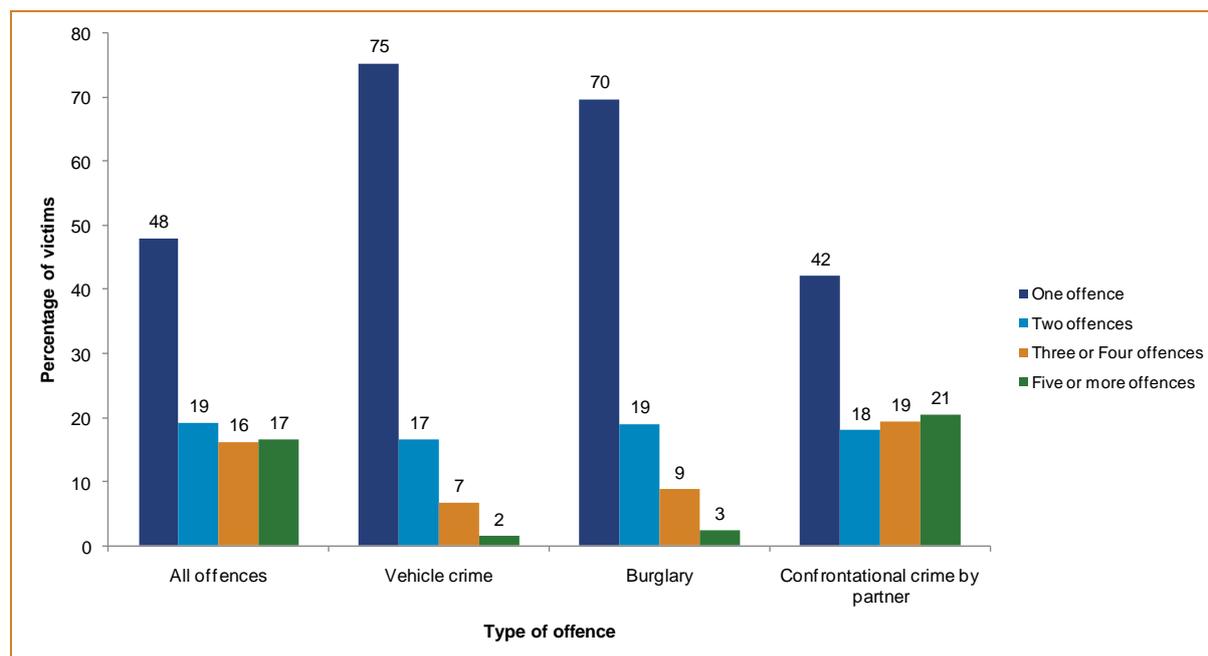
Figure 1 shows that the proportion of multiple and chronic victims varied across different offence types. The proportion was higher for personal offences,³ such as confrontational offences⁴, and lower for household offences,⁵ such as burglary and vehicle crime. For example, 26% of vehicle crime victims experienced repeat vehicle crimes and 31% of burglary victims had been burgled more than once. In contrast, 58% of those who experienced confrontational crime by partners did so on two or more occasions in 2008, and 21% were chronic victims (only 2% of vehicle crime victims and 3% of burglary victims were chronic victims).

³ Personal offences were those personally experienced by the respondent, and include sexual offences, assaults, threats to the person and personal property, robberies, theft of personal property, and damage of personal property.

⁴ Confrontational offences include assaults, threats to the person and personal property, and personal property damage.

⁵ Household offences are those where the whole household was considered the victim, including burglary, theft from a dwelling, other household thefts, thefts of and from vehicles, vehicle interference, bicycle theft, and vandalism to household property and vehicles.

Figure 1: Concentration of victimisation by offence type in 2008



Note:
 Percentages do not necessarily add up to 100% because of rounding

These results indicate that someone who experiences a confrontational crime by their partner is likely to become a repeat victim and that one in five such victims will become chronically victimised. A woman living in a violent or abusive relationship is often seen as the archetypal repeat victim because of her ongoing proximity to the offender.

Table 2 shows, by offence type, the number and percentage of total offences experienced by repeat victims, and the amount of crime that could be prevented if action was taken to stop individuals or households (depending on the offence type) from being victimised more than twice. It shows that personal crimes would reduce by 53% (897,000 offences), while household crime would fall by 30% (a drop of 274,000 offences).

