



Trends in and Social Dynamics of Crime in the Pacific

Abstract An understanding of policing dynamics requires an examination of not only the landscape of criminal activities that police encounter and work in, but also the socio-political processes that produce crime in a given community and context. This chapter provides an overview of crime trends in Pacific Islands countries and territories (PICTs) in the twenty-first century and discusses some key social dynamics producing various crimes. It pays special attention to crimes and violence experienced by young people and women, as well as how neoliberal globalisation has produced new vulnerabilities in PICTs, including expanding organised and transnational crime, such as drug trafficking and cybercrime. The chapter includes suggestions for where there are research and data gaps, and how future research and policy should aim to close these gaps to further inform crime-related policies.

Keywords Crime in the pacific · Youth and crime · Gender-based violence · Trafficking · Environmental crime · Corruption · Violence

INTRODUCTION

The study of crime remains a contested field, constituted by theoretical, empirical, and policy debates around trends in, causes of, and responses to crime (Carrabine, 2017). Policymakers, police, and the public engage in these debates through implicit and explicit assumptions about the ‘nature’ of crime and criminality in their own contexts. A common narrative among police, criminal justice actors, and the public regarding crime in Pacific Islands countries and territories (PICTs) is both that crime rates are increasing and the nature of crimes is changing due to rapid social change, related to urbanisation, marketisation, and a weakening of communal and Indigenous means of regulating rule-breaking and criminal behaviours. This discourse fits with theorisation of crime in the context of ‘modernisation’, a weakening of family- and community-based relations and the erosion of moral solidarity through the stresses of modern economic life produces anomie; that is, a lack—or loss of regulation—of human desires, human behaviour, and sense of collective belonging (DiCristina, 2016).

However, crime is also a political construct, reflective of the efforts of political elites to reinforce their privilege and interests, as well as expressions of various social and political contradictions or conflicts in a given society (Blaustein et al., 2018). Moreover, in PICTs, as noted in Chapter 2, criminal law was inherited from colonial rule that often worked in the interests of colonial powers, rather than local communities and, as such, further reinforces class-based inequalities and oppression (Forsyth, 2009; Sumner, 1982). In PICTs, there are also tensions related to how enforcement of customary forms of justice can become criminal or criminalised, especially in situations where specific customary forms of punishment may violate human or individual rights embodied in legal frameworks (see e.g., Amin, Trussler, et al., 2022). Key in critical perspectives on crimes is that activities of poor and marginalised groups tend to be both more criminalised and punished, while crimes and harms committed by economic and political elites tend to be ignored, and may not even be defined as crime (Wacquant, 2009). Therefore, there is often both more focus and data on violent crimes, property crimes, theft and crimes against state authority, while corruption, state-based crimes, and corporate crimes are less documented.

A critical perspective centres on ongoing global politics and inequalities between nations in understanding crime dynamics. Post-colonial societies,

such as PICTs, continue to be impacted by colonial histories and legacies in the structure of legislation, criminal justice systems, and policing (Cunneen, 2011). Thus, unlike in the global North, countries in the global South, including PICTs, often face foreign pressures regarding reform of and/or prioritisation in their criminal law and justice systems that also distort alignment with local interests, priorities, values, and understandings of crime. These pressures come from different sources, including international conventions to which countries are party, aid dynamics, and the continued exploitation of resources in PICTs by Northern powers (Watson et al., 2021). We see these dynamics especially in relation to crimes related to gender-based violence, child abuse, and the environment (Carrington et al., 2018).

Legacies of colonialism for crime and violence also include the racialised and ethnicity-based divisions and inequalities produced under colonial rule and reproduced in post-colonial societies (Carrington et al., 2018). In addition, the use of post-colonial societies as playgrounds for super-power geo-politics has impacted on political stability and political violence dynamics. As such, police in PICTs are located in a context that includes violence against ethnic and political minorities and their property. The threat of group violence in the form of inter-tribal/ethnic, racialised, and/or political violence continues to be an issue in some PICTs. While this is beyond the scope of the chapter, some important implications for policing are discussed in Chapters 4, 5, and 6.

This chapter discusses some of the data trends and social dynamics of crime in the context of PICTs. It first examines the challenges of analysing crime data in the region and the subsequent difficulty for police and policymakers to produce data-driven policing action. This is followed by a discussion of trends and dynamics related to non-violent and violent crimes in the region, with a special focus on crime-related issues faced by youth, women, and marginalised communities. This section points to the challenging and complex environment PICT police services face, as well as indicating how other societal actors may be relevant and needed. The next section examines dynamics related to organised and transnational crime, looking at how these have become amplified through processes of neoliberal globalisation, and emphasising the need for regional, transnational, and multi-sectoral collaboration for policing. The final section of this chapter looks at state crimes, with a special focus on the use of excessive force by police and how evolving legislation, practices, and norms require greater attention in this regard for police reform, and also larger reforms in governance.

DATA ON CRIME IN THE PACIFIC

In PICTs, as in all contexts, there are at least three key sources of crime data—country-level police data, national-level victimisation or stakeholder perception surveys, and judicial records of criminal cases. Discussions of crime data from these sources should always come with important caveats, including the fact that crimes of the state, corruption, and crimes committed by the police in their work tend to be documented (when actually reported) in processes outside of public access, through internal mechanisms. Reports produced by human rights watchdogs, media outlets, and other civil society organisations become important sources regarding many of these latter types of crimes. Criminal codes and classifications also differ across the region and, as such, comparisons of data between national jurisdictions should be interpreted with caution.

Crime volume and rates based on police-based data provide only a partial picture of the actual or population-based true crime rate since police records only reflect law-breaking acts that are reported to the police or caught by police authorities and actually documented by the police. Moreover, the analysis of trends in police-based crime data can be difficult given changes in legislation and record-keeping practices within countries, as well as differential definitions between countries. Significantly in Pacific Island societies, when looking at crime data, it is important to note that the authority and legitimacy of the police have been shifting, especially under urbanising processes and state-building efforts. This has contributed to a general trend of increased reporting to the police of law-breaking behaviour that would not previously have been reported (Cain, 2001; Pratt & Melei, 2018; Putt & Dinnen, 2020). Nevertheless, in both urban and rural or outer islands of PICTs, police continue to be dependent on traditional authorities (such as chiefs and elders) to deal with certain types of law-breaking behaviours (see e.g., Forsyth, 2009; Watson & Dinnen, 2020). Therefore, record-keeping practices in rural and outer islands can vary quite significantly from urban centres and main/larger islands in a given country or territory (Cain, 2001). There can also be delays in communication to metropole headquarters from more remote centres. Therefore, police-based crime data in PICTs for any given year will tend to be more biased towards urban centres and main islands. In many PICTs, record-keeping practices of the police forces have become more regular and professionalised; police-based ‘annual trends of crime’ reports have become more easily accessible to the public; and,

especially since the early 2010s, such reports are also archived online on government websites, as well as on the social media pages of the police departments themselves. However, there are still substantive variations in the regularity and quality of police-based data keeping across the region. Further adding to the problem of incomplete, irregular, and partial crime data at the police level is the fact that police-based crime data is also impacted by the dynamics of policing priorities, which are influenced by funding sources and how budgets are determined (see Chapter 2).

In addition to police-based crime data, reflecting a push towards data and community-driven policymaking there have been several community perception surveys of safety and policing commissioned by the police themselves, other arms of governments or through the Pacific Police Development Programs funded by the Australian Government. Community perception surveys have been undertaken in Solomon Islands (see e.g., the annual 2009–2013 People’s Survey by ANU Enterprise/ANU Edge [at ramsi.org], as well as the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force Annual Reports, 2013–2018), Tonga (Koloto & Fowles, 2012), Samoa (Samoa Bureau of Statistics, 2013), Cook Islands (McMurray, 2014), Tuvalu (Watson, 2017), and Guam (Watson et al., 2019). Although these types of surveys do not help measure crime rates, they remain important by providing insights into public perceptions of safety and crime, as well as indicating to what extent trends from police-based data of crime may align with trends from actual crime rates (Hipp, 2013; Maguire & McVie, 2017).

Victimisation surveys are often considered to provide a more reliable and stable picture of the actual crime rate. While various United Nations surveys, Demographic Health Surveys, and World Bank surveys point to victimisation rates in relation to theft, property crimes, and violence against the person, crime victimisation surveys have not been undertaken in a systematic and longitudinal way in any PICTs. Integrating criminal victimisation items into regular national surveys would provide an important mechanism for monitoring crime rates, as well as potentially evaluating policies regarding the policing of crime. This is particularly true because of both the constraints faced by police in data keeping and the fact that, despite changing trends, many crimes continue to go unreported to state institutions, especially outside of urban centres.

