

typical patterns. First, 22% of respondents could remember no-one they knew being sent to prison when they were a child. Second, only 24% of pakeha, but 56% of Māori, first remembered someone being sent to prison when they were 11 or younger. Third, 40% of pakeha, but less than 10% of Māori, knew of no-one going to prison when they were a child.

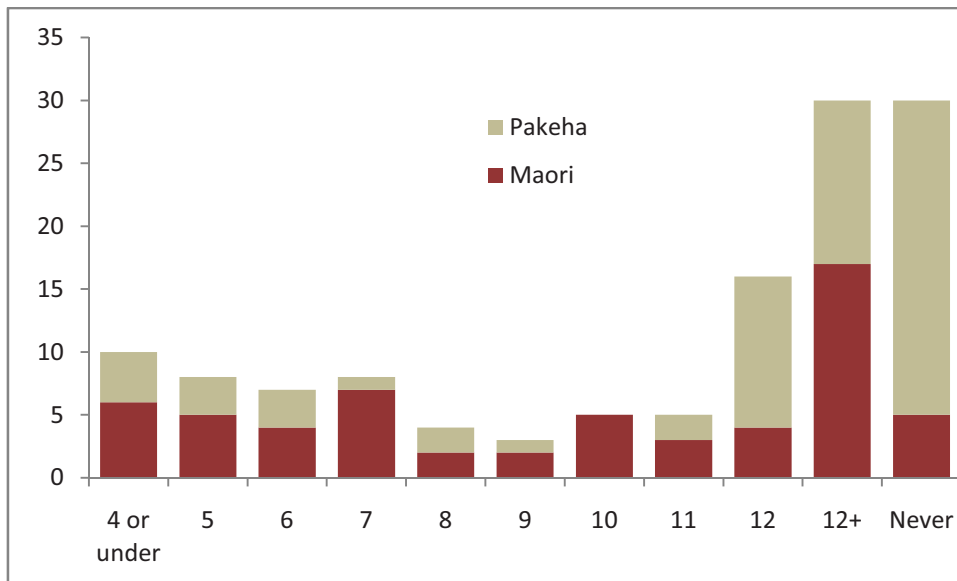


Figure 4. Age at which someone the respondent knew was first sent to prison

While these figures appear to show a much higher rate of intergenerational recidivism for Māori than for others, this is only because Māori in the previous generation were imprisoned at a much higher rate.

The normalisation argument

During our interviews with stakeholders, the view was expressed to us on several occasions that the prisoners of children should be kept well away from courts and prisons (and their family member who is a prisoner), otherwise they would come to see the prison environment as 'normal', thus making it more likely that they would, in turn, offend. This is referred to in the international literature, for example:

Many myths follow the children of these offenders, the most pervasive of which is that the children will be better off if they have no contact with incarcerated parents, according to Karen Shain of San Francisco-based Legal Services for Prisoners with Children (Tebo, 2006) p. 12.

The normalisation view is diametrically opposite to that held by community organisations such as PARS and PILLARS. These organisations actively support significant ongoing relationships between the family and the prisoner, while working to support the family in a range of ways.

The question to be resolved is the direction of the influence. By visiting in prison and continuing to be involved with their incarcerated parent, are children imbibing a prison culture which will lead them to become criminals, or are they maintaining high quality relationships that protect them against such influences, and encourage the prisoner to turn away from a life of crime?

Our research provides some insight into this. We asked prisoners whether they had visited anyone in prison before they were 17 years of age. 52% answered yes and 48% answered no. More than half visited 5 times or less, and only a quarter visited ten times or more. The latter group are interesting because seven were pakeha, six Māori and two Pasifika. Although the numbers are too small to indicate a trend, it appears that pakeha visited slightly more frequently than Māori, in this sample¹¹.

The literature on intergenerational recidivism suggests that, where a parent or other close family members goes to prison, this may provide knowledge and experiences to the child that, by itself (even taking into account other aggravating factors such as low income, poverty, low education levels and drug and alcohol abuse), increases the likelihood that a person will end up in prison as an adult. The questionnaire therefore asked prisoners how much they had known, prior to entering prison for the first time, about what prison is like. Responses are shown in Figure 5:

