

03 May 2022

C149840

S 9(2)(a)

Tēnā koe S 9(2)(a)

Thank you for your email of 28 March 2022 to the Department of Corrections – Ara Poutama Aotearoa, inquiring about the annual figures of people in prison with gang affiliations per year from 2009 to 2022 to date. Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA).

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 people 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 to new areas, building alternative support networks, or accessing services such as tattoo removal.

It can also include individually planned rehabilitative initiatives that help gang affiliated people address their offending behaviours, alongside support to address the ongoing drivers that lead to and maintain a person's gang affiliation or membership.

You requested:

Could I please obtain annual figures for the total prisoners (including those on remand) with gang affiliations, and broken down by specific gang and ethnicity? Can these please be per year from 2009 to 2021, and for the most recent month possible of 2022?

Please find attached Appendix One which contains the annual figures requested of people in prison with gang affiliations as at 30 June each year from 2010 to 2021 and figures generated on 28 February 2022 broken down by ethnicity and specific gang.

This data exclude a small number of people who are in Corrections custody but have been transferred to offsite locations, such as a mental health facility, so may differ slightly from figures previously published elsewhere.

Information relating to gang affiliation was not centrally recorded by Corrections prior to 2010. Figures for 2009 are not readily retrievable therefore your request is partially refused under section 18(f) of the OIA, as the format in which the information is held cannot be made available without substantial collation or research.

In accordance with sections 18A and 18B of the OIA we have considered whether affixing a charge, extending the time limit, or consulting with you would enable us to provide a full response to your request. As Corrections would need to manually review thousands of historic records to compile this data, we do not believe these options would enable the request to be granted in this instance.

You will note from the attached statistics that the majority of gang members in prison identify as Māori. Māori are similarly over-represented across the general prison population. Corrections is committed to delivering improved outcomes for Māori and their whānau, so that we can begin to address the significant over-representation of Māori in the corrections system. For more information, you may wish to read Hōkai Rangi, Corrections' all of departmental strategy, available here:
https://www.corrections.govt.nz/data/assets/pdf_file/0003/38244/Hokai_Rangi_Strategy.pdf

Note that Corrections' ethnicity records rely on self-reporting information, and the people we manage are not required to report their ethnicity. Individuals may also declare more than one ethnicity. The data provided relates to their preferred recorded ethnicity.

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



Rachel Leota
National Commissioner