It is important to note that, despite the lack of national-level crime victimisation surveys, due to women’s movements across the region, donor-driven pressure on policies regarding violence against women

(VAW), and monitoring and evaluation obligations created through international conventions (e.g., the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women*) and global development goals (the United Nations Millennium Development Goals and Sustainable Development Goals) there is an emergent body of crime victimisation data on domestic, intimate partner, sexual, and family violence in the region. Regarding VAW, and especially domestic violence and intimate partner violence (IPV), between 2003 and 2013—through funding from different agencies, such as AusAID, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), and the World Health Organization (WHO), and the work of women’s organisations locally—there are country-specific surveys that have produced data, including for Samoa (UNFPA, 2006), Vanuatu (Vanuatu Women’s Centre, 2011), Kiribati (SPC, 2009a), Solomon Islands (SPC, 2009b), Tonga (Ma’a Fafine mo e Famili, 2012), Fiji (Fiji Women’s Crisis Centre, 2013), Papua New Guinea (PNG) (WHO, 2013), and Tuvalu (SPC, 2009c). There has also been additional, more recent documentation of the prevalence and incidence of family violence in PICTs. For example, in 2017, in Samoa, the Office of the Ombudsman conducted a national public inquiry into family violence (Samoa Office of the Ombudsman and National Human Rights Institution, 2018). Putt and Dinnen (2020) provide a report on family and sexual violence in PNG, which was funded by the Australian Government through the Justice Services and Stability for Development Program. Similarly, due to advocacy by civil society organisations, violence against children has been documented via the 14 country situation analyses commissioned by the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) Pacific, which provides some indication of the level of violence experienced by children in Cook Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Fiji, Kiribati, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu (UNICEF, 2017).

A review of the available data on crime indicates that there are important gaps that need to be addressed. These include developing systematic and regular national victimisation surveys, documenting reports of criminal behaviour to customary authorities, and better integrating police and corrections data that would allow for analyses of recidivism. Additionally, there is a need for research and analyses of crime in corrections systems and crime from the perspectives of perpetrators.

Keeping in mind the above discussion, in this chapter we draw on data from police reports, and available victimisation and stakeholder perception surveys, as well as—when relevant—reports from different civil society organisations and media outlets. Specifically, we have used police-based reports of crime data from Fiji, Tonga, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Kiribati, and Guam. While Tuvalu Police Service data was made available, there were discrepancies in the data that could not be verified and therefore we have relied mainly on the Tuvalu Stakeholders Perceptions Study (Watson, 2017). For PNG, reports and analyses based on police data and previous victimisation surveys have been used. In discussions of domestic violence and violence against women and children, we have used both police-based data and reports available from victimisation and prevalence surveys in Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu, Kiribati, Fiji, PNG, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu. For transnational crime, organised crime, corruption and state crimes, existing studies and reports by human rights watchdogs, civil society actors, and media outlets have been utilised. We have not looked at judicial records of criminal cases since the chapter is focused on discussing trends in criminal behaviour rather than trends in judicial processes, outcomes, or decisions.¹ Data from prisons would also have been useful; however, access to corrections data is constrained across PICTs and gaining access was not possible.

Given the data used in this chapter, crime dynamics are not represented in many parts of Micronesia, including the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Tokelau, Nauru, Palau, and the FSM; nor in some parts of Polynesia, such as the French territories.

OVERVIEW OF TRENDS IN AND SOCIAL DYNAMICS OF CRIME IN THE PACIFIC

Prevalence of crime, especially violent crime, in PICTs is relatively low, with Melanesian countries having higher rates of crime compared to Polynesian and Micronesian countries. Overall, the number of criminal

¹ See, for example, the reports on the United Nations Development Programme Access to Justice projects in Fiji and Solomon Islands at https://www.pacific.undp.org/content/pacific/en/home/projects/Fij_A2J.html and <https://www.pacific.undp.org/content/pacific/en/home/projects/solomonislands-access-to-justice.html/>. Additional reports include the Access to Justice Study commissioned by Sustineo in the Solomon Islands: <https://sustineo.com.au/projects/solomon-islands-access-to-justice-study/>.

offences and the crime rate,² based on police records, have declined since the early 2010s in Fiji, Vanuatu, Kiribati, Tuvalu, and Samoa, but increased in Solomon Islands, Tonga, and Guam (see Figs. 3.1 and 3.2).³ This is generally true of both property crimes and crimes against the person (see Fig. 3.3), although since 2013 crimes against the person have increased in Samoa and crimes against property have increased in Guam.

While police often find themselves dealing with traffic violations, property crimes, alcohol-related interpersonal violence, and disturbances of the peace, police in PICTs must also respond to context-specific and emerging situations. Thus across PICTs, despite overall low crime rates, crimes related to domestic, intimate partner, and family violence are persistently among the highest in the world, with the prevalence of IPV being 51% in Melanesia, 41% in Micronesia, and 39% in Polynesia (WHO, 2021). Police are increasingly being called to respond to domestic, intimate partner, and family violence. Especially in the Melanesian countries, police have had to also deal with inter-ethnic violence, political violence, and violence between private security providers, as well as violence in sorcery accusations. Across PICTs, cybercrimes are growing, with even governments being victims (Watson, 2021a, 2021b). Some PICTs have also become points of transit for organised and transnational crime related to the smuggling of drugs, wildlife, small arms, and migrants, as well as drug trafficking. Both the location of PICTs as a route from Asia and Latin America towards markets in New Zealand and Australia and the difficulty of policing the vast expanses of ocean that characterise

² Throughout the chapter, whenever possible, we report counts first, and then rates. This is because crime is a rare event in PICTs and, as such, rates are strongly impacted by population size, which leaves rates of places with small populations extremely volatile. This is true throughout PICTs with population sizes substantively less than 100,000 people. Also, although crime rates in cross-national comparisons are usually reported as per 100,000 inhabitants, given the small populations of many PICTs we report rates here as per 500 inhabitants.

³ In Figs. 3.1 and 3.2, numbers are included for countries for which we were able to access data. Also note that, reflecting some of the challenges of crime data discussed above, based on police records the crime rate for Tuvalu would appear to be 200/500 inhabitants in 2013 and 198/500 inhabitants in 2018, which would mean that Tuvalu has the highest crime rate in the PICTs. This seems unlikely. However, despite repeated follow-ups, no clarification was provided by the Tuvalu Police Service or the Tuvalu Ministry of Justice regarding these numbers. It is possible that traffic violations were counted in the crime data even though the data labelling in the reports does not indicate this and suggests otherwise. This is why Tuvalu is not included in Figs. 3.2 or 3.3.

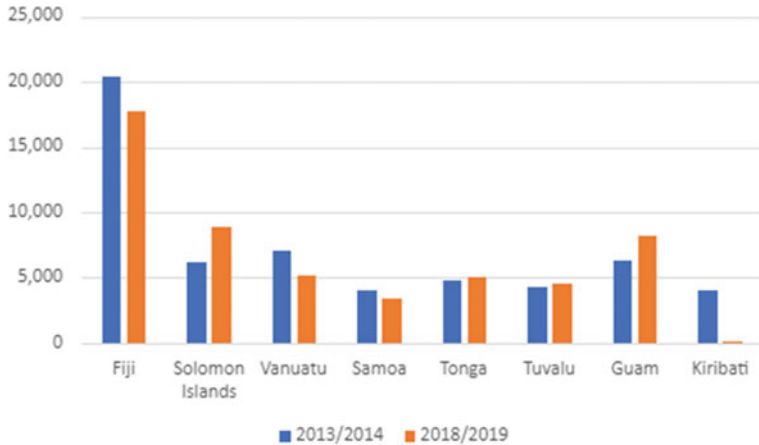


Fig. 3.1 Total police-recorded criminal offences in 2013/2014 vs. 2018/2019 (*Sources* Fiji: Fiji Bureau of Statistics, 2013; Fiji Police Force [personal communication, 2019]; Solomon Islands: Royal Solomon Islands Police Force, 2014, 2018; Vanuatu: Nichols et al., 2019; Samoa: Samoa Bureau of Statistics, 2013; R. Boodoosingh [personal communication, 2021]; Tonga: Tonga Police, 2014, 2019; Tuvalu: Tuvalu Police Service [personal communications, 2013, 2019]; Guam: Guam Police Department, 2015, 2020; Kiribati: Kiribati Police Service [personal communication, 2020])

PICTs have made them attractive for organised crime routes (Watson et al., 2021). Furthermore, in addition to environmental crimes that involve illegal fishing, logging, and trade of wildlife, PICTs continue to witness environmental crimes involving illegal disposal of waste, illegal development of land, and other activities directly harming the environment—often by foreign corporations (with problematic links to local political elites), but by local businesses and actors as well. Publics across PICTs also continue to worry about a range of state crimes, including corruption, police brutality, and other forms of human rights violations by their governments.

