

Reoffending patterns of Military-style Activity Camp graduates:
2015 update



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**Published**

September 2016

ISBN 978-0-947513-31-3 (online)

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# Key findings

This report describes changes in the offending outcomes observed for 79 young people who between October 2010 and December 2013 graduated from 11 Military-style Activity Camps (MACs) held at Te Puna Wai ō Tuhinapo youth justice residence in Christchurch. All of these young people had a post-MAC follow-up period of at least 12 months so their follow-up offending could be observed.

Caution must be taken in interpreting reoffending outcomes as they are not always a measure of the effectiveness of an intervention alone. For example, some people may reoffend less often simply due to the fact that they were caught by the Police and made to account for their actions, regardless of the particular intervention applied.

Offending outcomes observed for the MAC graduates included:

* Eleven (14%) of the 79 young people did not reoffend (ie they did not come to the attention of Police with a new offence) in the 12 months after exiting the residence.
* Sixty (76%) of the 79 young people offended less often, and 62 (78%) reduced the seriousness of their offending in the 12 months after the MACs compared with the 12 months before.
* Theft and burglary were the most common offences committed by the young people. Overall, in the 12 months after the MACs, these offences reduced by 43% and 57% respectively compared to the 12 months prior.
* Violent offending by the 79 young people reduced by 54% in the 12 months after the MACs compared with the 12 months before.
* While the majority of young people reduced the frequency and seriousness of their offending, around one-fifth of MAC graduates increased the frequency and/or seriousness of their offending after the MACs.
* Twenty-four (30%) of the 79 young people were imprisoned or received a new Supervision with Residence (SwR) order in the 12 months after completing a MAC. This rate was higher for Europeans than Māori, although due to small numbers, this result needs to be treated with caution.

### Further research

The reoffending outcomes observed for MAC graduates appear very similar to those for all young people who have received SwR orders. However, to test differences, a robust statistical approach such as a matched comparison analysis is required. Such an analysis was not in scope for this report, but could usefully be undertaken in the future.

Some of the MAC graduates spent time out of the community on custodial remand or subject to custodial orders/sentences which may have had some effect on their rates of offending. The feasibility of calculating an adjusted reoffending rate that reflects actual time spent in the community could usefully be investigated in the future.

# Introduction

This report describes changes in the offending outcomes observed for 79 young people who graduated from 11 Military-style Activity Camps (MACs) held between October 2010 and December 2013 at Te Puna Wai ō Tuhinapo youth justice residence in Christchurch. These young people had at least a 12 month post-release period so their follow-up offending could be observed.

Multiple measures of recidivism are presented, as a single measure of whether young people did or did not reoffend provides an incomplete picture. It is also useful to look at the proportion of individuals who reduced the frequency or seriousness of their offending, and the proportion of those who reoffended whose offending and other circumstances were serious enough to warrant a custodial sentence or order.

Caution must be taken in interpreting reoffending outcomes as they are not always a measure of the effectiveness of an intervention alone. For example, some people may reoffend less often simply due to the fact that they were caught by the Police and made to account for their actions, regardless of the particular intervention applied. There may also be a general effect from the person aging and maturing.

The analysis excluded 15 young people who commenced, but did not complete, the MACs examined in this report. On-going disruptive behaviour, lack of engagement or effort, or physical/verbal abuse toward staff or other participants were often the reasons behind young people being removed from, or not graduating, the programme.

### What is the MAC programme?

The MAC programme was introduced as part of a Fresh Start package of reforms in October 2010. MACs are intended to target the most serious and repeat young offenders, and are undertaken as part of a Supervision with Residence (SwR) order.

