



New Zealand House of Representatives
Te Whare Māngai o Aotearoa

Justice Committee

Komiti Whiriwhiri Take Ture

54th Parliament

August 2024

2024/25 Estimates for Vote Police

2024/25 Estimates for Vote Serious Fraud

**2024/25 Estimates for appropriations
within Vote Business, Science and
Innovation related to the Retail Crime
Subsidy**

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Vote Police, Vote Serious Fraud, and appropriations within Vote Business, Science and Innovation related to the Retail Crime Subsidy

Recommendation

The Justice Committee recommends that the appropriations for the year ending 30 June 2025 for Vote Police and Vote Serious Fraud as set out in Parliamentary Paper B.5 Vol.6, and the appropriations within Vote Business, Science and Innovation related to the Retail Crime Subsidy as set out in Parliamentary Paper B.5 Vol.1, be accepted.

About Vote Police

The New Zealand Police are the administering government agency for Vote Police. They are responsible for protecting the safety of New Zealanders by preventing crime, road crashes, and other harm, and by holding offenders to account. The Commissioner and constabulary members swear allegiance directly to the Sovereign. Under the Policing Act 2008, the Police are independent from the government of the day.

In 2024/25, the appropriations sought for Vote Police total \$2.775 billion. This is about \$107.7 million less than the estimated actual expenditure of \$2.882 billion in 2023/24. The Minister of Police is responsible for the appropriations in the Vote.

The four largest appropriations in the Vote are:

- *Policing Services (Multi-Category Appropriation)*: \$2.197 billion (79.2 percent of the Vote)
- *Road Safety Programme*: \$332.909 million (12 percent of the Vote)
- *Capital Expenditure*: \$177.870 million (6.4 percent of the Vote)
- *Arms Safety and Control*: \$65.431 million (2.4 percent of the Vote).

The Minister of Police is also responsible for capital injections of over \$228 million.

Trends in the Vote

For comparison, the table below shows the amount sought in Budget 2024 against spending over the previous three years.

	2021/22 Actual \$billion		2022/23 Actual \$billion		2023/24 Estimated Actual \$billion		2024/25 Estimates sought \$billion
	2.392		2.709		2.882		2.775
% increase or (decrease)		13.3		6.4		(3.7)	

About Vote Serious Fraud

The Serious Fraud Office is the department responsible for administering Vote Serious Fraud. The Office is the lead enforcement agency for investigating and prosecuting serious or complex financial crime, including bribery and corruption. It also plays a role in preventing financial crime. The Minister of Police is responsible for the two appropriations in the Vote.

The appropriations sought for Vote Serious Fraud total \$17.1 million in 2024/25. This is \$64,000 less than the estimated annual expenditure in 2023/24, but \$564,000 less than the budget for that year after adjustments through the Supplementary Estimates. The appropriation *Prevention, Investigation and Prosecution of Serious Financial Crime* increased by \$443,000 and the appropriation for capital expenditure increased by \$110,000.

The appropriation *Prevention, Investigation and Prosecution of Serious Financial Crime*, with proposed funding of \$16.953 million, comprises 99 percent of the Vote. The remaining appropriation *Serious Fraud Office—Capital Expenditure PLA* proposes funding of \$140,000.

Trends in the Vote

For comparison, the table below shows the amount sought in Budget 2024 against spending over the previous three years.

	2021/22 Actual \$million		2022/23 Actual \$million		2023/24 Estimated Actual \$million		2024/25 Estimates sought \$million
	14.777		16.829		17.157		17.093
% increase or (decrease)	13.9		1.9		(0.4)		

Appropriations within Vote Business, Science and Innovation related to the Retail Crime Subsidy

In 2024/25, the Minister of Police is also responsible for appropriations of \$4.15 million within Vote Business, Science and Innovation to implement and administer the Retail Crime Subsidy Scheme.