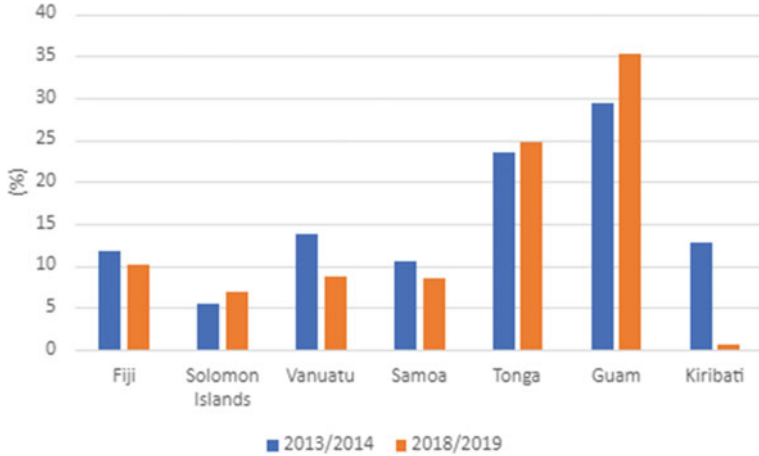


Fig. 3.2 Crime rates in PICTs per 500 inhabitants in 2013/2014 vs. 2018/2019 (*Sources* Fiji: Fiji Bureau of Statistics, 2013; Fiji Police Force [personal communication, 2019]; Solomon Islands: Royal Solomon Islands Police Force, 2014, 2018; Vanuatu: Nichols et al., 2019; Samoa: Samoa Bureau of Statistics, 2013; R. Boodoosingh [personal communication, 2021]; Tonga: Tonga Police, 2014, 2019; Guam: Guam Police Department, 2015, 2020; Kiribati: Kiribati Police Service [personal communication, 2020])

Non-Violent Crime

Non-violent crime refers to a crime that does not involve the use of force or cause injury to persons. While this type of crime includes a range of offence categories, in this section, we focus on trends in property crime and substance-abuse-related crime, as well as key factors driving these trends, and implications for policing.

Property Crime

Reflecting a global trend (Heiskanen, 2010), there has been a decline in property crime as a proportion of total crimes across the Pacific since the 1990s (Cain, 2001) and in the period 2013–2018 (except in Guam) (see Fig. 3.3). Nevertheless, motor vehicle theft, burglary, and house-breaking continue to be salient issues for the public. For example, the 2013 community perception study in Samoa indicated that crimes of theft and break-ins were considered to be in the top five most worrying crimes

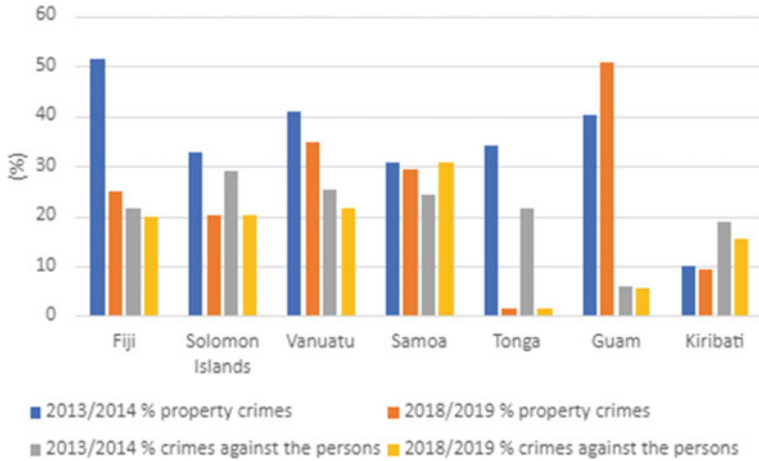


Fig. 3.3 Property crimes and crimes against the person as a proportion of total crimes in 2013/2014 vs. 2018/2019 (*Sources* Fiji: Fiji Bureau of Statistics, 2013; Fiji Police Force [personal communication, 2019]; Solomon Islands: Royal Solomon Islands Police Force, 2014, 2018; Vanuatu: Nichols et al., 2019; Samoa: Samoa Bureau of Statistics, 2013; R. Boodoosingh [personal communication, 2021]; Tonga: Tonga Police, 2014, 2019; Guam: Guam Police Department, 2015, 2020; Kiribati: Kiribati Police Service [personal communication, 2020])

for the population (Samoa Bureau of Statistics, 2013). In Guam, the community identified theft as the most common concern, followed closely by concerns about home invasions, burglaries, and trespassing (Watson et al., 2019). In contrast, however, the 2017 community perception study in Tuvalu (Watson, 2017) indicates that crimes of theft, stealing property, and damage to property remain low on the list of what both police and the public are concerned about.

Most of these crimes are understood to be opportunistic and a product of the high rates of youth unemployment across PICTs, increasing inequality and rapid urbanisation in the region (Adinkrah, 1995; Plange, 2000). However, despite the understanding that they are often opportunistic, it is important to note that the degree of organisation in these types of crime varies across the region—thus while the *raskols* (a generic term for criminals or a group of criminals in PNG) of Port Moresby (PNG) are involved in organised criminal (including violent) activity

(Goddard, 2005), *squads* (gangs) of young men (and sometimes women) in Port Vila (Vanuatu) hang out together and may sometimes engage individually in thefts (Kraemer, 2013). As such, in their work on Port Vila, Stern (2017) and Kraemer (2013) refer to the marginalisation and stigmatisation of especially young men from urban informal settlements in media and a public discourse on their criminality that does not align with the reality on the ground, where many groups of unemployed young men do important unpaid work for community.

Even though domestic vs. commercial property crimes indicate different aspects of (in)security, police-based records of property crimes are not disaggregated by domestic vs. commercial property crimes. Some studies have noted that commercial property crimes have reversed trends since early 2000 in Fiji (Duncan & Sharma, 2005) and since 2010 in PNG (Lakhani & Willman, 2014), with domestic break-ins becoming more common than commercial property crimes. This may be a result of increased investment in private security measures by commercial property owners. Dinnen (2020) notes that in PNG, the increased use of private security may make marginalised groups more likely to experience property crimes compared to privileged elites and corporate actors. This dynamic, which we also see globally, is likely true in the other PICTs. Duncan and Sharma (2005) argue that recorded property crimes (both domestic and commercial) in Fiji may be decreasing because of increased private expenditure by higher-income households and businesses on crime prevention, including security guard firms, and security doors, grilles, wiring, and alarm systems. Like Dinnen (2020), Duncan and Sharma (2005) argue further that the privatisation of self-protection means that lower-income households are more likely to become victims of property crimes and that these crimes are also less likely to be recorded and reflected in police data. Government investment in both more ‘boots on the ground’ and infrastructure—such as lighting and surveillance cameras—are also referred to when explaining the decrease in property crimes (see e.g., Neimila, 2019). However, these claims need to be examined more systematically and, at the moment, data to do this kind of analysis is missing. Moreover, analysis is also required regarding which neighbourhoods and communities benefit from these public investments and which are excluded. Specifically, crime victimisation surveys with representative samples that allow for neighbourhood-based and socio-economic analysis would be helpful in providing a more accurate and nuanced picture.

Substance-Abuse-Related Crime

Police data indicates that offences related to drunkenness, drug use, and consequent disturbance of the peace have increased across the region. This is supported by community perceptions. For example, in Tuvalu, the police and community identified alcohol-related crimes as the greatest concern (Watson, 2017, 2021). In Guam, 75.1% of the community listed substance abuse and 63.7% placed underage drinking as priorities (Watson et al., 2019). Men and youth are more likely to engage in problematic drug and alcohol use and to commit drug- and alcohol-related crimes; while women and girls involved in illicit drug use or experiencing drug addiction may engage in transactional sex and opportunistic crimes, and be at greater risk of experiencing sexual and physical violence. Accidents and deaths linked to driving motor vehicles under the influence are also a problem in the region.

There is a particular concern about substance abuse by youth and related juvenile delinquency that has been increasing since the beginning of the twenty-first century (Devaney et al., 2006; Noble et al., 2011; Plange, 2000). In the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the top three offences recorded were disturbing the peace, drunk and disorderly conduct, and different types of assault, usually recorded as being under the influence of alcohol (Noble et al., 2011). In Solomon Islands, alcohol-related crimes such as production and sale of *kwasa* (home brew) and drunk and disorderly conduct, as well as theft/property damage motivated by or conducted under the influence of alcohol, were identified as leading offences, especially among young men (Noble et al., 2011). In the FSM, thefts, especially by young people, have been linked to obtaining cash to buy alcohol and drugs (or electronics), and arrests usually note that young offenders are under the influence of alcohol (Noble et al., 2011). Lack of enforcement of regulations limiting access to underage alcohol consumption and single-session binge drinking is considered problematic practices in many parts of PICTs and are linked to disorderly conduct, disturbance of the peace, and sometimes assault. In Samoa, possession of illicit drugs continues to be among the most common crimes, especially among young male offenders. While alcohol and marijuana were the main concerns previously (Devaney et al., 2006), increased availability of methamphetamine (ice) and, to some degree, cocaine/heroin (see ‘Organised and Transnational Crime’, below) have become a concern and are linked to increased violence in distribution

processes, as well as in disorderly or violent conduct under the influence (Lyons, 2019a, 2019b).

