



Insight Briefing: The disproportionality of wāhine Māori in the criminal justice system

Insight Briefing: 11 June 2026

Purpose

1. This Insights Briefing presents our observations and insights on the persistent, multi-decade problem of the disproportionality of wāhine Māori (Māori women) in the criminal justice system.
2. Our observations arise from our roles including monitoring places of detention, handling complaints, and agency engagement. It also draws on the views of Pūhara Mana Tangata – our Māori Advisory panel members — Dame Naida Glavish, Juscinta Grace, Kura Moeahu, Lady Tureiti Moxon, Ngahiwi Tomoana, and Wallace Haumaha, and Professor Tracey McIntosh.

Context and considerations

3. Recent data illustrates the compounding nature of this problem at every stage of the pipeline as wāhine Māori make up 44% of Police proceedings, 66% remanded into custody, and 71% sentenced to imprisonment. As of April 2026, wāhine Māori represent 65% of the total female prison population and 69% on remand.
4. This is not a formal Ombudsman report, and the focus is at a system-level, so the report does not contain any new adverse findings concerning individual agencies.
5. This briefing contains an initial analysis of the problem and what might help address it, based on what we see across our independent, citizen-focused oversight. It outlines areas which we consider require some further inquiry, investigation and scrutiny to support efforts to address this problem.

Role of Ombudsman

6. The Office of the Ombudsman safeguards human rights, dignity, and the voice of the voiceless by serving as Kaitiaki Mana Tangata (guardian of the welfare of the people) in respect of public sector decision-making and is guided by *Tuia kia ōrite - Fairness for all*.

Executive summary

- Wāhine Māori are disproportionately impacted within the criminal justice system. This is a persistent, multi-decade problem that the system compounds rather than corrects.
- Recent data illustrates the compounding nature of this problem at every stage of the pipeline as wāhine Māori make up 44% of Police proceedings, 66% remanded into custody, and 71% sentenced to imprisonment. As of April 2026, wāhine Māori represent 65% of the total female prison population and 69% on remand. Wāhine Māori are incarcerated at nearly 11 times the rate of non-Māori.
- Corrections are set to receive funding increases in anticipation of continued growth in the prison population – without meaningful interventions there is a risk the disproportionate rates of imprisonment for wāhine Māori will be embedded in the projected prison population growth.
- Ombudsman inspections of all three women's prisons over recent years confirmed deficits in contact with their tamariki (children)/whānau (family), limited access to rehabilitation and kaupapa Māori programmes, and unfit prison facilities. Specific issues at one Mothers and Babies Unit includes lack of appropriate staff training, limited health advice and difficulty finding daycare to attend rehabilitation.
- It's unclear whether current agency work plans are sufficient to tackle such a complex, multi-decade problem. We intend to further assess whether an adequate multi-agency, long-term strategy exists that targets clear outcomes to understand what is going to change to deliver a different outcome.
- To help build our understanding of the issues impacting wāhine Māori we drew on insights from Pūhara Mana Tangata – our Māori Advisory panel and Professor Tracey McIntosh. Their insights included the need for sustained long-term funding of innovative programmes and community initiatives and give us an idea of the kinds of focus areas needed to make enduring change. We intend to further examine what initiatives might be required by engaging with agencies and the community.
- We also intend to engage with other oversight agencies as well as Parliament to identify ways for us to co-ordinate our efforts to oversee and inform agencies as they seek to tackle this problem.

What do we know?

Multi-decade context overview: persistent and normalised

7. We begin with a whakataukī from our Pūhara Mana Tangata - Māori Advisory panel:

Ko te mana tapu o ngā wāhine kei ngā wāhine te whare tangata mō ngā tātai heke o ngā whakapapa, Ko te mana tapu anō o ngā tāne hei karawhiu i te tewhatewha hei manaaki hei tiaki i ngā wāhine katoa o tōna whakapapa. He mea nui tēnei tirohanga o Te Ao Māori, nā i runga i enei tika ā tātou te Iwi Māori, ka whakakaha ake i te hiahia ki te whakatika i ngā wāhine me ngā tāne i roto i te pūnaha ture hara, tae atu hoki ki te whānau.