Hearing with the Minister of Police

We heard from the Minister of Police, Hon Mark Mitchell, on 20 June 2024. The Minister acknowledged that policing is a hard job. He said he has the utmost respect for those who choose to go out every day to keep people safe in their homes, communities, and workplaces. The Minister also acknowledged the critically important role that the Serious Fraud Office plays for the country in a difficult and very complex area. We thanked both organisations for meeting with us. Although we did not have any questions for the Serious Fraud Office, we thank it for its comprehensive response to written questions. We note that we will have an opportunity to hear from it later in the year for further scrutiny during our

review briefing. We will give consideration to whether the office appears separately during future Estimates hearings to ensure we have dedicated time to hear from it.

One-off funding to address cost pressures

The Minister observed that the Police have faced cost pressures driven by a range of external price rises. Budget 2024 proposes one-off funding of \$120 million in 2024/25 to fund these pressures. The proposed funding is temporary because the Police are expected to implement measures and identify opportunities to improve their financial stability. This includes planned cost savings of \$55 million from 2024/25 to 2027/28.

The Minister said that the Government knew it had to implement cost savings measures due to what he described as “enormous growth in back-office bureaucracy”, which was unsustainable. The Police, along with other government agencies, were included in this exercise. However, the Minister indicated that it became apparent that the Police’s core costs had not been funded properly in previous years, placing enormous fiscal pressure on them. We heard that the Minister expects the Police to focus on providing the best quality frontline services to the public in the most efficient manner.

The Government’s plan to restore law and order

In responses to the Standard Estimates Questionnaire, the Police reported that the changing nature of their operating environment continues to drive an escalation in demand for policing services. The Police are increasingly expected to provide a response to community and social issues, placing limits on their ability to respond to other serious and immediate demands. Given these pressures, combined with the 3.7 percent funding reduction of \$107.7 million in 2024/25, we asked about the Minister’s plan to restore law and order. The Minister highlighted the following initiatives:

- To address retail crime, he has asked the lead of the Police’s retail crime unit to work more closely with the retail sector, shopkeepers, and the security industry. More police are also being put back “out on the beat”.
- In his view, gangs have had a “very permissive environment” over the past six years. He has been clear in his letter of expectation to the Police that this will change. The Minister said that Police have reorientated their resources into policing gang convoys and gang tangis.
- At the time of our hearing, we were considering the Gangs Legislation Amendment Bill, which would ban the display of gang insignia in public places.¹ The power for the Police to issue dispersal notices and non-consorting orders was borrowed from the Western Australian legislation. The Minister has met with his counterparts there. He believes the powers will be very effective tools for frontline police officers to show the public that police are controlling the streets.
- The Firearms Prohibitions Orders regime is being strengthened, including giving the Police a warrantless search power. The Minister considers that this will enable the Police to stop and search gang members and their vehicles to seize illegal weapons that have been used to commit violence.

¹ We subsequently presented our report to the House on 3 July 2024.

- The Government is introducing a youth military-style academy. The Minister thinks this will make a “big, serious impact” on young recidivist and violent offenders who are a risk to the community and themselves.

Enforcing legislation to ban gang patches

We note that there has been commentary, both from the public and in the media, about the Police’s ability to enforce new legislation, particularly the ban on gang patches. We asked whether the legislation will be enforceable, and, if so, how it would deter gang violence in the community. We were told that the legislation was introduced to give the Police new powers so that the public can see that they are controlling the streets and gangs. The Minister said he has “no doubt at all” that the Police are capable of using these new powers and can deliver on the Government’s desired policy.

The Police acknowledged that their next step is waiting for the legislation to be passed. To ready themselves to take on the enforcement responsibility, the Police have recently announced the establishment of the National Gang Unit and District Gang Unit. The units will play a key role in coordinating and supporting the Police’s implementation of enforcement activity. The Police recognise that the work is a significant challenge, but they are ready to move resources, where necessary, to ensure that they can enforce the new legislation. The Commissioner said he expects the National Gang Unit to be operating by 1 July 2024. Although some positions are still to be appointed, the unit has a director and core staff.

