

Introduction Around 500 offenders are sentenced to imprisonment each year for sex offences, which is only about 7 percent of total receptions. However, their sentences tend to be significantly longer than the average. Consequently, they spend longer periods in prison, and thus comprise a significant proportion of the prison population, a proportion which is slowly but steadily increasing. For this reason, as well as the fact their crimes are very serious, and the risks to public safety of any subsequent re-offending, they are an important focus for rehabilitation as well as post-release management.

This report defines as a sex offender any person who is convicted and sentenced to a Corrections-administered sentence for offences within the ANZSOC (Australia/New Zealand Standard Offence Classification) category of sexual offences. A “child sex offender” someone who is serving a prison sentence for a sexual offence involving a victim under the age of 16 years. “Adult sex offenders” are all of the remainder; most are serving sentences for sex offences against adult victims, but the offences of some may not have had a defined victim (e.g., offences involving indecent publications or images).

Many offenders are convicted and sentenced for multiple offences, and for some of those included in various counts here, the sex offence may or may not have been the most serious offence in the mix of offences for which the person was convicted. This issue is clarified by data presented in figure 18.

Unless specified, all numbers in this report are “snapshot” figures, that is, offenders serving a prison sentence on a given point in time.

Offenders Figures 1 and 2 show the number of offenders in prison who were, on the date given, serving a sentence for a child or adult sex offence. Also depicted on the graph is the number who had ever served a sentence for a child or adult sex offence (inclusive of the former).

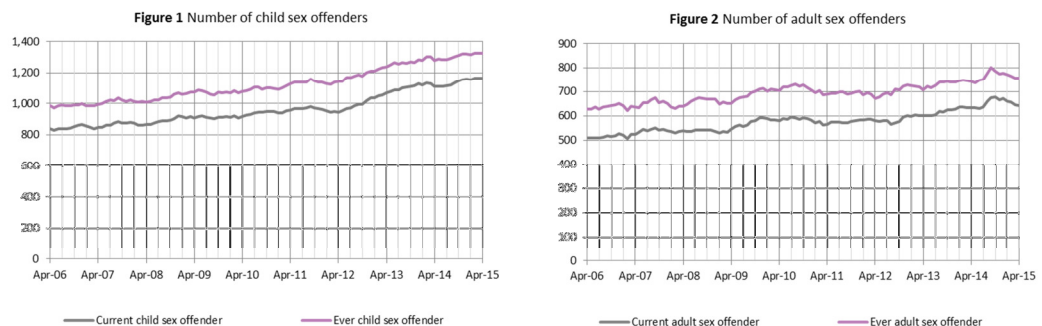


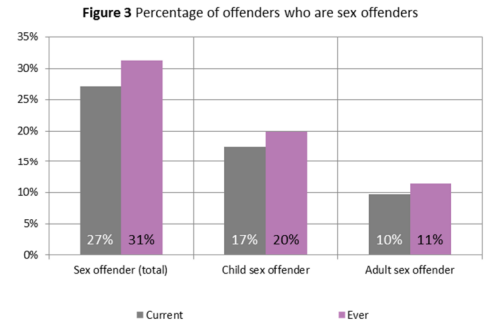
Figure 1 shows the number of sentenced prisoners who are imprisoned for a child sex offence and those who have ever been imprisoned for a child sex offence.

The two series in figure 2 count those who are imprisoned for an adult sex offence and those who have ever been imprisoned for an adult sex offence.

Just over a quarter (27 percent) of all sentenced prisoners in April 2015 were serving a sentence for a sex offence (see figure 3).

Almost a third (31 percent) of sentenced prisoners in April 2015 have at some time (including current sentence) been sentenced for a sex offence.

The proportion made up by child sex offenders is 7 percentage points higher than that of adult sex offenders.



Gender Of the 1,805 offenders who are serving a sentence for a sex offence in April 2015, only 2 are women.

The number of women in prison who are sex offenders is very low, and has remained at this level since 2006, peaking at 9 in December 2013. The number of men in prison who are sex offenders has been increasing consistently since 2006.