The sacredness of women is the fact that it is women who hold the womb of the generations of the genealogy. The sacredness of the men is to apply the resources to be the provider and the protectors of every woman in their whānau. The sacredness of wāhine as the bearer of the next generation and equally the tāne as the provider of the seed to help generate the next generation. This Te Ao Māori perspective is important as it reinforces the need to address both wāhine and tāne within the criminal justice system as well as the whānau – Pūhara Mana Tangata member.

8. The overrepresentation of Māori in the criminal justice system pipeline is a persistent, multi-decade problem that the system compounds rather than corrects. Ombudsman reviews as far back as 2007 (Ombudsman Mel Smith) noted that Māori made up 51% of the male prison population despite being 14% of the country's population.¹
9. The Justice Sector Leadership Board's (JSLB) LTIB from 1960-2022, identified that Māori imprisonment rose from 1960, mainly driven by urbanisation and systemic discrimination — reaching 50% of the total by 1985 and 53% by 2022.² The disproportionality is more acute for wāhine Māori, who are incarcerated at nearly 11 times the rate of non-Māori women³ (comprising 65% of the female prison population, as of 30 April 2026).
10. The Justice Select Committee have recognised the importance of this problem in their Scrutiny Plan; "improving justice outcomes for Māori is a significant challenge for the justice system", and adopted a specific scrutiny focus on the overrepresentation of Māori.⁴ This is a core focus for the Ministry of Justice - Te Tāhū o te Ture (Justice), the Department of Corrections – Ara Poutama Aotearoa (Corrections) and NZ Police - Ngā

¹ Mel Smith, [Report on issues involving the criminal justice sector](https://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz/resources/report-issues-involving-criminal-justice-sector) (Office of the Ombudsman, 2007), 67, <https://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz/resources/report-issues-involving-criminal-justice-sector>.

² Ministry of Justice, [Long-term Insights Briefing: Focus on Imprisonment in New Zealand](https://www.justice.govt.nz/justice-sector-policy/key-initiatives/key-initiatives-archive/justice-sector-long-term-insights-briefing/), (Ministry of Justice, 2022), 8. <https://www.justice.govt.nz/justice-sector-policy/key-initiatives/key-initiatives-archive/justice-sector-long-term-insights-briefing/>.

³ Ministry of Justice, [Long-term Insights Briefing: Focus on Imprisonment in New Zealand](https://www.justice.govt.nz/justice-sector-policy/key-initiatives/key-initiatives-archive/justice-sector-long-term-insights-briefing/), (Ministry of Justice, 2022), 8. <https://www.justice.govt.nz/justice-sector-policy/key-initiatives/key-initiatives-archive/justice-sector-long-term-insights-briefing/>.

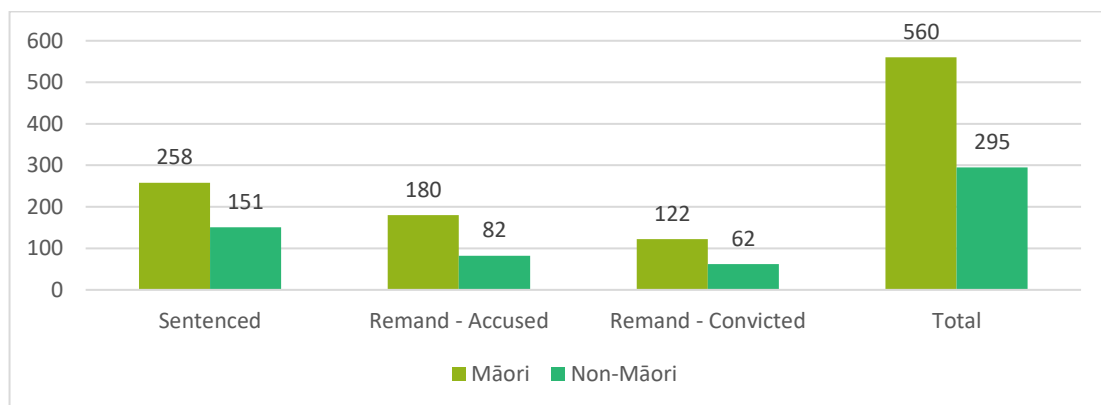
⁴ Justice Select Committee, *Justice Committee Scrutiny Plan for the 54th Parliament*, (New Zealand Parliament 2024), 12. <https://selectcommittees.parliament.nz/v/6/d1fd2b86-e76a-4228-7597-08dc7b8190fc?lang=en>.