The MAC programme is a partnership between Child, Youth and Family (CYF) and the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF). It aims to reinforce self-discipline, personal responsibility and community values, while also helping to address the underlying causes of offending for the young people. The programme involves two phases:

* a nine-week residential-based phase that includes a wilderness camp run jointly by the NZDF and residence staff, a structured residence-based programme including therapeutic and educational interventions (including literacy and numeracy skills) targeting criminogenic needs[[1]](#footnote-1), and drug and alcohol treatment
* a community-based phase where a social services provider will continue to offer support for up to 12 months, to help the young person as they settle back into the community.

As the MAC programme is intended to target the most serious and repeat young offenders, one of the outcome measures for the MACs is to assess the extent to which there was a reduction in offending by graduates after the programme – in particular, the frequency and seriousness of offending. The extent of change in any other outcomes sought by the MAC programme (such as improved literacy or numeracy skills) is not able to be measured from the administrative data held.

The results from an evaluation of the MAC programme was published by MSD in September 2013 and can be retrieved from the MSD website.[[2]](#footnote-2)

# Methodology

All analyses provided in this report were produced by Insights MSD, Ministry of Social Development, using CYF and New Zealand Police (Police) data. A brief description of the data utilised and the analysis undertaken is provided below, with more detail shown in Appendix A.

### Data sources and analysis

Information on the individuals who participated in the MACs held between October 2010 and December 2013 was provided to Insights MSD by Residential and High Needs Services, CYF. Information on their release dates from residence was sourced from CYRAS.[[3]](#footnote-3)

Police provided offence occurrence data for each person which represents a history of offending recorded by Police from July 2005 to the date of extract. Of course, not all offences are reported to or discovered by Police, and not all perpetrators are identified and apprehended, so this offending data is an undercount of actual levels of offending by some individuals.

An offence occurrence is recorded by Police against a person when they believe that an offence has taken place and that this person is responsible for the offence. It does not necessarily result in a charge being laid in court, or imply that the offence has been proven in any formal way. Due to the nature of the Police data, the reoffending rates presented in this report are likely to be higher than those reported in other youth justice research using different measures such as arrests, prosecutions or convictions. In New Zealand, using these latter measures of reoffending would give only a partial view of changes in children and young peoples’ offending patterns.

Offending is examined for the 12 months prior to the MACs, and for the 12 months after release from residence. Further details can be found in Appendix A.

Changes in the seriousness of offending were examined using the Justice Sector Seriousness Scale produced by the Ministry of Justice. Appendix A provides a discussion on measuring seriousness scores and the associated error variance.

### Cautionary notes

As in any reoffending analysis, patterns of offending can be affected by court orders or sentences which remove the person from the community, and therefore restrict opportunities to offend. For young people this includes SwR orders, prison sentences, and periods in custodial remand. This is particularly an issue when examining offending patterns for “serious” offenders (such as those who participate in MACs) who are more likely than other groups to be remanded in custody or receive high-end court tariffs.

In addition, individuals who emigrate overseas will appear as having committed no offences during the periods they are not in New Zealand.

These periods spent out of the community can occur both before and after the intervention being examined. The feasibility of calculating an adjusted reoffending rate that reflects actual time spent in the community could usefully be investigated in the future.

# MAC graduates reoffending patterns

A total of 79 young males who graduated from the 11 MACs examined in this report had a follow-up period of at least 12 months. Of the 79 young people:

* 54% (43) were Māori, 25% (20) were European, 15% (12) were Pacific people and 5% (4) belonged to other ethnic groups
* the average age at first recorded offence was 11.6 years (ranging from 6.6 to 15.7 years)
* the average number of years between the first recorded offence and beginning the SwR order was 4.7 (ranging from 0.5 to 9.4 years)
* the average age at the start of the order was 16.3 years (ranging from 15 to 17.3 years)
* the average number of days between graduating the MAC programme and exiting the residence was 27 (ranging from 0 to 126 days), with 34% (27) of the young people exiting within one week of graduating the MAC.

