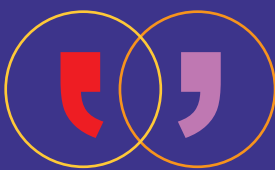


The
Workshop

How to Talk About Crime and Justice

A Guide



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In collaboration with:

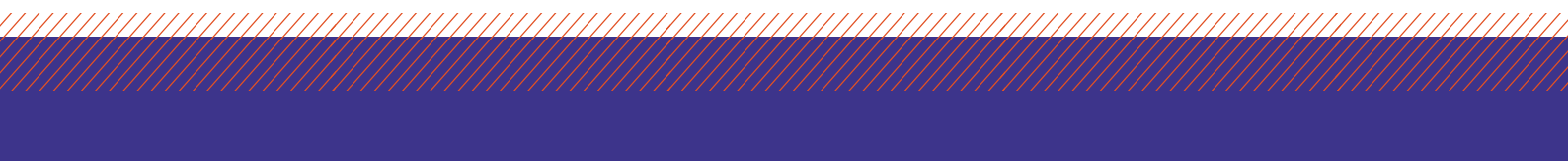


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About this guide

This guide is designed for technical experts, communicators and advocates working to deliver justice reform solutions that will improve wellbeing for people and communities in Aotearoa New Zealand.

The purpose of the guide is to help us all use more effective strategies to:

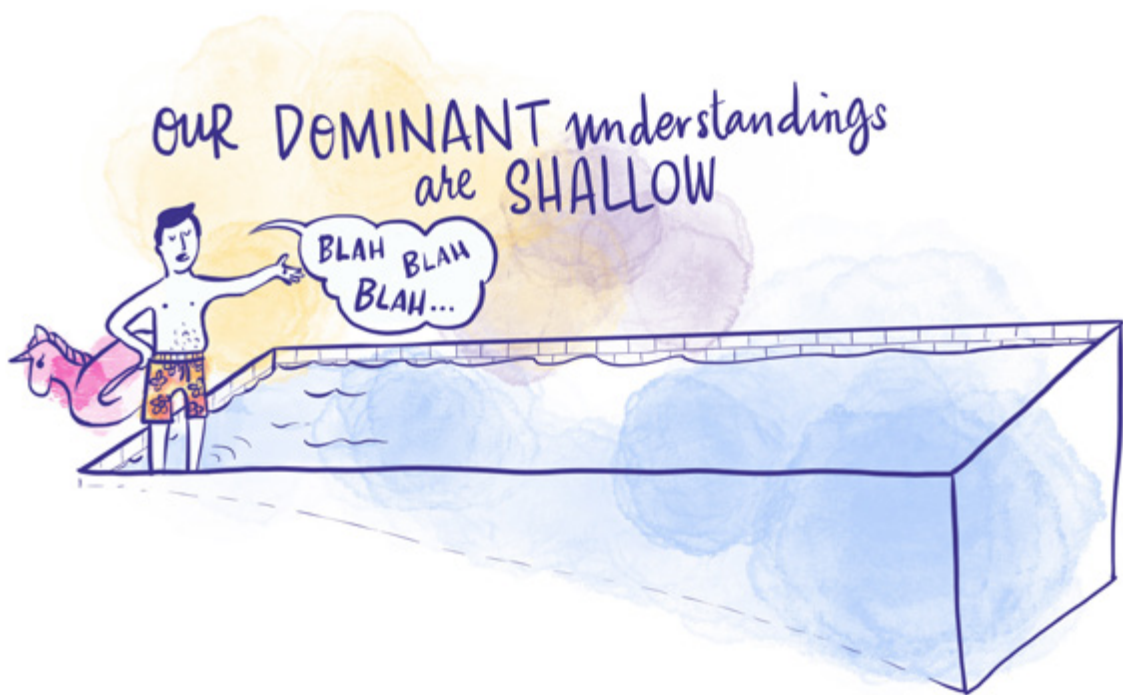
- improve people's understanding, based on best evidence, of why we need a shift in crime and justice policy away from reactive punishment and incarceration and towards prevention, rehabilitation and restoration
- help people designing and leading that shift to have better conversations with the public
- motivate people to act in support of these shifts.

Why we need a message guide on crime and justice reform

Many barriers prevent the adoption of a more effective, just and compassionate criminal justice system. One significant barrier is what the public believe about why people commit crime and how society should respond (sometimes known as mental models). Politicians are led by public support and demand for new solutions. Public demand, and the mental models that it flows from, are influenced by dominant cultural understandings about people, crime and the criminal justice system.

When the prevailing shared cultural stories about crime and justice issues are too shallow or unproductive, it makes it hard to build support for more effective, but complex, approaches. For example, one strong cultural narrative to emerge in this research is the belief that people commit crime after weighing up the costs and benefits of a criminal action (the rational actor model). Where this narrative is dominant, it follows that there is also public support for solutions to crime that increase the costs to individuals (i.e. harsher punishments).

It is often assumed that if we set out the facts and evidence about crime and the criminal justice system people will develop a deeper understanding of the issues and make decisions in the context of this new information. This assumption is based on the belief that the barrier to deeper understanding is a lack of information. Unfortunately, this strategy has been shown by scientists to be ineffective for building deeper understandings of complex issues, especially when working with the wider public.



.....

Both our in-built cognitive processes and our cultural and information environment influence how shallow or deep our thinking is about complex issues such as crime and justice.

- Daniel Kahneman coined the term “thinking fast” to explain the many mental shortcuts we use to reduce the work of assessing the vast amount of information we are exposed to. These mental shortcuts:
 - » protect our existing beliefs and knowledge.
 - » encourage us to grasp the concrete (what we see, touch, smell and hear) and shy away from the abstract (unseen systems and structures, even professionals, that impact our day-to-day lives).
- At the same time, the digital age has brought new, faster and more targeted ways for us to be exposed to unproductive and shallow explanations and narratives about complex systems issues.
- If people have shallow beliefs about issues and our fast-thinking defaults to protect them, while shying away from complexity, it makes it hard to have productive public conversations about systemic change.
- As knowledge holders and communicators on crime and justice issues, we play our part:
 - » We draw on the information deficit model of communication, or we focus on compelling personal stories.
 - » In doing so we can inadvertently surface existing unproductive narratives, instead of navigating around them and developing new narratives.

What does this mean for building public support for criminal justice reform?

- Building support for effective solutions that require systems change involves dealing with often invisible public narratives and mental models.
- While dominant narratives and the mental models they feed into may be unhelpful, other narratives and mental models exist (or can be developed) that can be built upon with well researched strategies.
- Rebalancing public narratives and the mental models they inform has been proven to deepen people’s understandings on complex issues.
- This change happens over time when strategic communication is used across a field of practice.

Research shows if narratives change in this way over time and, for example, crime is understood in the context of systems, structures, inequality, racism and lack of opportunity, the public’s appetite for new solutions can also change.

Examples of unhelpful and helpful narratives on crime

In the first part of this project, The Workshop and JustSpeak researched expert and public narratives about crime and justice in New Zealand. Here are some examples of unhelpful and helpful public narratives about crime and justice from our research findings.

Topic	Unhelpful, dominant narratives	More helpful, recessive narratives
Causes of crime	<p>Rational actor: people commit crime because the rewards are greater than the risks or costs.</p> <p>Human nature: some people are ‘just bad’, people are greedy or selfish.</p>	<p>Disadvantage, challenging circumstances, economic need, social disconnection and a sense of hopelessness or lack of purpose.</p> <p>Culture of crime: people are born, raised or socialised in environments where crime is normal.</p> <p>Diminished capacity: including drug and alcohol addictions, mental health issues or neurodisabilities.</p>
Purpose of justice system	Punishment, public safety and maintaining social order.	Reducing reoffending, rehabilitation, needs of victims.
Alternatives to prison	<p>In-system alternatives like community-based sentences for minor crimes.</p> <p>Harsher sentences to deter crime.</p>	<p>Alternatives outside the justice system like more mental health and addiction services, and more social services to prevent crime, i.e. welfare, education, care and protection.</p> <p>Restorative justice.</p>

Moving from individual behaviour to supportive systems and structures

At the heart of this project is a shared desire to create a more compassionate and pragmatic response to crime in our communities across Aotearoa New Zealand. Increasing public support for the policy, law and practice changes that we need to make that vision a reality requires:

- significant changes not only to our existing justice system but also to the wider system of community and social support
- moving people's understandings (and associated narratives) away from individual behaviour as the cause of and solution to crime
- lifting people's gaze to understand how wider systems and structures impact different people and influence their likelihood to get swept into the justice system and why we need to change them.



How we created this guide — a summary

As part of a collaboration with JustSpeak, The Workshop undertook research to identify messages that could:

- improve the New Zealand public's understanding of the causes of crime;
- improve understanding of the effectiveness of various policy responses to crime;
- influence attitudes about punishment, rehabilitation and forgiveness; and
- increase support for evidence-based policy and legal responses to crime.

We developed and tested seven messages based on The Workshop’s evidence-led principles for effective communication and our primary research into existing public and expert narratives about crime and justice in Aotearoa New Zealand. For more on this research see our earlier report [Expert and Public Narratives on Crime in New Zealand](#) and the [short message guide based on that research](#).

We used a rigorous methodology to test the effect of these messages. Specifically, we used a randomised control trial. This involved allocating a representative sample of New Zealanders (3,200 people from an existing research panel) to hear one of the seven messages or no message at all (a control).

We wanted to find out whether each message was better, the same or worse than no message at all at helping people think more productively about crime and justice. We tested whether each message had an effect on key attitudes about crime and willingness to act in support of justice reform. We compared this to receiving no message, where people would draw on their existing beliefs and ideas about crime and justice.

Limits of our testing

Our research was limited to testing seven messages in total. For pragmatic reasons we combined a number of different message components into one message, for example, a value and a metaphor. We then examined how the entire message influenced people’s thinking. While some of the entire messages we tested were less effective, if we had tested their component parts separately we may have found different results. For example, we combined the ‘dead end’ metaphor with the ‘national progress’ value, and while that message was not as effective as some of the others we tested, the individual components may have been.

