

09 May 2022

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S 9(2)(a)

Tēnā koe S 9(2)(a)

Thank you for your email of 21 March 2022 to the Department of Corrections – Ara Poutama Aotearoa, requesting information about maximum security prisoners at Auckland Prison. Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA).

Public safety is one of Corrections' top priorities. The security classification system is designed to ensure people serving prison sentences are managed at a level of supervision appropriate to the level of internal and external risk that they pose. People in prison are required to undergo an initial security classification assessment within 14 days of being sentenced to a term of imprisonment and being received into a prison, unless they are to be released within 21 days of initial reception. Every person in prison's security classification must be reviewed at least once every six months during their sentence, unless they have a security classification of minimum.

People in prison can request to have their security classification reviewed in accordance with section 48 of the Corrections Act 2004, which they can initiate via Corrections' PC.01 prisoner complaints process. Every person in prison will also have their security classification reviewed when their risk level appears to substantially change or if there is a significant change in the individual's circumstances.

The process for assessing people as maximum security, and the subsequent six-monthly reviews, is designed to ensure only people who genuinely require management as maximum security are assigned this classification, which typically results in the person being transferred to Auckland Prison or Auckland Region Women's Corrections Facility (ARWCF).

The process requires trained staff to answer a series of questions about the person to create an evidence-based proposal for classification to maximum security. The Chief Custodial Officer (CCO) will consider the recommendation proposal and make the final decision on whether to:

- classify the person to maximum security and transfer them to Auckland Prison, or ARWCF; or,
- not classify to maximum and instead retain the person at their current site.

If a recommendation is not approved, the CCO will provide guidance on an appropriate management plan to safely manage the person at that site or recommend placement at another site.

Further information about the security classifications of people in prison can be found in the Prison Operations Manual (POM), which is publicly available on Corrections' website at: www.corrections.govt.nz/resources/policy_and_legislation/Prison-Operations-Manual

You requested:

1. The number of people held in the maximum security unit at Auckland Prison in 2021
2. I would like this broken down by ethnicity. (in percentage please)

During 2020/21, 540 distinct individuals were held in a maximum-security unit at Auckland Prison. The following table provides a breakdown of the ethnicity of these individuals, by percentage.

Ethnicity	Percent
Māori	59%
European	16%
Pacific	21%
Other (including Asian)	3%

Although 540 individuals were held in a maximum-security unit at Auckland Prison during this period, the number of individuals held in these units at any point in time is lower than this. For example, on 30 April 2022, 215 individuals were held in a maximum-security unit at Auckland Prison while 172 people were in high-security units, 113 were in low-medium security units and 48 were held in minimum-security units.

Furthermore, not all people held within maximum-security units are placed there due to them having a maximum-security classification. For example, while people on remand do not have security classifications, some remandees on directed segregation are placed in maximum-security units at Auckland Prison to help facilitate their management away from others, including for the security and good order of the prison or the safety of the prisoner.

Information has been provided by financial year, consistent with Corrections' standard reporting conventions. All ethnicity information is self-reported by people in prison upon their reception. People in prison can identify with multiple ethnicities. The information provided is based on their primary reported ethnicity.

It is well known that Māori and Pacific people are over-represented within the criminal justice system. Any example of Māori or Pacific overrepresentation in security classification in prison needs to be considered within the context of overrepresentation in the overall justice system. For example:

- Māori and Pacific people constitute around 62% of the total prison population, but comprise 73% of people imprisoned for violent offences

- 49% of Māori and 50% of Pacific people in prison are serving prison sentences for violent offences
- Māori and Pacific people in prison constitute more than 85% of the prison population who are gang affiliated. Gang affiliation is a proven risk factor for in-prison violence as well as involvement in prison disorder incidents.

Over-representation in these areas may contribute to any over-representation in security classification in prison. As such, a response to reducing any Māori and Pacific over-representation in security classification needs to consider these broader issues. Violence in prisons and the community and gang affiliation are complex issues that Corrections cannot resolve or manage alone. Social and welfare support, employment, education, health and mental health services and support for families and communities all need to combine to address these issues.

Corrections is committed to changing these statistics in collaboration with other agencies, iwi, providers and wider communities. We aim to ensure every person who has an identified need – great or small – receives an appropriate intervention. Our interventions offer a pathway for people so they can enhance their wellbeing and move on to lead crime-free lives. We are working hard to reduce violence in prisons, reduce people's risk of re-offending and reduce Māori and Pacific over-representation in the prison system – but we know there is a lot of hard work to do.

In August 2019, Corrections Minister Hon Kelvin Davis launched Hōkai Rangī, Ara Poutama Aotearoa – Correction's organisational strategy 2019-2024. This new strategic direction for the whole of Corrections provides for us to build on the good things already happening across the country and innovate to find new ways of doing working to achieve greater wellbeing outcomes with Māori and their whānau. A range of strategic initiatives that aim to address these complex inter-related issues are referenced throughout our latest 2020/21 Annual Report, which you can find on our website [here](#).

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