### **Reoffending rate**

Half of the MAC graduates had come to the attention of Police with a new offence within four months of exiting the residence (Figure 1). Within six months, 66% of the graduates had reoffended. Within 12 months, 86% had reoffended. There was little difference in the reoffending rate of Māori and European graduates after 12 months (86% and 85%, respectively). However, Māori were initially slower to reoffend than Europeans. After 70 days, half (50%) of European graduates had reoffended compared with 33% of Māori graduates.

**Figure 1: Percentage of MAC graduates who reoffended within 12 months after exiting the residence**

Frequency and seriousness of offending

Overall, there was an increase in the average frequency and seriousness of offending leading up to the MACs, followed by a reduction in both measures after graduates exited the residences (Figures 2 and 3). Over the 12 months since completing a MAC, the average number of offences committed by graduates was 8.2 (ranging from 0 to 28). This is a reduction of 47% from the average of 15.6 offences over the 12 months before the MAC (ranging from 2 to 44). The average seriousness of all the offences committed in the 12 months before the MACs was 2,871, this fell by 57% to 1,221 in the 12 months following the MACs.

**Figure 2: Average frequency of offences dealt with by Police before and after graduates attended MACs**



**Figure 3: Average total seriousness of offences dealt with by Police before and after graduates attended MACs**



The majority of the decrease in the number of offences committed by graduates in the 12 months following the MACs was due to large drops in burglary and theft-related offences (Figure 4). Overall, theft-related offences reduced by 43%, burglary offences reduced by 57% and violent offending (including injury causing acts; robbery-related; and abduction & harassment offences) reduced by 54% in the 12 months after the MACs.

**Figure 4: Change in the total frequency of offences committed by MAC graduates, by ANZSOC offence division**[[4]](#footnote-4)

**Figure 5: Percentage of MAC graduates who committed one or more of the ANZSOC offence divisions**

While there was an overall drop in the frequency of offending, the small number of fraud & deception offences increased a little in the 12 months following the MACs.

For many of the common offence types, the number of offences reduced substantially more than the percentage of recipients committing these offences (Figure 5). This suggests that some high frequency offenders are committing fewer offences after the MACs but are not stopping their offending completely.

### Overall outcomes in the 12 months after completing the order

Table 1 compares offending patterns in the 12 months after the MACs with the 12 months before the MACs. In the 12 months after:

* 14% (11) of the 79 young people did not reoffend at all
* 76% (60) of the young people offended less often (including the 11 who did not reoffend[[5]](#footnote-5)), while 19% (15) offended more often and 5% (4) offended at the same rate as before
* 78% (62) of the young people reduced the total seriousness of their offending, while 20% (16) committed more serious offences, and one person’s total seriousness of offending remained the same
* 71% (56) of the young people reduced the seriousness of their most serious offence, while 22% (17) committed a more serious offence and 8% (6) committed an offence of the same seriousness
* there was little difference between Māori and European graduates in the first three outcomes, however more Māori (81%) reduced the seriousness of their most serious offence compared with Europeans (60%). The differences in outcomes between ethnic groups should, however, be treated with caution due to the small number of graduates in each group and the differences in ethnicity proportions between the MACs.

Table 1: Outcome reductions 12 months after attending a MAC compared to 12 months before, by ethnicity

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Outcome** | **European**(n = 20) | **Māori**(n = 43) | **Overall**(n = 79) |
| Did not reoffend | 15% (3) | 14% (6) | 14% (11) |
| Reduced frequency of offending | 80% (16) | 79% (34) | 76% (60) |
| Reduced total seriousness of offending | 85% (17) | 77% (33) | 78% (62) |
| Reduced seriousness of most serious offence | 60% (12) | 81% (35) | 71% (56) |
| Received a custodial sentence[[6]](#footnote-6) | 45% (9) | 23% (10) | 30% (24) |

In the 12 months after the MACs, 19% (15) of the 79 young people were imprisoned, and 11% (9) received a new SwR order. Overall, the post-MAC custodial sentence rate was 30%, with the figures being 45% for Europeans and 23% for Māori. Again, caution should be taken with these figures due to small numbers in these cohorts. Eight of the 24 young people who received a new custodial sentence were graduates of MAC One, with lower numbers coming from each of the subsequent MACs.