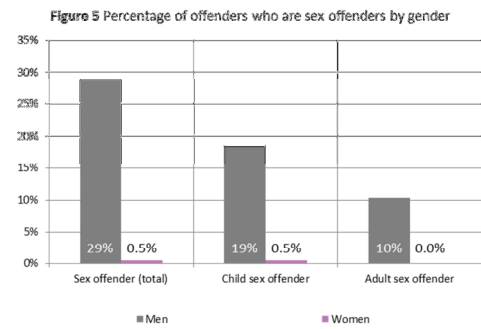
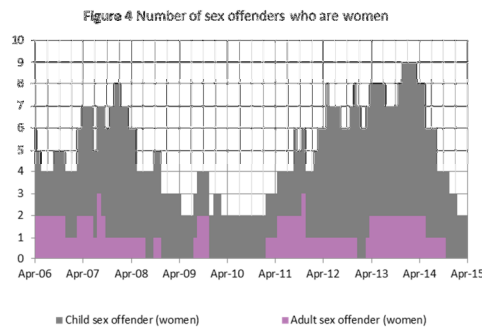
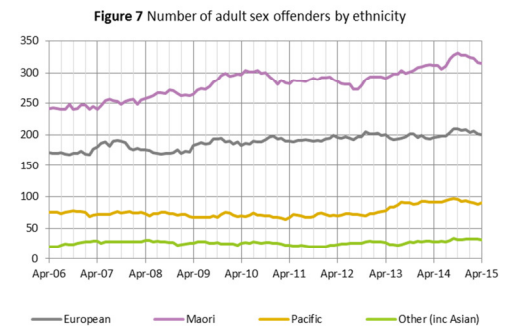
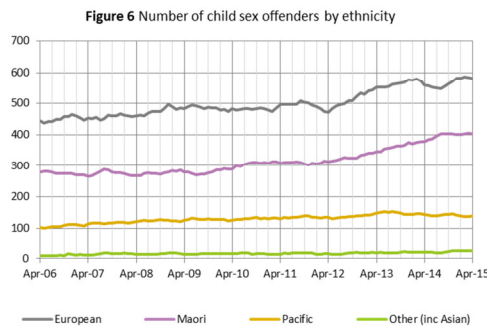


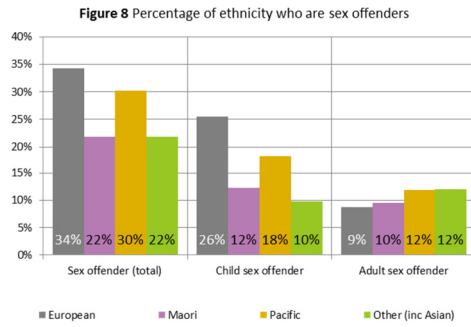
Figure 5 shows the percentage of all male prisoners who are sex offenders compared with the percentage of women prisoners.

Ethnicity Figures 6 and 7 show the number of child sex offenders and number of adult sex offenders by ethnicity.



European prisoners account for half of all child sex offenders (51 percent) at April 2015. This is a small decrease from 2006, when European prisoners accounted for 53 percent of the child sex offender population (European prisoners comprise 35 percent of the total sentenced prison population).

Maori prisoners, who comprise 50 percent of all sentenced prisoners, accounted for 35 percent of child sex offenders. This has increased from 34 percent in 2006. On the other hand Maori prisoners account for 49 percent of adult sex offenders at the end of April 2015.



Overall, sex offenders (current offence) are predominantly of European ethnicity, especially in the make-up of the child sex offender sub-group.

Figure 8 shows the percentage of each ethnicity sub-group of prisoners who are sex offenders.

Figure 9 shows the ratio of prisoners who are adult sex offenders or child sex offenders, broken down by ethnicity. For European prisoners, 1 in 11 prisoners is an adult sex offender and 1 in 4 prisoners is a child sex offender.

“Other” (including Asian) ethnicity prisoners are much less likely to be sex offenders in prison: 1 in 8 prisoners is an adult sex offender, and just 1 in 10 are child sex offenders.



Age Figure 10 indicates the age of sex offenders at the time of commencing their sentence over the last 9 years. This reveals that relatively few were under 20 years (around 5 percent), and a significant proportion were in older age brackets – over 40 years of age.

