

MEDIA RELEASE

JUSTICE SECTOR PROJECTIONS RELEASED

The Ministry of Justice, in collaboration with justice sector agencies, has released its projections for New Zealand's prison population over the next 10 years.

Without further system changes the total prison population is expected to rise from 8,800 in November 2020 to 10,600 by June 2030.

Currently, the sentenced population is at 5,500 which is the lowest it has been since early 2005 and it is projected to continue to decline. However, the remand population is projected to grow, and it will drive an increase in the total prison population if not addressed.

"The remand population is projected to grow as people spend longer in remand. This is due to cases taking longer to be resolved in court as defendants continue to plead guilty later in the court process." says Ministry spokesperson, Anton Youngman.

"Addressing delays across the court system remains a continued focus of the justice sector. A number of initiatives, to further reduce delay, are in place and additional initiatives are currently being developed. Initiatives in development have not been factored into this report but will be included in future projections".

"Projecting long-term trends across the justice sector is challenging. These projections represent only one possible future, and not *the* future. It's essential that we understand what will happen under current settings so we can use it as a baseline to measure future change."

"Since COVID-19 Alert Level 4, fewer people have been remanded in custody and instead been granted bail. This has temporarily reduced the remand population. However, if cases continue to take longer to be resolved in court, people will spend longer on remand, and this will drive an increase in the remand population."

Addressing the increase in remand time is a significant focus of Justice Sector agencies, with initiatives already in place. For example, the High Impact Innovation Programme's Bail Support Services pilot supports people applying for bail and adhering to bail conditions. There has also been an increase in the number of judges through both Budget-19 and the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund, which will speed up the progress of cases through the courts.

In addition, there are other significant initiatives in development that will help address delays in courts. For example, the cross-sector Criminal Process Improvement Programme has been established with the judiciary to look at better ways of working within the court system and improve timely access to justice.

Justice sector agencies have also developed strategies to reduce reoffending and improve people's experience across the justice system. Successful delivery of these transformative change strategies will significantly, and positively, impact these projections.

The full report can be found here:

<https://www.justice.govt.nz/assets/Documents/Publications/imGcg9-2020-Justice-sector-projection-report-v2.1.pdf>

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