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Table 2: The concentration of repeat victimisation by offence type in 2008

Type of crime	Total offences (000s)	Number of offences against repeat victims (000s)	% of offences that happened against repeat victims	Number of offences prevented if victimisation capped at two offences (000s)	% of total offences prevented if victimisation capped at two offences
All household crime	910	648	71%	274	30%
Burglary	341	184	54%	49	14%
Vehicle crime	246	113	46%	26	11%
All personal crime	1,703	1,434	83%	897	53%
Confrontational crime by partner	340	297	87%	180	53%

Notes:

Percentages do not necessarily add up to 100% because of rounding

The numbers of people shown are based on the weighted NZCASS sample.

Looking at specific offence types, there would have been 14% fewer burglaries (a drop of 49,000 offences) and 11% fewer vehicle crimes (a drop of 26,000 offences) if no household had experienced these offences more than twice. Confrontational crimes by a partner would have been cut by more than half (180,000 offences).

These findings show that initiatives aimed at protecting multiple victims from further victimisation could help to reduce overall crime significantly. This assumes no displacement effect, where different individuals or households could become targeted by offenders, or where offenders commit different crimes. It is also worth noting that Table 2 relates to the level of crime reported in the NZCASS 2009 survey and does not directly link to official crime statistics.

The average (median) number of household offences experienced by multiple victims in 2008 was two, rising to three for personal offences.

4. The profile of multiple and chronic victims

As found in international research on multiple and repeat victimisation, the profile of multiple victims in New Zealand is very similar to all victims in general. As shown in Table 3, those at greater risk of multiple victimisation were typically:

- younger (aged 15 to 24 years old)
- self-identified as being from Māori and, to a lesser extent, Pacific ethnic groups
- single or living in a de facto relationship
- living in the 20% most deprived areas of the country
- residing in sole parent households or living with flatmates
- living in rented accommodation, particularly social housing.

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Table 3: Factors associated with risk of multiple victimisation in 2008

Factors	High Risk		Low Risk	
	% deviation from the NZ average (19%)			
Personal factors				
Age	15 – 24 years	+14%	40 – 59 years	-3%
	25 – 39 years	+4%	60+ years	-11%
Ethnicity	Māori	+12%	Asian	-5%
	Pacific	+6%		
Marital status	Single	+11%	Widowed	-11%
	De facto	+8%	Married	-6%
Economic factors				
Employment status	Unemployed/benefits	+14%	Retired	-14%
	Students	+11%		
Financial situation	Struggling	+10%	Managing well	-2%
	Coping	+3%		
NZ Deprivation Index	Most deprived Quintile 5	+8%	Least deprived	
			Quintile 1	-4%
			Quintile 2	-3%
			Quintile 3	-3%
Household factors				
Household composition	Sole parent	+16%	Couple without children	-8%
	Flatmates	+15%	Single person living alone	-6%
Tenure	Social renters	+12%	Owner-occupied	-4%
	Private renters	+7%		
Geographic factors				
Urbanisation			Minor urban and rural areas	-4%

Notes:

Percentage differences were calculated prior to rounding.

This analysis is restricted to those differences which, when compared to the NZ average, are significant at the 95% confidence level.

Chronic victims were more than twice as likely to be aged 15 to 24 years, to identify as Māori, and/or to be unemployed or on benefits at the time of the survey, as compared with the population as a whole. Chronic victims were also nearly twice as likely to be students and/or living in rental accommodation, especially social housing.

These results do not necessarily mean that these factors played a causal role in either multiple or chronic victimisation. A number of these factors are likely to be inter-related; for example, being young, being a student and living in rented accommodation. Consequently, it is possible that some of these factors are not in themselves directly related to multiple and chronic victimisation risk.

Figure 2 shows that the concentration of victimisation decreased with age, with victims aged 15 to 24 years significantly more likely to experience multiple and chronic victimisation. In contrast, victims aged 60 years or more were significantly more likely to experience only one offence.