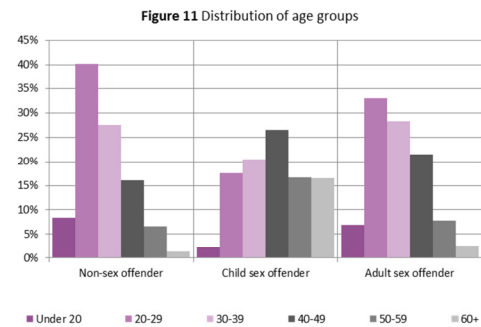
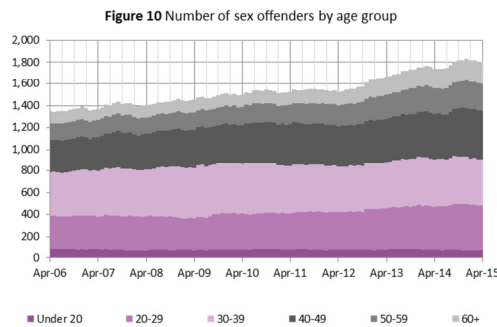
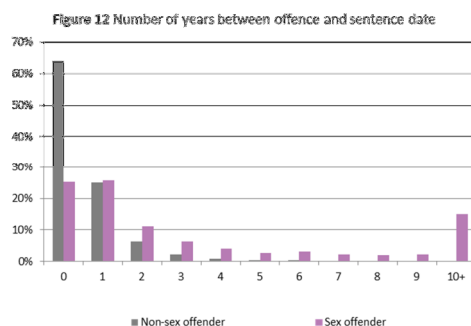


Figure 11 shows the distribution of age between the different cohorts in April 2015.

The average age of child sex offenders is somewhat higher than for the wider prisoner population: 33 percent of child sex offenders are aged of 50 or over, which contrasts sharply with the fact that less than 10 percent of other prisoners are over that age.

The age profiles of non-sex offenders and adult sex offenders are not significantly different. The non-sex offender group is predominantly made up of offenders under 40 (76 percent), whereas for adult sex offenders 68 percent are under 40.



Of significant contribution to the older age group is the period between the date of the offending and sentencing. While half of all sex offenders were sentenced within 2 years of offending (compared with 90 percent of non-sex offenders), 15% of sex offenders offenders were not sentenced until 10 or more years after the offence. Figure 12 shows the distribution of offenders over the number of years between the offence and sentence dates.

Figure 13 shows the mean age of prisoners at commencement of their current sentence in April 2015.

The mean age of a non-sex offender at sentence commencement is 30 years. This is only 2 years lower than adult sex offenders (32). Child sex offenders have a much higher average age which is 43 years

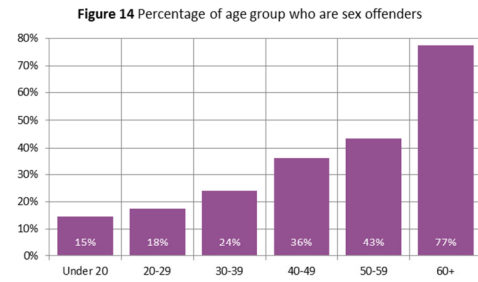
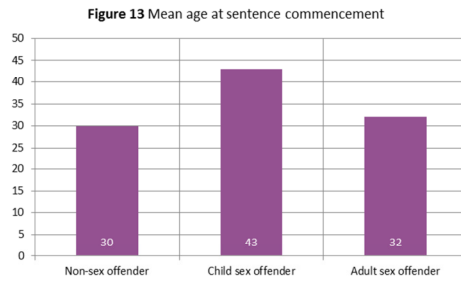
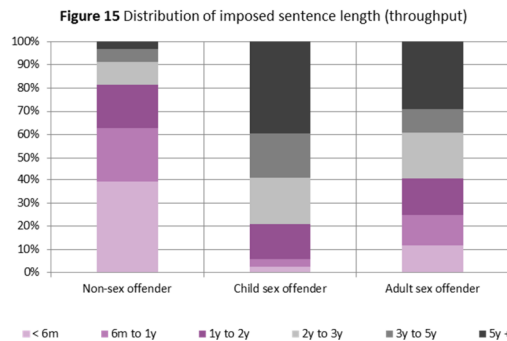


Figure 14 shows the percentage of all prisoners in each age group who are sex offenders. Clearly, as age increases, the proportion of prisoners who are sex offenders increases. Almost 80 percent of prisoners aged 60 and over are sex offenders. This is almost double the rate of those in the 50-59 age group.

