

SENSIBLE SENTENCING TRUST POLL

May 2011

REPORT

CONFIDENTIAL

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TOPLINE SUMMARY

This Poll was conducted in May 2011 on a sample of 1000 people 15 years and older spread throughout New Zealand, as per the population.

These attitudes were measured by the Sensible Sentencing Trust for the very first time and so the results serve as a benchmark Poll.

It is apparent that most people want sentences in New Zealand different from the way they are currently:

- 73% think prison sentences for violent crimes, (such as murder and rape), are too short with only 2% thinking they are too long
- 61% think punishments given in New Zealand for Youth Offending, (such as graffiti, vandalism and petty theft), are too soft and only 2% think they are too hard
- 86% think that if a person commits three crimes and is sentenced to one year prison for each crime, that their total sentence should be for 3 years; just 9% think the sentence should be for 1 year
- 71% think DNA should be recorded for people arrested and 24% think not.

Additionally, 65% think that the level of violent crime in New Zealand is getting worse and only 4% that it is getting better. 26% consider the level to be about the same.

The Sensible Sentencing Trust has high awareness with 65% of all New Zealanders 15+ years having heard of the Trust. Awareness is much higher with older people and lower with younger, representing an opportunity for further increase.



RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Sensible Sentencing Trust wants to play a more public role in order to be more effective.

To achieve this, the Trust requires an understanding of New Zealanders' attitudes towards crime and prison sentences, via a statistically robust nationwide Poll.

The specific information collected in this Poll includes the perceptions of New Zealanders towards:

- length of prison sentences for violent crime
- levels of violent crime over time
- youth offending punishment levels
- recording of DNA for arrests

and:

- awareness of the Sensible Sentencing Trust



RESEARCH DESIGN

1000 telephone interviews were conducted for this Poll with New Zealanders aged 15 years and over.

The sample was randomly selected from throughout New Zealand and is representative of the population. A full profile of the personal and household demographics of the sample is at the back of this report.

All interviewing was conducted between May 10th and 30th, 2011 by Consumer Link, a fieldwork and tabulations company owned by Colmar Brunton Research. The questions were included in their Telephone Omnibus Survey (which is a cost share survey with other companies). Interviewers are fully trained and supervised with 10% of surveys audited. Three calls are made to reach each randomly selected respondent before replacement. Contact is weekday evenings and weekends so as to not over-sample non-workers and stay-at-homes. Approximately equal numbers of males and females are interviewed and the data is subsequently weighted to reflect age, gender and household size as per the total New Zealand population.

Pauline Colmar, a market research specialist, designed the research and wrote this report.

RESULTS

The actual questions that were asked are in italics.

1. Violent Crime Prison Sentence Lengths

"Are prison sentences given in New Zealand for violent crimes, such as murder and rape, too short, about right or too long?"

Length of Violent Crime Sentences	
	All NZers 15+ years (1000) %
Too short	72.8
About right	18.8
Too long	1.6
Don't know	6.8
	100

The majority of New Zealanders (73%) think prison sentences given for violent crimes, such as murder and rape, are too short with 19% thinking they are about right and only 2% thinking they are too long.

Looking at the results by personal and household characteristics shows little differences by gender, employment hours, marital status, household size and children and whether main household shopper or not.

There are, however, other differences:

- 15 to 19 year olds are much less likely to say the sentences are too short, especially 15 to 17 year olds. 55% of 15 to 17 year olds say too short (compared to an average of 73%) and 5% say too long
- conversely 35 to 39 year olds are much more likely to say the sentences are too short at 88%
- age and gender combined show males 15 to 24 years are least likely to think the sentences are too short at 61% with females 25 to 39 years the most likely at 88%
- by ethnic grouping, Pacific Islanders are the most likely to think the sentences for violent crime are too long at 9%. Asian ethnicities are low on about right (9%) with high don't knows (17%)
- by occupation, clerks (84%), plant machine operators and assemblers (94%) and labourers/ elementary service workers (80%) are all above average for saying the prison sentences are too short
- people earning under \$10,000 pa (64%) and those earning \$70,001 to \$100,000 (67%) are slightly less likely to perceive the sentences as too short when compared with other income levels
- socio-economic levels 4 and 5 (lower middle) are more likely to say the sentences are too short - 81% and 79% respectively
- by area, Aucklanders (77%), North Island non-urban (80%) and South Island urban which is Dunedin, Invercargill and Nelson combined (81%) are all higher than average in saying the sentences are too short

2. Levels of Violent Crime Over Time

"Is the level of violent crime in New Zealand getting worse, is it about the same or is it getting better?"