Pirihimana o Aotearoa (Police). In their regular scrutiny examinations, the Committee rigorously examines cross-agency collaboration, performance metrics, and strategic interventions.

Data shows compounding disproportionality at each stage and further growth in the prison population

11. Recent data (February 2026) evidences the continuation of the compounding disproportionality for wāhine Māori through each stage of the system pipeline: wāhine Māori make up; 44% at police proceedings, 49% of court appearances, 66% of women remanded in custody, and 71% of those sentenced to imprisonment.⁵
12. As of April 2026, wāhine Māori make up 65% of the total female prison population, 63% of the sentenced female prison population and 69% of females on remand accused status – see **Table 1**.⁶

Table 1: Wāhine Māori and non-Māori prison population, as of 30 April 2026.



13. This enduring disparity should be of particular concern because of the projected overall increases in the prison population. Budget 2026 provides Corrections with \$503 million in new operating funding over the next 4 years in anticipation of continued growth in the overall prison population.⁷ Without meaningful interventions there is a risk the disproportionate rates of imprisonment for wāhine Māori will be embedded in the projected prison population growth.

⁵ Ministry of Justice, *Reducing the disproportionality of Māori in the criminal justice system: wāhine Māori*, (New Zealand Government, February 2026), <https://www.justice.govt.nz/about/news-and-media/media-releases/wahine-maori-overrepresented-in-the-criminal-justice-system/>.

⁶ Department of Corrections – Ara Poutama Aotearoa, email correspondence, 8 May 2026.

⁷ The Treasury, “Budget at a Glance 2026”, New Zealand Government, <https://www.treasury.govt.nz/publications/glance/budget-glance-2026>.

Justice Sector Stewardship and Governance

14. The Ministry of Justice holds stewardship of the Justice sector, with “honouring our responsibilities to Māori”⁸ as an enduring long-term priority.
15. However, the Ministry of Justice works alongside several other agencies in the wider Justice sector as multiple agencies are all responsible for the pipeline. The Justice Sector Leadership Board was established in 2011 to bring together six core agencies⁹ managing the justice pipeline. Current priorities are timely justice, remote participation, law-and-order targets, victims, and anti-corruption¹⁰.
16. In the 2025/26 financial year, \$16.653 million was the estimated actual amount allocated to Sector Leadership and Support.¹¹ In the 2026/27 financial year, the estimated budgeted funding increased slightly to \$16.909 million.¹² The scope of this appropriation is limited to advice and services for Justice’s leadership role in the justice sector, agency coordination, judicial appointments advice, and Crown entity monitoring.

What is the impact?

The human impact of the problem - Ombudsman Oversight Insights

17. The Ombudsman acts as a National Preventive Mechanism (NPM), as designated under the Crimes of Torture Act 1989 (COTA). The COTA purpose is to enable Aotearoa to meet its international obligations under the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and its Optional Protocol (OPCAT).
18. Throughout our jurisdictions including as NPM we see evidence of the impact of incarceration on women. In our inspections of the three women’s prisons,¹³ we observed areas that had a significant impact on prisoner treatment, conditions and wellbeing.

⁸ Ministry of Justice, “Regulatory Stewardship”, New Zealand Government, accessed 9 June 2026, <https://www.justice.govt.nz/justice-sector-policy/regulatory-stewardship/>.

⁹ Justice, Police, Corrections, Oranga Tamariki, Serious Fraud Office, and Crown Law.

¹⁰ Ministry of Justice, “Sector Governance”, New Zealand Government, accessed 9 June 2026.

¹¹ The Treasury, *The Estimates of Appropriations 2025/26 - Justice Sector B.5 Vol.6*, New Zealand Government, 77 <https://www.treasury.govt.nz/publications/budgets/justice-sector-estimates-appropriations-government-new-zealand-year-ending-30-june-2026>.

