

05 October 2022

C157774

S 9(2)(a)

Tēnā koe S 9(2)(a)

Thank you for your email of 14 September 2022 to the Department of Corrections – Ara Poutama Aotearoa, requesting information about gang statistics in prisons nationwide. Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA).

Keeping the public safe and helping people to stop offending are Corrections' top priorities. We recognise that effective gang management in prisons and in the community is a crucial aspect of achieving this.

Gangs in various forms have existed in New Zealand communities and prisons for several generations and are heavily embedded in parts of the community. In recent years there has been an increase in the proportion of the prison population with identified gang affiliations, mirroring the growth seen in gang membership within the wider community. The proportion of people in prison with gang affiliations has been steadily increasing over the last thirty years, with the latest numbers showing around 35 percent of the prison population, at any time, has an affiliation to a gang.

Gang affiliation is a known indicator of violence and it is recognised that gang members are over-represented in acts of disorder and other incidents in prisons. Corrections is determined to ensure that prisons are safe environments that promote the safety of staff and aid the rehabilitation and reintegration of people we manage – free from gang intimidation, violence and the manipulation of people and controls that aid illicit activities and anti-social behaviour.

Corrections takes all reasonable steps to discourage people from gang membership by providing programmes and opportunities to support them to disassociate themselves from gangs and related activities. This can involve moving people to different units or prisons, building alternative support networks, or accessing services such as tattoo removal. Assistance can also include individually planned rehabilitation initiatives that help gang affiliated people address their offending behaviours, and support them to build sustainable and law-abiding lifestyles.

People in prison can be identified as having a gang-affiliation by various means, including one or more of the following:

- Gang tattoos/markings;
- Gang documentation/paraphernalia
- Information from other agencies;
- Admission to staff;
- Staff observations; and/or
- Intelligence information from other sources

You requested:

The number of gang members in New Zealand prisons, broken down by gang affiliation and by location.

You further advised on 16 September 2022 that you required the most recent statistics held by Corrections.

Please see Appendix One for a breakdown of people in prison with a recorded gang affiliation as at 31 August 2022, by gang and location.

When reviewing the figures provided in response to your questions, note that Corrections' gang-affiliation figures represent any person with a known connection to a gang, and this data does not differentiate between those who are confirmed patched members, associates or prospects. Noting that your questions refer to *gang-members*, the parameters of your request have been adjusted accordingly.

Quarterly statistics related to the total prison population can be found on Corrections' website: <https://www.corrections.govt.nz/resources/statistics>.

Please note that this response may be published on Corrections' website. Typically, responses are published quarterly, or as otherwise determined. Your personal information including name and contact details will be removed for publication.

I trust the information provided is of assistance. I encourage you to raise any concerns about this response with Corrections. Alternatively, you are advised of your right to also raise any concerns with the Office of the Ombudsman. Contact details are: Office of the Ombudsman, PO Box 10152, Wellington 6143.

Ngā mihi



Ben Clark
National Commissioner