Levels of Violent Crime Over Time	
	All NZers 15+ years (1000) %
Worse	64.9
About the same	26.2
Better	4.2
Don't know	4.7
	100

Two thirds of New Zealanders (65%) think that the level of violent crime in New Zealand is getting worse, 26% that it is about the same and only 4% that it is getting better.

Looking at the results by personal and household characteristics shows little differences by gender, employment status and household size and children.

Differences with the other population segments are:

- 15 to 24 year olds are less likely to think that violent crime is getting worse (57%), whereas 30 to 34 year olds (72%) and 70 years and older (76%) are more likely to think it is getting worse
- 20 to 24 years (10%) and 30 to 34 years (9%) are both above average for thinking it is getting better
- age and gender combined show females 25 to 39 years are most likely to think violent crime is getting worse at 76% versus males 25 to 39 years among the least likely at 55%
- by ethnic grouping, Pacific Islanders are the most likely to think the level of violent crime is getting worse (72%), with Asian and European ethnicities the least likely to think it is getting worse at only 50% each
- agriculture and fishery workers (76%), retired (74%) and fulltime homemakers (85%) are more likely to say violent crime is getting worse. Professionals (55%), students (54%) and labourers/ elementary service workers (57%) are all less likely to say it is getting worse. Professional occupations are most likely to think it is about the same (37%) with technicians/associate professionals most likely to think it is getting better (11%)

- people earning under \$10,000 pa (57%) and those earning over \$100,000 (54%) are the least likely to think the level of violent crime is getting worse and are well above average in thinking it is about the same - 33% and 36% respectively
- single people are less likely than average to think violent crime in New Zealand is getting worse (60%)
- socio-economic levels 4 and 5 (lower middle) are more likely to say violent crime is getting worse - 72% and 71% respectively
- main shoppers are slightly more likely (68%) than non-shoppers (60%) to feel that the level of violent crime is getting worse
- by area, Wellington is the least likely (53%) and Auckland below average (62%) on thinking violent crime is getting worse. 12% of Wellingtonians think the level of violent crime is getting better (against an 4% average)



3. Youth Offending Punishment Levels

"Are punishments given in New Zealand for Youth Offending such as graffiti, vandalism, and petty theft too soft, about right or too hard?"

Youth Offending Punishment Levels	
	All NZers 15+ years (1000) %
Too soft	61.4
About right	27.4
Too hard	1.8
Don't know	9.4
	100

Most New Zealanders (61%) think punishments given in New Zealand for Youth Offending are too soft, with 27% thinking they are about right and only 2% thinking they are too hard.

Looking at the results by personal and household demographics shows little differences by household size and children, socio-economic level and whether main household shopper or not.

The differences are:

- males are more likely (69%) than females (54%) to consider that the punishments for Youth Offending are too soft
- 15 to 19 year olds are much less likely (45%) and 20 to 24 years (52%) and 30 to 34 years (53%) are less likely to consider the punishments too soft
- of all 15 to 24 year olds, 47% think the punishments are too soft, 42% think they are about right and only 4% think they are too hard; 7% don't know
- 35 to 39 year olds (76%) and 70+ years (71%) are much more likely to think punishments for Youth Offending are too soft
- age and gender combined show females 15 to 24 years are least likely at 43% to find the punishments too soft. Males 15 to 24 years (52%) and females 40 to 59 years (49%) are also lower than average. Males 40 to 59 are the most likely to think the Youth Offending punishments are too soft at 79%
- by ethnic grouping, Asians (72%) and Europeans (74%) are most likely to say too soft. European New Zealanders (29%) and Maori (28%) are more likely to say about right compared to average. Pacific Islanders are much more likely (12%) than other groups to say too hard

- fulltime workers (69%) are more likely than part-time (54%) and those not employed as income earners (55%) to think the punishments are too soft
- labourers/ elementary service workers (82%) and retired (79%) are well above average for saying the punishments are too soft, whereas students especially (40%), agriculture and fishery workers (51%) and professionals (55%) are all well below average. 44% of students consider the Youth Offending punishments to be about right
- people earning under \$10,000 pa (46%) and those earning \$70,001 to \$100,000 (56%) are slightly less likely to describe the punishments as too soft, as are people who are single (53%)
- by area, North Island urban excluding Auckland and Wellington are the most likely to say the punishments are too soft (71%) and South Island non-urban (48%) is the least likely



4. Prison Sentences Added or Served At Once

"If a person commits three crimes and is sentenced to one year prison for each crime, should their total sentence be for 3 years or for 1 year?"

