

Toward an understanding of Aotearoa New Zealand's adult gang environment

A report from the Prime Minister's Chief Science Advisor,
Kaitohutohu Mātanga Pūtaiao Matua ki te Pirimia

Full report



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FOREWORD

This report is about human beings, many of whom had limited choice about whether they joined a gang or not. Given the structural forces at play that limit the life trajectories of too many, for some, gang membership was inevitable from the outset.

The report was requested by Prime Minister Ardern in 2022, to support a policy agenda to reduce gang harm in our communities. It provides a select review of the international and local evidence on gangs, drawing on academic literature, government documents, and meetings with stakeholders and those with lived experience of gangs.

The report does not offer quick solutions, nor does it recommend specific policy advice. Rather it is our hope that this report will move the conversation forward on what the evidence says, and doesn't say, about gangs in Aotearoa New Zealand. This report is not intended to exclude those who are gang affected or gang affiliated but to better understand their world, so we might reduce rather than widen the gulf between gang communities and mainstream communities.

There are no quick fixes. Reducing gang harm will require addressing underlying societal issues which have been well documented but unsolved: inequity, intergenerational trauma, housing, family violence, etc, all of which serve to narrow the choices of those in our society who experience complex and inter-connected stressors. Protective factors that reduce the chance of a young person being involved in a gang include strong ties to family, school, and community. Investing in these young people to enable them to enjoy these protective factors offers the most hope of diminishing gang harm in the long term.

There are some intervention points that are under-explored in the vast majority of literature and previous conversations on the topic. Women and children in and around the gang world can be supported to reduce harm. Best practice in prisons that supports positive pathways on release can be made standard practice, but we acknowledge this is challenging to implement. The systemic operational challenges that prevent remand prisoners from accessing therapeutic and harm reduction services can be re-examined. A focus on the criminal and anti-social behaviours within and beyond gangs, rather than the gangs per se, might improve chances of success.

Developing and implementing public health policies on family harm, youth offending, drug harm reduction, as well as trauma-informed frameworks at a community level, are needed if we are really to change things. And doing so necessitates the inclusion of additional voices alongside law enforcement to address gang-associated harms. A public health approach does not come at the expense of enforcement. However, we can't and won't arrest ourselves out of the "gang problem".

We hope that this report supports policy makers and decision makers to move past the 'tough-on-crime vs soft-on-crime' rhetoric, and focus on being smart on crime, protecting our communities from harm and providing real and lasting change for Aotearoa New Zealand.



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ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Definition
ACE	Adverse Childhood Experience
BOP	Bay of Plenty
BOPYDT	Bay of Plenty Youth Development Trust
CHI	Crime Harm Index
Corrections	Department of Corrections
CPI	Corruption Perceptions Index
FVDRC	Family Violence Death Review Committee
GELS	Gang Employment Liaison Scheme
GHIC	Gang Harm Insights Centre
GIC	Gang Intelligence Centre
GREAT	Gang Resistance Education and Training
IDI	Integrated Data Infrastructure
IPV	Intimate Partner Violence
NCIWR	National Collective of Independent Women’s Refuges
NGL	National Gang List
NIA	National Intelligence Application
NZAG	New Zealand Adult Gang
OMCG	Outlaw Motorcycle Gang
OPWG	Other Patch Wearing Gang
OT	Oranga Tamariki
RAW	Reclaiming Another Woman
ROCC	Resilience to Organised Crime in Communities
SASWB	South Auckland Social Wellbeing Board
STU	Special Treatment Unit
SVRU	Scottish Violence Reduction Unit
SWA	Social Wellbeing Agency
WCA	Wesley Community Action
WNPH	Whāngaia Ngā Pā Harakeke

GLOSSARY OF REO MĀORI TERMS

We note that some words can have multiple meanings. Translations are taken from the Māori Dictionary, based on their use in the report.