¹² The Treasury, *The Estimates of Appropriations 2026/27 - Justice Sector B.5 Vol.6*, New Zealand Government, 94 <https://budget.govt.nz/budget/2026/estimates/v6/index.htm>.

¹³ This includes observations from the following three Ombudsman reports: OPCAT report on an unannounced targeted inspection of Auckland Region Women’s Corrections Facility under the Crimes of Torture Act 1989, (March 2025), OPCAT Report on an unannounced inspection of Arohata Women’s Prison under the Crimes of Torture Act 1989 (July 2023), and OPCAT Report on an announced targeted inspection of Christchurch Women’s Prison under the Crimes of Torture Act 1989 (July 2023).

Human impact on incarcerated mothers

19. Inadequacies in the Mothers with Babies Unit at Auckland Region Women's Correctional Facility included a lack of appropriate staff training, inability for mothers to access health advice at any time (as they would in the community), and difficulty finding childcare to attend rehabilitation programmes.

Contact limitations with tamariki/whānau

20. With three geographically spread prison sites, women have challenges maintaining in-person and virtual contact with tamariki and whānau.

Accessibility of programs

21. An increased need for women to transfer out of their prison to access certain rehabilitation programmes, given the geographical distance between the three women's prisons. This was further impacted by prison transfers to manage population pressures.
22. Staff shortages result in fewer unlock times, and less opportunities for women to access meaningful activities and programmes.

Kaupapa Māori programmes

23. The kaupapa Māori programmes in prison appear to be site specific and fragmented. A prior Ombudsman recommendation emphasised the need to; "prioritise, fund and implement kaupapa Māori practices and programmes."¹⁴

Capacity concerns

24. Capacity is reached more quickly in the women's prison network. This results in the use of buildings that are unfit for purpose, and women distanced from their support systems.

Ombudsman's complaints

25. Since July 2024, of the 237 contacts from, or about, women in prison; approximately 1 in 7 related to restricted access to whānau / family, and 1 in 20 related to inadequate post-natal care and Mother-Babies Unit applications.

What are agencies doing?

Current agencies work plans to address the problem

26. Justice and Corrections have provided us with their work plans to address this problem – see **Appendix 1**. Whether this is sufficient to address such a complex multi-generational problem, is unclear.

¹⁴ Report on an unannounced targeted inspection of Auckland Region Women's Corrections Facility. Chief Ombudsman OPCAT Report (2023). Published 5 December 2025.

27. Given that several agencies are involved and responsible for different points in the “pipeline” of the Justice sector, any solution to the problem likely requires a shift from single agency targets to a joint agency model with shared benchmarks and joint outcomes. A whole-of-sector accountability approach would enable clear monitoring of collective sector performance. Short-term, long-term and intergenerational approaches are needed to create sustainable and enduring change.

Me whai whakaaro tātou ki ngā whakatipuranga — ā-rima tau, ā-tekau tau, puta noa i ngā whakatipuranga maha.

We need intergenerational thinking — 5, 10 (year), multi-generational – Pūhara Mana Tangata member.

28. From our initial analysis it is not clear that there is a long term multi agency strategy in place to guide this work across the system, and greater visibility of associated funding in the Estimates would be beneficial for scrutiny purposes. We intend to undertake further work to understand whether there is sufficient co-ordination and collaboration across the agencies responsible for the justice pipeline to adequately address the issues.

What more is needed?

Initial engagement on approaches that are needed

29. To start to understand what steps might be helpful to tackle these problems, we have drawn on the expertise of the Ombudsman’s Pūhara Mana Tangata – Māori Advisory panel members (Pūhara) and Professor Tracey McIntosh. Collectively they provide a wealth of expertise, and range of insights on what might help to support cultural safety, charging, treatment, rehabilitation and reintegration.
30. Throughout our engagements there were some common overarching themes:
- Disrupted whakapapa (genealogy) flows from incarceration that removes women from primary caregiving roles — present and future. Because women are far more likely than men to be primary caregivers, women's incarceration has a disproportionate intergenerational impact, accelerating the transfer of social inequality.
 - High rates of remand imprisonment was a particular concern. It was noted that remand can extend up to two years, during which households collapse and tamariki may be taken into Oranga Tamariki care.
 - Survival-driven offending (often shop-lifting to provide for whānau) was emphasised as a key driver for imprisonment of wāhine Māori.
 - Deficits in provision of reintegration services for wāhine Māori prisoners upon release is a key issue. A Pūhara member identified the absence of wraparound support at release as the key driver of recidivism, describing women leaving prison as weighed down by whakamā (shame). Programmes equivalent to those available

for tāne (men) (such as Te Whakaruruhau at Rimutaka) do not exist at scale for wāhine.