For this reason, we have included in this message guide some of those metaphors and values which, when individually tested in studies in the US and UK, were found to be effective. Our top recommendation is to use the messages and message elements that performed best in our New Zealand tests. But communicators may want to trial these message elements that performed well elsewhere.

More information about the methodology is set out in the appendix. This message guide sets out the findings of this research.

What we found — a summary

Generally, all of the messages we tested were constructed in a way that our previous research suggested would shift people in some progressive way. And we did find that these messages could potentially help move people in more progressive directions on a range of issues including:

- ➔ Forgiveness (moved people in the direction of needing more forgiveness in our justice system)
- ➔ Hard labour (moved people away from thinking that hard labour is a good policy)

- Systemic racism (moved people towards understanding that more Māori in prison means there is something wrong with the system).

Some of the messages worked better to shift certain attitudes about crime and some worked better with different audiences. So while all of the tested messages are useful, we do have some specific advice on which to use for specific purposes, and which to avoid despite its ability to shift attitudes.

Summary of our recommendations

These are our recommendations based on the findings:

- Start with a vision about preventing crime and restoring community wellbeing. People take a number of cognitive shortcuts that make it difficult for them to conceptualise systems and structural change and think change is possible. Describe the better future that we want for people and communities in concrete terms to help orient people to deeper ways of thinking. Starting with a positive vision is an effective strategy.



- Use collective values like pragmatism, benevolence and solving shared problems.
- A growing body of research shows we need to engage all people with our shared, helpful values. Pragmatic problem solving and benevolence were the values that moved people's attitudes in this research.
- Use a small set of facts about racial inequity to help explain systemic racism.

- When we just use facts about the outcomes of systemic racism (e.g. data about a disproportionate number of Māori in prison) we encounter two problems. Firstly, a fact about an outcome doesn't give an explanation about how that outcome was caused. People will fill in that gap with dominant mental models and narratives about what caused the problem and, in many cases, especially on a complex subject like systemic racism, those ideas will be wrong. Secondly, if we describe a problem without explaining how it was caused, it is hard for people to see how the problem could be solved. So we need to string together a set of facts that add up to an explanation about what caused the problem.
- Make it clear that people in politics are responsible for prevention of crime.
- Include an explanatory chain (a + b = c) about what causes crime, the impacts and the best solutions in New Zealand. This helps people think more productively about the causes of crime. Such explanations should come after the values and vision.

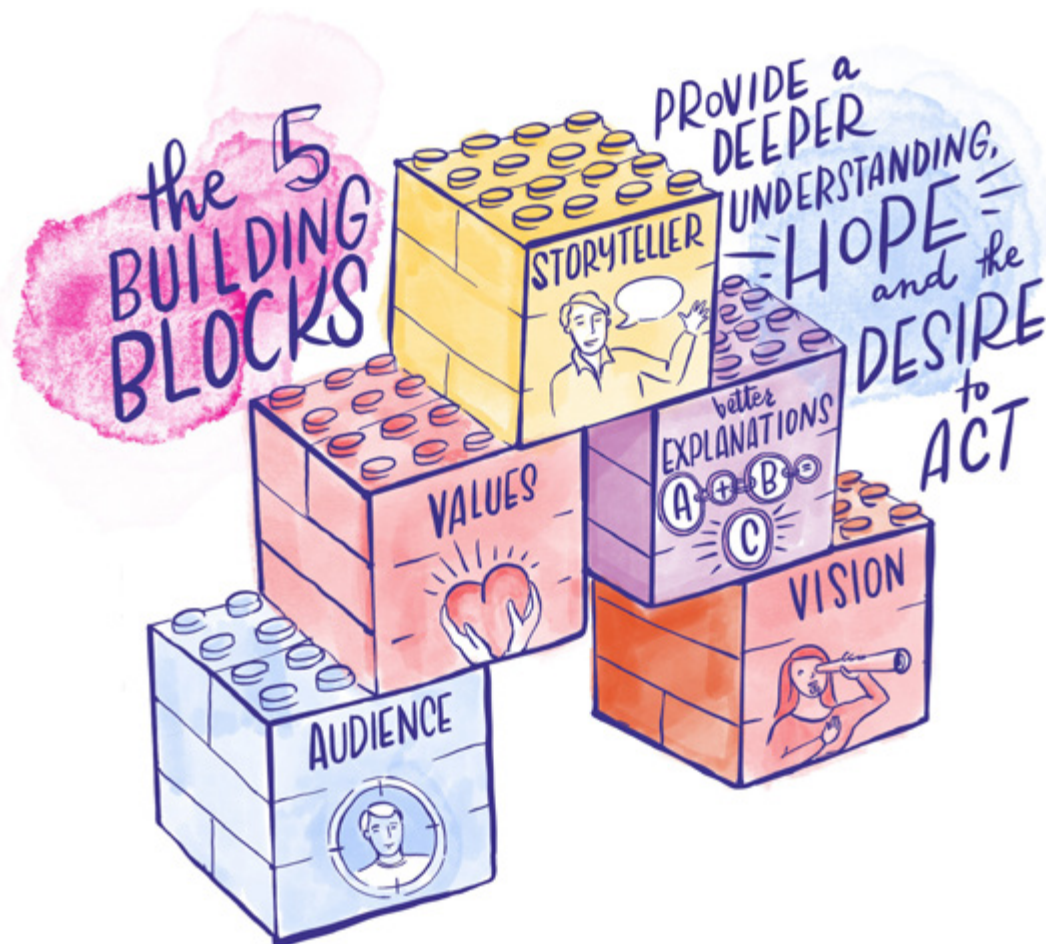


- People find it hard to imagine how issues like crime can be solved. Draw their attention to the humans whose actions have created and can solve the problems you describe. This helps people believe that change is possible and see how a solution like reforming the justice system could work.
- Use tested metaphors to help explain structural causes and responses to crime.
- The most effective messages we tested contained metaphors that had tested well in the US and UK – ‘justice maze’ and ‘justice gears’. We recommend using these metaphors.
- Don't just describe crime, use better explanations about how crime happens.
- Target attitudes about crime, and know some punitive views are lightly held.
- Political affiliation is not always a good proxy for attitudes about crime. People across the political spectrum can hold a range of existing beliefs and attitudes and may be more or less persuadable on issues like crime. We found, for example, that some people who held fairly punitive views came from across the political spectrum and were, nonetheless, persuaded by messages about taking a more forgiving approach to justice. People across the political spectrum care about community wellbeing and can be helped to think more productively about crime and justice.

The results showed that different messages can be more effective depending on the outcome being measured. These results are presented in detail below.

The five building blocks of strategic communication

At The Workshop, we have developed a framework to communicate in ways that help experts, communicators and advocates put evidence – whether that be from science, mātauranga Māori or lived experience – at the heart of decision making. We call this the five building blocks of strategic communication. The building blocks are based on research from multiple disciplines. We use these blocks to frame our findings and provide practical advice.



Building Block 1 — Audience: who you should communicate with



Generally speaking, there are three main groups of people to consider:

- » People who are already persuaded by your message (the base).
- » People who are firmly opposed to your message and unlikely to be persuaded.
- » People who don't have a fixed view or who have mixed and sometimes competing views on the issue (fence-sitters). This tends to be the majority of people.

General principles on knowing your audience:

- » Focus on finding effective ways to communicate with persuadable people.
- » Avoid using your time and resources on the firmly opposed. Focusing on those who are firmly opposed lends itself to **myth busting and negating** their arguments. This amplifies shallow explanations (see vision making and better explanations for more information).
- » Test your communications on people who are persuadable as well as your base.
- » Don't only test your communication on the base. They are already persuaded and will usually agree with and share any message – even ones that embed shallow thinking.
- » Don't measure the effectiveness of your communications by how the firmly opposed respond. Don't be afraid of messages that are unpopular with people who are fixed in their opposing views.
- » Effective strategic communications will activate your base and convince people who are open to persuasion.

Finding persuadable audiences on justice

Prior to randomised control testing of the messages all participants completed a small number of attitude questions about crime and justice issues. After giving the participants the messages, we explored the effect each message had on all participants as a single group. We also looked at how the message affected people based on their pre-message attitudes.

In general, in this kind of testing, we find people's attitudes on any issue fall into one of three groups:

- two groups who hold more extreme positions, at either end of the attitude spectrum
- one group who occupy a middle ground of attitudes, the 'fence-sitters'.

Generally speaking, we find the largest group are the fence-sitters. Based on existing research on how messaging works and on which people, we approach our testing with the assumption that these fence-sitters are most likely to be shifted by an effective message. Their attitudes are likely to be the least strongly held, as well as the least extreme.

In this research, we found something a little different:

- The fence-sitter group was of similar size to the group with less punitive views.
- More people than we would normally expect expressed more punitive and less evidence-based attitudes to crime and justice issues. It was the largest group in the study.
- However, these more extreme attitudes appeared to not be strongly held, as many messages were effective in shifting the attitudes of people in this group.

Justice, crime and punishment have been highly politicised and polarised issues in New Zealand. So it is not surprising that we found views on this issue were more polarised than on other issues we have researched (e.g. poverty).

Research also shows that using fear to engage people is a fast and easy way to build support for simple, militaristic and punitive solutions. Our review of public narratives on crime in New Zealand found that fear and security were amongst the most commonly engaged values. So it is also not surprising that we found a lot of people with more punitive views.

What might be surprising is our finding that some people who hold punitive views about crime and justice hold them lightly. This group of people were shifted to less punitive views after being exposed to some of our messages. This means we can recommend messages for you to use which may persuade people who hold their punitive views lightly.

Our persuadable audience, in this case, therefore includes people who hold punitive attitudes towards crime and justice, but who hold them lightly and are open to being persuaded by a carefully crafted message about evidence-led solutions.

Building Block 2 —Lead with a concrete vision for a better world



Lead your communications with a clear picture of the concrete ways in which the world could be better as a result of justice reform. This creates the cognitive conditions for people to positively consider the evidence and the wider changes needed to support justice reform.

