

22 April 2024

C179734

[REDACTED]

Tēnā koe [REDACTED]

Thank you for your email of 21 March 2024 to the Department of Corrections – Ara Poutama Aotearoa, requesting information about staffing levels, prison capacity and the prison population. Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA).

Corrections is responsible for managing approximately 9,500 people in prison and 26,000 people in the community. We are a 24/7 operation, with 17 prisons and a significant number of Community Corrections sites across the country. We also deliver rehabilitation and treatment programmes, employment and training, health services, mental health and addiction support and accommodation and reintegration services to people in prison and the community.

As has been widely reported, we are currently managing ongoing staffing pressures, alongside many other organisations and businesses around the country. We fully acknowledge the pressure this has placed on our people working in prisons, which is why we are making a concerted effort to recruit, retain and train frontline staff.

We have a significant recruitment effort underway, involving a newly launched recruitment campaign, strengthened recruitment processes, improved onboarding processes, and continuous work underway to improve staff safety. As a result, we've seen an increase in the number of job applications for new corrections officers. As at 19 March 2024, we had received 26,794 applications since 1 October 2022, with 1,356 people appointed into corrections officer roles and many more in the recruitment pipeline. Overall, frontline staffing levels are increasing thanks to the lift in recruitment and a reduction in turnover.

Retention is also a priority for Corrections. Our staff are our biggest assets, and we are committed to finding ways to hold on to their experience and expertise, especially in such a tight labour market.

A number of staff retention measures have been implemented across Corrections, including:

- Continuously working to improve staff safety
- Investing in the capability and training of our frontline staff
- Implementing new rosters
- Continuing to work with our union partners on matters concerning staffing levels and staff safety
- Improving our wellbeing initiatives, including injury management, wellbeing, and health promotion.
- Making sure people have pathways to build long-term careers at Corrections.

We also anticipate that the new collective agreement ratified by our union partners in November 2023 will have a positive impact on staff retention, with changes including improved pay and benefits, as well as safety and wellbeing provisions.

You requested:

The latest (as of 20/03/24) corrections officer staffing levels broken down by prison (Roles, employed, vacancies, contractors).

The latest (as of 20/03/24) number of open beds, on-site population, and physical capacity of each prison across New Zealand.

Please refer to Appendix One for staffing levels and the onsite prison population, open beds (operational capacity) and physical beds (maximum capacity) available for use in our prison network.

Caution is urged when drawing conclusions from the current number of vacancies shown, as the number of vacancies reported is not necessarily an indication of the level of staffing challenges a particular site is experiencing. We report vacancies as positions which are established but are currently unfilled. However, operational requirements at prison sites can mean not all vacancies require filling.

In addition, the number of open beds across prisons is not static and is based on a number of factors. These include the availability of staff to meet required ratios of staff to prisoners and the need to separately manage certain groups such as remand and sentenced prisoners, people with different security classifications, people with multiple gang affiliations and those who are subject to voluntary or directed segregation. Our prison network has more than 11,000 physical beds.

Corrections does not decide who is in prison and who is in the community – this is a matter for the Courts and New Zealand Parole Board. We have enough capacity to safely manage anyone that is remanded into Corrections' custody.

Managing changes in demand is a daily part of our business, and we constantly review the entire prison network to ensure our staffing numbers and facilities around the country can meet the demands of the current prison population.

In recent years, we have seen an increase in the remand population (44 percent of the total population), which has driven an increase in the overall prison population. In response to this and to prepare for any future population increases, we have been working through several measures to ensure we are well placed to safely manage anyone remanded into our custody. These include adapting rosters to improve efficiency, opening additional capacity, and reconfiguration of the prison population to ensure we have capacity for the right security classifications in the right places. We are also currently developing a new facility at Waikeria Prison, which will provide an additional 500 physical beds.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R Powell'.

Rebecca Powell
Deputy Chief Executive (Acting)
People and Capability

| Corrections Officers ¹ by site/facility – 26 March 2024 | | | |
|--|--|------------|-----------|
| Site/Facility | FTE Establishment (Current) ² | Actual FTE | Vacancies |
| Auckland Prison | 334.10 | 331.20 | 2.90 |
| Auckland Region Women's Corrections Facility | 229.20 | 205.48 | 23.73 |
| Mt Eden Corrections Facility | 468.00 | 459.70 | 8.30 |
| Northland Region Corrections Facility | 233.90 | 223.93 | 9.97 |
| Spring Hill Corrections Facility | 326.60 | 350.00 | -23.40 |
| Waikeria Prison | 303.80 | 266.00 | 37.80 |
| Tongariro Prison | 159.20 | 134.70 | 24.50 |
| Whanganui Prison | 248.20 | 227.80 | 20.40 |
| Hawke's Bay Regional Prison | 291.70 | 270.00 | 21.70 |
| Manawatu Prison | 141.80 | 130.00 | 11.80 |
| Arohata Prison | 100.00 | 81.00 | 19.00 |
| Rimutaka Prison | 401.40 | 345.00 | 56.40 |
| Christchurch Men's Prison | 425.70 | 349.85 | 75.85 |
| Christchurch Women's Prison | 96.20 | 89.50 | 6.70 |
| Rolleston Prison | 167.50 | 142.00 | 25.50 |
| Otago Corrections Facility | 260.40 | 215.05 | 45.35 |
| Invercargill Prison | 95.70 | 73.00 | 22.70 |

¹ Includes Corrections Officers, Senior Corrections Officers and Principal Corrections Officers.

² This includes staff we are actively recruiting for future capacity, as well as staff required to operate current capacity.

| Prison Capacity and Population by site/facility – 20 March 2024 | | | |
|---|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Site/Facility | Onsite Population ³ | Operational Capacity ⁴ | Maximum Capacity ⁵ |
| Female Network | | | |
| Auckland Region Women's Corrections Facility | 345 | 377 | 462 |
| Arohata Prison | 121 | 139 | 173 |
| Christchurch Women's Prison | 137 | 160 | 256 |
| Female Total | 603 | 676 | 891 |
| Male Network | | | |
| Northland Region Corrections Facility | 536 | 548 | 652 |
| Auckland Prison | 641 | 620 | 680 |
| Mt Eden Corrections Facility | 985 | 1,117 | 1,357 |
| Auckland South Corrections Facility | 955 | 960 | 960 |
| Spring Hill Corrections Facility | 816 | 818 | 986 |
| Waikeria Prison | 444 | 455 | 460 |
| Tongariro Prison | 360 | 420 | 422 |
| Whanganui Prison | 511 | 549 | 581 |
| Hawke's Bay Regional Prison | 569 | 616 | 789 |
| Manawatu Prison | 247 | 251 | 290 |
| Rimutaka Prison | 844 | 900 | 1,118 |
| Christchurch Men's Prison | 820 | 826 | 964 |
| Rolleston Prison | 451 | 460 | 504 |
| Otago Corrections Facility | 478 | 516 | 600 |
| Invercargill Prison | 174 | 176 | 191 |
| Male Total | 8,831 | 9,232 | 10,554 |
| Network Total | 9,434 | 9,908 | 11,445 |

³ This is the population managed by staff at prison sites. It does not include people held at offsite facilities such as mental health facilities and police custody.

⁴ Beds on capacity that are open and staffed. Please note, the term 'operational capacity' and 'open beds' are used interchangeably.

⁵ This is the total number of physical beds, including beds that might be temporarily closed due to repairs, maintenance, or staffing levels. These beds could be used if required, subject to maintenance and staffing levels.