

# Alcohol blamed for rising violent crime

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## **Police have issued warnings on the abuse of alcohol after sharp increases in violent crime across South Island regions.**

Police statistics released yesterday showed Nelson Bays had a 5 per cent rise in recorded crime last year, with a significant increase in violence.

Area commander Inspector Brian McGurk said Nelson Bays had problems with street violence and disorder, particularly in Nelson's central business district.

Overall recorded offences increased by 400 to 8410, with violent crime up 27%.

Family violence accounted for 37% of all recorded violence in the area, including a 48% rise in the number of domestic assaults.

McGurk said society was less tolerant of domestic violence, which was being reported more often to police.

On the West Coast, violent crime has increased for a second year, from 420 offences to 469.

Acting area commander Senior Sergeant John Price said the proportion of violent offending that had alcohol as a factor was a concern for residents.

Violence offences have gone up 14% in Marlborough, but the region had a 2% decrease in recorded crime, along with a 1% population rise.

Area commander Inspector Steve Caldwell was pleased with Marlborough's 60% crime resolution rate, one of the highest in the country.

West Coast's resolution rate is 56.8% and Nelson Bays' 53.8%.

In the Otago rural police area, which covers Queenstown Lakes, Central Otago and Waitaki District Council areas, overall recorded crime dropped 9.4%, although violent crime was up 21% from 128 to 734 offences.

Grievous assaults had more than doubled to 89.

"These crimes are almost without exception alcohol-fuelled and are a blight on our towns," area commander Inspector Phil Jones said.

He hoped a reduction in Queenstown liquor licensing hours and proposed liquor bans in Queenstown and Alexandra would help reduce the problem this year.

<http://stuff.co.nz/thepress/4459985a24035.html>