Of the 24 young people who received a custodial sentence, 18 were among those who had a lower frequency and/or seriousness of offending after completing the MAC. The periods that they were removed from the community due to these sentences may have contributed to their lower post-intervention offending rate.

Table 2 shows that outcomes for the graduates from the MACs held in 2013 appear to be less positive than those of graduates from MACs held in 2012, although because of small numbers these differences need to be viewed with caution.

Table 2: Outcomes 12 months after completing MACs, by year held

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Year MAC held | N | Did not reoffend | Reduced frequency of offending | Reduced total seriousness of offending | Reduced seriousness of most serious offence | Received a custodial sentence |
| 2011 | 27 | 11% | 81% | 70% | 67% | 41% |
| 2012 | 30 | 23% | 77% | 90% | 80% | 17% |
| 2013 | 22 | 5% | 68% | 73% | 64% | 36% |
| Combined | 79 | 14% | 76% | 78% | 71% | 30% |

### Further research

The reoffending outcomes seen in Table 1 for MAC graduates appear very similar to those seen for all young people who have received SwR orders.[[7]](#footnote-7) However caution must be taken with such a comparison, as measuring the impact of the MAC relative to SwR would require a robust statistical approach such as a matched comparison analysis. This could usefully be undertaken in the future.

Some of the MAC graduates spent time out of the community on custodial remand or subject to custodial orders which may have had some effect on their rates of offending. The feasibility of calculating adjusted reoffending rates that reflect actual time spent in the community could usefully be investigated.

# Appendix A: Measuring reoffending

Information on the individuals who participated in the MACs held between October 2010 and December 2013 was provided to Insights MSD by Residential and High Needs Services, CYF. Information on their release dates from residence was sourced from CYRAS.[[8]](#footnote-8)

### Estimating offending patterns

Police extracted occurrence data from the National Intelligence Application (NIA) on 3 March 2015 for the MAC graduates.[[9]](#footnote-9) Occurrence data represents a history of contact with Police dating back to July 2005. Before this time, the data is less reliable as it was not compulsory for such data to be entered in NIA. An occurrence can be either an offence that is believed to have taken place or an incident where there is Police contact that is not offence-related, eg a truant episode. Incidents (including breaches of Police bail) are excluded from our analyses in this report.

An offence occurrence does not necessarily result in a charge being laid in court, or imply that the offence has been proven in any formal way, although proceeding by diversionary approaches such as Police Alternative Action first requires an admission of guilt by the young person. Offence occurrences provide a more consistent measure of offending patterns than court outcomes data for young people, given a large proportion of offences are diverted from prosecution (eg around 70% in 2013/14 for 14–16 year olds).

The date the offence was committed was used to assign each offence to the period before or after a MAC.

Police also extracted court outcomes data of young people who had been imprisoned (including home detention) in the District or High Courts since their intervention. This, together with SwR information from CYRAS[[10]](#footnote-10), allows us to calculate a post-MAC custodial sentence rate.

When examining reoffending, rather than having a single binary measure of whether the individual did or did not reoffend, it is useful to calculate multiple recidivism measures to better understand how offending patterns have changed for the cohort of interest.

Figure 1 presents information on the reoffending rate for the MAC graduates. This is the time until they committed their first offence upon exiting residence. Information is presented in terms of the cumulative proportion of all MAC graduates who had reoffended at each point in time over the 12 months since exiting residence.

For the analyses in Figures 2 and 3, frequency of offence counts and total seriousness scores were calculated for each six-month period before and after the MACs for each individual, and then were averaged across the members of each MAC cohort.

