

22 November 2023

C174672



Tēnā koe 

Thank you for your email of 20 October 2023 to the Department of Corrections – Ara Poutama Aotearoa, requesting information about gang affiliations, contraband and assaults. Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA).

### **Gang affiliations**

Gangs in various forms have existed in New Zealand communities and prisons for several decades and are heavily embedded in parts of the community. Gang violence and other anti-social activity is not something Corrections can resolve or manage alone. Social and welfare issues, employment, education, health and mental health services, and support for families and communities all need to combine to reduce the impact of gangs. As it has in the community, the proportion of people in prison identified as gang members has steadily increased over the last thirty years, where approximately 37% of the prison population has gang affiliations.

We take all reasonable steps to discourage prisoners from gang membership by providing programmes and opportunities to support prisoners disassociating themselves from gangs and gang related activities. This can involve moving to new areas, building alternative support networks, or accessing services such as tattoo removal. Pathways to exit gangs can also form part of a broader suite of rehabilitation programmes, which support people to build sustainable and law-abiding lifestyles.

Corrections also takes steps through individual gang management plans at prison sites, to reduce the risk present in any unit with gang members present. This can include, for instance, operational responses to moderate contact between gang members within a unit during unlock times.

You have asked:

1. *How many prisoners in Invercargill Prison, Whanganui Prison and Manawatu Prison have known gang affiliations and what portion (percentage) of the prison population do they represent, respectively?*
2. *How do these numbers compare to 2022, 2021, and 2020?*

The table below provides numbers of those in prison who have been identified as having gang associations and what percentage of the prison population that number represents, at that time. The information is provided as a snapshot as at 30 June for the years 2020 to 2023. The data is provided for Invercargill, Manawatu and Whanganui Prisons, as requested.

Caution is urged when comparing prisons as prisons differ in size, remand/sentence population and the security classification of prisoners accommodated. Equally, the type of prison population accommodated may fluctuate at the same prison, over time. Quarterly statistics are available on our website.

Site and date	Gang association	Gang association %
<b>Invercargill Prison</b>		
30/06/2020	39	23%
30/06/2021	20	18%
30/06/2022	25	22%
30/06/2023	43	28%
<b>Manawatu Prison</b>		
30/06/2020	88	39%
30/06/2021	93	39%
30/06/2022	69	30%
30/06/2023	84	38%
<b>Whanganui Prison</b>		
30/06/2020	189	36%
30/06/2021	154	37%
30/06/2022	138	36%
30/06/2023	167	34%

3. *What are the names of the gangs to which the prisoners with known gang affiliations at Invercargill Prison, Whanganui Prison and Manawatu Prison belong to and how many prisoners identify with each gang?*
4. *How do these numbers compare to 2022, 2021, and 2020?*

The table below provides the information captured in questions 1 and 2, broken down by the name of gang.

Site and gang name	30/06/2020	30/06/2021	30/06/2022	30/06/2023
<b>Invercargill Prison</b>				
Bandidos MC	1		1	1
Black Power	4		1	2
Bloods			1	2
Crips	2		1	1
Finks MC				1
Head Hunters MC	1	1	1	2
Hells Angels MC	1			
Killer Beez	5	1	3	3

King Cobra				2
Mangu Kaha			1	
Mongrel Mob	19	14	7	22
Nomads				2
Other			1	
Road Knights MC	2		1	
Tribesmen MC	1	1	3	2
White Power	3	3	3	3
Wolf Pack			1	
<b>Manawatu Prison</b>				
Aotearoa Natives			1	
Bandidos MC			1	
Black Power		9	18	13
Black Power Outbackz			1	1
Bloods				3
Crips	3	1	1	
Evil Souls	4	9	7	4
Head Hunters MC	6	4	4	7
Hells Angels MC	4	4	2	3
Killer Beez	5	1	1	5
King Cobra	1	2		1
Mongrel Mob	23	23	14	25
Never Snitch Krew	1		4	
Nomads	22	26	14	12
Rebels MC	3	2	1	2
Tribal Huks				1
Tribesmen MC		3	2	1
Uru Taha			1	
Westside - Tauranga			1	1
Westside Outlawz	2			
White Power	2	1	2	
<b>Whanganui Prison</b>				
Bad Troublesome Ward	1			
Bandidos MC		2	1	1
Black Power	60	42	37	40
Bloods	4		1	3
Comanchero MC				2
Crips	2	3	2	4
Evil Souls			1	3
Filthy Few MC				1
Greasy Dogs	1	1		1
Head Hunters MC	9	10	8	8
Hells Angels MC	5	10	6	4
Highway 61 MC	4	1		
Killer Beez	6	4	1	4

