

# Imprisonment in the general population

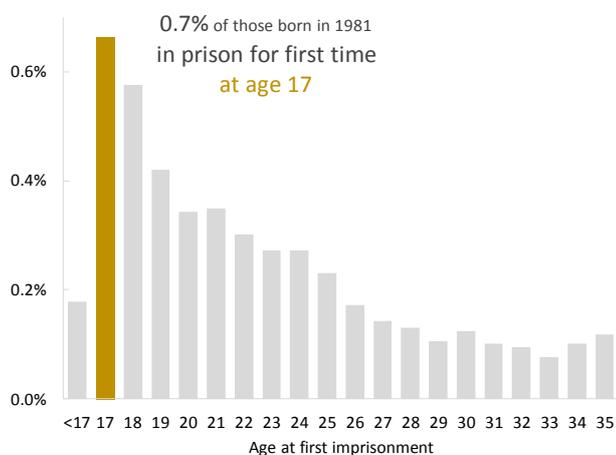
One in twenty people born in 1981 had spent time in prison by age 35

Most people enter prison for the first time at a young age. Overall, 5% of people born in 1981 had been in prison by age 35. Imprisonment rates vary by gender and ethnic group and rates for Māori men are particularly high. In recent years the proportion of young people who have been in prison has trended downward for all ethnic groups.

## First imprisonment usually happens when people are young

People can be imprisoned either in custodial remand (while awaiting resolution of their court case) or as sentenced prisoners. For people born in 1981 we can track their times in prison up to age 35.<sup>1</sup>

Most prisoners are aged between 25 and 49 years, but the most common age they first entered prison was just 17 years; 0.7% of those born in 1981 (14% of those ever imprisoned) were first imprisoned at that age. The peak age of first imprisonment has remained at 17 or 18 for those born more recently.



Of those born in 1981, 3.6% had been in prison by age 25. By age 35, 4.8% had been in prison.

## Imprisonment highest for men and for Māori

A much larger proportion of men than women, and a larger proportion of Māori than other ethnic groups, have been in prison. By age 35, one in five Māori men born in 1981 had been in prison.

### Proportion of those born in 1981 imprisoned by age 35

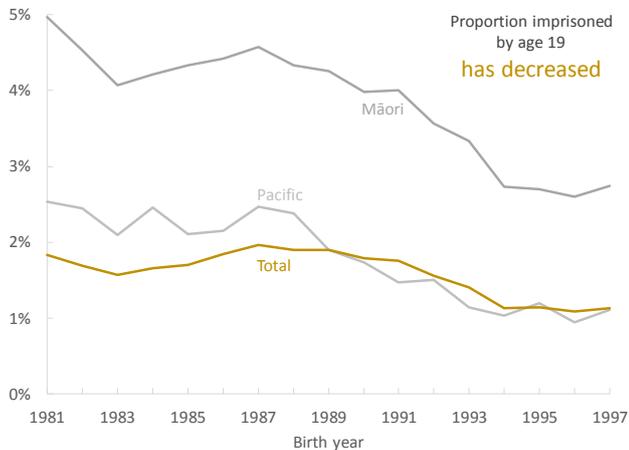
	Women	Men	Women and men
Māori	4.1%	19.9%	12.1%
Pacific	1.3%	10.3%	5.7%
European or other	0.6%	4.4%	2.5%
<b>All ethnic groups</b>	<b>1.4%</b>	<b>8.0%</b>	<b>4.8%</b>

## Proportions imprisoned have decreased

For those born from 1981 through to 1997, the proportion of people who have been in prison by a given age has trended downwards. For example, the proportion imprisoned by age 19 remained at around 1.8% for people born in each year from 1981 to 1991. The proportion then declined for people born more recently and has remained at about 1.1% for those born in 1994–97.

<sup>1</sup> This analysis is based on data in the Integrated Data Infrastructure, which has imprisonment data from 1998 onwards. By implication, those data completely cover imprisonment at age 17 or more for people born in 1981 and later. This analysis makes no adjustment for emigration or mortality.

Although the proportions of Māori imprisoned have remained much higher than for others, the trends have been downwards for all ethnic groups. Between birth years 1981 and 1997, the proportion of people imprisoned up to and including age 19 halved for each ethnic group (from 5.0% to 2.7% for Māori, from 2.5% to 1.1% for Pacific, and from 0.8% to 0.4% for European or other ethnic groups).



The rate of entry of people into prison for the first time is just one of many factors driving the size of the prison population. Although the rate of first-time imprisonment has trended downward, increased use of custodial remand, higher proportion of long sentences served, increased rates of some types of serious crime, and persistently high rates of recidivism combined to increase the prison population in recent years.

### Statistics New Zealand disclaimer

The results in this report are not official statistics. They have been created for research purposes from the Integrated Data Infrastructure (IDI), managed by Statistics New Zealand. Access to the anonymised data used in this study was provided by Statistics NZ under the security and confidentiality provisions of the Statistics Act 1975. The opinions, findings, recommendations, and conclusions expressed in this paper are those of the researchers, not Statistics NZ.

Only people authorised by the Statistics Act 1975 are allowed to see data about a particular person, household, business, or organisation, and the results in this report have been confidentialised to protect these groups from identification and to keep their data safe.

Careful consideration has been given to the privacy, security, and confidentiality issues associated with using administrative and survey data in the IDI. Further detail can be found in the privacy impact assessment for the IDI available from [www.stats.govt.nz](http://www.stats.govt.nz)

Date published: 29 MAR 2019

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