Some of us consider that the ban will create tension and conflict within communities. Some of us also questioned whether an entry-level police officer would enforce the policy. We therefore asked whether only the gang unit would enforce the policy, and about any health and safety plans for officers. The Minister described the quality of young police recruits as “outstanding”. However, he said that their job has become a lot more dangerous in the past six years. This is because gangs are more violent and are carrying more firearms, which they are willing to use. We heard that the Government wants to reestablish an environment where gangs have their guns confiscated and understand that they are not “above the law”. It also wants an environment where the Police enforce the laws that are passed so that their job is much safer for the young police officers that we referred to.

We understand that only 17 fines have been issued over the past eight years under legislation that bans gang patches in government buildings. We asked how the Government will measure the success of the new legislation. The Minister considers that the current legislation that bans gang patches and insignia being worn in schools, hospitals, and other public buildings has been very effective. In particular, he told us that it has stopped people wearing gang patches in schools. We heard that the Government is just expanding that ban into all public spaces.

Some of us suggested that conversations with gang members are an important step for reducing the risk to police officers and enforcing legislation. The Minister acknowledged that the Police have conversations with gang members during the course of their work, but this is an operational matter. He said that, as the Minister of Police, he is very happy to meet with gang members. However, the only conversation he will have with them will be about helping them leave gangs and rejoin society.

Training for new recruits

The Police explained that they have worked very hard to uplift their training and correctly equip their new recruits for what they will face in the job. This is particularly true for tactical situations where their approach determines their safety and that of everyone around them. Recruit training has reverted to 20 weeks; for a time, it was 16 weeks. The Commissioner said he is very confident in the people being brought into the organisation and how the Police are preparing them for the challenging role. The Minister observed that probationary constables still must complete additional study and pass exams. He considers that the quality of the training is very good and that recruits have strong support when they graduate.

Responding to family harm and mental health incidents

In February 2024, the Police indicated that they intended to step back from responding to family harm and mental health callouts. We discussed why the Police may not be the most appropriate agency to respond to these situations, who would instead be responsible, and who determines whether a call warrants police attention.

The Minister explained that any family harm incident that involves an offence or violence will always need police intervention. However, some incidents do not need a police response and are pulling officers away from their core role. For example, they may need a health-based response provided by someone with mental health training. Alternatively, the Ministry of Social Development or Oranga Tamariki may be the best agency to respond to family harm incidents. We heard that the Government is working across the agencies to identify how to rebuild capability to respond to these events.

The Police pointed out that they use the term “family harm” to include violence. It also encompasses a range of other matters where families are under pressure and are seeking a response, which the Police have also been responding to. They emphasised that they have a “job to do” when violence is involved. However, at present, the Police are the “first port of call” for a wide range of incidents where violence is neither indicated nor a serious prospect. They told us that they have a very good working relationship in communities with “multi-agency tables”.² Community providers are present at these meetings and can take referrals for families that need help. The Police’s intention is to triage so they can attend the calls that need police attendance, and free themselves up to work in a range of other areas as the public expects.

The Police consider that it is appropriate for them to respond to make the situation safe when someone is in a mental health crisis. This applies to situations where a person may be threatening harm to others or is at immediate risk of harm to themselves. However, the Police’s current challenge is that they may then spend hours with the person waiting to hand them over to the appropriate crisis support service. The Police said they continue to work with their health colleagues and are very clear about each other’s roles. They stressed that police officers are neither trained nor necessarily the type of response that a person in a mental health crisis is seeking.

² Regular meetings, sometimes called “multi-agency tables”, are held across districts between the Police and agencies like Oranga Tamariki, the Department of Corrections, and Women’s Refuge. Information is shared from family harm investigations at these meetings.