Justice reform requires people to support significant changes to a deeply embedded system in New Zealand. People’s thinking tends to default to the status quo (this is called a ‘normalcy bias’). As such, it is hard for people to see how our justice system could be substantially different.

In the case of justice reform specifically, research in the UK and the USA found that when people were exposed to information about the problems in the justice system, they often responded with a sense of fatalism and hopelessness. They could see the problems, but they couldn’t see how things could be improved.

Starting your communication about justice reform with a vision helps people believe that change is possible.

Key principles of vision-making:

→ Start with the cake not the ingredients.

- » Build a vision of what our communities would look and feel like if our justice policies shifted to prevention, rehabilitation and restoration. What does that look and feel like for people’s day-to-day lives? Make it concrete and believable.
- » Lead visions with people-centred outcomes, not economic.
- » Envision the entire community. Do not talk about crime or justice policy in isolation. Include health, education, housing and other social services.

→ **Work in partnership and in relationship with mana whenua to build a vision for a justice system that embraces a positive Tiriti o Waitangi/ Treaty of Waitangi relationship.**

→ **Show credible human-driven pathways to achieving the vision.**

- » Name/identify the steps to achieve the vision.
- » Break the pathway from the present to the envisioned future down into steps that people can imagine happening. The more concrete your pathway to change, the easier it is for people to believe in it.
- » Put people in the picture. You can increase people's sense of control and agency if you clearly identify the people who can act to achieve the vision, e.g. people in government.
- » Name the people who created the problem or are preventing solutions. People lack understanding of how problems came about. They default to either individual choice or thinking it is natural.

→ **Focus on your story, not rubbishing theirs.**

- » Avoid myth busting and negating (e.g. 'it is not true that prisons prevent crime'). It amplifies unhelpful narratives and ways of thinking.
- » Stay on message with your story about the better future that is possible, the barriers standing in the way, and how those barriers can be removed.

Building Block 3 —Connecting with what matters to people: values



What are values and why do they matter in communications?

Values are core to effective communication about important and complex social issues because they lie at the heart of human motivations.

Values:

- are the 'why' of life – the things that are most important to us, or that we aspire to
- inform our beliefs, our attitudes and our actions, but don't always align with them
- inform how we come to believe certain things about crime ('people make rational choices to commit crime'), and
- influence what solutions we believe are needed ('more prisons').

People often talk about engaging with people's values to better communicate. However, people hold a very wide range of values, and often communicators misinterpret what values most people hold most dear. Our perceptions about what most people value most highly are often incorrect due to our dominant cultural narratives and discourse that surface values relating to wealth, success or protecting our in-groups.

Collective or intrinsic values

- Research shows that what most people aspire to is taking care of each other and the planet, discovery, creativity and reaching our own goals (also known as intrinsic and collective values).
- These are also the values that are most likely to motivate people to support changing our systems to achieve wellbeing.
- Emphasising these values, for example, could build support for a shift towards a more preventative and restorative approach to crime and justice reform.



Individualist or extrinsic values

- Unhelpfully, the values referred to most frequently in our media and advertising and politics are the values that lead us to think about how policies benefit us personally but not the collective.
- We can call these extrinsic or individualist values.
- These are the values of power, security and achievement and include making the case that money is the reason to care about or take action on a social issue.
- For example, when we say that the problem with prisons is that they are costly or when we compare the cost of imprisoning someone with the cost of providing preventive social services.



Why values matter in communicating about crime and justice

Values tell your audience why the issue that you are communicating about matters. If you engage an unhelpful value, even though you might increase your audience's interest in or concern about your issue, you may not build support for the systemic and collective solutions you know are needed.

If we tell people that the reason they should care about justice reform is because it could save money, we might build support for solutions that cut costs, but which don't address any of the problems we really want to solve. On the other hand, if we engage helpful, collective values like human potential we are not only increasing engagement and concern about the problem, we are also building support for solutions and changes that improve outcomes for people.

So at the very beginning of developing messages, it's important to get clear on why this issue matters and what value underpins the change you are proposing.

Mind the perception gap

Often we think we have to frame our communications with the values that matter to our audience, rather than the values that lie at the heart of our work. We might be clear that justice reform is needed in order to improve the wellbeing of people and communities. But we think we need to focus on cost-effectiveness or security because we believe those are the things that matter most to our audience.

The good news is research shows that the vast majority of people in New Zealand prioritise collective values like wellbeing, compassion and benevolence. But you are not alone if you assumed most people would care about cost-effectiveness and security. In fact, most of us overestimate how much other people care about individualist values, and underestimate how much they care about collective values. Researchers describe this as the ‘perception gap’. The majority of us care most about collective good, but we assume that we are in the minority.

As communicators, we need to be aware of this perception gap, and remind ourselves that the helpful, collective values that actually motivate our policy work (like solving shared problems and ensuring everyone can reach their potential) are also the values prioritised by most people in our audience. This is especially true when it comes to talking about crime and justice.

General advice on using values in your communication

Researchers suggest in strategic communication we:

- move away from using individualistic values to motivate people to find solutions to crime and justice reform
- avoid appealing solely to economic values like cost-effectiveness or value to the economy
- focus on shared intrinsic values like human potential to encourage people to act collectively as citizens
- appeal to people’s shared sense of community to inspire action
- avoid appealing solely to fear and guilt (e.g. the dangers of crime)
- explore different intrinsic values for different audiences.

Specific values to use when talking about crime and justice reform

In this research we tested a range of collective intrinsic values (including benevolence, national progress, human potential and pragmatism) and two individualist values (cost-effectiveness and security).

In our tests we found two helpful, collective values that had a positive impact on audience attitudes to justice reform. They are:

- Pragmatic problem solving
- Benevolence

Other values that might be useful:

- National progress
- Human potential

Value: Pragmatism / problem solving

This value communicates that it is important to solve our communities' problems by doing what works. Pragmatism values taking a 'common sense' approach, replacing approaches that don't work (like sending more people to prison) with 'proven alternatives'.



In studies, this value orientated people away from punishment as the primary function and goal of the criminal justice system. It helped people focus on the outcomes we want to achieve and on the need to consider these outcomes when thinking about how the system should work. People were then able to reason back from a set of desired outcomes to the ways the system should be structured.

Pragmatism also engendered a sense of optimism that problems can be overcome with common sense and careful, solutions-oriented planning. Research suggests this stems from its ability to overcome the public's strong sense of fatalism about criminal justice.

In one US study¹, pragmatism outperformed all other values, particularly in terms of assigning responsibility for causes of crime to systems over individuals. Pragmatism consistently elevated systems-level thinking and policy support. This is hard to do, so we incorporated this value into three of the messages we tested in New Zealand.

In our tests, the messages which engaged the value of pragmatic problem solving were effective at moving people to agree more with evidence-based explanations for the cause of crime, and to be more supportive of evidence-based responses to crime.

¹ [FrameWorks Institute. \(2013\). *Framing and facts: Necessary synergies in communicating about public safety and criminal justice.*](#)

Specifically, for example, two of the messages that engaged this pragmatic problem solving value increased our test audience's agreement with the need for forgiveness and second-chances in our criminal justice system.

Examples of what this value might look like in a message:

- Lately there has been a lot of talk about how **managing New Zealand's justice system more responsibly can improve people's lives**.
- **Instead of solving problems** caused by a lack of resources and services in many communities, our current justice system chooses to lock people up.
- **This system is so ineffective it is hurting all of us:** victims, families, communities, and the people who commit crime.
- **If we take a common-sense approach to solving our communities' problems**, we can improve all our lives.
- **Taking a common-sense approach to solving our communities' problems**, means politicians using different solutions to prevent, reduce and address crime.
- **We need the government to identify practical things to do** to ensure all communities in New Zealand have resources and opportunities they need.
- **The government needs to identify and fund practical things**, such as mental health services, drug treatment services, and restorative justice.
- **A responsible approach to justice, using proven alternatives** to prison, will help all New Zealanders get to where they need to go and improve the wellbeing of all our communities.

Value: Benevolence



In values research, benevolence is the term used to describe a group of values that emphasise the importance of caring for and supporting each other. These benevolence values are about preserving and strengthening others' wellbeing. Specific values associated with benevolence including helpfulness, forgiveness, friendship and responsibility.

Sometimes these values are expressed in terms of support, altruism and kindness. In a wide range of studies, engaging benevolence values has been shown to increase support for policies and actions directed towards collective wellbeing.

In our tests we incorporated aspects of the benevolence values into several of the messages we tested, using language that referred to collective responsibility, wellbeing and support. We also implicitly engaged the value of forgiveness. All of these messages performed well in terms of increasing agreement with statements that reflect both an evidence-based understanding of crime and approaches to reduce crime.

For example, a message which combined the benevolence value of helpfulness and kindness with an explanation of the social context in which crime occurs was effective in moving the test audience on several measures.

When researchers asked people the same questions before and after they were given this message, people were:

- more likely than before they were given the message to agree that forgiveness is needed in the justice system; and
- less likely than before they were given the message to agree that hard labour is an effective tool for reducing crime.

Examples of what this value might look like in a message:

Responsibility and well-being:

- Lately there has been a lot of talk about how **managing New Zealand's justice system more responsibly can improve the wellbeing of all our communities.**
- **A responsible approach to justice**, using proven alternatives to prison, will help all New Zealanders get to where they need to go and **improve the wellbeing of all our communities.**

Support and forgiveness:

- Instead of punishing people who are already suffering, **we should be doing everything we can to support them.**
- As a community, we need to support all communities who are doing it tough, and stop using prisons to punish people who have been denied the opportunities and resources they need to thrive.



Other possibly useful values

The following two values were not as effective at moving our audiences to be supportive of more evidence-based approaches in our research, though did have some small effects. However, they were shown to be helpful in building public understanding of and support for evidence-based policies and approaches to crime and justice in the UK and the US, so we think it is possible that they may still be useful. For more on the limits of our research, and why we think it is useful to include some of the findings of research carried out in other settings, see the section on ‘How we created this guide’ above.