31. These engagements also identified four insights into what is needed to make an impact on the problem. We intend to use these insights as a base for further investigation and engagement with agencies and the wider community – are these the right areas of focus to help solve the problem, and, if they are, are agencies investing sufficiently in these areas?
32. The significance of this kaupapa is illustrated in this traditional whakataukī:

Kua hāngai te tukutuku ki runga i te whenua, te marae, te kura — ā, ki runga hoki i ā mātou wāhine. Ko rātou ngā aho tuitui e hono tahi ai mātou. Ki te whakaiti i te wāhine i roto i te pūnaha whakawa, ka motumotu te tūāpapa o tō mātou Māoritanga.

Tukutuku is built on the whenua, marae, kura — and on our wāhine. They are the binding strands that hold us together. To diminish wāhine in the justice system is to tear the fabric of who we are as Māori - Pūhara Mana Tangata member.

Insight 1: Early pipeline prevention: charging and Te Pae Oranga

33. The first insight our panel stressed was the importance of focusing on the beginning of the criminal justice system pipeline, when criminal charges are laid.
34. We are aware of some established community alternatives that may be making a meaningful difference by providing alternatives at the start of the pipeline: for example, Te Pae Oranga (Iwi Community Panels), which is used to divert low-level offences.
35. We intend to further examine what initiatives at the front of the pipeline are in place and their impact.

Example of Te Pae Oranga

Te Pae Oranga community iwi panels shift the justice response by leading with *whakawhanaungatanga* (connection) rather than being focused on the offence. This means that the start of a wāhine Māori's interaction with the pipeline shifts from a punitive to a relational response.

Te Pae Oranga is proven to work as demonstrated in a Police evaluation. Police data (FY24/25) shows it has been used proportionally more for Māori (42% of referrals – all genders) than for other ethnicities.¹ For female participants, wāhine Māori make up 51% of all female referrals. The evaluation found that Te Pae Oranga achieves strong crime prevention outcomes for wāhine Māori. In FY 24/25 66% successfully completed the programme, and of those, 87% showed a positive change in terms of reoffending: 76% had no further offending in the 12-months after completing Te Pae Oranga, and a further 11% did reoffend but with less harm.¹

Pūrākau 1: Case Study 1 – Strength of Te Pae Oranga

A vulnerable wāhine mother from Waikato had missed her Te Pae Oranga panel session. A liaison visited her home and found her burning clothes to keep her children warm, with no food in the cupboards. Practical wrap around support changed her trajectory. Instead of pursuing standard legal sanctions, the panel immediately deployed practical wrap-around support, providing firewood, food, and clothing.

Without this early pipeline prevention alternative pathway, the traditional systemic pipeline trajectory could have resulted in charges being laid, remand incarceration for shoplifting, possible Oranga Tamariki involvement, and her eventual release back into socioeconomic deprivation. By providing an alternative pathway with wrap-around support, Te Pae Oranga prevented multi-agency state intervention and kept the family unit intact.

Insight 2: Optimising Indigenous Community Infrastructure for Rehabilitation and Reintegration

36. Our second panel insight identifies the need for investment in next stages of the pipeline, of firstly, rehabilitation within prison and secondly, reintegration on release.
37. Long-term rehabilitation outcomes could be improved by fully integrating established, well resourced, sustainable community and iwi networks into its operational delivery models.
38. In terms of reintegration, resources could be directed to address an apparent gap in kaupapa Māori reintegration pathways for women. Residential infrastructure could be scaled up to match existing successful models for men (such as Te Whare Puutikitiki¹⁵). Another reintegration programme is the Grace Foundation, which supports stable housing and employment pathways.