The Police explained that the 111 call centre assesses each call for what response is needed. Indications of a potential risk of violence would trigger the call centre to dispatch a police car. We heard that the police receive more than one million calls annually and significant triaging occurs. The Commissioner said that call takers and dispatchers are asked to make some difficult decisions and he thinks they do it very well.

Youth offending

Military-style academies

Budget 2024 proposes new funding over four years to address serious youth offending. The funding is contained in Vote Oranga Tamariki, Vote Courts, Vote Justice, and Vote Police. It includes \$415,000 of operating funding and \$45,000 of capital funding for Vote Police. The initiative will fund two new components: a new legislative Youth Serious Offender category in the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989, and a military-style academy pilot that will operate from 2024/25.

We discussed youth military academies. Some members consider that neither previous camps in New Zealand nor a punitive approach to traumatised young people worked, and that camps had a high chance of retraumatising young people. The Minister disagreed that the approach is punitive and that having mentors and role models from the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) investing in young people will retraumatise them. Instead, his experience is that young people “lap up and thrive” in an environment with the best mentors and role models. This view is based on his heavy involvement in the Limited Service Volunteer programme, which he said has a success rate of about 70 percent.³ The Minister told us that he would like to see that programme adopted with the lessons learnt used to improve boot camps. We heard that he is “really optimistic” and “quite excited” about implementing the camps because he thinks that they will positively affect young people’s lives.

The Minister explained that eligibility will be determined through legislation to create a Youth Serious Offender category, which will focus on the worst recidivist violent offenders. He described them as a small group who create a disproportionate amount of harm and are a risk to themselves and their communities. The Minister views the programme as investing in these offenders to help them rejoin society and make good decisions, rather than being on a “fast track” into the adult criminal justice system. He is particularly concerned that it is much harder to rehabilitate people once they enter this system.

We understand that the Cabinet paper on military academies stated that these young people were sometimes mentally unwell and neurodiverse. This creates a significant risk of retraumatising them. We asked about steps to ensure that no child is traumatised by a military academy. The Minister said that the Minister for Children has engaged the best experts in the social sector to develop the programme. In his view, children will shift from an unsupportive, negative living situation to one where they receive the investment they need.

³ The Limited Service Volunteer programme is a motivational training course run by the New Zealand Defence Force for young people aged from 17 to 25 years old.

In 2022, the previous Government introduced a fast-track “circuit-breaker” for children aged 10 to 13 who were engaging in serious and persistent offending. We observed that the programme has shown positive outcomes by providing support for families and young people. Some of us therefore questioned why military academies are needed. The Minister said he is “100 percent supportive” of the fast-track programme. However, he pointed out that that programme deals with the “cohort of 70 to 80 percent”. People in this group are “on the fringes”, and easier to get back on track. The new offender category deals with the “worst violent recidivist offenders” who are responsible for aggravated robberies, and who he believes need serious intervention.

Tracking offending by children and young people

In April 2024, the Government announced a target for serious and persistent youth offending. The target is a 15 percent reduction in the total number of children and young people with serious and persistent offending behaviour by June 2029. Oranga Tamariki is the lead agency for reporting on the target. Progress against the target will be tracked through quarterly reporting on youth crime rates taken from the Police data.

We are interested in the challenges in tracking child and youth offending and the Police’s plans to collaborate with other agencies. The Commissioner acknowledged that the area is a “huge challenge”. In his view, the biggest concern is that younger children are drawn into offending. For example, children as young as seven have been involved in ram raids, usually with older offenders who are sometimes their siblings. Oranga Tamariki provides a care and protection response for children under the age of 14, and the Police have a role in the handover. For first-time offenders aged between 14 and 17, the Police’s aim is that they “never come back”. Their Youth Aid staff work very hard to enable this. Once young people are into serious and recidivist offending, the Police, the Youth Court, Oranga Tamariki, and other services are engaged to try and address the offending. The Police said they are seeing some significant challenges with repeat serious youth offenders. This suggests that the “core settings” that the Police have used for a long time are not working for a small group. The Police are providing advice to Ministers about those challenges.

