

24 July 2020

C122098

Brett Paton  
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Tēnā koe Mr Paton

Thank you for your email of 16 May 2020, requesting information about assaults in prison during the COVID-19 lockdown period. Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA).

As you will appreciate, we manage some of New Zealand's most difficult people in an environment that can be complex and challenging. We have a zero-tolerance policy toward violence of any kind.

Our staff recognise the importance of knowing and understanding prisoners, and actively engage with them to reinforce positive behaviour. Staff anticipate and attempt to resolve problems through the active management of prisoners, and are trained in de-escalation techniques, and interpersonal and tactical communication skills. The goal is always to manage a potentially volatile situation in a manner that minimises the likelihood of violence.

Over 75 percent of the prison population have convictions for violence in their offending histories, and gang members are disproportionately identified as responsible for assaults in prison.

The reality is that 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 people safe. This includes tactical skills, such as de-escalation, through to the introduction of stab resistant body armour, on body cameras and the expanded deployment of pepper spray.

We take strong action to ensure that prisoners are held to account for their behaviour whenever they use violence. We also support staff and prisoners who have been the victims of assault and provide assistance in reporting the incident to the New Zealand Police. Police determine whether or not criminal charges will be laid in relation to an assault. Prisoners who use violence can also be charged through the internal misconduct system.

You requested:

*the number of prisoner assaults on staff and the type of assault at Paremoremo Prison, Spring Hill Prison and Waikeria Prison from 25th of March when New Zealand entered lockdown to May 11 May when Level two was entered.*

Please note that assault incidents are categorised as follows:

- No injury – victim subjected to physical violence that did not result in physical injuries or require any form of medical treatment (e.g. kicking, shoving, jostling, striking, or punching that did not result in injury);
- Non-serious – victim subjected to physical violence that resulted in physical injuries that may have required medical treatment, and/or overnight hospitalisation as part of initial assessment or medical observation but not on-going medical treatment (e.g. blood nose, x-ray required, cuts requiring minimal stitches, gouging, or bites);
- Serious – an act of physical violence that involves one or more of the following: bodily harm requiring medical intervention by medical staff followed by overnight hospitalisation (beyond initial assessment or medical observation) in a medical facility; bodily harm requiring extended periods of ongoing medical intervention; or sexual assault of any form and degree where Police charges are laid.

Please find the requested information in the table below. Please note that no serious assaults occurred on prison staff at the prisons you have identified during this time period.

Caution is urged when comparing rates between prisons, due to their differences in size and operational requirements. Quarterly prison populations for each site can be found on our website, at: [www.corrections.govt.nz/resources/research\\_and\\_statistics/quarterly\\_prison\\_statistics](http://www.corrections.govt.nz/resources/research_and_statistics/quarterly_prison_statistics).

Prison and assault category	Number of prisoner-on-staff assaults
<b>Auckland Prison (Paremoremo)</b>	
Assault- No Injury	10
Assault- Non-Serious	9
<b>Spring Hill Corrections Facility</b>	
Assault- No Injury	4
Assault- Non-Serious	6
<b>Waikeria Prison</b>	
Assault- No Injury	5
Assault- Non-Serious	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>39</b>

I trust the information provided is of assistance. Should you have any concerns with this response, I would encourage you to raise these 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.

Please note that this response may be published on Corrections' website. Typically, responses are published monthly, or as otherwise determined. Your personal information including name and contact details will be removed for publication.

Ngā mihi nui

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a series of connected loops and a long horizontal stroke.

Rachel Leota  
National Commissioner