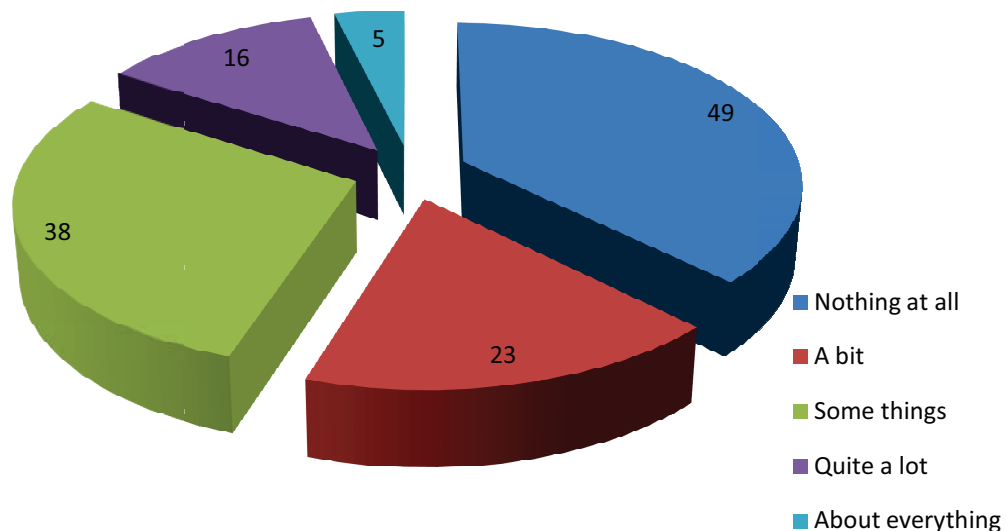


Figure 5. How much respondents knew about prison before they became a prisoner for the first time.

A small number of respondents (21) stated that they knew 'quite a lot' or 'about everything' about prison. There are few consistent patterns that would point to a strong 'knowledge-based' intergenerational recidivism among this group. Looking at these 21:

- 13 were Māori, 7 Pakeha and one other.
- 7 were female and 14 male.
- 6 did not live with a prisoner when they were a child.
- 14 visited prison as a child, 7 of these 10 or more times.
- 6 were in prison for the first time.
- 9 had been in prison on four or more occasions

In our search for the intergenerational recidivist, we attempted to narrow the criteria further, by selecting only those who had been in prison 4 or more times, had lived with someone who had been in prison, stated they

¹¹ In the sample, pakeha were both more slightly more likely to visit and more likely to visit more often, than Māori.

knew quite a lot or about everything about being in prison and had visited before the age of 17.

A total of 5 (out of 137) prisoners fit all the criteria, 4 men and 1 woman, 3 Māori and 2 pakeha, with sentences ranging from 3 years to over 20. Between them, they cited 21 family members who had been in prison, and most cited a mother or a father (in one case both) who had been in prison. They visited prison regularly as children. They have 12 children between them, so far.

If there is a direct pipeline from childhood to prison for some, this is the group for whom it is most evident, and it is only 3% of those involved in the prison survey. Not enough is known about this group, and we think that a research project should be set up to try and understand, through a qualitative study, what were the mediating factors (or lack of them) in these cases.

Previous sections of this first year report have noted a range of economic, social, health and education factors that mediate, and probably influence, the potential for the children to end up in prison. We have described a general picture of families living in poverty, often in reconstituted families, with a range of physical and emotional problems and a generally poor attachment to school.

Some of the caregivers are concerned that the children will get in trouble as they get older:

I am concerned that he will grow up like his mother (case 20).

[The older boy] has huge shoes to fill within the whānau, and the family need [his father] to be able to show him the way. They need a programme to strengthen whānau in these kinds of situations. The problem is the culture that young people are being exposed to by their parents. The children play with toy guns and knives (case 7).

It has affected the sons, in a huge way. Because the children had thirteen years worth of separation then two and a half years of re-bonding, and then he was taken away again. The sons have been affected especially at teenage age (case 2).

More often than not, the caregivers and children attribute the problems they are having to the *absence* of the prisoner, rather than his criminality. In case 10a, the naughtiest adolescent in his town, as we were told, the absence was seen as the cause of his criminality:

I take drugs and drink alcohol because it helps me chill out. I started about three years ago... I still love my Dad. But when he's released from prison he will probably just go back inside again ... My friend's dads are in prison too... (case 10a).

He explained to the interviewer that his father encourages him to lead a good life; but he thinks: who are you to tell me that?