Word	Definition
Kaiāwhina	Helper, assistant, contributor, counsel, advocate
Kaupapa	Topic, policy, matter for discussion
Mana Motuhake	Separate identity, autonomy, self-government, self-determination, independence, sovereignty, authority
Mirimiri	To rub, massage
Papakāinga	Original home, home base, village, communal Māori land
Rongoā	Remedy, medicine, treatment
Romiromi	To massage
Tikanga	Correct procedure, convention, protocol – the customary system of values and practices that have developed over time and are deeply embedded in the social context

REPORT OVERVIEW

This report provides a select review of the academic literature and grey literature, enriched by stakeholder engagement and conversations with those with lived experiences and was written to meet our Terms of Reference (Annex 1). It does not provide a comprehensive review of New Zealand Government activities. Further, while we have done our best to engage with various voices in the community, we recognise that drawing from academic and grey literature sources privileges the voice of the state throughout this report. We present an overview of some of the key themes that are relevant to gang members and gang communities. Many of the highlighted themes are themselves complex issues for which this report does not provide an in depth understanding.

The report begins in section 1 by outlining the definitional issues surrounding gangs. This is followed by an overview of what *is* known about the Aotearoa New Zealand gang environment, drawing upon data collated by the Gang Harm Insights Centre (GHIC). While we recognise that datasets such as the National Gang List (NGL) are contested, we consider there is value in understanding what the data might, and might not, tell us.

Employing the definitional criteria outlined by the GHIC, this report considers Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs (OMCG), Other Patch-Wearing Gangs (OPWG), and street gangs. Throughout the engagement process, various stakeholders identified other groups that might fall under the broad definition of gangs (for example white supremacist groups or online extremist communities). While we acknowledge that these groups pose a risk to our communities, they are not explored in detail within this report. Section 1 concludes by discussing the role of women, children, and the media in our gang environment.

Looking beyond definitional issues section 2 recognises ‘gang crime’ is often used as a blanket term to describe offending by young people, offending by gang affiliated individuals, and organised crime. Yet these offending behaviours are different and addressing related harms requires an understanding of these differences. Finally, gang members and gang communities are often framed as entirely antisocial yet, there are instances where prosocial attributes and behaviours are observed.

In section 3 we describe the behaviours that are associated with gang communities. Considering the literature being largely criminogenic, many of the associated behaviours are criminogenic. While the harms described are not the only harms that might be described in connection with gang communities, they arose as consistent themes in both the academic and grey literature. Recognising that gang connected individuals are often both perpetrators and victims of harm, we go on to describe some of the life course outcomes associated with gang membership drawing on both academic and grey literature. Section 3 concludes by describing some of the observed prosocial attributes of gang communities and articulating that there is a lot that we simply do not know about gang connected individuals and the wider gang communities.

Finally, section 0 describes the various mechanisms for ‘addressing gangs.’ This includes desistance, gang exit, suppression, prevention, intervention, and reintegration. The section concludes by describing approaches that look beyond gang membership, to address harmful behaviours using a holistic approach. Described as a public health response by the World Health Organisation (WHO), it is important to note that such a response is not limited to health services, nor does it come at the expense of enforcement. And we know there are examples of these already occurring in our New Zealand context, although an extensive overview of our national service provision is beyond the scope of this report.