So our top recommendation will always be to use the values that performed best in our New Zealand tests (pragmatic problem solving and benevolence values like support and forgiveness). But communicators may want to experiment with these additional values by combining them with the metaphors, causal chains and frames that performed well in our tests.

Value: National progress

This value communicates that progress is necessary for people in our country to have better lives. Specifically it talks about ‘modernising’ our justice system in order to progress together as a society. This value was shown in studies in the UK to help people see how the criminal justice system produces poor outcomes for society and increased people’s belief that meaningful change is possible (efficacy). Efficacy is important because if we increase people’s belief that change is needed but they don’t believe it is possible (which is something that can happen when the emphasis of a message is on a ‘crisis’) that has been found in studies to depress support for reform. This value also helped people understand broader social impacts of improving the criminal justice system and helped to reduce belief in the ‘rational actor’ model.

While this message was minimally effective in our tests, it was found to be more effective in studies in the UK and the US.



Examples of what this value might look like in a message:

In practice, the national progress value can be communicated by talking about the need to modernise our criminal justice system, identifying ways in which our current approach is outdated, and pointing out the connection between reform of our justice system and making progress as a society.

Here are examples from the messages we tested:

- **Modernising New Zealand's justice system is key to making progress as a society.**
- Our **outdated criminal justice system** is based on Victorian ideas of retribution and it is **holding our country back.**
- **A modern justice system that can improve outcomes** for our communities and our country is key to **making progress as a society.**

Value: Human potential

This value communicates that it is important and good for all people to reach their potential and be active members of our communities. Specifically it talks about how the potential of some children and young people is undermined by being 'swept into' the justice system. This value has been shown in other studies to orient people towards rehabilitation and build support for initiatives that prevent crime from occurring. It also specifically generated support for reforms to the youth justice system. This value focuses attention on the need for the criminal justice system to improve outcomes for communities and society, and also for offenders. It reminds people that the criminal justice system should help us realise our societal goals.

While this message didn't move our test audiences to be more supportive of evidence-based statements about crime and responses to crime, it was found to be effective in studies in the UK and the US.

Examples of what this value might look like in a message:

In practice, the human potential value can be communicated by talking about the need to support people to reach their potential, noting the ways our current system prevents people (especially children and young people) from reaching their potential, and naming the ways the government can help keep people out of the justice system so they can achieve their potential.

Here is an example from the messages we tested:

- Changing New Zealand's justice system is one way to **make sure all people can reach their potential and be active members of our communities.**

Values to avoid when talking about crime and justice

A growing body of research tells us to avoid certain values in our communications, if we want to increase public understanding of complex issues, and build public support for evidence-based policy change. In particular, as noted above, this research suggests that we should avoid engaging security and economic values.

Values to avoid:

- **Security values** (telling people that what matters about the issue is whether or not they, and the people they care about, are safe)
- **Economic values** (telling people that what matters about the issue is how much things cost or how much money they can earn).

In our tests we included one message that led with security and cost-effectiveness as the reasons why justice reform is needed. It was effective for reducing some groups' support for punitive responses to crime. However it was not effective in increasing understanding of the role of racism in the justice system, nor of the social context in which crime occurs.

So we found that while engaging cost-effectiveness as a value might build support for alternatives to prison within the criminal justice system, it didn't help people understand the wider social context of crime, and in particular the role of systemic racism.

Race plays a significant role in criminal justice in New Zealand, so it is important to find ways of talking about crime and justice that increase understanding of systemic racism. Also, evidence-based approaches to reduce crime include interventions outside the justice system, like better mental health and addiction services. So it is also important to find and use messages that build understanding of the wider social, economic and cultural context for crime. Security, fear, money and cost-effectiveness values did not do this in our tests, and in studies in the US and UK they have been shown to reduce support for evidence-based responses to crime.

Security and fear as a value

When we tell people that the purpose of the criminal justice system is to protect them against threats to their safety or the safety of their family and community, we are engaging people's fear (we call this the 'security' value).

Researchers have found that when people are frightened for themselves, their loved ones, in-group or country, they are:

- less able to tolerate ambiguity or consider the complex factors that contribute to crime
- more likely to demand and prefer simple solutions like harsher sentences.

So when we focus on security as the purpose of the justice system we are:

- making it harder for people to consider complexity in relation to crime and justice, and
- making it more likely they will support simple solutions like longer sentences.



Money and cost-effectiveness as a value

When we tell people the reason they should care about justice reform is because the current approach is wasting money, or because preventive or restorative approaches are less costly, we may well build support for change, but we may also:

- reinforce a dominant narrative that what matters most about the criminal justice system is how much it costs;
- build support for changes that reduce the cost of the justice system, whether or not those changes improve outcomes for communities; and
- depress support for changes to the justice system that do improve outcomes, but which don't necessarily save money.

Research in the UK² suggests avoiding Cost Efficiency as a value when talking about justice reform. Appealing to the value of cost savings or financial efficiency increased people's punitive attitudes and depressed support for reforms. In another study in the US³ Efficiency/Cost Effectiveness values produced negative movement, especially on support for measures to address racial disparities and measures to increase the efficiency of the criminal justice system.

² FrameWorks Institute. (2016). *New narratives: Changing the frame on crime and justice*.

³ FrameWorks Institute. (2013). *Framing and facts: Necessary synergies in communicating about public safety and criminal justice*.

The difference between pragmatism and cost-effectiveness

Earlier we recommended pragmatic problem solving as a good value to engage in talking about criminal justice reform. However, when people try to talk about pragmatism they may end up engaging the value of cost-effectiveness. So it's important to note the difference between these values. Pragmatism tells us that what matters is solving the problem, and doing what the evidence tells us will work. It's about solving problems by acting responsibly and doing what will work. Cost-effectiveness says that what matters is how much we spend on the problem, and doing what will cost least.

So when you want to engage the pragmatic problem solving value, avoid leading with cost-effectiveness. Instead talk about practical solutions, doing what works to improve people's lives and solving problems. It's also important to then be explicit and specific about what those practical solutions are – with a clear focus on prevention.

Avoid	Replace with
Making why we should reform the justice system because of cost/economics, safety or personal choices or individual behaviours.	A focus on benevolence and collective problem solving as the reasons for reform.

Building Block 4 — Provide better explanatory pathways

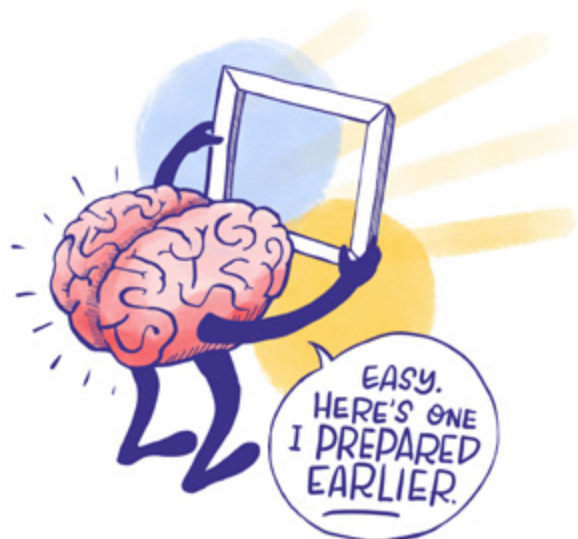
To surface better understandings for people about crime and justice issues, we also need to provide better explanations, including pathways from problem through to solution. In strategic communication, a good explanation works with people's fast-thinking brains and is an invitation for people to slow their thinking down.

The language we use, the frames we draw upon, the metaphors we choose and the causal chains we present are critical in giving people better explanations about crime and justice. Our better explanations need to:

- use effective simplifying models
- avoid repackaging unhelpful, dominant understandings
- show cause, effect and solution clearly, not just describe the problem.

Frames

Frames are pre-packaged explanations or stories about how the world works. They are part of our fast-thinking brains, are employed unconsciously and are often shared across a culture. Frames may be more or less helpful in relation to surfacing better understandings. We cannot avoid frames or negate or myth bust unhelpful ones, but we can replace them with better ones.



Helpful frame: Social construction of crime

The social construction frame sets crime into a wider social context, explicitly naming some of the social factors that make people from certain communities or groups more likely to be caught up in the criminal justice system.

This frame is important because:

- ➔ It reflects how beliefs about what is 'criminal' are constructed by ideas that people and groups with power and influence hold about others and their behaviour, especially about Māori.
- ➔ By describing discrimination, it implicitly frames racism and is designed to counter unhelpful implicit messages that carry racist messages ('dog whistling').
- ➔ It replaces shallow and unhelpful dominant frames in the public narrative, including the 'rational actor' frame and the 'criminal families' frame.

Countering 'dog whistling'

Another of the messages we tested explicitly frames racism and racial injustice as the problem that needs fixing in our justice system, and we do recommend doing that (see more below). But this message offers another approach to framing racism. In this message, the description of discrimination implicitly frames racism, without explicitly naming racism. This message was designed to counter unhelpful messages in the public discourse that carry an implicitly racist message, also known as 'dog whistling'. This is where people reference a racist

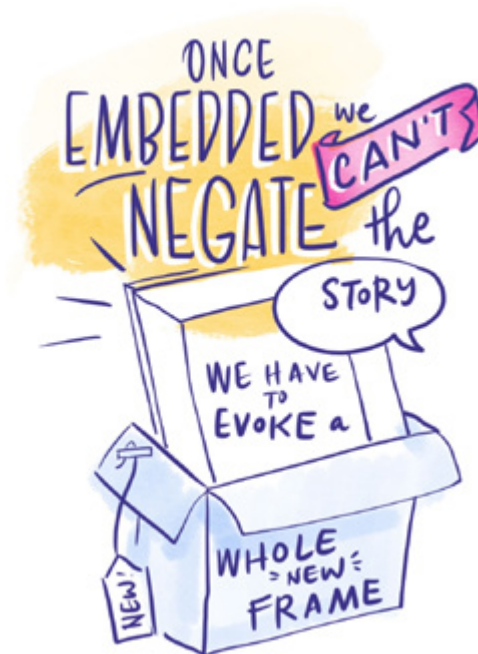
idea or story with coded language, without specifically saying a racist thing, e.g. 'If Māori did not keep choosing to join a gang they wouldn't end up in prison so much'.