Prison Sentences Added or Served At Once	
	All NZers 15+ years (1000) %
3 years	85.9
1 year	8.8
Don't know	5.3
	100

Almost all New Zealanders (86%) think that if a person commits three crimes and is sentenced to one year prison for each crime that their total sentence should be for 3 years. Just 9% of New Zealanders think the sentences should be concurrent and 1 year served.

Looking at the results by personal and household characteristics shows little differences by employment hours, personal income, marital status, household size, socio-economic or whether main household shopper or not.

There are however, other differences:

- males (11%) are slightly more likely than females (7%) to say one year
- 25 to 29 year olds (93%) and 35 to 39 year olds (92%) are a bit more likely to think the sentence should be for three years
- age and gender combined show males 15 to 24 years (16%) are the most likely group to think the sentence should be one year
- by ethnic grouping, Maori (13%) and Pacific Islanders (11%) are more likely to say one year than other ethnicities
- agriculture and fishery workers are the occupation most likely to say three years (96%) and least likely to say one year (3%). Trade workers and unemployed/ beneficiaries are the least likely to say three years at 75% each
- households with preschool only children are more likely to say three years (92%)
- by area, North Island non-urban (93%) are the most likely to feel the sentences should be added to three years; only 2% think one year. Wellingtonians are lower than average on three years (76%) and higher on one year (15%)



5. DNA Recording

"Should DNA be recorded for any person arrested for a crime?"

DNA Recording if Arrested	
	All NZers 15+ years (1000) %
Yes	71.0
No	23.6
Don't know	5.4
	100

The majority of New Zealanders, 71%, think DNA should be recorded for any person arrested of a crime and 24% think not.

Looking at the results by personal and household characteristics shows little differences by gender, employment hours, marital status, household size and children, area or main household shopper or not.

The differences are:

- 15 to 17 year olds are the most likely to agree with DNA recording (84%). 20 to 24 year olds are the least likely - 64% say yes and 32% say no. 40 to 59 year olds are above average in not wanting DNA recording (28%)
- by ethnic grouping, Asians are the most likely (80%) to agree with DNA recording and Maori the least likely to agree (62%)
- by occupation, agreement with DNA recording is highest with service and sales workers (83%) and lowest with labourers/ elementary service workers (57%)
- people earning under \$50,001 to \$70,000 pa are the most likely to say yes to DNA being recorded when people are arrested (83%) and those earning over \$100,000 are the least likely to agree (61%)
- socio-economic level 1 (the highest) is the most likely to say no to DNA recording (34%)



6. Sensible Sentencing Trust Awareness

"Have you heard of the Sensible Sentencing Trust?"

Aware of Sensible Sentencing Trust	
	All NZers 15+ years (1000) %
Yes	64.6
No	34.5
Unsure	0.9
	100

Two thirds of New Zealanders (65%) have heard of the Sensible Sentencing Trust and 35% have not.

When looking at the results by personal and household characteristics, there are little or no differences in awareness by gender.

The other differences are:

- younger people are much less likely to have heard of the Sensible Sentencing Trust: 3% of those aged 15 to 17, 17% of those aged 18 to 19, 30% of those 20 to 24 and 47% of those 25 to 29 years; only 17% of all 15 to 24 year olds have heard of the Sensible Sentencing Trust

- older people are much more likely to have heard of the Sensible Sentencing Trust: 90% of 50 to 59 year olds, 93% of 60 to 69 year olds and 82% of those 70 years and older
- by ethnic groupings, NZ Europeans (70%), Europeans (56%) and Maori (53%) have the highest awareness, with Pacific Islanders (31%), Asians (21%) and other ethnicities (29%) all with low awareness
- self employed (80%) and fulltime workers (72%) are more likely to have heard of the Sensible Sentencing Trust when compared with part-time (47%) and non-income workers (58%)
- awareness is higher than average with legislators/ administrators/ managers (83%), professionals (84%), retired (85%) and technicians/ associate professionals (77%). Awareness is particularly low with students (20%) and low with service and sales workers (45%) and unemployed/ beneficiaries (47%)
- people earning under \$10,000 pa (29%) are the least aware of the Sensible Sentencing Trust. Those earning \$20,001 to \$30,000 (79%) and over \$40,000 have above average awareness
- single people have lower awareness (34%)
- larger households of three or more have higher awareness than households of one or two people