Overrepresentation of Māori in the justice system

We observed that Māori are overrepresented in the justice system. We suggested that the new legislation, like the gang patch ban and boot camps, will disproportionately affect Māori, resulting in an influx into the justice system. The Commissioner acknowledged that Māori are overrepresented in the criminal justice system. He considers that the difficult position for policing is that many of the failings that lead to Māori in the justice system occur “upstream” of the Police. They have worked hard as an organisation to understand how they might be contributing to that.

At the same time, the Police have continued to build their capability to engage with Māori to achieve positive outcomes in crime prevention. We heard that the Police have Māori Responsiveness Managers and liaison officers across the country who have built effective relationships with iwi and Māori NGOs. The Police gave Te Pae Oranga as an example of a programme that has allowed them to get better results than they can through the courts. The programme involves diverting minor offences into an alternative justice process, which addresses the underlying causes of offending.

The Police noted, however, that their job is to enforce the law, and they cannot address all the inequities affecting Māori “at the tail end of that process”. We heard that the Police need to be able to keep communities safe and they do so by undertaking their law enforcement function. The Commissioner said he is very confident that the Police’s culture enables them to carry out that function appropriately for the people that they deal with.

The Minister also recognised that Māori are overrepresented in the justice system and as victims of crime. To address the overrepresentation in both areas, he considers that strong iwi leadership, in partnership with the Crown, is needed to determine how to deal with the drivers of the overrepresentation.

Prosecutions for cannabis possession

We understand that Māori are disproportionately represented in the number of discretionary prosecutions for cannabis possession. Some of us consider that the resources that are put towards prosecuting people for cannabis possession are a waste of money. The Minister explained that the Police operations are very targeted, and recover firearms, along with large cannabis operations. Often, the people are also involved in other types of crime. The Commissioner stated that drug possession offences are very often not the primary charge and are laid alongside charges for other offending. He told us that the Police exercise “a large amount” of discretion regarding drug possession. This reflects amendments to the misuse of drugs legislation, which require them to consider alternatives in terms of a health response.

Crime in the Auckland CBD

The Minister told us that the Police are starting to see some positive trends regarding crime in the Auckland CBD. He said that the Police have been doing an “outstanding job”, and are increasing their visibility, as well as their beat and reassurance patrols. We heard that they are receiving positive feedback and this work will continue.

The Police noted that foot patrols in the Auckland CBD have increased year-on-year by “slightly over” 60 percent. However, they are very mindful that the measure they use relies on manual logging by officers, which can be inconsistent. The Police are considering the best way to measure their visibility, particularly given the Government’s priority for police visibility in public places.

We asked whether a police station will be opened in the area. The Minister said he would like to see a patrol base or “something” in the downtown area, but there is not the budget for that. We heard that some business associations have approached the Police offering to partner with them. The Minister told us that there are varying views about that. For example, the Mayor “feels very strongly” that an increased police presence will have the biggest effect, which the Minister said he agrees with in “some respects”. He also recognises that residents would like to see some permanent police presence. The Minister added that the Government is considering different options.

Addressing illegal street racing

We referred to recent media reports of illegal street racing in Levin, involving up to 200 cars. We asked about resources and capability in Budget 2024 and the next four years to “crack down” on boy racers. We are particularly interested in whether the 15-year-old vehicle confiscation and seizure legislation will be strengthened so boy racers receive fewer warnings. We heard that the Minister planned to meet with the Minister of Transport, who is responsible for the legislation, in the week after our hearing. The Minister of Police said he wants the legislation strengthened, to send a clear message to boy racers that their behaviour will have consequences. His preference is for boy racers to lose their vehicle and not have it returned if they fail to follow instructions or comply with frontline police officers. He considers that this is the biggest deterrent.