We tested a message that started with a shared desire to fix problems in the justice system, stated the harm to everyone, and especially young Māori, from the current system, and named discriminatory behaviour by the police and others towards Māori. In our testing, this message moved the test audience to an increased understanding that the justice system is racist. This message moved the more punitive people in our sample as well as the people who already held more progressive views, and the fence-sitters.

We recommend this message as part of a communication strategy to increase understanding of systemic racism in the justice system.

Replacing unhelpful, shallow narratives

One of the dominant frames we found in the public narrative about crime in New Zealand was the 'rational choice' frame, which assumes that people weigh up the decision to commit crime rationally. This frame is closely linked to people's belief in the deterrent effect of harsh sentences and imprisonment. If someone stops to rationally weigh up the pros and cons of doing something illegal before they act, then knowledge of a potentially harsh sentence could act as a deterrent. In fact, the evidence is clear that most people do not make this kind of careful, considered, rational assessment before taking action. The social construction frame has been shown in studies to reduce agreement with the 'rational actor' frame.



What this frame looks like in practice:

Lately there has been a lot of talk about needing to reduce our reliance on prisons, and stop putting people into a justice system that creates more problems than it solves.

We know that **children from communities with a lack of resources or who have been in state care, are more likely to be swept into our prisons as adults.** Too many of our laws, and the way they are policed, **target people who have grown up in such circumstances.** The result is a **justice system that creates injustices by discriminating against people** based on how they grew up, their income, or what they look like.

Instead of punishing people who are already suffering, we should be doing everything we can to support them. It's time for politicians to stop ignoring proven and effective alternatives to prison such as drug and alcohol treatment. As a community, we need to support all communities who are doing it tough, and stop using prisons to punish people who have been denied the opportunities and resources they need to thrive.

Metaphors

Metaphors are a simplifying explanation that can help people quickly grasp a better, deeper explanation. A metaphor takes something we understand on a practical everyday level and connects it to the abstract or complex to make sense. We often don't notice when we're using metaphors because they are so common.

Metaphors are another way we can provide people with better explanations. Explanatory metaphors take what people know about familiar objects or experiences and pair it with something we don't understand to help us see how that thing, system or process works.



Good metaphors:

- allow people to grasp concepts quickly and get to surprisingly deep understandings
- are memorable and 'sticky', and people love to extend them.

Because they are unconscious, and people will not stop and think about them, we have to be careful about our use of them and check we aren't using dominant shallow ones.

Metaphors have a source domain and a target domain. The source is often the concrete bit and is more clearly described than the target. Metaphors create a map between the two domains. They are more than a jumble of associations, they have a structure which tells us how things work.

The human brain is wired to latch onto the tangible and shy away from the abstract. So it is great when we find metaphors that help to surface structural explanations.

General recommendations about using metaphors to talk about crime and justice:

- Avoid untested and unhelpful metaphors where possible or consider what explanations they might surface.
- Images often contain metaphors – test images before use.

Helpful metaphors for crime and justice reform:

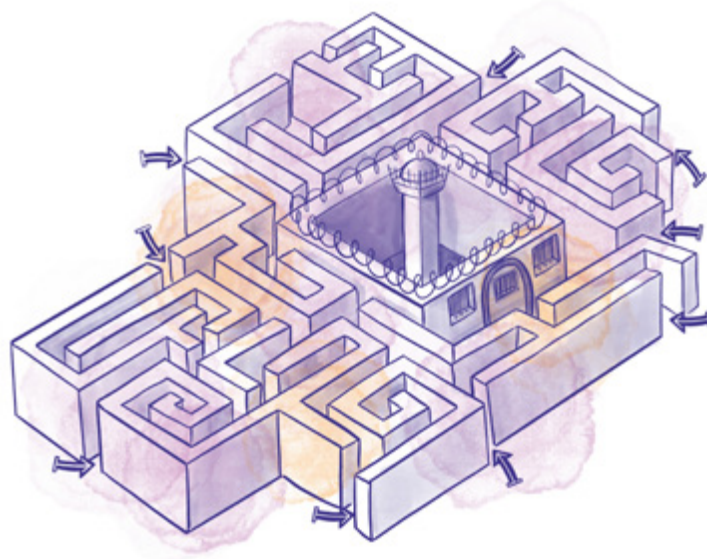
- Justice maze
- Justice gears

Other metaphors that could be helpful:

- Dead end
- Channeling crime

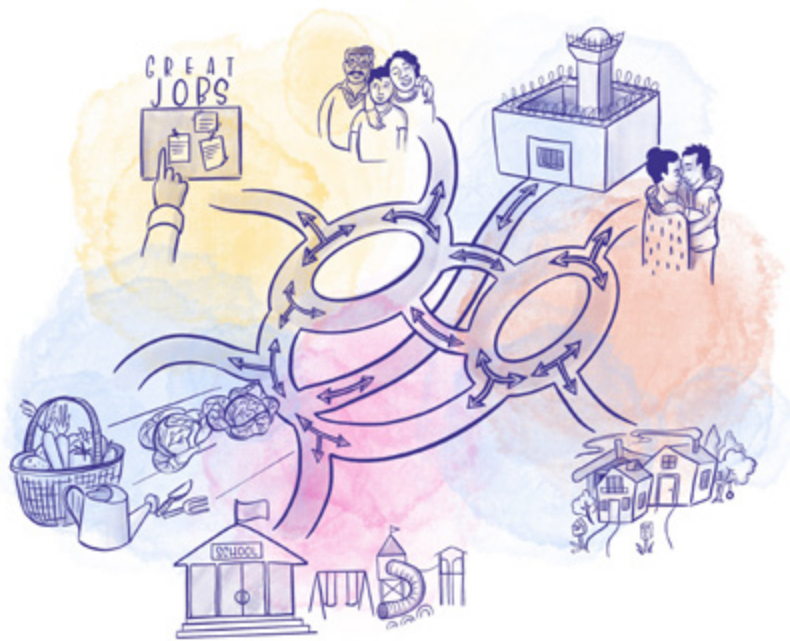
JUSTICE MAZE

This metaphor compares the justice system to a maze.



- The key characteristic of the metaphor is that there are lots of ways into the maze, and not enough ways out.
- The problem with the current justice system is that it traps people in a maze that they cannot get out of.

- The solution is to build more paths out of the justice system, including proven alternatives to prison, to get us all where we really want to go.



How it helps people think differently

In studies, the justice maze metaphor:

- helped people to think and talk about contextual factors – either institutional structures or environmental factors – that influence outcomes for individuals and groups
- focused people’s attention on structures as the causes of and solutions to criminal justice issues
- created an opportunity for people to understand how people’s contexts influence the choices they make and the outcomes they experience
- gave people a tool for understanding that what is ostensibly the same setting can present different sets of choices to different populations of people.

What it looks like in practice

Our current justice system puts too many people from communities that lack opportunities on **a path that goes straight to prison and has no way out. It is a maze without exits.**

Some people in politics want to keep the current justice system in place even though **it is designed with too few paths for people to get out of the maze.**

If we take a common-sense approach to solving our communities’ problems, we can prevent harm, decrease crime and **stop people getting trapped in the system.**

The government needs to build more paths out of the maze. Identify and fund practical things such as mental health services, drug treatment services, and restorative justice. A responsible approach to justice, using proven alternatives to prison, will help all New Zealanders get to where they need to go.

JUSTICE GEARS

This metaphor compares the justice system to a system of gears on a bicycle.



- The key characteristic of the metaphor is that you need to use different gears to get to different places.
- The problem with the current justice system is that it uses only one gear (prison) which gets us to only one outcome.
- The solution is to use a full range of different gears, including proven alternatives to prison, to get us all where we really want to go.

How it helps people think differently

This metaphor is designed to help people think about alternative solutions. In studies it:

- helped people see why alternatives are necessary and ultimately beneficial for offenders and their communities
- built support for alternatives to prison as well as the importance of strong social services outside the criminal justice system to prevent and reduce crime
- helped people recognise the need for multiple types of interventions and for flexibility in responses.

Research⁴ also found that the Justice Gears metaphor helped participants talk and think about:

- the 'systemness' of the criminal justice system,
- the inefficiency of aspects of the current system, and
- the different resources available to different populations.

What it looks like in practice

Our current justice system has been built by people in politics and law to be **geared to one outcome: prison**. This system is so ineffective it is hurting all of us: victims, families, communities, and the people who commit crime.

Just like we need different gears for cycling up and down hills, the justice system needs different solutions for different problems. Taking a common-sense approach to solving our communities' problems, means politicians using different solutions to prevent, reduce and address crime.

A responsible approach to justice, **using proven alternatives** to prison, will **help all New Zealanders get to where they need to go** and improve the wellbeing of all our communities.

Other possibly useful metaphors

The following two metaphors were less effective at moving audiences to be supportive of more evidence-based approaches in our research. However, they were shown to be helpful in building public understanding of and support for evidence-based policies and approaches to crime and justice in the UK and the US, so we think it is possible that they may still be useful. For more on the limits of our research, and why we therefore think it is useful to include some of the findings of research carried out in other settings, see the section on 'How we tested these messages' above.

DEAD END

This metaphor compares the justice system to a dead end.

- The key characteristic of the metaphor is that there is no way out of a dead end, it leads nowhere.
- The problem with the current justice system is that people get put on a path that leads them to a dead end, a place that takes them nowhere and from where there is no way forward.
- The solution is to build more paths that lead people to better outcomes.



⁴ FrameWorks Institute. (2013). *Maze and gears: Using explanatory metaphors to increase public understanding of the criminal justice system and its reform*.

How it helps people think differently

This metaphor is designed to explain how imprisonment:

- limits opportunities
- can fundamentally change an offender's life trajectory
- cuts off opportunities for employment, education, community involvement, and
- prevents the development of positive social networks outside of the criminal justice system.