- awareness is higher in homes with no children (75%) and lowest in homes with preschool only children (40%)
- awareness is lowest with socio-economic levels 5 and 6 (lowest) - 59% and 54% respectively
- main shoppers have higher awareness (76%) than non-shoppers (49%)
- by area, Wellingtonians (72%) and North Island non-urban (73%) have higher awareness of the Trust, with South Island non-urban the lowest (51%)



SAMPLE PROFILE

The sample of 1,000 New Zealanders has the following characteristics:

Total Sample (1000)

<u>Gender</u>	%
Female	52
Male	<u>48</u>
	<u>100</u>

<u>Age</u>	%
15 to 19 years	14
20 to 29 years	12
30 to 39 years	15
40 to 49 years	23
50 to 59 years	16
60 to 69 years	11
70 years and over	<u>9</u>
	<u>100</u>

	<u>Total Sample</u>
	(1000)
<u>Ethnicity</u>	%
(more than one category can be chosen)	
European/Pakeha	86
Maori/part Maori	9
Pacific Islander	4
Asian/part Asian	5
European	4
Other mixes	1
<u>Employment Status</u>	%
Self-employed	14
Full-time, 30+ hrs weekly	40
Part-time, less than 30 hrs weekly	17
Not employed as an income earner	<u>29</u>
	<u>100</u>
<u>Occupation</u>	%
Legislators, admin and managers	8
Professionals	18
Tech and associated professionals	9

Clerks	8
Service and sales workers	11
Agriculture and fishery workers	7
Trades workers	5
Students	11
Retired	7
Labourers and elementary service	5
Other	7
Unemployed/ beneficiaries	<u>4</u>
	<u>100</u>

<u>Personal Income (per annum)</u>	<u>%</u>
Under \$10,000	15
\$10,001 to \$20,000	11
\$20,001 to \$30,000	10
\$30,001 to \$40,000	11
\$40,001 to \$50,000	8
\$50,001 to \$70,000	11
\$70,001 to \$100,000	11
Over \$100,000	12
Refused	<u>11</u>
	<u>100</u>

	<u>Total Sample</u>
	(1000)
<u>Marital Status</u>	%
Single or never married	32
Married or living with partner	57
Separated or divorced	7
Widowed	<u>4</u>
	<u>100</u>
<u>Household Size</u>	%
One	10
Two	26
Three	23
Four	24
Five or more	<u>17</u>
	<u>100</u>
<u>Household Composition</u>	%
No children	56
Some preschoolers	12
School-aged only	<u>32</u>
	<u>100</u>

	<u>Total Sample (1000)</u>
<u>Socio-economic Level</u>	%
One (high)	7
Two	13
Three	34
Four	14
Five	12
Six (low)	<u>20</u>
	<u>100</u>
<u>Main Shopper Status</u>	%
Yes	58
No	<u>42</u>
	<u>100</u>
<u>Area</u>	%
Auckland	33
Wellington	11
Other North Island Main Urban	20
Other North Island Non-Main Urban	12
Christchurch	14
Other South Island Main Urban	5
Other South Island Non-Main Urban	<u>5</u>
	<u>100</u>

QUESTIONNAIRE

INTRODUCTION: We now have a poll about crime in New Zealand and are interested in your opinions.

1. Firstly, are prison sentences given in New Zealand for violent crimes, such as murder and rape, too short, about right or too long?

Too short 1

About right 2

Too long 3

DO NOT READ Don't know 4

2. Is the level of violent crime in New Zealand getting worse, is it about the same or is it getting better?

Worse 1

About the same 2

Better 3

DO NOT READ Don't know 4



3. Are punishments given in New Zealand for Youth Offending such as graffiti, vandalism, and petty theft too soft, about right or too hard?

Too soft 1

About right 2

Too hard 3

DO NOT READ Don't know 4

4. If a person commits three crimes and is sentenced to one year prison for each crime, should their total sentence be for 3 years or for 1 year?

3 years 1

1 year 2

Don't know 3

5. Should DNA be recorded for any person arrested for a crime?

Yes 1

No 2

Don't know..... 3

6. Have you heard of the Sensible Sentencing Trust?

Yes 1

No 2

Unsure 3