Funding to renew the police fleet

Budget 2024 proposes a capital injection of \$12.75 million for the policy initiative *Police Fleet Renewal Programme*. The Minister noted that this funding will enable the Police to continue to renew about 600 to 650 vehicles each year, and to maintain their maritime capability. He described the Police vehicle fleet as critical to getting police officers to important incidents, “out on the beat”, and visible in communities. The Police explained that the funding will enable them to replace their specialist vehicles sooner, to ensure that they are modern and fit for purpose.

We asked how the funding will help the Police carry out their job on a practical level. The Police stressed that the equipment provided to frontline staff is “absolutely key” to enabling them to do their job. Vehicles and equipment that are older and are out of action because they need more frequent servicing prevent staff from undertaking their daily tasks. The funding will ensure that all the Police’s groups have the equipment and transport they need to have a positive effect on the community.

Performance indicators

We observed that that the appropriations for Vote Police have some of the most detailed performance indicators. The Police described policing performance as “notoriously difficult” to measure because they are operating in a complex social environment. They also perform a wide range of statutory functions. Consequently, it can be very difficult to discern the Police’s effect on outcomes, and identify appropriate measures that would show whether policing was effective.

The Commissioner said he was not aware of any police service in the world that has “really nailed” a performance measurement framework. Instead, they are more often able to “build a picture” of performance based on a range of factors. The Commissioner acknowledged the Police’s performance reporting team, which for several years has won awards for the quality of the information in the annual reports. He attributed this to the team working very hard to identify best practice internationally.

Reduction in funding for youth services

We note that, within the *Crime Prevention* appropriation, *Youth Services* have decreased from \$89.776 million in 2023/24 to \$76.951 million in 2024/25. In our hearing, the Commissioner said that the amount is understated in the Budget documents. In responses to post-hearing questions, the Minister explained that the overall amount for the *Crime Prevention* appropriation is correct. For reporting purposes, the appropriation is classified into sub-components, with funding allocated to each category. However, a misallocation of funding in the sub-components meant that the *Youth Services* component received a proportionately larger reduction in funding. The Estimates document indicated that the *Youth Services* component reduced by \$12.8 million between the 2023/24 Estimated Actual and 2024/25 Budget whereas the correct reduction is \$4.7 million.

Other matters considered

- **Effect of cost-savings initiative on frontline work**—In January 2024, the Police were asked to identify savings of 6.5 percent, as part of the Government’s initiative to reduce public service expenditure. This figure was subsequently reduced for the Police. The Minister said he has been very clear with the Commissioner and the Executive that any cost-saving measures should not affect the provision of frontline services. Savings should also be reinvested in, and enhance, those services. (*Transcript, pages 6 and 7.*)
- **Upgrade to the 111 system**—The Minister acknowledged staff in the 111 call centres who he described as “world class” and “outstanding”. The Police told us that the 111 service is performing very highly and is well within its service expectations. The Next Generation Critical Communications programme includes upgrades to the Police’s radio network, which is a key component of the 111 lines. The operating platform to despatch cars will also need to be upgraded “at some point”. Although there is no funding in Budget 2024 for this work, the Police said they will “come again on that”. (*Transcript, pages 7 and 8.*)
- **ReFrame operating model**—We asked why ReFrame, a future operating model that would help the Police deal with demand pressures, is not funded on an ongoing basis in the Budget. The Police explained that the operating model design arising from the ReFrame programme will allow it to work in a different way in the future. However, it needs a “big transformation effort”, particularly for investment in IT platforms. The Police have decided to “bank” the operating model and run it into their Core Policing Services programme, which will go for a Budget bid in Budget 2026. (*Transcript, pages 13 and 14.*)
- **Work to retain police officers**—The Police told us that, to date, they have not detected an uptick in people leaving the Police or in attrition rates as a result of recruitment from Australia. The Minister noted that the attrition rate is trending down slightly, from 5.5 percent to 4.5 percent. The Commissioner observed that policing is very different in Australia, and many New Zealand officers who go there come back. (*Transcript, pages 25 and 26.*)
- **Funding for the Retail Crime Prevention Programme/Fog Cannon policy initiative**—We note that Budget 2024 contains no additional funding for the Retail Crime Prevention programme to fund fog cannons and other security measures. Instead, the

funding is rolled over from the previous year. The Minister said that this programme will be considered in future budgets. He pointed out that money is still available for retailers and shopkeepers to access support. (*Transcript, page 28.*)