In UK and US studies this metaphor helped people see how prisons:

- fail to rehabilitate offenders
- do not improve outcomes, and
- lead to more negative results.

Because the metaphor explains the detrimental impact of prison it opens space for the public to consider alternative solutions. Research in the UK showed that this metaphor is sticky, which means people retain and reuse the metaphor.

What it looks like in practice

When people go to prison, they are put on a one-way path and have no way to get back to a normal life.

We need to build paths that lead people to better outcomes. For example, properly resourcing communities, building comprehensive mental health services, and drug treatment services, and using proven alternatives to prison.

CHANNELING CRIME

This metaphor compares the justice system to a one-way path or current of water.

- The key characteristic of the metaphor is that everything in the channel is pulled along by a powerful current and that things can only go in one direction.
- The problem with the current justice system is that people get swept or pushed into that powerful current, and then they are pulled towards one outcome and cannot get out.
- The solution is to keep people out of the current in the first place, while supporting those who have been swept in to make their way out again to safe landing places where they can recover and live normal lives.



How it helps people think differently

This metaphor is designed to explain how imprisonment leads to more crime. In studies it counteracted unhelpful public narratives including:

- the public's rational actor belief
- the belief that the threat of imprisonment deters people from crime, and
- the belief that serving a custodial sentence dissuades subsequent criminal activity

What it looks like in practice

Children and young people from communities with high unemployment, low school achievement and a lack of other resources are more likely **to be swept into our justice system and end up in prison.**

We need to **keep people out of this current in the first place and guide them to safer, more stable shores** while **supporting those who have been swept in to make their way out again** and live normal lives.

Causal stories: using facts

Causal stories help us provide better explanations and frame facts.

Facts are critical to our work, which is to help people use effective and evidence-led communications strategies to build public support for policy solutions that are backed up by research. But facts alone won't overcome strong cultural narratives and mental models that our brains work to protect, we reject information that doesn't fit. Reassessing beliefs is much harder work, which is why incorrect narratives and misinformation once embedded is very hard to shift.



Why do fast brains 'protect' us from responding to excellent new facts about systems issues?

- ➔ We seek to confirm what we already believe and reject what feels untrue to us. So new facts that challenge our existing beliefs are likely to be rejected as untrue.
- ➔ We can see people's behaviour. We cannot see more complex systems, their patterns across time and scale. So we tend to overestimate the role of individual choice and underestimate the role of structures and systems. This is a significant challenge for improving public understanding of complex issues.

So if we want to shift shallow beliefs, we need to understand that facts themselves are not the story. They are a character in the story you want to tell about what the problem is, who it affects and how, the need to act, who made it happen and who can change it and how.

Case study: using facts about race to tell a story about systemic racism and the justice system

When we just use facts about the outcomes of systemic racism (e.g. data about a disproportionate number of Māori in prison) we encounter two problems.

- ➔ Firstly, a fact about an outcome doesn't give an explanation about how that outcome was caused. People will fill in that gap with their own pre-existing ideas about what caused the problem and in many cases, especially on a complex subject like systemic racism, those ideas will be wrong.

→ Secondly, if we describe a problem without explaining how it was caused it is hard for people to see how the problem could be solved. In relation to justice, in particular, research in the US showed that people had fatalistic beliefs about racism in the system. They saw that it was a problem, but didn't believe it could be solved.

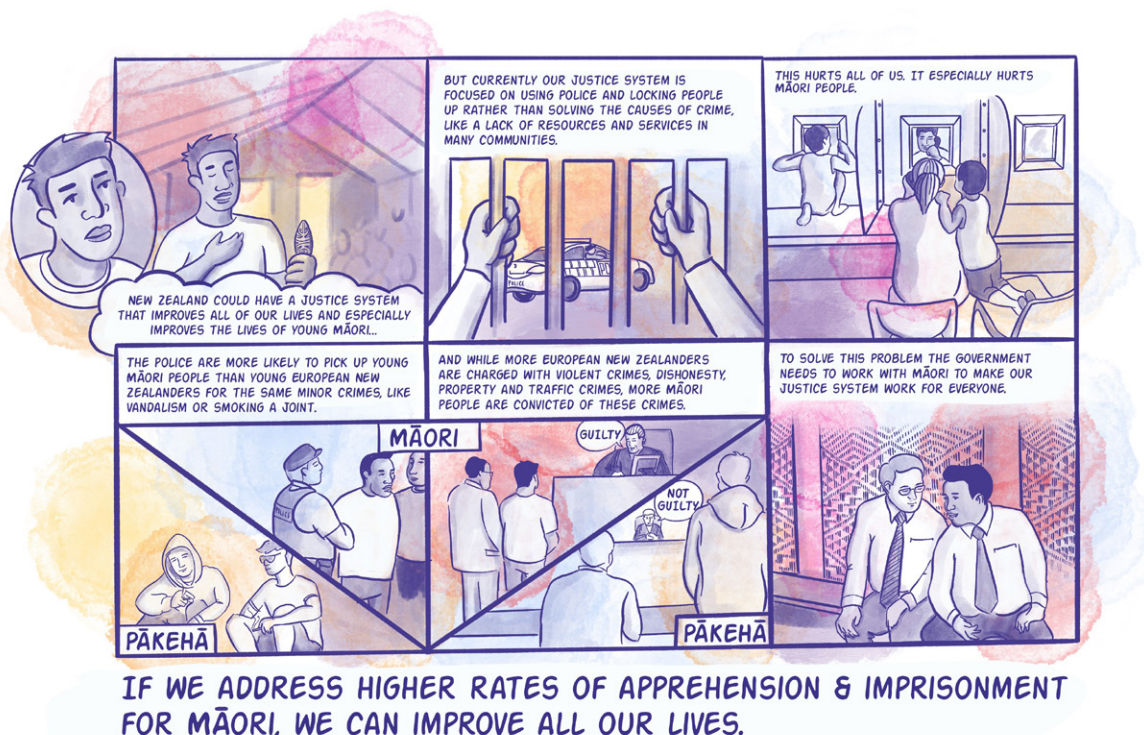
So we need to string together a set of facts that add up to an explanation about what caused the problem, point towards the agents who are responsible for causing the problem, and help people see that there are ways that the problem could be solved.

In one of the messages we tested in this research, we replaced the metaphor with a short causal chain of facts about racial bias in the justice system. This message was based on a study done in the US⁵ where researchers tested different fact-based messages. The message with key explanatory facts about race in the justice system increased people's ability to identify systemic factors in the justice system. The facts they used explicitly compared rates of arrest and incarceration between Black and white Americans. Our version of this message allowed us to test the effect of explicitly mentioning race on people's attitudes about and support for justice reform.

What we found and what we recommend:

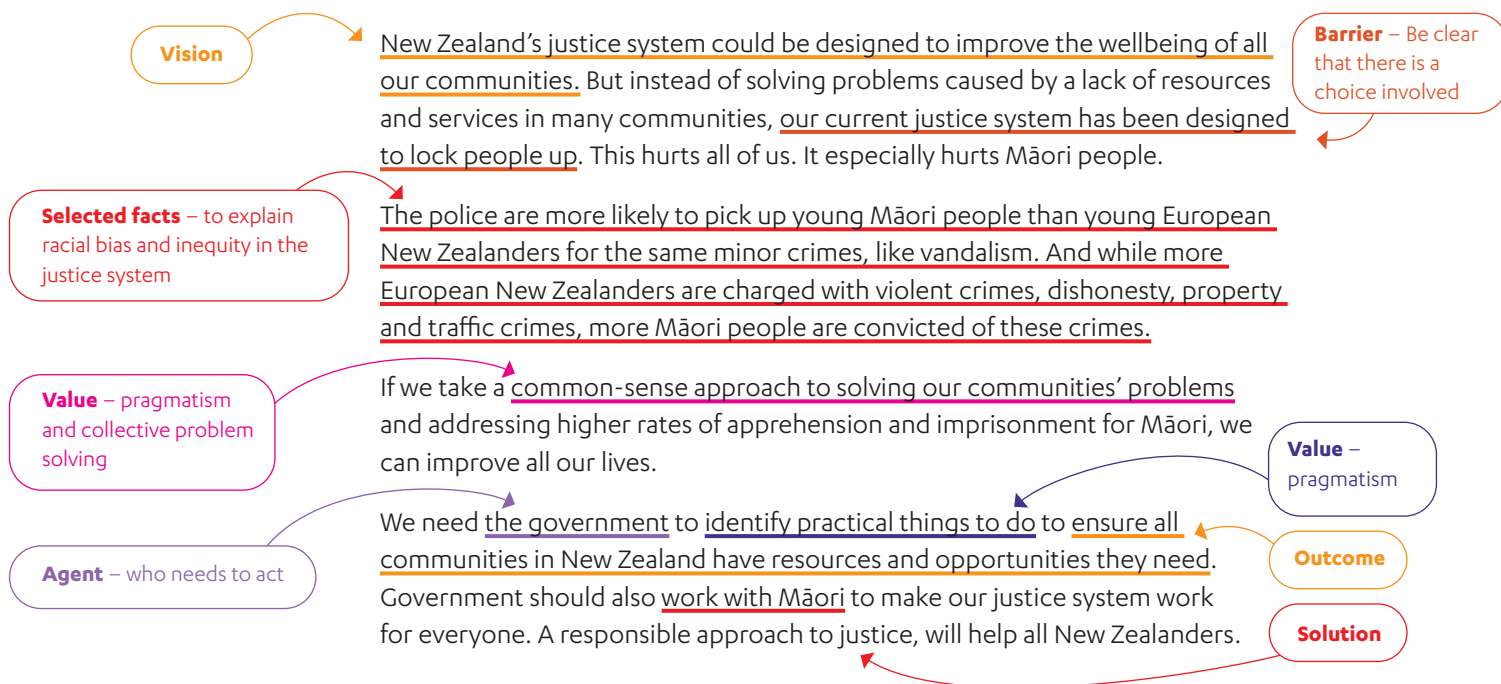
As in the studies elsewhere, our tests showed that this message is effective at increasing recognition of systemic racism. Specifically, this message increased our test audience's agreement with the statement that 'more Māori in prison means that there is something wrong with the system'.