Figure 2: The concentration of crime by different age groups in 2008

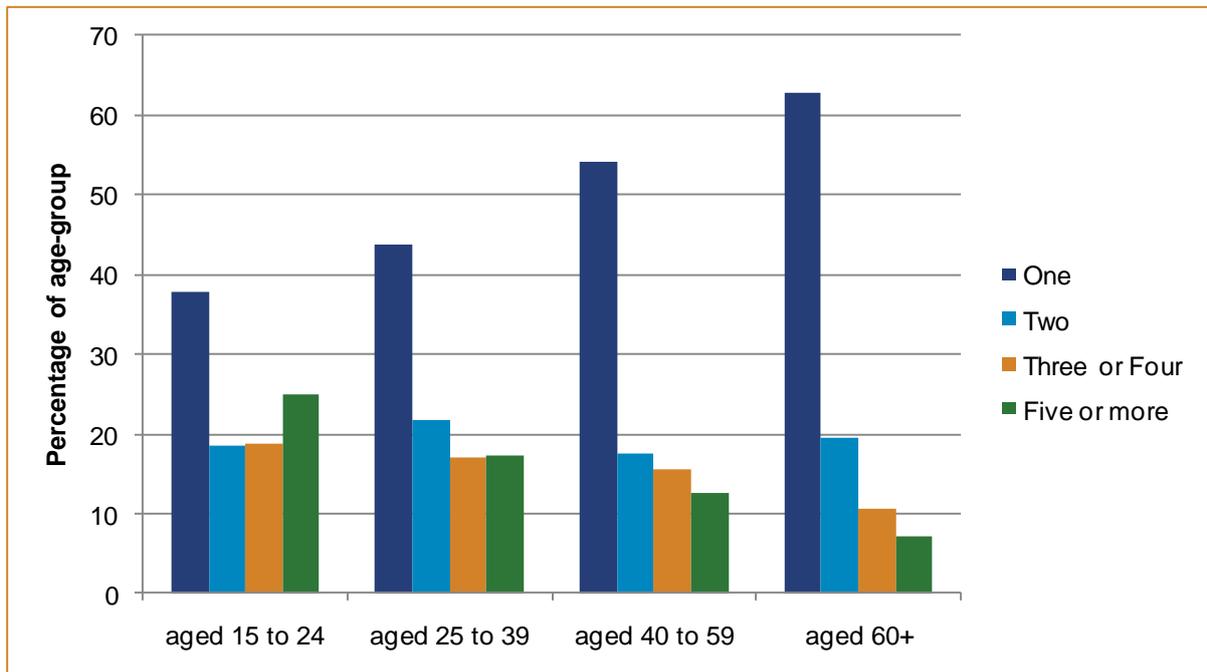
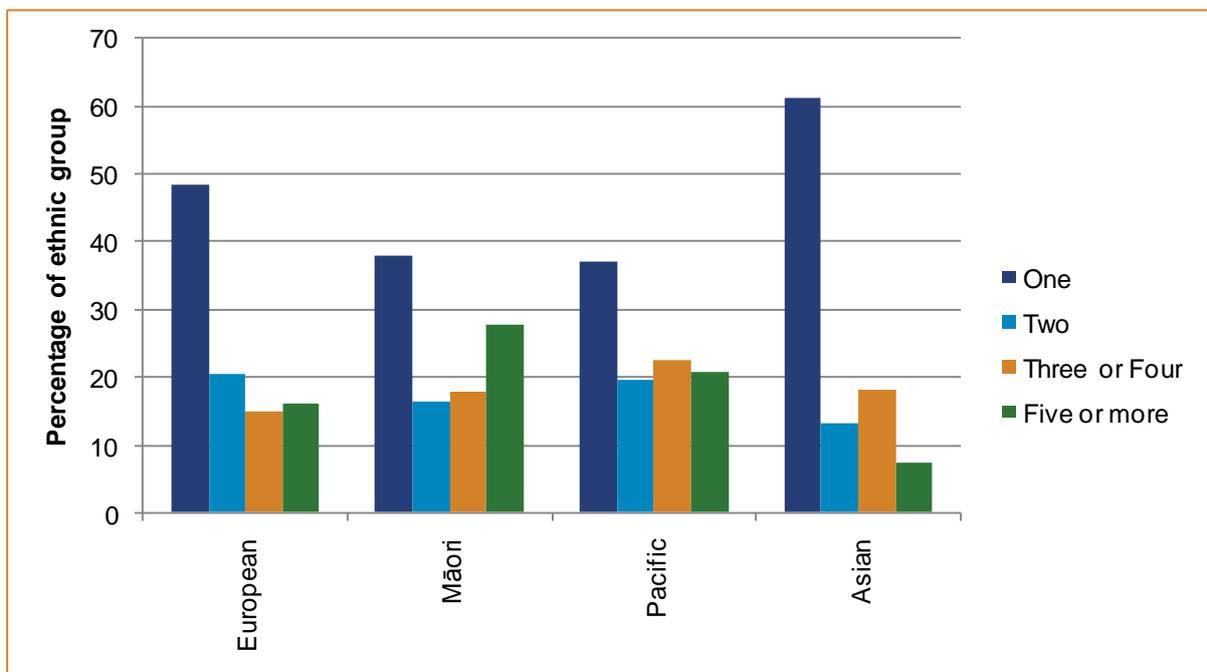