Violence in the family, socio-economic inequalities and lack of employment opportunities, and political systems that marginalise large chunks of the population (the poor, cultural/ethnic minorities) continue to have an impact on patterns of substance abuse and related crimes. Persistent underinvestment in addressing substance abuse, at both proximate and holistic levels, is also a problem. Unlike in the North Pacific, where treatment programs specifically for substance addiction are available, treatment programs related to addiction are limited in the South Pacific countries and territories—being provided only in PNG, Fiji and Solomon Islands, and only through psychiatric hospitals (Devaney et al., 2006)—and stigma surrounding addiction continues to make drug users vulnerable to violence and additional criminal activity and violence (Al Jazeera, 2019). While police responses, especially with young people (and particularly young women), have often been to allow elders to mediate the situation, over time increasing concerns (often with links to violent crimes) have led to arrests and sentencing. It is important to note that when non-state interventions are used, they can involve physical forms of discipline, which can contribute to continued substance abuse (Noble et al., 2011). Corrections systems in PICTs do not often address addiction and therefore there is an increased risk of the persistence of addiction and ‘falling into’ criminal behaviour.

Violent Crime/Crimes Against the Person

Violent crime includes murder, serious sexual offences, grievous bodily harm, armed robbery, and car-jacking. Based on national police data, there is a five-year trend of decline in crimes against the person as a proportion of total crimes across the region, except in Samoa (see Fig. 3.3, under ‘Overview of Trends in and Social Dynamics of Crime in the Pacific’). At the same time, it is important to recognise that this trend does not capture the persistently high rates of different kinds of violence that women, men, and young people face across the region, especially within the family (Asian Development Bank, 2016; Eves, 2006; UNFPA, 2019).

Community and stakeholder perception surveys place the use and abuse of alcohol (and other drugs) as key factors in contributing to violent crime. However, research suggests that while alcohol may be

used specifically to ‘gain courage’, to work as a trigger in opportunistic crimes, to enable violence, or to excuse violence, other social factors are considered much more important in understanding the dynamics of violent crime (Carrabine, 2017; Eves, 2006). Recorded homicides and violent crimes usually note the use of weapons, including axes, bush/cane knives, *flipins* (slingshots with metal darts), and firearms. With the exception of PNG (as noted further below, under ‘Firearms Trafficking’), the availability and use of small firearms are not considered to be major issues in most of the region; however, in some PICTs small firearms are more commonly used in violent crime than figures would suggest, and their presence may be increasing through transnational crime networks (United Nation Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), 2016), which are examined later in the chapter (see ‘Organised and Transnational Crime’, below). Discussions of violence in PICTs also lead often to questions of violent Pacific cultures/masculinities. However, as Biersack notes, there is a contemporary political economy in the production of violent masculinities:

Whatever the link between violence and masculinity in the past, contemporary masculinity and its association with violence must be understood, at least to a degree, with respect to contemporary economic realities ... Throughout Pacific Island history, men have competed for prestige. Yet many men today lack a reliable income stream, an education and literacy and/or an ability to speak colonial languages and pidgins; as a result, they find themselves at the bottom of a socio-economic ladder that has no precolonial precedent. As a new underclass, they are ill equipped to operate in the new arenas of male competition and, thus, to perform masculinity, which was and still is crucial to their social standing. (2016, p. 206)

Police in PICTs must also respond to the use of customary practices of dealing with rule breaking, which can include violent forms of discipline. These practices then come into conflict with human rights frameworks that are embedded in the legal structure of many of the PICTs. Violence against children and the rights of the children (as noted further below: see ‘Youth Violence and Violence Against Children’) is one such area that police are having to negotiate, and another relates to the pluralistic systems of authority/justice that exist in PICTs. For example, in Tuvalu, police had to stop elders on one outer island from administering a physically violent punishment against a pastor who had broken the

community's by-laws (Amin, Watson, et al., forthcoming). In these situations, traditional or customary forms of authorities must be sanctioned by the police, but the police may often lack the resources and capacity to do so.

Homicide

Across Oceania, homicide rates on average have gone down since 1990 across all age groups, except in Fiji and Guam where homicide rates have increased since 1990. Figure 3.4 shows homicide rates in 1990 and 2017 in Oceania. Note that while homicide rates are mainly low in PICTs, the small populations of some of the countries mean that isolated incidents will inflate the rate. There is also internal variation in homicide rates. For example, in PNG, while the provinces of Gulf and Milne Bay have low rates compared to the national rate of 10.97 per 100,000 population, the city of Lae in Morobe province has rates of 60 per 100,000 population. Further, the UNODC (2019) *Global Study on Homicide* noted that records of causes of death, including homicide, are poorly recorded across the region and that homicide rates may be higher than measured. This is in part linked to the remoteness of many islands (most PICTs) and interiors (e.g., PNG and parts of Fiji) that lead to underreporting of all types of crimes, including homicide.

The UNODC (2019) study suggests that homicide in PICTs falls into three categories: inter-tribal/ethnic conflict, violent crime (including organised crime, hate crime, and brawls) and domestic violence. The politicisation of ethnicity and subsequent violence produce violent deaths in PNG, Fiji, Solomon Islands, and Tonga. Women account for between 10 and 44% of victims of violent deaths in Melanesia (UNODC, 2019).

Other than homicide, violence against the person occurs in multiple forms and overlaps with other forms of crimes. Unorganised interpersonal violence—such as fights in bars, between neighbours, or after drinking sessions—are usually between men and occur throughout PICTs. Police and publics blame alcohol, especially 'home brew' (Kessaram et al., 2016), and some rural communities in remote islands have banned alcohol during certain hours, days, or events (e.g., in Tuvalu and Kiribati). Other research indicates that while alcohol may be a proximate/immediate factor, rivalries, property contestations, or 'saving face' may also be at play (see e.g., Eves, 2006).

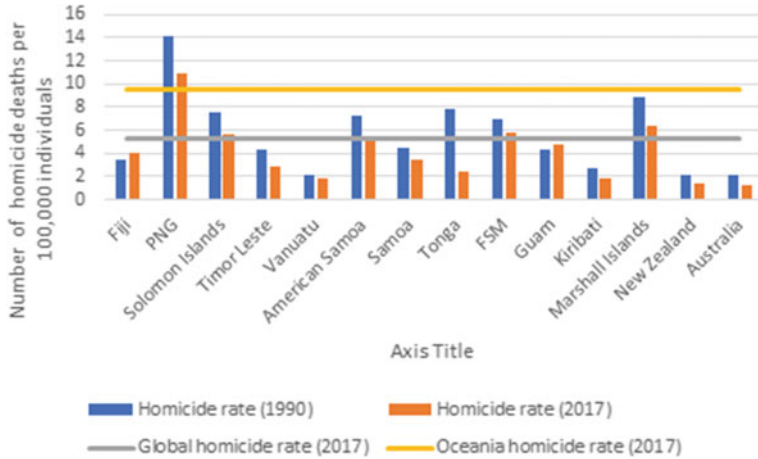


Fig. 3.4 Homicide rates in 1990 vs. 2017 in Oceania (*Source* Global Burden of Disease Collaborative Network, 2018; Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation, 2018; Roser & Ritchie, 2013. *Note* Homicide rates are measured as the number of deaths from homicide per 100,000 individuals)

Youth Violence and Violence Against Children

One form of violent crime that has become a concern relates to youth⁴ rivalries that break out into sporadic occurrences of violence between different secondary schools or gang-like groups (e.g., in Tonga, Samoa, FSM) or between neighbourhoods (e.g., in Fiji, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, PNG). Lee describes these kinds of violent acts in Tonga as:

intense inter-school rivalries that frequently erupt into violence including large-scale brawls in the streets ... [A boy] described being trapped on a bus with boys from a rival school who hit him repeatedly with a piece of

⁴ Definitions of youth in PICTs vary and tend to include a wider age range than the global definition of 15–24 years. In PICTs, the term ‘youth’ often includes young adults and is related to whether one is married and has children rather than just a specific age or employment experience and, as such, 15–35 years often captures the cultural meaning of youth better (Lee & Craney, 2019; Plange, 2000).

wood ... [to the point of requiring] plastic surgery to repair his face ... Some Tongans regard such experiences of violence as an inevitable part of adjusting to Tongan life. (2017, p. 85)

Some of these dynamics also overlap with drug distribution networks (as discussed under ‘Organised and Transnational Crime’, below). Others, as noted above, are linked to irregular or opportunistic thefts and property damage. Socio-economic inequalities, a discourse of certain groups of youth (e.g., deportees, diasporic youth ‘sent back’, unemployed youth) as ‘troublemakers’, and marginalisation of youth continue to be important drivers of these dynamics. For example, in the case of violence in Tongan secondary schools, a significant component relates to the enforcement of social hierarchies based on social status, class, gender, and ‘outsider/foreign’ (vs. ‘local/native’) in Tonga (Fa’avae et al., 2017; Lee, 2017). In the case of Fiji, these types of youth gang violence occur most often in social housing communities and informal settlements. Noble and colleagues (2011) confirm that young people were the main participants (though not the leaders) in riots and other forms of public violence/unrest in Tonga in 2006, in the ‘Tensions’ in Solomon Islands from 1998 to 2003.