Hearing with the Associate Minister of Police

We also heard from the Associate Minister of Police, Hon Casey Costello, on 20 June 2024.⁴

Increasing the number of constabulary staff

As part of Budget 2024, the Government announced that frontline police numbers will be increased by 500 officers by the end of 2025. Budget 2024 includes funding of \$191 million over four years for the policy initiative *Investing in Frontline Policing*. The funding will be used for recruitment, training, remuneration, and other operating costs. When the new Government was sworn in on 27 November 2023, there were 10,211 sworn officers. The extra funding is to increase police constabulary numbers to 10,711.

The Minister has been delegated responsibility for assisting with the proposed investment into 500 additional constabulary staff, including matters related to recruitment and retention. We explored the rationale for the specific target and the importance of having 500 more police officers. The Minister told us that New Zealand First, from a policy position, thought that the figure was a very aspirational number. However, it was one that was necessary to make a tangible difference. She emphasised that the funding also includes investment in resources to equip staff and to fund training and recruitment, and capital investment in police stations. The Minister said that the Government is very focused on getting police back onto the frontline. We heard that the Government has been very clear that the Commissioner will determine where the additional staff will be best deployed.

We are interested in how the target will be achieved when current vacancies and attrition rates are also taken into account. The Minister explained that the Government is very focused on keeping police officers in the police force. The Police are also starting to see a “marked increase” in applications for police college training—from about 350 per month in 2023 to more than 600 applications in May 2024. The Police pointed out that, as well as graduates from the Police College, “re-joins” are another route into the Police. When the economy is slower, they tend to see more people rejoining the organisation. Although the total is “a bit of an unknown”, the Police said they are confident that a number of people will rejoin over the next two years. The Police also noted that the attrition rate fluctuates. The long-run average is about 4.5 percent. However, during the COVID-19 period, it was as low as just over 2 percent.

We discussed some confusion about which Minister is responsible for achieving the target. The Minister confirmed that she has delegated responsibility, which has never changed. However, the work of the Minister of Police and the Associate Minister involves some crossover. She acknowledged some confusion between the offices about responsibility for answering and transferring questions, which she believes has been addressed. To achieve their shared objectives, the Ministers work closely together and meet weekly. The Minister considers it a great honour to have the delegation to lead the recruitment programme. The work has given her the opportunity to consider a range of policing functions and to be

⁴ All references to “the Minister” in this section of our report are to the Associate Minister of Police.

operationally involved. In her view, her associate portfolios enable her to support the key Ministers while keeping momentum on specific tasks.

Maintaining the current police to population ratio

In Budget 2022, the previous Government announced tagged contingency funding to maintain a ratio of 1 officer to every 480 New Zealanders. We asked whether the Government intends to use that funding to maintain the ratio. We heard that the Government's focus is to meet the coalition target of 10,711 officers. The Minister said that the Government will also continue to work on determining the best way to ensure that frontline policing is funded in proportion to the population.

The Commissioner told us that he had not seen a recent update to the calculation. However, he would expect that an increase of 500 officers over two years would see the Police track "pretty consistently" with the police-to-population target. The Commissioner pointed out that this depends on population increase estimates, which the Police receive periodically from Statistics New Zealand.

Addressing the increase in fraud and cybercrime

Other responsibilities that are delegated to the Minister include assisting with oversight, policy development, and other matters relating to:

- the cross-agency Transnational Organised Crime (TNOC) Strategy and annual work plans under the strategy
- the Resilience to Organised Crime in Communities (ROCC) work programme.

