

02 November 2021

C142190

T.C. Pearce
fyi-request-16988-fff80328@requests.fyi.org.nz

Tēnā koe T.C.

Thank you for your email of 1 October 2021 to the Department of Corrections – Ara Poutama Aotearoa (Corrections), requesting information about prison transfers. Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA).

There are 18 prisons across New Zealand: 17 managed by Corrections and Auckland South Corrections Facility, which is managed by Serco under a Public Private Partnership. Since its peak of 10,820 in March 2018, the number of people in New Zealand prisons has decreased by over 20 percent with today's prison population around 8,000. The population at any individual prison can fluctuate daily due to scheduled releases, sentence end dates and court decisions. Quarterly prison statistics for each prison from 2009 onwards are available on Corrections' website, at: www.corrections.govt.nz/resources/statistics/quarterly_prison_statistics

The decision to move any person in prison is made on a case-by-case basis. Consideration will be given to each person's employment, education and treatment needs and the ability for their family and friends to continue visits with them, as well as how best to safely and securely manage the prison population in the surrounding region. Corrections always aims to ensure that people in prison are in the most appropriate accommodation for them, increasing their access to employment, education and rehabilitation programmes and improving the working conditions of our staff. Accordingly, we cannot guarantee that a person sentenced to imprisonment will remain in any one prison during the duration of their sentence.

Prison movement coordinators determine transfers between prisons, in consultation with Prison Directors. People in prison can request a transfer to a different prison, however, priority is generally given to those who require a special placement for site specific reasons, like attendance at special treatment programmes, medical procedures, court appearances or to assist with the ease of release to the community.

Prisons vary significantly in size and operational differences which may also affect the suitability of a person's placement at that site. For example, Auckland Prison is New Zealand's only specialist maximum security facility, while Mt Eden Corrections Facility is the main reception prison for newly remanded men in the Auckland region. The range of rehabilitation programmes also differs between each prison, as do the vocational and industry training opportunities available. Information about each prison is available at:

<https://www.corrections.govt.nz/about-us/getting-in-touch/our-locations>

You requested:

- 1) *Please provide me with the number of transfers between all prisons, per week, from January 1, 2019 to today's date. Please break this down by the prison each prisoner was transferred from and their destination prison. Please provide me with these data in excel spreadsheet format. Please provide me with these data in excel spreadsheet format.*

Between 1 January 2019 and 14 October 2021, there were 23,767 transfers between prisons. Attached as Appendix One is a spreadsheet detailing prison transfers between 1 January 2019 and 14 October 2021. The data is broken down by prison transferred from and to, reason for transfer and date of transfer. Although you have requested the data to be broken down by week, we are not able to provide the data broken down in that way, under section 16(2)(a) of the OIA, as it would impair efficient administration of the department to separate these out by week. However, the spreadsheet provided is searchable by date.

The information provided to you in Appendix One is sourced from a national register for prison transfers introduced in November 2018. This new system was rolled out across prisons from November 2018 to 1 July 2019. As such, although the register includes data from 1 January 2019 onwards, information dated before 1 July 2019 should not be considered complete, but is provided to the best of Corrections' ability.

- 2) *Please provide me with the number of transfers between all prisons that were delayed from Aug 17th 2021 to today's date.*
 - a. *Please provide me with an excel spreadsheet with the scheduled transfer date and the actual transfer date for each of these instances. I do not require the name of prisoners in this information.*

Delays in transfers can happen for any number of reasons, including change of programme or court dates (which are not genuine delays, just changes to the required date of transfer) or changing operational needs.

From 17 August 2021, when the country went into Alert Level 4, there have been significant operational challenges for prisons across the country. This has also included changing the dates for transfers for non-essential reasons to ensure safety and wellbeing of people in prison. Essential transfers, including those necessary for release, still occurred.

Corrections does not hold the information for delayed transfers in a way that is centrally collated and readily retrievable. In order for us to answer your question, we would have to search individual files to determine if a transfer was delayed. Therefore, this part of your request is refused under section 18(f) of the OIA, as the information cannot be made available without substantial collation or research.

In accordance with section 18A and 18B of the OIA, we have also considered whether fixing a charge, extending the time limit or consulting you would enable us to grant this request. However, we do not believe so in this case.

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 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.

I trust the information provided is of assistance.

Ngā mihi



Rachel Leota
National Commissioner