King Cobra	1	1	3	2
Mangu Kaha		1		1
Mongols MC			1	1
Mongrel Mob	50	40	34	44
Natives	1			
Never Snitch Krew				1
Nomads	22	14	19	22
Omerta				4
Other	1	1	1	1
Rebels MC	1	5	5	6
Stormtrooper			1	2
Tribesmen MC	4	1	1	1
Uru Taha	14	13	15	8
Westside - Tauranga	1			
Westside Outlawz	1	2		
White Power	1	2	1	3
Who Fucken Kares		1		

### **Contraband**

The safety and security of our sites, staff, visitors, and the people we manage is our top priority. Contraband can create significant safety risks in prisons. We place significant emphasis on the prevention and detection of contraband introduction in prisons and we are constantly working to stay one step ahead of new methods used to introduce contraband.

Contraband includes alcohol, communication devices, drugs, drug paraphernalia, tattoo equipment, tobacco, tobacco paraphernalia, weapons, and other miscellaneous items that people in prison could use in inappropriate ways.

Some people go to extreme and elaborate lengths to introduce contraband into prison. Contraband may be concealed on a person's body when they come into the prison, posted in with mail or property, thrown over perimeter fencing, or smuggled into the prison by visitors. Sometimes the people we manage place a significant amount of pressure on their partners, friends, or associates to risk attempting to bring contraband into prison for them.

Methods we use to prevent contraband from entering our prisons include:

- searches of vehicles and people entering prisons
- using scanners and x-ray machines at entry points
- extensive prison perimeter security
- camera surveillance in prison visit rooms, along perimeter fences and at entry points
- requiring people in prison to wear closed overalls when in visiting areas to prevent contraband being hidden on them
- checking prisoner mail and property for contraband
- random and targeted monitoring of prisoner telephone calls
- specialist detector dog teams that patrol prison perimeters, visitor areas and cells
- prohibiting visitors who attempt to bring contraband into prisons.

We were also the first agency in New Zealand to train our detector dogs to detect new psychoactive substances, including synthetic cannabis. Our detector dog teams have a range of searching capabilities and can also detect drugs, mobile phones, tobacco, and illicitly brewed alcohol.

When a person in prison is found to be in possession of contraband they are charged with an internal misconduct and depending on the type of the item found, they are referred to the New Zealand Police who are responsible for laying criminal charges. If a visitor is found to be in possession of contraband, they are issued a prohibition notice that prohibits the person from entering prison grounds for a specific timeframe. Depending on the type of contraband, this could be escalated to New Zealand Police.

5. *How many contraband items were found at Invercargill Prison, Whanganui Prison and Manawatu Prison respectively, broken down by item type, annually from 2020 to present?*
6. *How many throw overs (over the fence) were discovered at each prison by year and what were they?*

Appendix One (tab titled 'Contraband') provides the total number of contraband items found at Invercargill Prison, Manawatu Prison and Whanganui Prison for 2019/20 to 2023/24, as at 30 October 2023. This information is provided by financial year in line with our standard reporting conventions. The financial year runs from 1 July to 30 June. The information provided for the 2023/24 financial year is as at 31 October 2023, therefore, the data is subject to change until the end of year count.

A table (tab titled 'Contraband Categories') outlining definitions of Corrections' standard primary, secondary and tertiary contraband categories has been included in Appendix One for your reference. The tertiary category 'Other' is used when all other categories do not apply. This category could include items such as lengths of wire, hair clips or articles of clothing that are prohibited.

When analysing any fluctuations over time, note that our incident reporting system does not report whether the contraband was found within the secure perimeter of the prison or outside of the prison (for example in the carpark). Corrections' prisons also have varied prison populations, security classifications and physical layouts. We caution against drawing conclusions about the data provided as contraband incidents are therefore not comparable between sites.