For the analyses in Tables 1 and 2, offending in the 12 months before the MAC was compared to offending in the 12 months after the MAC for each individual, and then the proportion of individuals in the total sample who had particular outcomes was calculated. This includes the proportion who did not reoffend, the proportions who reduced the frequency or seriousness of their offending, and the proportion who reoffended and received a custodial sentence.

***Should some offences be excluded?***

Recidivism analyses take many forms, and it is not uncommon for certain types of offences to be excluded from such analyses. For example, breaching the conditions of a court order may be excluded as this is not really new offending. In other cases, certain types of minor offences may be excluded from measures, particularly if the intervention is at the more serious end of the spectrum, so the person is not regarded as a reoffender if they only commit a minor offence. In New Zealand, for example, the Department of Corrections calculates ‘reconviction’ rates for people who receive community-based or custodial sentences that they administer. These reconviction rates exclude any convictions that do not result in a new sentence back to the Department.

In this report, minor traffic offences and some minor non-traffic offences for which an infringement notice can be issued were excluded from the analyses. This was to avoid categorising young people as having reoffended if these were the only offences committed. Traffic offences excluded covered the following ANZSOC offence groups: regulatory driving offences, driving without a licence, driver licence related offences, registration offences, road worthiness offences, pedestrian offences, parking offences and exceeding the legal speed limit.[[11]](#footnote-11) Non-traffic infringement offences excluded were: breaching a local liquor ban, liquor-related offences involving minors, and littering.

The impact of excluding some minor offences is very small. For example, of the ‘overall’ figures seen in Table 1, four of the five figures would be exactly the same if all offences were included, and the other figure would differ by only 1%.

### Measuring offence seriousness

The Justice Sector Seriousness Scale was developed by the Ministry of Justice as a way of comparing the seriousness of different types of offences based on actual court sentencing data. A seriousness score of 200 for an offence implies that, on average, the courts impose sentences that are twice as severe as those imposed on an offence with a score of 100. However caution is required with this interpretation as the way in which scores are calculated means there is sizable variance in some averages, particularly for offences of ‘moderate’ seriousness where the types and lengths of sentences imposed can vary considerably.[[12]](#footnote-12)

In this report, total seriousness scores are calculated for a period of interest before the MACs, and compared to total seriousness scores after the MACs. For example, if a young person committed one of each of the offences shown in Table A1 in a period of interest, their total seriousness score would be 783.8.

Table A1: Examples of offence seriousness scores

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Offence | Seriousness score |
| Robbery (by assault) | 379.1 |
| Shoplifts (estimated value of goods <$500) | 15.2 |
| Wilful damage | 9.5 |
| Burglary (estimated value of goods $500 to $5,000) | 380.0 |
| Total | 783.8 |

Seriousness scores are a statistical representation of the average number of days of imprisonment imposed by the courts for each offence. Statistical equivalences are used for people who receive community-based sentences or fines. Because of the rather convoluted methodology, it is not possible to calculate error variances for the seriousness scores. However, because it needs to be acknowledged that the raw seriousness scores and therefore summary values calculated from them have error variance, it was decided to use a 5% margin of error around total seriousness scores when comparing the pre-intervention period with the post-intervention period. In effect this means that total seriousness scores need to differ by more than 10% to be considered different.

The Justice Sector Seriousness Scale is developed from District and High Court sentencing data relating to adults. While there could be debate over the applicability of the scale to offending by young people, developing a similar scale based on the diverse range of ways in which cases are dealt with in the Youth Justice system would be problematic. In any case, the interest in seriousness scores is primarily in terms of assessing relative changes rather than in the absolute value of the scores.