KEY MESSAGES

HIGH LEVEL CONCLUSIONS

- A stronger focus on prevention and early intervention will slow the flow of young people into gangs and alleviate pressure on multiple systems (justice, health, corrections) in the long-term. Beyond targeted programmes, prevention can include poverty reduction, opportunities provision, access to healthcare, etc. Outcomes (i.e., changed behaviours, improved social outcomes etc) will be difficult to measure and attribute to specific interventions. Setting expectations appropriately is important.
- A focus on social harms and harmful behaviours (for example violence reduction or addiction services) will likely improve chances of success. This enables a health approach, rather than taking a strictly law-and-order approach. There is also a need to recognise the concentration and proliferation of social hazards in socioeconomic disadvantaged communities. For example, the presence of alcohol and gambling outlets, and the absence of healthy affordable food and early childhood centres.
- There are different types of gangs however data collection across agencies differs and few distinguish the type of gang with which an individual is affiliated. The lack of distinction limits the extent to which we can understand unique gang harms, and risks those in decision-making positions attempting to address multiple complex issues with narrow approaches.
- Our gang population is unique with some gangs adopting sophisticated business structures while some of our oldest gang communities are made up of actual whānau with shared whakapapa connections. The international literature might help to support a better understanding of the former but does not adequately capture the complex intergenerational nature of the latter.
- The experiences of women in gang environments presents a significant research gap. It is a disservice to our women who experience complex needs that their experiences are poorly understood. Supporting these women presents opportunities to reduce harm.
- Suppression, control, and enforcement approaches serve a purpose, and we know that these mechanisms are already in use, but they are not the sole answer. The evidence indicates that interventions such as 'scared-straight' or boot camp approaches are ineffective. And a 'zero-tolerance' style of policing builds distrust in the communities that police are tasked to serve. It creates alienation and dislocation from communities and risks fuelling gang membership and increasing gang dislocation and isolation.
- Due to systemic operational challenges, delivery of services to the remand prison population is challenging. However, our remand population are staying in prison for longer periods of time and have limited access to services. Work to address the present challenges might allow for those who recognise they need support to access it sooner, reducing the risk of reconnecting with criminal activity.
- For service providers, the dedication of resources to the administration that comes with evaluation can be burdensome. Yet, without consistent approaches to evaluation we are in the dark about what works and what doesn't.
- There is a need to improve data collection, working in partnership with gang communities to support trusted relationships and to establish a shared sense of ownership of key issues that are to be addressed.
- There is a need for innovative, culturally informed, and methodically tested evaluations to support decision makers in allocating funding and resources most effectively.
- The literature describes risk factors that influence gang joining across domains such as community, peer groups, school, family, and individual levels. While risk factors are useful, they are viewed by some as problematic as they do not account for historical processes and policies that are responsible for socioeconomic and structural drivers of persistent and intergenerational disadvantage. These are well known contributors to the formation of some of our early gangs.

TOWARD AN UNDERSTANDING OF GANGS

This report canvases the literature on gangs to establish an understanding of the harms that occur by, to, and within gang communities. A life-course approach has been adopted to understand the pull factors that draw people, particularly children and young people, toward gangs, and the outcomes that might be observed for gang connected individuals, and the wider community within which they exist. We have also considered protective factors and to some extent the social and community conditions that facilitate push and pull factors. Beyond the literature, the report draws on government reports and datasets. Importantly, narratives of those with lived experiences were sought out, and the experiences of organisations that work alongside gang communities (some of which were resourced to provide evidence-based evaluations and others that shared case studies).*

We note that the experiences of women and children that exist within gang communities are seldom represented within literature and conversations on gangs. This is a missed opportunity and a massive oversight. We strongly believe that it is important to hear from those in gangs and those in their orbit. Consequently, we engaged with a range of organisations that work alongside gang whānau as well as men and women with lived experiences who were willing to share with us.

Global and local themes need to be considered

While NZ has its own specific context that surrounds our gang populations, there are global themes that can describe our experience of gangs to some extent. The research identifies various factors that influence gang membership that span the broad domains of community conditions, schooling, peer groups, family factors and individual characteristics. Various risk factors, housed within these domains, might influence an individual to join a gang, including economic deprivation and parental disengagement or disorganisation.

The international literature tends to describe gang involvement as a transient life stage for young people. While that may be the case for some of our gang population, it is very common to find gang membership that has persisted well into adult years in NZ. In some instances, older gang members will have been gang associated from a young age and likely have children and grandchildren raised within the gang context. However, intergenerational gang relationships do not necessarily equate to participation within organised criminal networks or any criminal activity whatsoever. It is important to recognise that longevity of gang membership and being born into a gang whānau are separate, if related, issues. For many, gang membership is simply whānau.

There are unique aspects of NZ's gang populations. NZ's colonial history is highlighted as a starting point for our Māori gang membership. The 'urban drift' and the mass movements of Māori away from their papakāinga to the urban centres are significant. These events facilitated the flow of disenfranchised Māori into gangs. The immigration Dawn Raids in the 1970s had a significant influence over the flow of young Pacific peoples into gangs. We note that the intervention of the state and/or faith-based organisations has played a role in the formation of youth gangs in previous decades (and some might argue, that continues to this day).[†]

* We have attempted to canvas a broad range of stakeholders, guided by the expertise and networks of the Chief Science Advisors (CSAs) for Justice and Ministry of Social Development (MSD), but this project was not resourced for comprehensive engagement.