Social media has also created a relatively new medium for producing violence (including physical harm or suicide) and harm through cyberbullying across PICTs (Fa’avae et al., 2017). While the knee-jerk reaction to the more dramatic forms of these incidences is to put more police on the ground or to increase surveillance and (physical) discipline of youth, a much more holistic approach is needed to address these dynamics, including creating more socio-economic opportunities for young people and making more space for youth voice and participation in decision-making forums (Fa’avae et al., 2017; Lee & Craney, 2019; Noble et al., 2011). How rule-breaking behaviour by young people is treated has become an important point of debate and discussion, with civil society organisations and some faith-based organisations advocating for steering away from punitive and exclusionary measures that further alienate and marginalise youth and increase the risk of continued delinquent and criminal behaviour (Heard, 2018; Noble et al., 2011).

Criminological and policy discussions of youth violence and delinquency need to consider how high rates of violence against children by family members and teachers in PICTs produce youth violence (Noble et al., 2011). A 2019 study conducted by Save the Children, World

Vision, Plan International, and ChildFund estimated that 4 million or 70% of children across the larger PICTs in Melanesia and Polynesia, and 2.8 million or 75% of children in PNG experience violent discipline at home (Suthanthiraraj, 2019) (see Fig. 3.5). The study also notes that the median rate of physical and sexual violence against adolescent girls (15–19 years) is 24.4% and 10.5%, respectively. Unfortunately, data on Micronesian and smaller Polynesian countries and territories is not available and, importantly, data on physical and sexual violence experienced by boys has not been documented. Other studies—such as that by Fulu et al. (2013), which includes data on PNG and Fiji—indicate that boys experience both physical and sexual violence at high levels and this contributes to a cycle of violence as boys mature into adulthood. Experiences of violent discipline in homes—especially in the context of changing family and communal structures of living in urban contexts, persistent socio-economic inequality, and a lack of mental health and other needed social services—have meant that young people are being drawn into substance abuse, being victimised into further violence, and perpetrating violence as well. In Fiji, a study commissioned by the Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation confirms that levels of neglect and violence experienced by both boys and girls across their childhood are high and severe (Meo-Sewabu, 2021).

The Pacific Youth Risk and Resilience Framework (Noble et al., 2011, p. 10) points to the importance of a looking at youth crime and delinquency holistically and developmentally. Many police officers emphasise that dealing with youth violence requires ‘upstream’ engagement with youth through multiple social actors, including social welfare officers, teachers, counsellors, community elders, leaders, and faith-based institutions. Meo-Sewabu (2021) also documents the need for a multi-stakeholder approach at different stages and spaces of youth development to address youth criminality and, in particular, the urgent need to deal with neglect of and violence against youth in their homes. Meo-Sewabu (2021) further emphasises the need to for cooperation and collaboration across the different agencies implicated in dealing with youth violence and violence against children.

Gender-Based Violence

Women, children, and sexual minorities continue to face regular and everyday forms of violence that are gendered in the Pacific. As Fig. 3.6 indicates, level surveys conducted between 2000 and 2018 on women’s

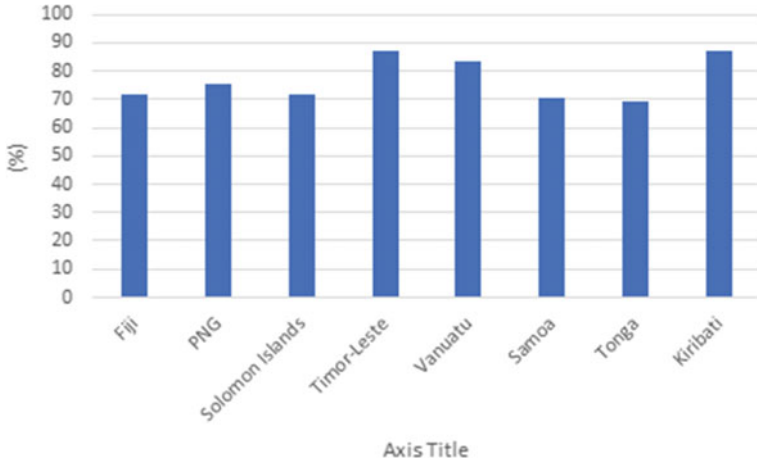


Fig. 3.5 Estimated percentage of children (1–14 years) experiencing violent discipline (psychological and physical) at home (*Source* Suthanthiraraj, 2019)

experience of violence, PICTs continue to have some of the highest rates of IPV in the world. Importantly, in the majority of PICTs, the violence experienced by women is perpetrated the most often by their partners; and when it is not their partners, it is often a family member or a teacher (kNOwVAWdata, 2020) (Table 3.1).

The surveys were conducted by various Women’s Crisis Centres in partnership with the UNFPA.

In most PICTs, girls (aged 15 years and above) and women are more likely to experience physical violence from their partners than non-partners. In Cook Islands, Samoa, and Tonga, women are more likely to experience violence from non-partners: see Fig. 3.7. For sexual violence against females since age 15, rates of non-partner violence are lower compared to sexual violence by partner across PICTs except in Nauru, Palau, and Tuvalu (see Fig. 3.7).

The high rates of VAW in PICTs are produced through an intersection of cultural norms that rationalise and normalise violence against wives/female partners (see Amin et al., 2020; Eves, 2006; Heard et al., 2020); cultural and religious practices that make it difficult for women to report violence (Forster, 2010; Thaggard & Montayre, 2019); political dynamics and practices that both marginalise women and de-legitimise

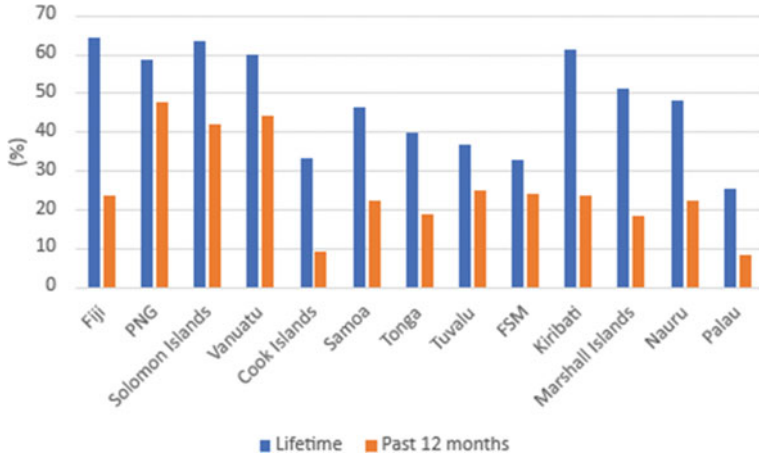


Fig. 3.6 Proportion of ever-partnered women disclosing experience of IPV (physical and/or sexual) (*Source* See Table 3.1)

Table 3.1 Years, survey methodologies, and age groups of IPV data in Figs. 3.6 and 3.7

	<i>Year of data collection</i>	<i>Survey methodology</i>	<i>Age group</i>
Fiji	2010	WHO	18–64
PNG	2016	DHS	15–49
Solomon Islands	2008	WHO	15–49
Vanuatu	2009	WHO	15–49
Cook Islands	2012	WHO	15–64
Samoa	2000	WHO	15–49
Tonga	2009	WHO	15–49
Tuvalu	2007	DHS	15–49
FSM	2014	WHO	15–64
Kiribati	2018	MICS-DHS	15–49
Marshall Islands	2012	WHO	15–64
Nauru	2013	WHO	15–64
Palau	2013	WHO	15–64