# Appendix B: ANZSOC offence divisions

The most common types of offences committed by MAC graduates in the 12 months either side of the MACs are shown in the table below for each ANZSOC offence division.[[13]](#footnote-13)

Table B1: Examples of offences by young people within each ANZSOC offence division

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| ANZSOC Offence Division | Shortened name | Most common offences for MAC graduates |
| Homicide and related offences | Homicide-related | No such offences committed by the MAC graduates in the 12 months before or after |
| Acts intended to cause injury | Injury causing acts | All minor, serious and grievous assaults with around half of such offences involving common assault |
| Sexual assault and related offences | Sexual | Indecent assault; unlawful sexual connection; doing an indecent act; rape |
| Dangerous or negligent acts endangering persons | Dangerous acts | Reckless, dangerous or careless driving; sustained loss of traction |
| Abduction, harassment and other offences against the person | Abduction & harassment | Threatening behaviour or acts; kidnapping; criminal harassment |
| Robbery, extortion and related offences | Robbery-related | Aggravated robbery; robbery; demands to steal; assault with intent to rob |
| Unlawful entry with intent/burglary, break and enter | Burglary | Burglary |
| Theft and related offences | Theft-related | All types of theft (with shoplifting being the most common); unlawfully takes or gets into a motor vehicle; receiving stolen property |
| Fraud, deception and related offences | Fraud & deception | Take, obtain or use a document or credit card for pecuniary advantage; obtain by deception |
| Illicit drug offences | Illicit drugs | Possess cannabis or drug-related utensils; deal in cannabis; cultivate cannabis |
| Prohibited and regulated weapons and explosives offences | Weapons-related | Possess offensive weapon or knife in a public place; possess or carry firearm or other restricted weapon; reckless discharge of firearm |
| Property damage and environmental pollution | Property damage | Wilful damage including graffiti-related offences; unlawfully interfere with motor vehicles; arson; intentional damage |
| Public order offences | Public order | Wilful trespass; unlawfully in an enclosed yard, area or building; disorderly behaviour; fighting in a public place; breach of local liquor ban; possessing instruments for car conversion |
| Traffic and vehicle regulatory offences1 | Traffic | Unlicensed driver; failing to stop; driving while disqualified; driving with excess alcohol (not involving death or injury) |
| Offences against government procedures, government security and government operations | Against justice | Escaping lawful custody; resisting Police; breach of court-imposed bail; obstruct/hinder Police; failing to furnish their own name and address |
| Miscellaneous offences | Miscellaneous | Various other offences not included in the categories above. Not reported in graphs as not enough offences. |

Note:

1. Note the discussion in Appendix A regarding some minor traffic offences being excluded from analyses.



1. Attributes of offenders that are directly linked to criminal behaviour. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <http://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/evaluation/military-style-activity-camp/index.html>. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. CYRAS is the Child, Youth and Family case management recording system, managed by MSD. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Refer to Table B1 in Appendix B for examples of the most common offences committed by MAC participants within each of the Australian and New Zealand Standard Offence Classification (ANZSOC) offence divisions. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. In other words, of the 76% who reduced their frequency of offending, 14% did not reoffend at all, and 62% did reoffend, but committed fewer offences afterwards. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Sentence of imprisonment or SwR. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. See: Insights MSD (2015). *Offending patterns for recipients of Youth Court supervision orders: 2015 update*. Ministry of Social Development, Wellington, New Zealand. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. CYRAS is the Child, Youth and Family case management recording system, managed by MSD. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Data are shared for statistical and research purposes under a Memorandum of Understanding between the two agencies. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. CYRAS is the Child, Youth, Residences and Adoption System database and case management recording system, managed by MSD. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. The majority of minor traffic offences excluded involved an unlicensed driver failing to comply with a prohibition, or a driver failing to stop for the flashing lights on a police car. Police offence codes that indicated that a motor vehicle was impounded were excluded from analyses as these are present in the data for statistical purposes only. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. For more information on the Scale see: <http://www.justice.govt.nz/justice-sector/statistics/justice-sector-working-papers/justice-sector-offence-seriousness-score-faq>. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Offences are categorised by the Australian and New Zealand Standard Offence Classification (ANZSOC), 2011. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)