Each incident within the data provided is categorised by staff at the prison where contraband was found. When reviewing these figures, note that we rely on individual sites to enter information into a central system in an accurate and timely matter.

Throwovers are recorded under the 'Other' category. The throwover tab provides information as to what those items were, and they are not in addition to the ones captured in the other category of the contraband tab. Also note that the information has been collated by manually reviewing each incident report that was categorised as a throwover. It

is important to note that, should a future request be submitted which extends the timeframe or amount of prisons, we will need to consider whether substantial collation and research applies.

You may be aware that Invercargill Prison is situated in the city, with residential streets running alongside it. This means it is easier for the public to throw items over the fence than it would be at other prison sites around the country. CCTV has been installed along the fence to deter this activity and record evidence for any Police investigation should people attempt to throw over items.

### **Assaults**

Our staff manage some of New Zealand's most dangerous people in an extremely complex and challenging environment. Prisons can be volatile environments and many of the prisoners our staff work with can behave unpredictably and act without warning. We have a number of processes in place to safeguard the welfare of staff and people in prison, and resources available for staff requiring additional support. We have a zero-tolerance policy toward violence of any kind.

The reality is the threat of violence is something we cannot eliminate entirely, but we do everything possible to minimise this risk. We have invested significantly in training and tools to keep our staff safe. This includes tactical skills, such as de-escalation, through to the provision of stab resistant body armour, on body cameras and the expanded deployment of pepper spray.

We have also worked with Corrections Association of New Zealand (CANZ) and the Public Service Association (PSA) to develop the Violence and Aggression Joint Action Plan, and all prison sites now have an individual site safety plan to address violence and aggression. These plans are led by the Prison Director in consultation with local site union delegates. Some of the actions achieved to date through the Violence and Aggression Joint Action Plan include:

- Corrections has worked alongside Police to use the 105 online reporting tool to report staff assaults. The 105 online reporting tool enables our staff to report assaults directly to Police through an online form, allowing Police to take action in a consistent and transparent way
- Delivery of capability uplift training. Up to the end of August 2023, 2,025 frontline custodial staff have now been trained in the Tactical Communication course offered by CERT. This is 53 percent of the cohort.
- Continuing the delivery of hostage and suicide training across all prison sites.
- The Personal Protective Equipment available to staff has been reviewed and is considered fit for purpose. New Body Worn Cameras have been rolled out to all staff
- Post Incident Response Team (PIRT) training is well embedded and there is an ongoing process to deliver training as more PIRT officers are freed up for training or recruited
- A post-incident psychological support service has been secured and is available to staff.

7. *How many incidents of prisoners assaulting corrections staff were reported at Invercargill Prison, Whanganui Prison and Manawatu Prison respectively, broken down by item type, annually from 2020 to present?*
8. *Could we please ask for a breakdown of the seriousness/injuries of these incidents?*
9. *What action was taken (repercussions) against the offending prisoner in each incident?*

Any person in prison who assaults another may be held to account by way of an internal misconduct that may result in a loss of privileges. Where appropriate, the assault is referred to the New Zealand Police who are responsible for laying criminal charges. The outcomes of internal misconducts are held on the individual's file and not collated centrally. To provide the repercussion of the assaults within scope would require substantial collation and research as every misconduct will need to be checked and verified manually. Therefore, this request is refused in accordance with section 18(f) of the OIA, substantial collation and research.

As per section 18B we have considered whether consulting the requestor would assist to make the request in a form that would remove the reason for the refusal. However, we do not consider that the request could be refined in this instance. We have also considered whether to affix a charge or extend the time limit for responding. However, given the scale of the request we do not consider that this would be an appropriate use of our limited publicly funded resources.

10. *For the cases classified as assaults resulting in serious injuries, could we please ask what happened?*

Please see the tab titled 'Injuries sustained – serious' in Appendix One for anonymised details of injuries sustained from a serious assault that took place at Invercargill Prison, Manawatu Prison and Whanganui Prison from 2019/20 to 2023/24, as at 31 October 2023.

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



Leigh Marsh  
National Commissioner