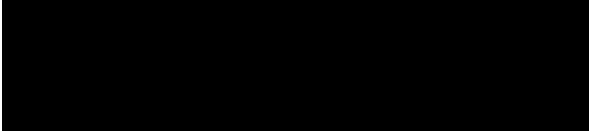


11 February 2026

C208628



Tēnā koe 

Thank you for your email of 11 January 2026 to the Department of Corrections – Ara Poutama Aotearoa, requesting information about assaults in prison. Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA).

Assaults in prisons, whether against other prisoners or frontline staff, are unacceptable. Corrections staff come to work every day to keep New Zealanders safe. They deal with some of New Zealand's most challenging people, and do an exceptional and brave job in often very difficult circumstances. Prisons can be volatile environments, and many of the prisoners our staff work with can behave unpredictably and act without warning.

Every assault is taken seriously, and I expect any prisoner who resorts to violence to be held to account. This may be through internal misconduct charges, a change in security classification, or referral to Police for consideration of criminal prosecution.

In recent years Corrections has had an increasing focus on ensuring that all incidents of assault, regardless of whether they result in injury, are recorded.

For ease of response, some of your questions have been reordered and answered together. You requested:

- 1. The total number of recorded assaults by prisoners against Corrections staff across all New Zealand prisons between 1 January 2025 and 1 January 2026.*
- 2. A year-by-year total of assaults by prisoners against Corrections staff for each of the past five calendar years, where this information is readily available.*
- 3. For the period 1 January 2025 to 1 January 2026, a breakdown of assaults by the role or occupation of the staff member assaulted, including prison officers, healthcare staff (such as nurses), and any other recorded categories.*
- 4. For the same period, a breakdown of assaults by the general type or classification used by the Department.*
- 5. A prison-by-prison total of assaults against Corrections staff for the period 1 January 2025 to 1 January 2026.*
- 6. Identification of the prisons that recorded the highest number of assaults against Corrections staff during that period.*

7. *A comparison of the total number of assaults against Corrections staff during 1 January 2025–1 January 2026 with the total recorded during 1 January 2024–1 January 2025.*
9. *Any summary trend information already held by the Department showing how assaults against Corrections staff have changed over the five-year period from 2020 to 2025.*

These parts of your request, for prisoner-on-prisoner and prisoner-on-staff assault statistics, are refused in accordance with section 18(d) of the OIA, on the basis that this information requested is already publicly available. Corrections publishes a range of statistics on our website quarterly, including information and statistics on prisoner-on-prisoner and prisoner-on-staff assaults in prison, which we provide nationally as well as by prison, from the 2015/16 financial year onwards. Corrections' data on assaults is broken down into three categories: serious, non-serious, and non-injury, with definitions provided for each category. This information can be accessed at: [Assaults in prisons | Department of Corrections](#)

In response to question 3, Corrections doesn't report on prisoner on staff assaults in the level of granularity you have requested, as the victim's specific role or occupation is not recorded in a readily retrievable format. However, we can confirm that the majority of assaults are against Corrections Officers, including Senior Corrections Officers and Principal Corrections Officers, with a small proportion of assaults against medical staff.

8. *Where an increase is identified between these periods, any high-level commentary, summaries, or analysis already held by the Department that discusses factors contributing to the increase.*

A number of highly complex factors contribute to violence in prison. Over 80 percent of the prison population have convictions for violence in their offending histories and more than 90 percent meet the criteria for a lifetime diagnosis of a mental health or substance abuse disorder.

Additionally, a significant number have a gang affiliation which is a known predictor of violence. In recent years, there has been an increase in the proportion of the prisoner population who are gang affiliated, which mirrors growth in gang membership in communities. Gang members are over-represented in acts of disorder and violence in prison, and are also known to incite other people in prison to carry out violent acts on behalf of the gangs.

A growing proportion of the prisoner population is on remand, and there is a strong statistical association between remand status and incidents of assault within prison. In addition, a growing proportion of the prisoner population have histories of extensive methamphetamine use which is associated with significant and lasting impacts on mental and emotional functioning, including issues such as anger control.

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.

Corrections has invested in training and tools to keep our people safe. This includes training in de-escalation techniques and interpersonal and tactical communication skills, through to stab resistant vests, body worn cameras, and pepper spray.

We also worked with the 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 General Manager in consultation with local site union delegates.

The next phase of this plan, called 'Safer Prisons', was launched in October 2024 to ensure we are adaptive and responsive to the current challenges and risks of the prison environment. The Safer Prisons Plan takes the foundation of the Violence and Aggression Joint Action Plan and creates a focused plan to improve safety and wellbeing at our prisons. It comprises four workstreams: improving prison operations; understanding prison profiles; focusing on the wellbeing of our people; and managing gangs.

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 hope this information is helpful. I encourage you to raise any concerns about this response with Corrections. Alternatively, you are advised of your right to 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 blue ink, appearing to read 'Leigh Marsh', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Leigh Marsh
Commissioner Custodial Services