Imposed sentence length

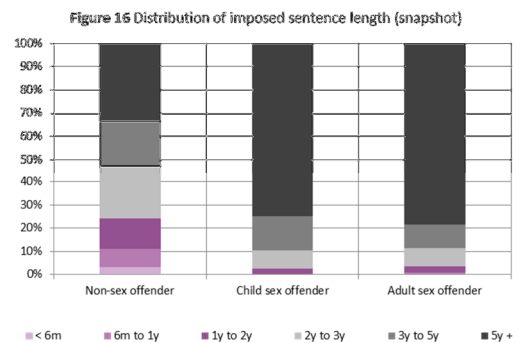


Sex offenders and non-sex offenders receive sentences of markedly different imposed length. Figure 15 shows the distribution of imposed sentence lengths for all offenders who started a prison sentence in the calendar year 2014.

Over 60 percent of non-sex offenders starting a prison sentence are sentenced to 1 year or less. This is significantly higher than child sex offenders, where only 6 percent of prison sentence starts are for 1 year or less.

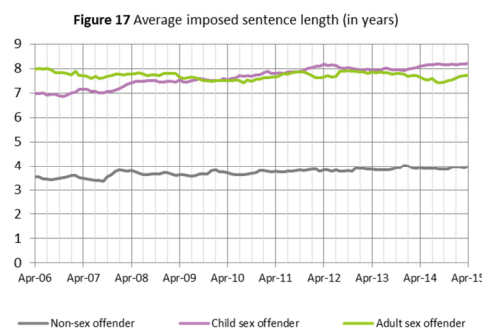
While over 80 percent of non-sex offender starts are sentenced to 2 years or less, only 21 percent of child sex offenders and 39 percent of adult sex offenders are sentenced to terms under this threshold.

Figure 16 shows the distribution of imposed sentence length on any given day. While around 35 percent of non-sex offenders in prison are serving sentences of greater than 5 years, sentences longer than this length are being served by 78 percent of adult sex offenders and 75 percent of child sex offenders.



As Figure 17 reveals, average imposed sentence lengths of sex offenders are almost double the average imposed lengths of sentence of non-sex offenders.

In 2006 adult sex offenders had an average imposed sentence length of approximately 1 year more than child sex offenders. Since 2006 the average length for adult sex offenders has not changed, while the average length for child sex offenders has increased, making it the longest average sentence length for any offence group other than Life Sentences for murder.



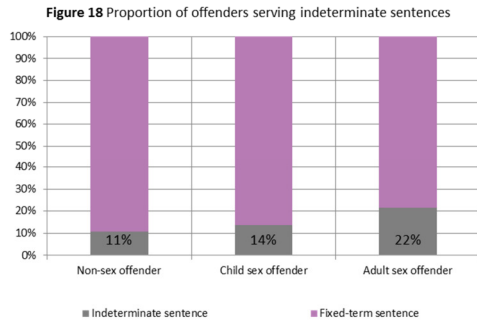


Figure 18 shows the proportion of offenders serving indeterminate sentences at the end of April 2015.

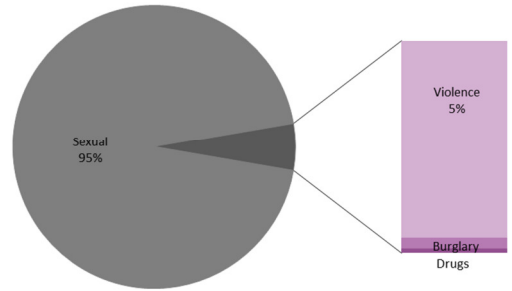
Sex offenders are more likely to serve indeterminate sentences; over 22 percent of adult sex offenders are serving an indeterminate sentence.

The proportion of child sex offenders serving indeterminate sentences is 3 percentage points higher than non-sex offenders.

Offence type

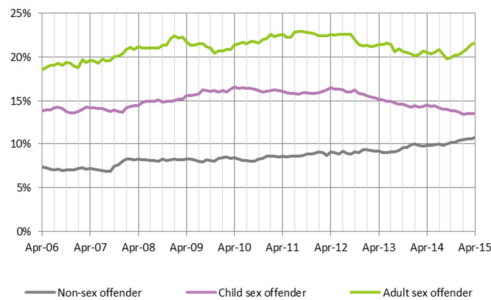
Figure 19 shows all sex offenders in prison in April 2015, according to their most serious offence. Unsurprisingly, for 95 percent of sex offenders, a sexual offence was the most serious offence. Of the remaining 5 percent, violent offences were the primary MSO (some of whom were convicted of murder also). Burglary and Drugs are the most serious offence for less than 1 percent of sex offenders. In these cases, the sex offence is likely to be of relatively low-seriousness, such as performing an indecent act with intent to offend.