In their Briefing to the Incoming Minister, the Police reported that fraud and cybercrime are one of the fastest-growing demand areas by volume. We asked about the international trends and available funding, recognising that fraud requires a different type of resource than traditional policing. The Minister noted that fraud involves organised crime, that the global trends are very similar to New Zealand but with larger numbers, and the perpetrators are often offshore. She considers that the response therefore needs to be aimed at disruption and building cross-agency relationships to prevent this type of crime. We heard that the Government is continuing to invest in transnational organised crime. Although it does not specifically relate to fraud, it is also continuing the ROCC programme, which allows communities to target their greatest needs.

We asked whether the Minister will be pushing for "account and pay-matching" by banks to prevent online frauds and scams. The Minister said that this is not specifically within her portfolio, but she has been having some conversations. She acknowledged that banking "is also coming to the table" on the discussion and wants to do more and have police engagement. The Minister told us that the work is in the very early stages so she could not commit to anything specific, including funding, at present.

Interaction between the ROCC programme and the gang unit

We are interested in how the Minister's delegation for the ROCC programme interacts with the newly announced National Gang Unit. In the Minister's view, the effectiveness of the

ROCC programme is that it allows social agencies and communities to drive the work rather than the Police driving it. She described the Police's role as more of a secretariat function. The Police told us that most of the work under the ROCC programme sits in its own space. However, they are still exploring the role of the Gang Harm Insights Centre and how that will work alongside, and potentially as part of, the National Gang Unit. This decision is subject to ongoing discussion and consultation.

Increasing the number of youth aid officers

We note that the Budget does not contain a specific allocation to increase the number of youth aid officers. Some of us noted that this was despite a coalition commitment to do so. The Minister told us that she is working with the Commissioner and police around the country to understand what youth aid services are needed. For example, she pointed out that more time is spent in courts due to the complexity of the process for dealing with youth offending. Therefore, more specific youth prosecutors may be needed rather than youth aid officers. We heard that the Government has not made any firm decisions, and the coalition commitment is for this term of the government, not this year.

Some of us consider that the Government should have undertaken work to establish the Police's needs for youth services before introducing initiatives to target young serious offenders. The Minister observed that, at present, all the youth aid resources are being used to deal with high-end offending. She considers that, if there are more youth aid officers, they will also be able to support early interventions and break the cycle earlier in the process.

Appendix

Committee procedure

We met on 20 June, 25 July, and 1 August 2024 to consider Vote Police, Vote Serious Fraud, and the appropriations within Vote Business, Science and Innovation related to the Retail Crime Subsidy. We heard evidence for 2 hours and 22 minutes from the Minister of Police, Hon Mark Mitchell, the Associate Minister of Police, Hon Casey Costello, the New Zealand Police, and the Serious Fraud Office. We received advice from the Office of the Auditor-General.

Committee members

James Meager (Chairperson)
Hon Ginny Andersen
Jamie Arbuckle
Cameron Brewer
Tākuta Ferris
Paulo Garcia
Dr Tracey McLellan
Rima Nakhle
Tamatha Paul
Todd Stephenson
Hon Dr Duncan Webb

Related resources

In addition to the standard Estimates documents, we considered the following documents as evidence and advice. They are available on the [Parliament website](#), along with the [Hansard transcript](#) and recordings of our meetings with the [Minister of Police](#) and the [Associate Minister of Police](#) on 20 June 2024.

- Standard Estimates Questionnaire responses (Vote Police).
- Standard Estimates Questionnaire responses (Vote Serious Fraud).
- Standard Estimates Questionnaire responses (Vote Business, Science and Innovation).
- Minister of Police (Responses to additional questions, Vote Police).
- Minister of Police (Responses to additional questions, Vote Serious Fraud).
- Office of the Auditor-General (Briefing on Vote Police).
- Office of the Auditor-General (Briefing on Vote Serious Fraud).