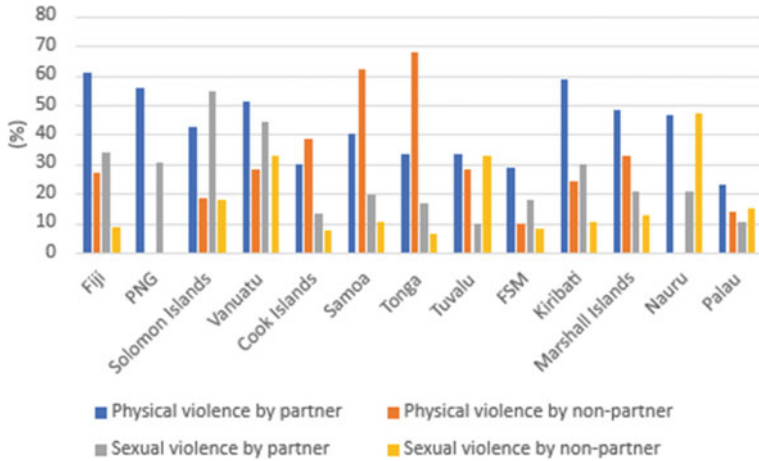


Fig. 3.7 Comparison of lifetime experience of women and girls since age 15 of physical and sexual violence by intimate partner vs. non-partner (*Source* See Table 3.1)

policing institutions (George, 2016); and socio-economic structures that exclude or subordinate women and constrain their ability to leave, change, or speak out against violent relationships (Macintyre, 2012). Additionally, in understanding dynamics of IPV, it is important to consider how (rapid) social changes have produced changes in gender relations, marital and sexual relations, and the ability to perform dominant masculinities (Eves, 2006). Related to the latter, a persistent failure of education systems and employment markets to socialise and integrate young people, especially young men, has led to a range of dynamics that further reinforce the use of violence as a way to ‘solve problems’, maintain (gendered) power, and assert control.

Therefore, while there has been a great deal of work by government ministries and civil society organisations with citizens, communities, and the police forces focused on raising awareness, gender training programs, and how to respond to VAW, some of the key problems of gendered inequalities in the state, in police institutions, in aid agencies, in the economy, and in cultural and religious institutions remain unaddressed.

As such, structures that reinforce gendered violence continue to be reproduced and thus limit the effectiveness of programs trying to reduce VAW (Eves, 2006; George, 2016; Macintyre, 2012).

The high prevalence of VAW is also linked to inter/transgenerational transmission of trauma and violence, in which children are subjected to violence. The boys often grow up to become perpetrators and the girls often grow up to become subjected to IPV. In addition, histories of colonial and other political forms of violence have been documented to produce inter/transgenerational trauma that becomes linked to high rates of violence (Carrington et al., 2018; Rose, 2014). More Pacific-focused research is needed on both inter/transgenerational trauma and the role of colonial histories in producing gender-based violence, including IPV in PICTs. Amin, Girard, and Calabrò write:

The topic of trans-generational trauma should be dislodged from the niche it still occupies, to consider both how boys and men re-enact their own trauma and how colonial violence has been internalised and absorbed in PICTs. The impact of the interactions between masculinities and large-scale processes like globalisation equally deserves more attention. (2022, n.p.)

Important ethnographic work that has attempted to do this includes the work on men, masculinities, and violence in PNG (Eves, 2006) and some work in Fiji (see e.g., Romanos, 2005). The use of some PICTs as military bases by foreign powers, authoritarian governments, hierarchies that exclude participatory processes of decision-making, and exploitative labour structures in local and international economies are all important in understanding how Pacific masculinities are shifting and their links to dynamics of IPV and VAW (Biersack, 2016).

IPV and VAW are recognised in many contexts as a public health issue and, as such, the place of policing and the judicial system in this approach needs to be considered carefully to avoid the kind of ‘securitised’ responses to IPV that increase state power without addressing the structural inequalities that produce IPV, sexual violence, and gender-based violence (Kapur, 2014). Relatedly, research on IPV, sexual and domestic violence among young people in PICTs makes clear that there is a change in perspectives related to what intimate relationships should look like and a desire for more egalitarian relationships. However, research shows that ‘intersections of identities related to gender, age, religion and

Table 3.2 Criminalisation of homosexuality in PICTs

<i>PICTs where homosexuality is not criminalised (as of 2020)</i>	<i>PICTs that continue to criminalise homosexuality (as of 2020)</i>
Fiji	PNG
Vanuatu	Solomon Islands
FSM	Cook Islands
Marshall Islands	Samoa
Nauru	Tonga
Palau	Tuvalu
	Kiribati

Source ILGA World (2020)

sexuality, with social gender expectations that support male leadership and hierarchical social systems' (Heard, 2018, p. ii), continue to produce not only violence but also mental health issues and self-harm, including contributing to risks of suicide.

While IPV has been the major focus of policy discourse in relation to VAW across PICTs, other gendered violent crimes against persons include those associated with sorcery accusations (primarily in PNG and other parts of Melanesia) (Forsyth & Eves, 2015) and those against the LGBTQA+ communities (Amin & Girard, 2020; Amin et al., 2020; George, 2008; Kanemasu & Molnar, 2017). In relation to the latter, the continued criminalisation of homosexuality in some PICTs (see Table 3.2) continues to reinforce the risk of violence by both community and state against LGBTQA+ individuals (ILGA World, 2020). Moreover, among PICTs, only Samoa has hate crime legislation (ILGA World, 2020). At the same time, while most PICTs have not enforced these laws and some have legislation that prevents discrimination by sexual orientation in employment and other spheres (e.g., Kiribati), they create an environment of insecurity for LGBTQA+ communities and continue to reinforce stigmatisation, marginalisation, and physical violence against sexual minorities by families, publics, and even the police.

ORGANISED AND TRANSNATIONAL CRIME

While organised and transnational crime are not necessarily linked, in PICTs as elsewhere many aspects of organised crime have transnational dimensions. Rapid economic globalisation and the location of PICTs as

part of major transport routes connecting metropolises in Asia, the Americas, Australia, and New Zealand, as well as the challenges of policing the vast area in which PICTs are located and often-weak institutional structures for crime prevention have made them vulnerable to both organised and transnational crime and ‘progressively transnationalise crime’ (Walton & Dinnen, 2019, p. 426). Schloenhardt summarises organised crime in PICTs as follows:

there is general consensus that organised crime can be found throughout the Pacific Islands and the Police Commissioner of New Zealand has been quoted saying ‘that criminal enterprises in the Islands account for \$300 billion annually’. Among the most significant types of organised crime in the South Pacific are narcotrafficking, migrant smuggling, and firearms trafficking. Money laundering is another important phenomenon associated with organised crime and the Pacific Islands have gained some notoriety in that respect. Accordingly, this issue is comparatively well researched and documented elsewhere. Evidence about trafficking in persons, illegal gambling, tobacco smuggling, and electronic crime is so far only anecdotal. (2010, pp. 281–282)

Organised crime and transnational crime have become a major concern for some in the region, with the Pacific Transnational Crime Network identifying in 2019 that illicit drug trafficking and related crimes pose ‘extreme risk’ across Micronesia, Melanesia, and Polynesia. While the structure of criminal organisations is not fully understood, the Japanese *yakuza* and Chinese criminal gangs are considered to have significant influence (Schloenhardt, 2019). The *yakuza*’s influence and activities are mainly in Guam and former US territories of Micronesia, especially in relation to illegal gambling and the trafficking of illicit drugs and firearms (Schloenhardt, 2010).

Drug Trafficking

Ethnic Chinese gangs are understood to have increasing control over local drug markets in non-Melanesian PICTs, and narcotrafficking from South America to Australia via Melanesian PICTs—especially Fiji and Vanuatu—has been identified as a longstanding organised crime problem that has been amplified with the increase of globalised trade in PICTs (Broadhurst et al., 2013; Schloenhardt, 2010). For example, in 2004, a joint operation run by Fijian and Australian police, called Operation

Outrigger, broke up a methamphetamine warehouse in Suva, valued as a €500 million bust and believed to be run by an Asian gang aiming to ship the drug to Australia, New Zealand, Europe, and the United States of America (Boister, 2017). Since then, there have been many more drug seizures in Fiji, including in 2007 and 2015 (UNODC, 2013, 2016). There were also seizures in Port Vila (Vanuatu) of cocaine worth US\$370 million in 2013 (Australian Associated Press, 2013). In addition, Tonga and Solomon Islands have become sites of these transnational drug-trafficking routes (Short, 2019). In 2018, cocaine (500 kg) was seized from a yacht in the Honiara marina in Solomon Islands. Like the 2004 raid in Fiji, the Vanuatu, and Solomon Islands seizures were the product of multi-agency transborder cooperation (Australian Associated Press, 2013; Short, 2019). Some PICTs have become bases for offshore money laundering and drug trafficking by criminal groups from other countries. For example, Michael (2014) reported that Port Moresby (PNG) has become a site for Australian bikie gangs to work with West African and Chinese criminal organisations for money laundering. Walton and Dinnen (2019) also point to how political elites in PNG are able to export illicit money into Australia through investing in property markets or via inflated invoices to lawyers that deposit money into Australian bank accounts. Further, some PICT governments have noted that the fishing industries and the decline in stocks in Palau, Solomon Islands, and Kiribati have become an opportunity for criminal networks to recruit fishermen and fisherwomen into drug and people trafficking (McVeigh, 2018).

