

11 August 2017

C87697

Ti Lamusse
fyi-request-6290-df19a8b0@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear Ti Lamusse

Thank you for your email of 28 July 2017, in which you request the dataset used to produce the Department's statement that 60 percent of prisoners are unemployed prior to entering prison. Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA).

In your email, you reference the 'Reducing Reoffending by Employment' presentation, presented to Workwise, by Corrections' former National Manager Employer Partnerships, Elizabeth Manchee.

You requested:

'In the presentation, [Ms Manchee] claims that "60% of prisoners are unemployed before they go to prison". I am interested in the data that was used to support this claim.

Please provide me with the resources used to make this claim.

If such data exists, please provide me with the unemployment rate of prisoners prior to incarceration, broken down by year since records began.'

I am advised that the figure used in Ms Manchee's presentation was obtained by cross-referencing Corrections' prisoner information against the Ministry of Social Development's database of beneficiaries. 60 percent of prisoners were found to have been in receipt of a benefit, and were deemed by Corrections to be 'out of employment' immediately before they entered prison.

While the presentation itself is undated, I understand that it was produced in early 2014. Unfortunately, due to the age of the presentation and the nature of data sharing between government agencies, Corrections no longer holds the information behind the figure referenced in your email. Additionally, we do not hold the unemployment rate of prisoners prior to incarceration. As such, your request is declined under section 18(g) of the OIA as the information requested is not held by the Department, and we have no grounds for believing that it is held by another agency or more closely connected with the functions of another agency.

Please note that, due to current difficulty substantiating the information in the 'Reducing Reoffending through Employment' presentation, I have requested that Workwise remove it from their website. I understand that they have agreed to do so.

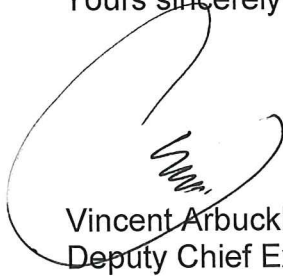
Finally, you may be interested in a related piece of data matching work recently undertaken by Corrections, assessing the income and employment of prisoners at the time they enter prison.

In this instance, we matched our data against data owned by the Inland Revenue Department, and found that in 2016, 87 percent of prisoners did not pay any form of income tax in the month before entering prison. This indicates that 87 percent were unemployed, working for income but not paying tax, receiving a benefit, or being financially supported by another person and that only 13 percent were employed or self-employed in a position where tax was being paid.

Accordingly, the Department remains committed to assisting prisoners into sustainable employment. We offer effective interventions prior to, and upon, prisoners' release from prison and have memoranda of understanding with over 100 individual employers to support this effort.

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

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'V. Arbuckle', enclosed within a large, loopy, handwritten oval shape.

Vincent Arbuckle
Deputy Chief Executive
Corporate Services