Figure 19 Sex offenders by most serious offence type



Indeterminate sentences

Figure 20 Percentage of offenders serving indeterminate sentences



As a companion Topic Series report on indeterminate sentences shows, almost all offenders serving Preventive Detention sentences are convicted sex offenders. Life Sentence prisoners convicted of murder make up the other main group of indeterminate-sentenced prisoners.

On any given day around a fifth of all adult sex offenders and around 1 in 7 child sex offenders are in prison and serving an indeterminate sentence.

In the past 2 years the proportion of all sex offenders in prison serving indeterminate sentences has been decreasing, while the rate for non-sex offenders has been increasing slightly since 2006.

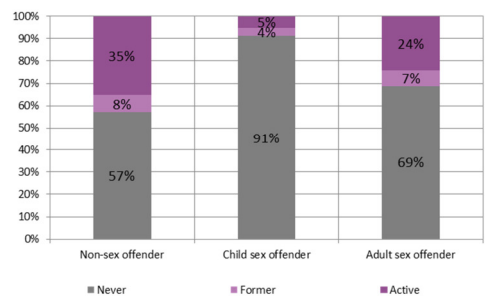
Gangs

Only 5 percent of child sex offenders are active gang members. Almost the same number of child sex offenders are former gang members. This leaves over 90 percent of child sex offenders who have never been gang members.

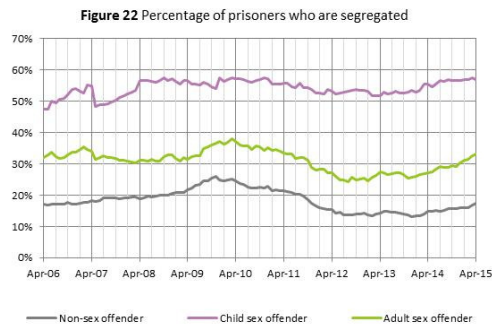
Adult sex offenders have a much higher rate (24%) of active gang membership which is more in line with the overall prison population (29%).

Non-sex offenders have the highest rate of active gang membership at 35 percent.

Figure 21 Percentage of offenders who are gang members



Segregation



Sex offenders tend to seek protective segregation when in prison, with child sex offenders particularly likely to request this.

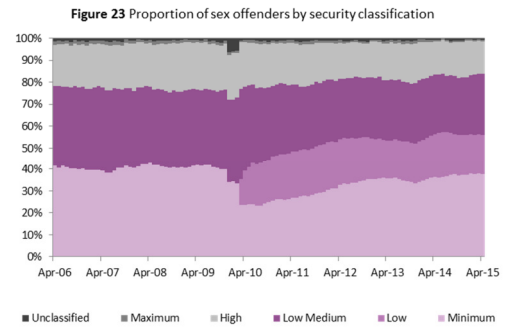
The April 2015 rate of segregation for child sex offenders (57 percent) is approximately twice the rate as that for adult sex offenders (33%).

In the same period, the rate of segregation for adult sex offenders is approximately twice the rate as that for non-sex offenders (17%).

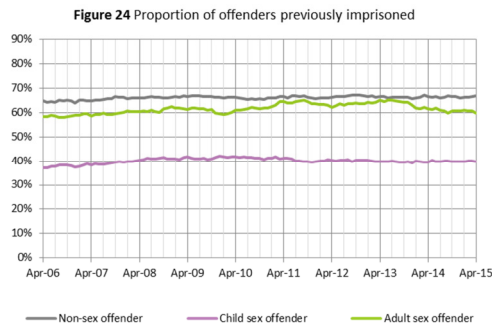
Security Classifications

Figure 23 shows the change in security classification for sex offenders since 2006 and the introduction of the new classification – Low.

Since the 2010 Security Classification Review the proportion of sex offenders who are Minimum classification has been increasing steadily, increasing from 24 percent to 38 percent in April 2015.