Because racism is such a big part of the problem with the existing system, we recommend using this message, and carefully constructed messages like it, which builds a clear causal chain of facts that explains how systemic racism affects different people in the justice system differently.



⁵ FrameWorks Institute. (2013). *Framing and facts: Necessary synergies in communicating about public safety and criminal justice.*

What this looks like in practice:



General principles about building causal stories

→ Sell the cake, not the ingredients.

- » Start with vision or values.
- » Avoid leading with facts on crime – this doesn't surface better explanations.
- » Don't lead with the technical or policy details of how to get there.

→ Ensure that the facts used serve a productive purpose, i.e. to help explain impacts that don't align with people's vision and point to structural solutions.

→ Employ explanatory chains, which involve:

- » Identifying the cause of the problem upfront.
- » Providing general conceptual accounts of the indirect and direct impacts.
- » End with broad repercussions.

→ Clearly identify agents when explaining the cause and effects.

What do causal stories look like for crime and justice reform?

Identify the cause of the current problem

What does this sound like?

'Problems are caused by a lack of resources and services in many communities.'
'We know that our current justice system puts too many people from communities that lack opportunities on a path that goes straight to prison and has no way out.'

Explain the reasons behind this default, naming agents. Explain political and industry influences that have set current systems in place.

What does this sound like?

‘Our current justice system has been built by people in politics and law to be geared to one outcome: prison.’

‘Some people in politics want to keep the current justice system in place even though it is designed with too few paths for people to get out of the maze.’

Mechanisms and Impacts

Discuss both who has been advantaged and who has been disadvantaged by our existing justice system and how. Use a few simple facts to make these points.

What does this sound like?

‘We know that children and young people from communities with high unemployment, low school achievement and a lack of other resources are more likely to be swept into our justice system and end up in prison.’

‘This hurts all of us. It especially hurts Māori people. The police are more likely to pick up young Māori people than young European New Zealanders for the same minor crimes, like vandalism. And while more European New Zealanders are charged with violent crimes, dishonesty, property and traffic crimes, more Māori people are convicted of these crimes.’

Broad repercussions for society

Discuss, using one or two facts, the impact on health, wellbeing, accessibility, equity.

What does this sound like?

‘If we take a common-sense approach to solving our communities’ problems, we can prevent harm, decrease crime and stop people getting trapped in the system. A responsible approach to justice, using proven alternatives to prison, will help all New Zealanders get to where they need to go.’

Solutions

Provide facts about the changes needed in our justice system. Describe better outcomes for people, communities and society within a story of a more pragmatic, working justice system.

What does this sound like?

‘The government needs to build more paths out of the maze. Identify and fund practical things such as mental health services, drug treatment services, and restorative justice. A responsible approach to justice, using proven alternatives to prison, will help all New Zealanders get to where they need to go.’

Name agents

- In the case of justice reform, there may be people who, for political or other reasons, oppose efforts to shift the focus towards preventative and restorative solutions. Naming these behaviours is important.
- Focus on the unhelpful or harmful behaviour of agents instead of labelling agents as 'bad people'. Make it clear that the agent could make different choices to solve the problem.



What does that look like in practice:

We need the government to identify practical things to do to ensure all communities in New Zealand have resources and opportunities they need. Government should also work with Māori to make our justice system work for everyone.

Avoid	Replace with
Describing the problem repeatedly with a lot of facts about why prisons are not working.	Explanatory chains that start with causes, lead people through effects and end with solutions that work.
Sentences without an agent, e.g. 'prisons are harming people'.	Name human agents, e.g. 'people in government have designed a justice system that locks people up'.
Labelling politicians or institutions as corrupt, evil or dispositionally broken.	Naming the problematic behaviour and/or naming the new behaviour required.

Building Block 5 — Storytellers

The messengers who convey messages about crime and justice also matter. Research on messengers and trust is complex, but findings suggest we should use:



- a wide range of messengers
- messengers who are well qualified to comment on the context of the message
- unexpected messengers who may align with persuadable people's values, e.g. former National MP Chester Burrows on justice reform.
- intergenerational messengers, e.g. young people or children talking to their parents and grandparents.

Perceived expertise matters more than actual expertise.

Putting it all together

Use this framework to construct your communications on crime and justice reform.

Step 1. Articulate an inclusive vision, a better future (the what and the who)

Be specific and concrete.

Sounds like:

'A responsible approach to justice, using proven alternatives to prison, will help all New Zealanders get to where they need to go.'



Step 2. Identify helpful intrinsic values (the why)

What are the helpful values that will motivate people to understand the need for justice reform? For example, use benevolence or pragmatic problem solving.

Sounds like:

'If we take a common-sense approach to solving our communities' problems, we can prevent harm, decrease crime and stop people getting trapped in the system.'



Step 3. Provide better explanatory pathways (the who, the how and the where)

You may decide to select a specific frame, e.g. the role of systemic racism – lay out the initial factor that contributes to why we have not reached our current vision, the impacts on different people, who is responsible for changing it.

Present solutions.

Attribute better outcomes based on evidence of the cause.



Sounds like:

'The government needs to identify and fund practical things, such as mental health services, drug treatment services, and restorative justice. A responsible approach to justice, using proven alternatives to prison, will help all New Zealanders get to where they need to go and improve the wellbeing of all our communities.'

Step 4. Present action/resolution (the what now?)

Giving people an action is important once you have motivated them with a vision and solution. This needs to be in proportion to the size of the problem you have described. Be specific, depending on what action you decide you want people to make.

Sounds like:

'Politicians need to fund practical things, such as mental health services, drug treatment services, and restorative justice. Ask your local MP to support these policies.'

General checklist for communications

Avoid	Replace with
Building Block 1. Audience	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Focusing on the opposition and their story. » Testing with your base. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Focus on developing messages for the persuadables.
Building Block 2. Vision	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Leading with facts, policies or problems. » Myth busting and negating their story. » Being vague and abstract in your vision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Lead with a positive vision (your story). » Sell the cake, not the ingredients. » Make the steps and human agency visible and concrete.
Building Block 3. Connecting with values that motivate	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Leading with cost or safety values. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Engage people on their most helpful intrinsic values like pragmatism and benevolence.
Building Block 4. Build explanatory pathways	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Leading with facts. Using untested metaphors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Use tested metaphors like the justice maze or justice gears. Use carefully selected facts in chains that explain causes like systemic racism.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Negating unhelpful frames. » Myth busting incorrect facts and stories. » Using passive language. » Villainising people. » Leading with facts or using single facts that don't frame a systems problem and solution. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Use better explanatory pathways. » Tell your story, don't rubbish theirs – choose an effective frame. » Name agents. » Name the problematic behaviour and/or the new behaviour required. » Build causal chains.
Building Block 5. Storytellers	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Choosing expected or untested messengers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Use a range of value-aligned messengers.

Appendix One: Messages

This appendix sets out the seven messages as tested, and breaks down each into their component parts.

Message 1: National progress value + dead end metaphor

Lately there has been a lot of talk about how modernising New Zealand's justice system is key to making progress as a society.

Our outdated criminal justice system is based on Victorian ideas of retribution and it is holding our country back. Some people in politics want to keep that system in place even though prison is a dead end. When people go to prison, they are put on a one-way path and have no way to get back to a normal life.

We need to build paths that lead people to better outcomes. For example, properly resourcing communities, creating education paths that suit all learners, building comprehensive mental health services, and drug treatment services, and using proven alternatives to prison. This will progress our society and offer paths that take people to better places and lives.

The government needs to make changes to our justice system that will allow all of us to move forward. A modern justice system that can improve outcomes for our communities and our country is key to making progress as a society.

Key components of this message

Value: National progress

Metaphor: Dead end

See the *Building block 3: Values* and *Building block 4: Better explanations* sections of the message guide for more details on each of these components.

Message 2: Human potential value + channelling crime metaphor

Lately there has been a lot of talk about how changing New Zealand's justice system is one way to make sure all people can reach their potential and be active members of our communities.

For example, we know that children and young people from communities with high unemployment, low school achievement and a lack of other resources are more likely to be swept into our justice system and end up in prison.

Some people in politics want to keep that outdated system in place even though the illogical focus on prisons, sweeps people into a powerful stream of crime from which it is difficult to escape.

We need to keep people out of this current in the first place and guide them to safer, more stable shores. This means the government should adequately resource and support communities so people are not pulled into the justice system. While supporting those who have been swept in to make their way out again and live normal lives.

Key components of this message

Value: Human potential

Metaphor: Channeling crime

See the *Building block 3: Values and Building block 4: Better explanations* sections of the message guide for more details on each of these components.

Message 3: Pragmatism value + justice maze metaphor

Lately there has been a lot of talk about how managing New Zealand's justice system more responsibly can improve the wellbeing of all our communities.

For example, we know that our current justice system puts too many people from communities that lack opportunities on a path that goes straight to prison and has no way out. It is a maze without exits.

Some people in politics want to keep the current justice system in place even though it is designed with too few paths for people to get out of the maze.

If we take a common-sense approach to solving our communities' problems, we can prevent harm, decrease crime and stop people getting trapped in the system.

The government needs to build more paths out of the maze. Identify and fund practical things such as mental health services, drug treatment services, and restorative justice. A responsible approach to justice, using proven alternatives to prison, will help all New Zealanders get to where they need to go.

Key components of this message

Value: Pragmatism / problem solving

Metaphor: Justice maze

See the *Building block 3: Values and Building block 4: Better explanations* sections of the message guide for more details on each of these components.

Message 4: Pragmatism value + justice gears metaphor

Lately there has been a lot of talk about how managing New Zealand's justice system more responsibly can improve our communities.

Our current justice system has been built by people in politics and law to be geared to one outcome: prison. This system is so ineffective it is hurting all of us: victims, families, communities, and the people who commit crime.