One notable impact of transnational drug trafficking through PICTs is that some countries and territories are evolving from being 'just transit points' to becoming sites of drug production and distribution for local markets (Bohane, 2021; Lyons, 2019b). According to several different media sources, in Fiji, there has been a significant rise in 'busts' of methamphetamine that had been designated for local markets (from two cases in 2013 to 113 cases in 2018) (Boister, 2017; Lyons, 2019b; Sauvakacolo, 2020). On 25 February 2021, *The Fiji Times* reported that the Fiji Police Force had uncovered laboratories in the Western and Eastern Divisions producing methamphetamine (Vakasukawaqa, 2021). The transnational drug-trafficking routes have also created local drug markets in Tonga (Lyons, 2019b). In addition to methamphetamine and cocaine, other synthetic drugs such as Fentanyl have been identified as growing issues. For example, the Samoa Police Commissioner Fuiavailili Egon Keil at the Pacific Islands Chiefs of Police Conference in 2019

stated: ‘We don’t have the money, the resources, the funding. We don’t have the equipment. Sometimes we don’t have the training. For example, this new drug Fentanyl. It is a very dangerous, addictive drug’ (Short, 2019). Pacific transnational crime expert Jose Luis Sousa-Santos warned in 2019 that while Samoa has not become yet a site of locally widespread use of ice, Tonga and Fiji should serve as warnings (Nataro, 2019). Local ice markets in Fiji, Tonga, and other PICTs are being served by local networks of criminal groups and are exploiting marginalised youth, increased social inequalities, and a lack of sufficient proactive responses from governments and civil society (Lyons, 2019b; Nataro, 2019). The importance of producing a holistic response to these security and crime threats early on, before they become law enforcement issues, has been emphasised by Sousa-Santos and Pacific border security scholar Tevita Tupou (Bohane, 2021; Nataro, 2019).

Human Trafficking

Human trafficking is understood to be part of the dynamics of organised and transnational crime in PICTs. In particular, human trafficking into the garment, agriculture, tourism/hospitality, fishing, logging, mining, construction, and sex industries have been documented. Human trafficking into these sectors in PICTs occurs from China, Vietnam, India, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines, as well as from within PICTs (Joshua, 2019; Lindley & Beacroft, 2011; Reuters, 2019; Talebulal-Nuku & Kumar, 2021; US Department of State, 2020). In addition to the shared pattern of (sex) trafficking of women and girls (Pacific and non-Pacific) into the tourism and hospitality industries of PICTs, the US Department of State, 2020 *Trafficking in Persons Report* points to different forms of human trafficking:

- trafficking of individuals from Southeast and South Asia into construction industries in Vanuatu and the Republic of the Marshall Islands;
- trafficking of local and East Asian women and girls for forced child-bearing as part of international fraudulent adoption schemes in the Republic of the Marshall Islands;
- foreign nationals from Southeast Asia under forced labour on fishing and sea vessels in Fiji, Vanuatu, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the FSM (see also Carreon, 2020);

- trafficking of individuals (including foreigners, locals, and children) into logging, fishing, and mining industries in PNG and Solomon Islands;
- trafficking of individuals through PICTs (especially PNG) as transit points for illegal migration to Australia, New Zealand, and Canada.

Data collection efforts on human trafficking have faced many challenges (Pacific Immigrant Development Community (PIDC), 2010). Reporting of trafficking cases to authorities is understood to be limited, especially in the case of women and girls, because trafficked women and girls also face additional stigmatisation linked to sexual violence (presumed or real). Moreover, local recruiters and brokers are often linked up to either local or national-level economic and political elites and thus continue to operate without much disruption from policing agencies (Chaudhry, 2020; US Department of State, 2020). In addition, the commodification, distortion, and/or exploitation of customary practices (such as bride price,⁵ child swapping, and labour obligations) may be contributing to the increased risk of trafficking of both children and women in some PICTs, including Vanuatu and the Republic of the Marshall Islands. The use of *kastom* to justify practices also makes it difficult to investigate and prosecute elites (US Department of State, 2020). While the overall penetration of the cash economy and the associated exacerbation of socio-economic marginalisation and/or inequalities are understood to increase the risk and incidence of trafficking, environmental degradation-induced displacements in PICTs are also an important contributor.

Firearms Trafficking

Firearms trafficking has been identified as a longstanding problem in the Melanesian PICTs, especially PNG and Solomon Islands, and is understood to be occurring through organised crime at the domestic rather than transnational level (Koorey, 2016; McDowell, 2012). However, Koorey (2016) does note that the availability of at least 260,000 illicit firearms in Australia could become a problem due to a high demand for

⁵ Bride price—also called bridewealth or bride token—is a practice in some PICTs where money, property, or another form of wealth is paid by the groom or his family to the bride or her family.

arms in PNG and existing routes of exchange and trafficking via Torres Strait. Moreover, the UNODC (2016) reports that there have been instances of groups trafficking material for methamphetamine production also trafficking firearms. Nevertheless, Koorey notes that:

many illicit small arms – firearms essentially – are sourced from inside the country in which they are used, and recycled multiple times within it, and ... the security sector has been, or remains, both a source of supply and driver of demand. This is particularly so for the Royal Papua New Guinea constabulary. (2016, pp. 1–2)

While hard data on firearms possession is difficult to find, Alpers and Wilson (2014) note that rates of civilian-held firearms in Melanesia range from 0.35 guns per 100 people in Solomon Islands (equivalent to 1 gun per 600 people) in 2003 to 58.59 guns per 100 people in New Caledonia in 2013. These are the same numbers reported by the UNODC (2016) in its report on transnational crimes in Melanesia. In other parts of PICTs, the rates range from a high of 19.85 guns per 100 people in Niue to no privately owned firearms in Nauru or and Palau (UNODC, 2016). In PNG, while the overall rate is low, the number of civilian-held firearms was close to 71,000 in 2007 (UNODC, 2016). Alpers (2015) notes that Melanesia, with the exception of PNG, remains relatively gun free. Only New Caledonia and PNG allow registered handguns for self-defence, and firearms licences have been suspended in Solomon Islands (since 1999) and Fiji (since 2000) following the ‘ethnic tensions’ and the coup, respectively. While arms manufacturing is prohibited (as in PNG, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu) or prevented through not issuing manufacturing licences (as in Fiji), single-shot home-made guns are reported to be available in PNG, Fiji and Solomon Islands (Alpers & Twyford, 2003).

Raids of and thefts from police/military stockades—as well as, possibly, officers releasing arms in return for bribes—are considered to be the main mechanism through which trafficking in firearms is occurring (Schloenhardt, 2010). Koorey (2016) reiterates that the issue of illicit small arms in Melanesia should be understood as a problem linked to societal and governance problems and not a ‘gun problem’.

Extractive Industries, Corruption, and the Politics–Crime Nexus

The role of governance problems noted above in relation to firearms trafficking also raises questions about another aspect of organised and transnational crime, related to corruption and the role of public officials in facilitating criminal activities. This is particularly evident in analyses of organised and transnational crime related to wildlife trafficking and illicit extraction of natural resources, especially in the logging, agriculture, and fishing sectors in PICTs. Walton and Dinnen suggest that ‘the most significant organised crime in the region has involved the nexus between political elites and seemingly licit actors’ (2019, p. 419). They further state that while transnational drug, human and wildlife trafficking have become important areas of concern for law enforcement agencies, civil society organisations, and governments, ‘they pale in comparison – in terms of social and economic disruption – to other forms of “organised crime”, which involve elite politicians, government officials, private sector elites and intermediaries’ (Walton & Dinnen, 2019, p. 421).

Walton and Dinnen (2019) document the politics–crime nexus in PICTs in various resource industries, including logging and fishing. Human rights abuses of workers and landowners, illicit logging, and the corruption of public officials by technically legal and legitimate logging companies (often Asian) have been recorded in the logging industry in PNG and Solomon Islands. Similarly, the Australian company Getax has been accused of using different forms of inducements for the state of Nauru to gain access to and control over phosphate mining in the country, whereby local political elite and the Australian company profit at the expense of the public (Thomas, 2016 as cited in Walton & Dinnen, 2019).

Organised criminal behaviour involving politicians in the fishing sector, especially in the smaller PICTs, occurs in relation to obtaining fishing licensing and access agreements (Tsamenyi & Hanich, 2008). While governance of the fisheries has improved through regional cooperation that reduces incentives and opportunities for corruption and illegal activities (Walton & Dinnen, 2019). Keen et al. (2020) note that much more action is needed to increase transparency and efficiency around data collection, data sharing, data accessibility, and multi-sector, multi-agency cooperation to respond to the complex and sophisticated nature of transnational and organised crime in the maritime environment.