One case we examined was of a 14 year old girl who had no memory of her father (he was arrested before she turned one year old). A 3 day visit to her father has made a huge positive difference to her life. In her mother's words:

Before she went to visit him she was in the wrong place. She was very naughty. She was making bad choices, behaving not very good, smoking, started being cheeky, not caring, was a big concern. Before she went to the prison to visit her dad she was lonely watching other children with their parents, she was sharing her sister's dad. When she went to visit I saw her shoulders rise. He told her where she came from, that his family were successful and had careers. It gave her "big time hope". It taught her "I am OK, I am still proud of who I am". Because of the visit she realised she was still able to make choices. She changed when she came back from the visit - she knew the missing part of her life. There is calmness in her life now. This time she has got her dad. They were laughing on the Friday together... She now has a belonging smile on her face... It's a new beginning for all of us. On the third day of the visit she hugged him properly. There was a smile on her face, very happy (case 8).

It is difficult to investigate or provide answers to the question of whether proximity to a prisoner invites the transmission of prison values, which will encourage offending in the next generation. Some of the mothers whose partners have gone to prison have met new partners who have, in turn, gone to prison. This is not confined to the most economically or socially disadvantaged families. The wife of one ex-prisoner, who served a term in prison and was then deported to his European country of birth, noted that her daughter is now in a relationship with a man who has just gone to prison.

It often falls on the non-imprisoned partner or relation (usually grandparent) to try and model alternative ways of living for the children. Often their feelings about the situation get in the way of this. One caregiver (case 13) says that she often feels like a "criminal by association", and others hide the situation for this reason. Some have lost their best friends - "my friend blamed me" (case 33) - or the love of family members (case 26), because of the situation. Their subsequent isolation and lack of resources makes it hard for them to be a positive role model.

As noted in earlier sections, many of these children are not doing very well, with some already in trouble, others demonstrating behavioural problems and difficulties in learning at school. On the other hand some, like the children in cases 26 and 30, have grown up fine, sometimes with rocky periods along the way.

It is argued by some (Fergusson et al, 2004) that careful research may uncover the exact factors that cause the tendency to intergenerational recidivism. In order to achieve this, a different kind of study would be needed.

On request, the Canterbury Health and Development Study kindly put together for us a table examining the differences in outcome at age 25 between those participants who had experienced parental imprisonment and those who had not.

The 'parent in prison' sample was only 3.3% of the total, and such a small size reduces the analytical power. However, the tendencies are very clear from the table, although of course cannot be attributed to any particular cause (for example, the sample of 33 cases is made up of some of the

most socially and economically deprived families in the sample, so that factor, rather than imprisonment, may cause all, or nearly all, the observed differences)¹².

Table 2. Associations between parental history of imprisonment (prior to age 15) and young adult outcomes by age 25 in the CHDS cohort.

Outcome	Parental history of imprisonment		
	Yes (N=33)	No (N=953)	p
Crime			
% Property or violent offending (21-25 years)	20.7	11.4	NS
% Arrested or convicted (21-25 years)	17.2	7.4	<.10
% Imprisonment (ever)	15.6	1.6	<.001
Substance Use			
% Nicotine dependence (25 years)	48.3	22.1	<.001
% Alcohol dependence (21-25 years)	6.9	5.3	NS
% Illicit drug dependence (21-25 years)	17.2	8	<.10
Mental Health			
% Depression/anxiety disorder (21-25 years)	41.4	30.3	NS
% Antisocial personality disorder (21-25 years)	13.8	2.7	<.001
% Suicide attempt (ever)	18.2	8.1	<.05
Partnership/Parenthood			
% Got pregnant/got partner pregnant (by age 20)	34.3	16.6	<.01
% Became natural parent (by age 20)	24.1	7.4	<.01
% Inter-partner violence past 12 months (25 years)	13.8	8.3	NS
Education/Employment			
% No educational qualifications (by age 25)	37.5	12.3	<.001
% 12+ months unemployment (21-25 years)	20.7	8.9	<.05
% Welfare dependent (25 years)	27.6	10.9	<.01

We are aware that we have only scratched the surface of the question of how the children of prisoners tend to end up in prison, often despite enormous efforts by caregivers and communities to stop this happening. Our aim here has been firstly to outline our first year findings, and secondly to summarise the main issues around this important question. There are some points that offer hope to community organisations that wish to help young people stop the cycle of offending. First, even in the

¹² Our grateful thanks to John Horwood and David Fergusson for their assistance.

most imprisoned households, children are not automatically condemned to become prisoners. In our sample of prisoners, only a tiny number had no real chance of escaping their carceral destiny. This means that, with the right interventions, the next generation can avoid prison. These interventions will need to target health, education, social and economic conditions, and also tackle the institutional assumptions of police and the justice system.

This project cannot solve these difficult issues alone, and we look forward to the assistance of analysts, researchers and academics from government, research and community agencies over the next two years to assist in this important task.