Just like we need different gears for cycling up and down hills, the justice system needs different solutions for different problems. Taking a common-sense approach to solving our communities' problems, means politicians using different solutions to prevent, reduce and address crime.

The government needs to identify and fund practical things, such as mental health services, drug treatment services, and restorative justice. A responsible approach to justice, using proven alternatives to prison, will help all New Zealanders get to where they need to go and improve the wellbeing of all our communities.

Key components of this message

Value: Pragmatism / problem solving

Metaphor: Justice Gears

See the *Building block 3: Values and Building block 4: Better explanations* sections of the message guide for more details on each of these components.

Message 5: Pragmatism value + facts about race

Lately there has been a lot of talk about how managing New Zealand's justice system more responsibly can improve people's lives.

Instead of solving problems caused by a lack of resources and services in many communities, our current justice system chooses to lock people up. This hurts all of us. It especially hurts Māori people.

The police are more likely to pick up young Māori people than young European New Zealanders for the same minor crimes, like vandalism. And while more European New Zealanders are charged with violent crimes, dishonesty, property and traffic crimes, more Māori people are convicted of these crimes.

If we take a common-sense approach to solving our communities' problems and addressing higher rates of apprehension and imprisonment for Māori, we can improve all our lives.

We need the government to identify practical things to do to ensure all communities in New Zealand have resources and opportunities they need. Government should also work with Māori to make our justice system work for everyone. A responsible approach to justice, will help all New Zealanders.

Key components of this message

Value: Pragmatism / problem solving

Metaphor: Justice maze

See the *Building block 3: Values and Building block 4: Better explanations* sections of the message guide for more details on each of these components.

Message 6: Cost-efficiency + security values

Lately there has been a lot of talk about how spending public money more efficiently on preventing crime could save money in the long term and keep people and communities safer.

For example, New Zealand has a very high imprisonment rate even though it is much more expensive to keep people in prison than it is to provide preventative services like parental education. Some people in politics want to keep the current criminal justice system in place even though it wastes money and doesn't keep us safe.

To address these problems and decrease crime we need to use public resources in cost-effective ways. Every dollar invested in rehabilitation saves money down the line. On the other hand, if we continue to build prisons, it will still cost taxpayers a lot of money in lost productivity and taxes. Our reliance on prison and other punishments is costly and ineffective.

The government can make changes to the criminal justice system that will save money and improve outcomes. A cost-effective approach to criminal justice will make our country safer and help all New Zealanders.

Key components of this message

Value 1: Cost-efficiency

Value 2: Security

Metaphor: Justice maze

See the *Building block 3: Values* section of the message guide for more details on each of these components.

Message 7: Benevolence value + social construction of crime

Lately there has been a lot of talk about needing to reduce our reliance on prisons, and stop putting people into a justice system that creates more problems than it solves.

We know that children from communities with a lack of resources or who have been in state care, are more likely to be swept into our prisons as adults. Too many of our laws, and the way they are policed, target people who have grown up in such circumstances. The result is a justice system that creates injustices by discriminating against people based on how they grew up, their income, or what they look like.

Instead of punishing people who are already suffering, we should be doing everything we can to support them. It's time for politicians to stop ignoring proven and effective alternatives to prison such as drug and alcohol treatment. As a community, we need to support all communities who are doing it tough, and stop using prisons to punish people who have been denied the opportunities and resources they need to thrive.

Key components of this message

Value: Benevolence

Frame: Social construction of crime

Appendix Two: Methods

For full details for the study design and extended analysis please request our findings document.

Study design

We used a randomised control trial to test the effect of seven messages on a set of attitudes and behavioural intentions compared to a control (no message).

Message development

In 2019, The Workshop and JustSpeak carried out primary research on public and expert narratives on crime and justice in Aotearoa New Zealand. That research identified common themes and characteristics in the public narrative about crime and justice in Aotearoa, outlined the gaps between that public narrative and the way that experts talk about crime, and noted the overlaps and opportunities to move the public narratives in the direction of being more well-informed and evidence-led.

For more on this research see our earlier report [Expert and Public Narratives on Crime in New Zealand](#) and our [short message guide based on that research](#).

We also undertook a review of existing message testing from around the world. We looked specifically for messages that had been shown through testing to be effective in addressing the gaps in public understanding we had found in New Zealand.

We found that the FrameWorks institute had undertaken a range of studies to test messages on crime and justice in the US and the UK⁶, and many of these studies tested messages to see if they could influence similar attitudes and beliefs as those that we had identified in our narrative research in New Zealand.

They found a set of reframing strategies were effective at improving people's understanding of crime, what causes it, and their support for evidence-led policies to prevent and respond to crime.

The Workshop drew on those findings and our own earlier research to construct seven messages with varying combinations of values, metaphors and frames, all less than 150 words long. The seven messages were labelled as follows:

Message 1: National progress (national progress value + dead end metaphor)

Message 2: Human potential (human potential value + crime channel metaphor)

Message 3: Justice maze (pragmatism value + justice maze metaphor)

Message 4: Justice gears (pragmatism value + justice gears metaphor)

⁶ FrameWorks Institute. (2016). *New narratives: Changing the frame on crime and justice*.

FrameWorks Institute. (2014). *Like a holiday camp: Mapping the gaps on criminal justice reform in England and Wales*.

FrameWorks Institute. (2014). *Talking criminal justice and public safety: A FrameWorks Message Memo*.

FrameWorks Institute. (2013). *Framing and facts: Necessary synergies in communicating about public safety and criminal justice*.

FrameWorks Institute. (2013). *Maze and gears: Using explanatory metaphors to increase public understanding of the criminal justice system and its reform*.

Message 5: Race facts (pragmatism value + race facts)

Message 6: Cost-efficiency (cost-efficiency + security values)

Message 7: Benevolence (benevolence value + social construction of crime frame)

The seven messages are set out in full in the report above.

Attitude and outcome measures

Respondents had their attitudes and beliefs about crime and justice measured in the experiment along with their intention to take action. Most questions were sourced and modified from existing surveys with publicly available datasets.

We sought to test whether messages could shift attitudes or expressed values. Eleven pre-test items that were repeated in the post-test questionnaire were questions on crime-related values, attitudes to the causes of crime, and attitudes to the efficacy of policy/legal responses to crime. Pre-test items included attitudes to political parties currently represented in parliament.

The scales for all items were 7-point Likert scales, ranging from 'Strongly disagree' to 'Strongly agree'.

Example questions

Questions on efficacy of responses to crime:

- » Tougher punishment measures will deter crime

Questions on expressed values relating to crime:

- » People who commit crimes deserve harsh treatment in prison

Questions on causes of crime:

- » Crime is a result of socioeconomic inequality in our society
- » For the most part, people who commit crimes are unfortunately just born that way

Questions on political actions:

Post-test items also included questions about the likelihood of taking political action to support a more liberal criminal justice system, with the options being:

- » Sign an online or paper petition
- » Take part in a consultation with central or local government

FrameWorks Institute. (2013). Maze and gears: Using explanatory metaphors to increase public understanding of the criminal justice system and its reform.

Simon, A., & Davey, L. (2010). *College bound: The effects of values frames on attitudes toward higher education reform.* Washington, DC: FrameWorks Institute.

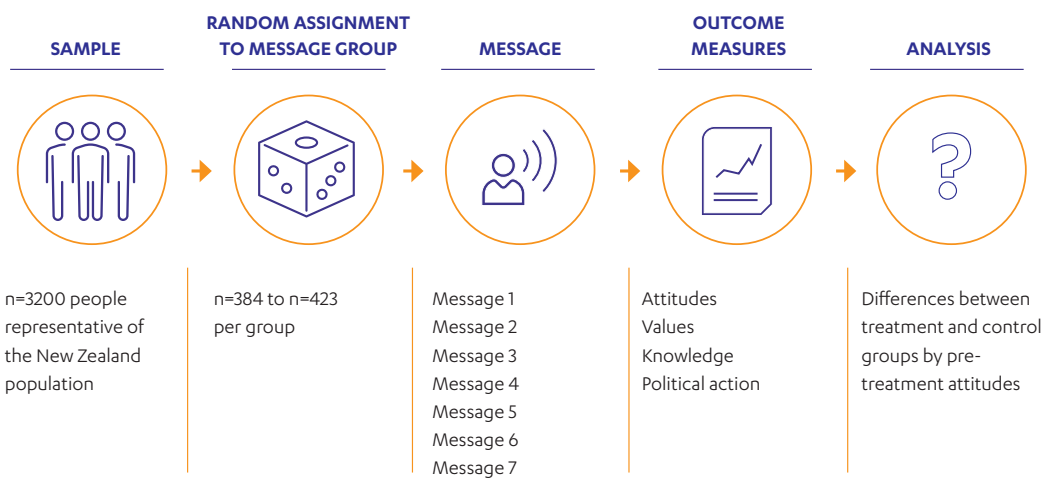
Procedure

The UMR panel comprised a sample of 3200 New Zealanders representing the general population. Each participant was randomly assigned to seven message groups and one control group.

Respondents first responded to the pre-test questions. They then read the message they were randomly assigned or had a forced delay if they were in the control condition.

All respondents completed the post-test questions and some demographic questions. Time delays were used on messages and longer questions to ensure that respondents spent enough time reading them.

An experimental design for determining effectiveness of messaging strategies:



Statistical analysis

Latent class analysis was used to create the post test group segmentations based on pre-test attitudes and knowledge. In the unweighted post test sample comprising 3200 people:

- 1516 (47%) held most punitive attitudes prior to testing
- 908 (28%) held attitudes that were more neutral
- 776 (24%) held the least punitive attitudes.

Using regression modeling we analysed the effects of each message on each outcome variable for the total sample, and for each of these groups to establish what worked. We also looked at effects by political behaviour (who people voted for in the last election). To be extra sure no other factors could be influencing the effect of each message on the outcome measures: attitudes, values and intended actions, we controlled for a wide range of demographic variables. Full results are available in the findings document.

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