Deep sea or seabed mining (DSM) is another significant opportunity for criminal exploitation that is perhaps even harder to regulate than the logging and fisheries sector. Both climate change and the environmental impact of DSM, as well as the potential for illegal and illicit extraction, have been cited as major concerns in the 2021 Drawing the Pacific Blue Line campaign by the Pacific Network on Globalisation and other regional and national PICT non-governmental organisations, which calls for a complete ban on DSM (Pacific Blue Line, 2021).

The tourism industry, especially in relation to land development by foreign companies, is a site in which environmental harm is being produced through the lack of enforcement of different environmental laws. An example of this is the case in Fiji of Freesoul Real Estate, which has damaged and polluted a reef, disrupted traditional fisheries, and stopped other landowners from using the land (Tarai, 2020).

It is important to emphasise that many of the above dynamics are driven by unequal globalisation, increased precarity, a lack of local and participatory forms of decision-making about development and social change, and the politics–crime nexus discussed above. While Vanuatu, Palau, and even Solomon Islands have been able to create significant disruptions to and changes in the politics–crime nexus, Walton and Dinnen note:

Available evidence suggests that the greatest challenge is often not the detection of offences, but the development of effective strategies to disrupt the growing number of offenders involved in financial crimes in countries such as PNG. This challenge is exacerbated by the limited resources available to specialist units, such as Financial Intelligence Units (FIUs), the slowness of judicial proceedings, and the limited capacities of law enforcement to investigate and prosecute such offences, thereby contributing to the high levels of impunity which enable this kind of offending to thrive. (2019, p. 427)

Cybercrime

Police across PICTs face a relatively new but growing threat related to cybercrime, which includes both violent and non-violent crime types. Information and communication technologies (ICTs) have enabled the ‘transformation of crime beyond people, places and even identifiable crimes’ (Findley, 1999, p. 2). While much cyber-offending extends the

limits of existing offences such as fraud and scams, cybercrimes are unique in their scale and reach and, as such, cannot be simply understood as analogous to similar activities in the non-virtual/physical world (Jewkes, 2007; Lee, 2018).

Data on cybercrime is even more difficult to aggregate than data on other crime. However, available statistics suggest that international cybercrime rates may be very high, with organised money-laundering schemes via ICTs estimated to be at 2–5% of global GDP (Lee, 2018). Global North data suggests that it is the second most reported economic crime and often involves fraud and identity theft. In PICTs, cyber-offences have economic costs due to the ‘clogging’ of networks in already limited-bandwidth countries and territories. Given the reliance of many PICTs on ICTs, they also pose a risk for disaster management and recovery.

In PICTs, police forces have had to respond to different forms of cybercrime. Most PICTs do not have strong formal institutions to address cybercrimes and only some PICTs have established cybercrime units in police departments, which sometimes consist of just one or two people. It is important to understand that some aspects of cybercrimes may not even be legislated under criminal laws (Ahmadu, 2006; Angelo, 2009). Legislation specifically defining crime related to ICTs has been slowly put into place since 2003 in PICTs but there continue to be gaps (Kshetri, 2013). The relatively underregulated financial systems in some PICTs (e.g., Nauru) make them a attractive sites for online money laundering.

Money laundering, credit card and other financial fraud, malware/ransomware, and data breaches are all potential sources of cybercrime in the Pacific landscape and perpetrators are not typically PICT residents (Kshetri, 2013). The availability of free domain names, and cheap or free web addresses from some PICTs, make PICTs an ideal environment for cybercrime. For example, Pitcairn Island, Niue, and Tokelau were noted in 2008 to be the top three economies generating spam and phishing per capita. The Tokelau domain (.tk) was the second most used domain for malicious registrations, with fake websites created to advertise teaching jobs for which applicants had to pay visa fees. Finau, Samuwai, and Prasad (2013) note that Cook Islands lost US\$100,000 through a 2007 telephone hijacking incident, while in 2008 companies and the government in the Republic of the Marshall Islands faced large losses in a two-day denial of service attack. In 2019, the Samoan Central Bank announced that the cryptocurrency OneCoin had compromised

Samoa's financial system, implicating Samoan businesses churches and individuals (Smith, 2019).

Cybercrime committed by PICT residents includes 'sextortion', use of social media to recruit young people (including children) for organised paedophilia rings (e.g., in Fiji: see Tabureguci, 2007 as cited in Kshetri, 2013) and production of child pornographic sites (e.g., in Tonga: see Sager et al., 2002 as cited in Kshetri, 2013). Cyberbullying, cyber-stalking, and/or social media crimes leading to violence, self-harm, and/or suicide are important issues, and revenge porn and extortion via social media have also been noted as problems. For example, in 2017, 900 nude images of women from Fiji (mainly students from the University of the South Pacific and Fiji National University) were being sold and/or used for extortion (Chanel, 2017). There have been also instances of social media being used for pyramid schemes where Indigenous conceptions of gifting have been exploited to target victims.

There have been increased efforts by PICT governments to regulate cyberspace to prevent cyber-offences, as well as increased cooperation between agencies. However, there is also concern that fears about cyber-crimes are being used to regulate political opposition. For example, Nauru, Samoa, Solomon Islands, PNG, and Fiji have either proposed or enforced very strict legislation limiting access to social media in the name of dealing with fake news, incitement of violence, and cases of suicide/violence linked to social media-based bullying and harassment (Watson, 2021a). These types of restrictive policies are often seen by the public as coinciding with political interests to maintain power and limit criticism of the government.

STATE CRIMES: EXCESSIVE USE OF FORCE BY POLICE

Finally, as legal and political processes have placed state and police actions under greater media, activist, and citizen scrutiny (especially with the availability of internet and social media), PICT police forces have also had to deal with questions of use of excessive force, corruption, and abuse of power (Brimacombe et al., 2018). Cases of criminal use of force by police in Fiji have reached international media, including acts that have resulted in deaths in custody and one incident involving police throwing a man off a bridge (Anthony, 2020; RNZ, 2020). Anthony (2020) reports that Fiji police officers have been charged with 400 offences in a five-year period. Amnesty International has repeatedly noted that Fiji police and

security forces are able to use excessive force with impunity, especially since the 2006 coup, and reports in 2016 suggest that this has continued even after the technical restoration of democracy (Amnesty International, 2016). Use of excessive violence has been reported by either victims or whistleblowers, and some officers have been charged and convicted in Tonga (RNZ, 2017, 2018), Samoa (Tupufia-Ah Tong, 2019), and Tuvalu (Amin, Watson, et al., 2022).

In understanding excessive use of force by police, it is important to consider the larger institutional and socio-political dynamics. The ‘bad apple’ argument is a problematic one. Instead, what is required is institutional review—not only examining how police structures and policing cultures produce violence, but also investigating how political authoritarianism, a culture of impunity of political and economic elites, and placing police in situations that require other services (e.g., social work or counselling) shape the relationship between police and communities and the use of excessive force by police.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has reviewed the trends in crime in PICTs, paying special attention to crime and violence related to young people and women, as well as noting the increasing concerns about substance-abuse-related crimes, and organised and transnational crimes. Most of the crime trends and dynamics discussed in the chapter are driven by persistent economic, socio-political, and gender inequalities in the region, as well as by political and decision-making structures that are often authoritarian, unequal, or exclusive. While local dynamics are important, the chapter has also shown that many dimensions of crime in PICTs have a global component. For example, global mobilities are having an impact on crime dynamics in the region, including the deportation of Pacific youth in the diaspora ‘back’ to the Pacific, and PICTs being transit points in trafficking of wildlife, drugs, and people. The intensification of extractive processes at the global level, despite advocacy in the region for environmental protection, has also produced ‘opportunities’ for organised criminal activity that are leaving PICT communities more vulnerable to displacement, being victimised by crime and being recruited into illicit activities. The chapter has also shown that advocacy impacts on responses to crime. Specifically, social mobilisation, civil society activism, and regional and international legal frameworks and conventions have led to the criminalisation of forms

of violence against women and children and also created pressures on police to respond more—and respond better—to gender-based violence and violence against children.

The chapter has highlighted that there are important gaps in crime data and crime research. Increasing systematic data collection on crime, perception of crime, and victimisation would help to better inform policymaking and police action in reducing crime. Importantly, data analysis and policy responses require what Forsyth et al. (2020) call a ‘Pacific people’s criminology’, in which criminological research and data collection: (a) become grounded in Indigenous methodologies and multi-stakeholder and interdisciplinary collaborations; and (b) directly engage with publics and policymakers in multiple forums to support advocacy and mobilisation for change and reform.

Forsyth et al. (2020) also argue that the focus on crime prevention (instead of crime control) would expand policy and action beyond police and judiciary systems. The socio-political dynamics noted in this chapter that are shaping crime and criminality require not only context-specific policing responses, but also holistic approaches that involve multiple stakeholders, locally and regionally. In the next three chapters, some of these different approaches are discussed in the context of plural policing, women in police and transnational policing.

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