Previous sentences

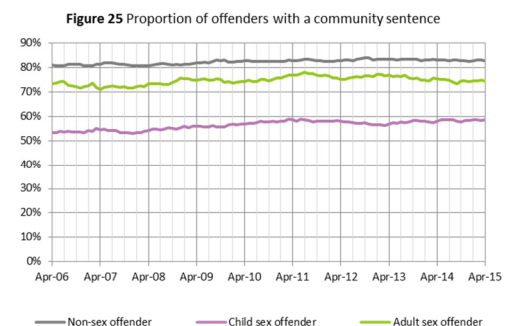


Child sex offenders are significantly less likely to have served a previous prison sentence than either adult sex offenders or non-sex offenders.

In April 2015, 67 percent of non-sex offenders had served a previous prison sentence, compared with 60 percent of adult sex offenders and only 40 percent of child sex offenders.

As with previous imprisonments (see figure 24), child sex offenders in prison have a much lower rate of prior community sentences.

In April 2015, 83 percent of non-sex offenders have served a previous community sentence, compared with 74 percent of adult sex offenders and only 59 percent of child sex offenders



Risk of re-offending

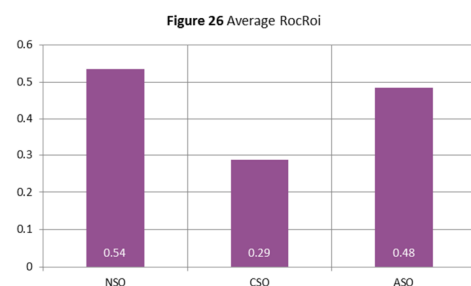


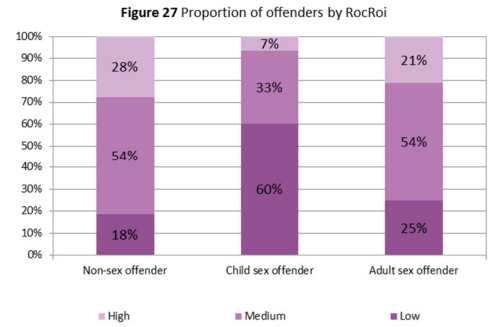
Figure 26 compares the average RocRoi of each cohort.

The average RocRoi for child sex offenders (0.29) is almost half of that of non-sex offenders (0.54).

Adult sex offenders have a slightly lower RocRoi than non-sex offenders (0.48).

Figure 27 shows the RocRoi distribution. Only 18 percent of non-sex offenders have a low RocRoi. This is notably lower than child sex offenders, where 60 percent have a low RocRoi.

However, standard actuarial risk measures such as RocRoi are known to have less validity with this type of offender, given that official records of conviction and sentencing are often significantly less representative of actual offending committed in the community by this type of offender.



This is the result of unusually low rates of reporting of sex offences by victims, and low rates of conviction of offenders prosecuted for such offences.

Recidivism rates

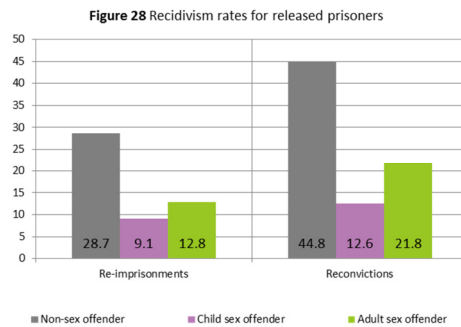


Figure 28 shows both reconviction and re-imprisonment rates (within 12 months of release) for prisoners released from prison, and compares these by sex offence type.

Sex offenders generally have considerably lower reconviction and re-imprisonment rates than non-sex offenders. Re-imprisonment and reconviction rates for child sex offenders are around a third of the rate of non-sex offenders; rates for adult sex offenders are around half.

Conclusion

Sex offenders form a relatively small sub-group of offenders sentenced to imprisonment each year, but with relatively long sentences, including significant numbers of indeterminate sentences, meaning they accumulate in prison, and form a significant proportion of the overall prisoner population. In prison, they tend to require special management, especially in relation to segregation for protective purposes.

The numbers of sex offenders in prison continues to grow. Against the trend of falling crime generally over the last 5 years, recorded sex offences have continued to rise steadily, with the result that more individuals are being convicted and sentenced to imprisonment for this type of offence.

Whereas the Department is called upon to house these individuals for long periods to ensure public protection, there is also a core responsibility of rehabilitation. A number of world-class rehabilitative programmes for sex offenders operate within New Zealand prisons, and have proven success in reducing the rates of sexual reoffending by these individuals.