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New crime statistics back up need for multi-agency coordinated response to scams

Netsafe, New Zealand's leading online safety organisation, said today's crime survey statistics released by the Ministry of Justice shows a critical gap in our justice system's ability to protect citizens and pursue cybercriminals when it comes to tackling scams. The statistics were included in the Ministry's New Zealand Crime & Victims Survey (NZCVS).

CEO Brent Carey says it is alarming that fraud has become the most common crime, yet conversely remains so underreported.

"What today's figures released by the Ministry of Justice shows is that unsurprisingly, only a fraction of scams and fraud are reported to law enforcement. On top of that issue these numbers show more than one in ten adults will experience at least one incident of fraud and cybercrime. This is nearly three times more than they are likely to experience theft and damage."

Reported online fraud has grown to 11% as compared to 8% in 2018. This is more than double the 4% of reported crimes related to theft and damage. Despite online fraud being the crime that adults are most likely to experience, only 10% of fraud and cybercrime is reported to police, compared to 33% of interpersonal violence. One of the main reasons cited is that the fraud had already been reported to the bank (24% of respondents said this).

"These statistics highlight a growing threat that we are failing to address adequately. If we don't prioritise tackling fraud and scams, we'll continue to see an erosion of public trust in our financial institutions, plans to digitise government services and our Justice system.

"With fraud and scams becoming the most likely crimes people will face, we must ask why victims are reluctant to report these incidents. Are they not confident in the system's ability to deliver justice, or are they unaware of the resources available to them? It's a wake-up call that the crimes most affecting people today are the ones we hear the least about. We need a stronger focus on fraud prevention, victim support, and a robust response from our justice system to reverse this trend."

Crucially there is no government funding for incident response and victim remediation. Yet in recent research by Netsafe and the Global Anti-Scam Alliance, 53% of New Zealand respondents admitted to a significant emotional impact post-scam.

Carey went on to say the rise in online banking fraud and fake selling sites reflects how unprepared New Zealand is for the digital age's criminal challenges.

Netsafe's focus on delivering vital online safety services is laser sharp, according to Carey. "Our focus remains on combatting scams and giving the public a non-governmental front door for reporting their concerns. It's time for a comprehensive strategy to combat these sophisticated

scams. A multi-agency, multi-pronged approach is required. This should include a national anti-scam centre that Netsafe's scam helpline can feed into."

Meanwhile Netsafe's approach includes the following:

Education and Awareness - Focus on educating people about common scam tactics and how to recognise them.

Creating a Safe Reporting Environment - Create an environment where victims feel safe and supported in reporting fraud. This includes providing clear, accessible reporting mechanisms and ensuring that victims are treated with empathy and respect.

Overcoming Embarrassment - Anyone can fall victim to a scam. High-profile individuals and organisations have been deceived, which underscores that these crimes are not a reflection of one's intelligence or vigilance.

Support Systems - Counselling and financial advice. Offering resources and assistance can help victims recover more quickly and prevent further victimisation.

With scammers exploiting sophisticated tactics to deceive even the most vigilant individuals, and the blame lying squarely with the perpetrators of these crimes, there *are* things we as users of online banking systems can take actions to reduce the risks.

Netsafe's advice

- Use strong passwords
- Enable two factor authentication
- Be cautious with sharing personal information.
- Be wary of 'out of the blue' messages
- Avoid clicking on suspicious links
- Report concerns to Police 105 your bank and to Netsafe.

"Netsafe stands ready to support initiatives aimed at tackling online scams and upholding civil and criminal remedies for online harm. It takes a network of networks and a partnership model to disrupt bad actors. Ensuring New Zealanders have a safe and positive online experience continues to be our focus, but collectively we need a much more coordinated approach," said Carey.

Today's figures come a week after Netsafe's announcement that it is bringing back [ReScam.org](https://www.rescam.org), a cutting-edge AI tool designed to waste scammers time so they can't target their next victims.

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For further information call or email

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Background information

Netsafe is New Zealand's online safety not-for-profit organisation. It has rolled out new scam-busting tools and services every month of 2024 so far, following their publication [State of Scams report](#) at the end of 2023.

These included the Chorus-funded Get Set Up for Safety toolkit for Seniors scam prevention, followed swiftly by the commercial alliances with Cybera, Dolla and Akau. The partnerships spanning banking, crypto and telecommunications sectors will give victims more options in trying to recover their losses.

Last week Netsafe announced a series of cutting-edge advancements designed to enhance New Zealand's anti-scam initiatives, focusing on both innovative mitigation strategies and robust international partnerships.

In continued efforts to disrupt the scammer network, Netsafe is bringing back [ReScam.org](https://www.rescam.org), a cutting-edge AI tool designed to waste scammers time so they can't target their next victims.

This innovative technology leverages the latest artificial intelligence measures to disrupt potential scams. It also educates users on the tactics used by cybercriminals in email scams.