

Three strikes for repeat burglars

ACT is announcing a policy to recognise the real harm repeat burglary does to its victims, so the small group of repeat offenders who treat breaking into homes and businesses as a career finally face real, predictable consequences.

Burglary is one of New Zealand's most common and harmful property offences. It is an invasion of the places people should feel safest: their homes, businesses, and communities. Around 184,000 New Zealanders experienced burglary in the most recent year, with much of the harm driven by prolific repeat offenders.

People released from prison for burglary have among the highest rates of reimprisonment and resentencing within 24 months of release – based on the latest data, 56.8% of people released from prison for burglary are back behind bars within two years, and 73.3% are resentenced¹.

While burglary carries a maximum sentence of 10 years' imprisonment under the Crimes Act, real-world sentencing and parole outcomes often fall well short of what victims would expect for repeat offenders. The result is a cycle where prolific burglars can cause repeated harm to households and communities before facing consequences that properly reflect the scale of their offending and protect future victims.

01 A clear warning on the first and second strike

Currently, even when the same burglar keeps committing the same crime, subsequent burglary convictions are largely treated as separate events. A repeat burglar can keep offending without any clear escalating consequences. The result is weak deterrence, prolific offenders testing the system, and victims left exposed to the same offenders.

ACT will treat each qualifying burglary conviction as a strike. For a first and second conviction, normal sentencing within the existing Crimes Act ten-year maximum continues, standard parole eligibility applies, and judges keep full discretion. The court will issue a formal, recorded warning each time, creating a clear legal record that a third conviction will trigger a mandatory sentence. Strikes will not apply to under-18s.

02 A mandatory minimum on the third strike

Even the country's most prolific burglars, some with dozens of convictions, are routinely sentenced well below the ten-year maximum and paroled early, only to reoffend. The consequences should match the scale of the offending.

ACT will require a minimum of three years without parole for a third or subsequent burglary conviction, or where three or more burglaries are sentenced together. Judges keep full discretion between that three-year floor and the ten-year maximum, with tougher sentences expected where aggravating factors are present.

The research

Police recorded 58,460 burglary victimisations in 2025.² However, the Ministry of Justice estimates the real number of victimisations at around 184,000³, suggesting burglary is significantly underreported.

In 2025, there were 4,256 burglary convictions.⁴ 1,877 adults were sentenced with burglary as their most serious offence, and only 925 of these were sentenced to prison.⁵ The average burglary sentence is 382 days (based on data for the 10 years to 2023).⁶

Based on Corrections' latest 24-month recidivism rates⁷, around 1,165 of those sentenced to prison or community-based sentences can be expected to be resentenced within two years of release from prison or beginning their community sentence.

Corrections does not break down its data in a way that can be precisely measured against ACT's proposed Three Strikes for Burglary regime. However, ACT estimates the policy would increase the prison population by hundreds, not thousands.

Even if every burglar were imprisoned as a matter of course, that would mean 952 extra prisoners a year. ACT's policy is more targeted: mandatory imprisonment would apply only to repeat burglars on their third or subsequent conviction, or offenders convicted of three or more burglaries in a single case.

Your property should be safe. Three Strikes for Burglary means three convictions and the minimum sentence kicks in. No more warnings, and no more discounts. Prisoners can't commit burglary, so households and businesses get their safety back.

1 Corrections, [Annual Report 2024 - 2025](#)

2 New Zealand Police, [Victimisation Time and Place](#)

3 Ministry of Justice, [New Zealand Crime & Victims Survey](#)

4 Stats NZ, [Charges finalised for adults by offence type calendar year](#)

5 Stats NZ, [Adults convicted in court by sentence type - most serious offence calendar year](#)

6 Corrections, [Official Information Act response](#)

7 Corrections, [Annual Report 2024 - 2025](#)