¹⁵ Te Kōhao Health website "Te Whare Puutikitiki - Reintegration Program — Te Kōhao Health" accessed on 1 June 2026, <https://www.tekohaohealth.co.nz/te-whare-puutikitiki>.

39. We intend to further examine what community and iwi-led rehabilitation, and reintegration is in place for wāhine Māori and their impact.

Pūrākau 2: Case Study 2 - Strength of Community and iwi-led Capacity

Our second pūrākau is shared as an example of Corrections programmes being prioritised over iwi and community reintegration plans when considering parole.

A young Tūhoe woman had a comprehensive, wraparound iwi reintegration plan that included kuia attendance at her hearings, dedicated iwi psychological support, and relocation to suitable housing. Despite the robustness of this community-led safety net, administrative decisions repeatedly prioritised the non-completion of an internal, group-based institutional programme (Kowhiritanga) as the sole basis for declining parole.

By prioritising internal courses over highly resourced iwi networks, the system potentially underutilises iwi-led community assets that can ensure successful and sustainable reintegration.

Insight 3: Ensuring stable whānau during incarceration¹⁶

40. Adverse justice outcomes have compounding, intergenerational effects. It is therefore important that connections to whānau are maintained to the greatest extent possible during a mother's incarceration.
41. Our panellists repeatedly stressed the need to prioritise positioning wider whānau as the default interim caregivers at the point of arrest, mandating immediate, whānau-centred planning to maintain child stability. We intend to undertake further examination of what

An example of the impact on mothers as primary caregivers was shared by Chief Justice Helen Winkelmann

The human cost is severe. In May 2026, Chief Justice Helen Winkelmann noted that women are overwhelmingly primary caregivers, and even short periods of custody "can be devastating for the children that she leaves behind". The Chief Justice noted that caregiving is a material sentencing consideration consistent with the Sentencing Act and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.¹ Addressing these issues demands a system-wide response, not only judicial action. The Chief Justice encouraged defence lawyers to consider human rights arguments in sentencing submissions where offenders have a significant role in the care of their children.

¹⁶ Capital letter article on Chief Justice Helen Winkelmann speech. "Sentencing of caregivers raises human rights issues", written by Angela Gregory, accessed on 29 May 2026, <https://www.capitalletter.co.nz/news/sentencing/848516/sentencing-caregivers-raises-human-rights-issues-chief-justice>.

pathways are in place to support whānau as the first port of call when discussing the care of tamariki prior to the exploration of any state intervention.

42. To further support whānau connections, there could be merit in establishing dedicated child-connection navigator roles within women's prisons to provide essential clarity regarding custody, education, and child well-being. Because most incarcerated women are primary caregivers at the point of arrest, this practical intervention actively de-escalates institutional tension and preserves foundational family structures for post-release sustainability. We intend to further examine what initiatives are in place to ensure stability of the whānau during incarceration, and their impact.

Insight 4: Enhancing Te Tiriti o Waitangi Obligations Through Iwi Partnerships

43. Our fourth panel insight identified that fulfilling constitutional duties under Te Tiriti o Waitangi provides a robust framework for achieving equitable outcomes across the justice sector. The principles of active protection and partnership were seen as requiring the Crown to proactively safeguard Māori well-being in this context. In fact, the Justice Sector 2022 LTIB acknowledges that addressing this longstanding problem requires genuine partnership with whānau, hapū, iwi and Māori groups.¹⁷
44. Partnering with local iwi and hapu provides a structured way to support rehabilitation and reintegration. We intend to further examine what partnership arrangements are in place and making a positive contribution.

Closing statement

45. From our initial insights and observations, we are concerned that the planned increase in the prison population will embed or worsen existing disproportionality. We intend to examine whether an adequate multi-agency, long-term strategy is in place, as well as further assessing what kind initiatives can make a positive impact on the problem. This will be informed by further engagement with agencies and communities.
46. We also plan to engage other oversight agencies and the Justice Select Committee, which has this issue as a specific focus, on how our respective inquiries and investigations can support scrutiny of this problem. Leveraging our collective skills and insights seems necessary to help drive change needed to address this and other complex societal problems. The Ombudsman can bring our independent, cross-budget, and cross-parliamentary-cycle insights to bear on this multi-decade challenge. A systemic, long-term response with sustained investment, transparent monitoring, and clear accountability is essential, in particular for Justice sector stewardship and governance.