Figure 3 shows that Māori victims were more likely to experience a higher level of crime than victims from European and Asian ethnic groups, with Māori victims significantly more likely to be chronic victims of crime.

Figure 3: The concentration of crime by ethnic group in 2008



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Table 4 sets out the reduction in household and personal crimes that could be achieved if action was taken to prevent further victimisation after a household or person has been victimised twice. The purpose of this hypothetical situation is to show the potential impact of effective interventions to protect multiple victims.

Table 4: The impact of preventing further crime after two victimisations by age and ethnicity

Type of crime	Total household offences (000s)	Number of offences prevented if household victimisation capped at two offences (000s)	% of total household offences prevented if victimisation capped at two offences	Total personal offences (000s)	Number of offences prevented if personal victimisation capped at two offences (000s)	% of total personal offences prevented if victimisation capped at two offences
Age						
15-24	162	57	35%	751	431	57%
25-39	294	105	36%	493	259	53%
40-59	327	92	28%	344	146	42%
60+	126	19	15%	115	61	53%
Ethnicity						
European	706	211	30%	1,207	638	53%
Maori	192	78	41%	528	334	63%
Pacific	54	21	31%	171	99	58%
Asian	63	12	19%	100	28	28%

Notes:

Percentages do not necessarily add up to 100% because of rounding.

The numbers of people shown are based on the weighted NZCASS sample.

If action could have been taken so that nobody experienced more than two crimes in 2008 then the total numbers of personal crimes against people aged 15 to 24 years, Māori and Pacific people would all have been reduced by more than half. The reduction achieved for household crimes is generally smaller than for personal crimes, due to household crimes being less concentrated on particular households. In total, personal offences would have been reduced by 897,000 and household offences by 273,000.

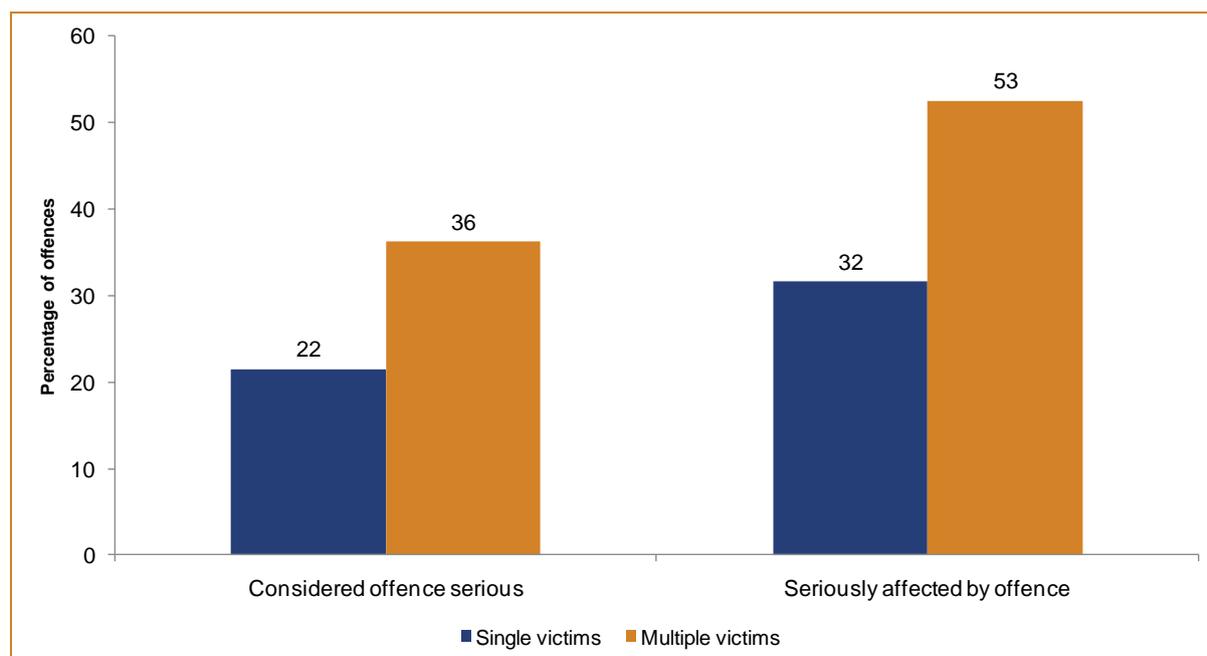
Recent initiatives to protect victims include on-the-spot safety orders for victims of domestic violence, where Police can remove a potentially violent person from the house for up to five days where there are no immediate grounds for an arrest but there is a likelihood of further violence occurring. Judges can also now issue a protection order on behalf of a victim when sentencing an offender for a domestic violence offence. More generally, a new Victims of Crime Reform Bill is being prepared with the aim of making the criminal justice system more responsive to victims.

Nearly half (48%) of multiple victims experienced a combination of both household and personal offences in 2008, while 40% experienced only household offences and 12% experienced only personal offences. Most multiple victims who experienced personal crimes in 2008 also experienced a household crime. This finding is consistent with international research (Mukherjee and Carcach, 1998).

5. Perceptions of crime and safety

As compared with those individuals who experienced one victimisation in 2008, multiple victims were significantly more likely to view offences as being serious in nature and to report being seriously affected by the offence (see Figure 4).

Figure 4: Proportion of single and multiple victims regarding the offence to be serious and/or to be seriously affected by the offence in 2008



However, multiple victims were not more likely to view what happened to them as a crime (as opposed to being ‘wrong, but not a crime’ or ‘just something that happens’) than victims of a single offence, with both groups viewing around 60% of offences as crimes. A similar proportion of offences experienced by multiple victims were brought to Police attention as compared with those involving victims of a single offence (33% and 30% respectively).

When asked about their perceptions of crime and personal safety, multiple victims were significantly more likely to perceive crime to be a problem where they lived and believe that local crime levels had increased during the 12 months prior to the survey (compared to the New Zealand average). They were also more likely to worry about becoming a victim of burglary, credit card fraud, being assaulted by a stranger, being assaulted by someone well known to them and/or sexually assaulted. Finally, multiple victims were also more likely to report feeling unsafe while walking alone in their neighbourhood after dark.

As above, other factors associated with multiple victims might explain why they feel more fearful than victims of a single offence; for example, having limited financial resources to prevent and/or cope with the effects of victimisation and/or living in economically deprived areas.

6. Cause and prevention

The causes of multiple and repeat victimisation have been debated for several decades (Farrell and Pease, 1993; Hope et al 2001). Two main explanations have been provided (see Mukherjee and Carcach, 1998; Farrell and Pease, 1993; Hope et al 2001), namely that:

- the initial victimisation directly changes the probability of further victimisation (known as boost theory or event/state dependency). For example, an offender may return to the same property on a subsequent occasion expecting goods to have been replaced by insurance in the interim.
- the first victimisation does not increase the risk of a subsequent victimisation, but merely flags the heightened risk of particular people and properties (flag theory, also termed risk heterogeneity). In other words, where a person lives and/or works or other particular features of their lifestyle may mean that they are at a heightened risk irrespective of how many times they have previously been victimised.

It is now generally accepted that these explanations are not mutually exclusive and regularly unfold in tandem and/or operate differently for different types of offence and victim (see Hope et al 2001).

This paper points towards some useful directions for future crime prevention policy:

- A focus on preventing multiple victimisation (so that fewer people are repeatedly victimised) has the potential to reduce significantly the total volume of crime in New Zealand.
- Crime prevention efforts focused on protecting repeat or multiple victims of personal offences are likely to have the greatest crime reduction impact.
- Efforts to reduce multiple victimisation would be best targeted towards Māori and younger people (particularly students and those living in rented accommodation, and, more specifically, social housing).
- Focusing crime prevention efforts on the protection of multiple victims also has the capacity to reduce the fear of crime and increase feelings of safety, given that this group of the population is significantly, and justifiably, worried about crime and personal safety.

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