¹⁷ Ministry of Justice, [Long-term Insights Briefing: Focus on Imprisonment in New Zealand](https://www.justice.govt.nz/justice-sector-policy/key-initiatives/key-initiatives-archive/justice-sector-long-term-insights-briefing/), (Ministry of Justice, 2022), 10. <https://www.justice.govt.nz/justice-sector-policy/key-initiatives/key-initiatives-archive/justice-sector-long-term-insights-briefing/>.

47. We will continue to seek the voices of the wāhine Māori prisoner in our work to enable the Ombudsman to better fulfil its kaitiaki role, drive fairer outcomes, and strengthen confidence in public services.

48. We close this briefing with a whakataukī illustrating the importance of disrupting a persistent, normalised and multi-decade problem for wāhine Māori in prison:

Ina kite koe i tētahi mea he i mua i tō aroaro, me whakatikangia, ina kore, ka rite koe ki taua he.

When you see something wrong in front of you, you are duty bound to correct it. For if you don't, you will become like it – Pūhara Mana Tangata member.

Appendix 1. The Ministry of Justice and the Department of Corrections work plans.

The Ministry of Justice

Reducing Māori Disproportionality Programme

A new system-wide programme is being established to coordinate agency action on Māori disproportionality. The initial focus is on wāhine Māori (followed by rangatahi Māori). A tactical response workstream will identify both system-level and agency-specific actions. Progress will be measured through indicators such as reductions in court inflow and recidivism.

Wāhine Māori Research Programme

Justice is developing an evidence base¹⁸ showing the system responds more seriously to wāhine Māori, with disproportionality amplifying at each stage. An unexplained proportion of wāhine Māori remains after controlling for offending history. This signals that system responses themselves contribute.

Supporting sector initiatives

- Te Ao Mārama: Judicially led initiative providing whānau wrap-around services in the District Court.
- Whakaoranga te Mana Tangata: Iwi-provider initiative supporting Māori through the court process.
- Te Pae Oranga: Police initiative referring low-level offences to iwi community panels.

The Department of Corrections

Wāhine – E rere ana ki te pae hou (Women's Strategic Plan)

Refreshed gendered response to Hōkai Rangi, organised around three priorities:

1. Capability (staff training in trauma-informed, gender and culturally responsive practice).
2. Capacity (timely access to interventions from court stage through reintegration),
3. Consistency (data, monitoring and a gender lens to ensure equitable access).

The Oranga Framework then translates the Strategic Plan into practice, articulating tangible changes for staff, women and the system.

Te Waihora Therapeutic Community (Christchurch Women's Prison, Avon Unit)

Offence-focused therapeutic community for wāhine. Integrates therapy, daily living and reintegration planning, with kaupapa Māori intervention and whānau-centred reintegration. Māori values underpin how the community functions, supporting wāhine in rehabilitation.

¹⁸ This includes the February 2026 Wāhine Māori Justice Sector Factsheet.

Pae Ora Health Service Delivery Model

Reframes prison health toward integrated, whānau-centred care. Recognises that for wāhine Māori, wellbeing includes physical, mental, cultural, and social dimensions including wairua and identity. The Integrated Health Assessment Pathway is progressing through proof-of-concept, enabling earlier identification of individuals complex needs and provides Rongoā Māori alongside clinical services.

Whānau and tamariki connection initiatives:

- Immediate needs checklist question to identify individuals with dependent children (January 2026): New questions to identify dependent children, completed when people are newly received into prison, linked to the Poutasi Review response.
- Mothers with Babies Units: Operating at all three women's prisons, with on-site and post-release kaupapa Māori parenting support.
- Child Centric Visits: At Arohata and Christchurch Women's Prison.
- Child Travel Fund: Corrections-funded, Te Pā-managed travel and accommodation assistance for whānau visits.
- Mothers Project: Lawyers supporting over 1,300 women to navigate parenting rights.
- Storybook Programme: Recorded reading to maintain mother-child connection.
- Social Workers: 6 FTE social workers across women's prisons (2 more recruited in response to growing prison population) who work alongside case management teams.