[†] That state intervention played a role in the formation of some of our earliest gang communities is a significant issue and we acknowledge the efforts of the Abuse in Care Royal Commission of Inquiry for capturing the stories of the many survivors of our state care institutions.

'Gang' is a highly contested term

The rhetoric that surrounds gangs in NZ is wide-ranging. There is often little distinction made in the public discourse between youth offending (like the recent spate of ram raids), youth gangs, adult gangs, and organised criminal networks. The lack of distinction risks those in decision-making positions attempting to address multiple complex issues with a single approach that is not 'fit for purpose' – namely it does not meet the needs of those it aims to serve. There is also a flow-on effect where any delinquent or anti-social behaviour is conveyed as 'gang activity' and sentinel events influence government policy more strongly than what the evidence says works.

Gangs perform a function for their members

Gangs may be seen as not good for society, but they fulfil a purpose for their members. If they didn't, they simply would not exist.

While the literature distinguishes various cohorts that fall under the catch-all term 'gangs,' we know that a significant portion of our gang population are a cohort with complex histories of intergenerational family violence, trauma, poverty, and neglect. These gang communities are described by some researchers as inhabiting the margins of society and have historically formed in resistance to the society that has rejected them. In this sense, gangs have a function, providing a sense of whānau and community for those who may have been rejected from other environments. In some cases, the relationship is one of actual whānau with whakapapa links.

Anecdotally we have also heard that a newer type of gang is emerging with a slightly different set of priorities and values. Throughout the engagement process we heard that these gangs arise out of different social conditions and place a higher value on capitalist-type values, appearance, and materialism.

Describing and addressing gang associated harms is complicated

While gang members and gang communities are not necessarily anti-social, gang environments serve as a concentration zone for individuals that pose a higher risk for exhibiting anti-social behaviour. When considering harms *by* gang members, themes of family violence, intimate partner violence, drug, or alcohol abuse and criminal offending emerge. While these elements exist in all communities, they are often overrepresented in gang-affected communities and even more so within gang-affiliated families.

The data indicates that gang members commit crimes more frequently than other offenders, are overrepresented in NZ's prison population, and are more likely to reoffend upon release from prison. Data from the GHIC suggests that individuals on the NGL have on average 38 convictions. Yet, gang members are also frequently recorded as victims of harm, tend to live in our most deprived communities, are disproportionately represented in the receipt of benefit income and have poorer health outcomes.

Adding a layer of complexity to this is the consideration that many of the harms described are not unique to gangs or gang members. And enforcement measures that focus purely on gang affiliation have their limitations. In that sense, focussed interventions to target organised crime and harmful behaviours, may prove to be a more worthwhile investment than customised measures to 'crack down on gangs' *per se*.*

* Recent survey data collected for the Justice sector Long-term Insight Briefing amongst a nationally representative sample (N= 1,318) of the New Zealand public indicates a perception that the amount of crime has increased and, that crime involving gangs is a major contributor to this. While addressing social harms through targeted interventions might be most effective, this may not meet the social appetite to 'crack down' on gangs.

Addressing gang associated harms will require a robust, multi-pronged approach

Efforts to address gang harms can take various forms such as prevention, intervention (including early intervention), desistance, or suppression. While prevention might focus on programmes to keep young people out of gangs in the first place, intervention approaches might work alongside gang members, their whānau, or young people deemed ‘at-risk,’ to address harmful behaviours and to potentially minimise the transmission of intergenerational gang membership. Gang desistance tends to focus on supporting an individual’s behavioural change and eventual gang exit and suppression approaches generally refer to legislative and law enforcement efforts to address the criminal aspects of gang harms.* There is a place for all types of approach, which have different timeframes. While suppression approaches might provide immediate improvement on specific issues, it is unlikely to bring about any long-term behavioural changes and may even contribute to perpetuating cycles of harm. Prevention and intervention approaches when delivered effectively can promote behavioural changes and desistance from criminal behaviours in the long term. Such changes do not happen quickly and can require significant resources to support individuals, whānau, and community to change, with downstream benefits hard to attribute to specific interventions. While this report does not address our obligations under Te Tiriti we recognise that it is important that initiatives developed to address harmful behaviours are considered in light of these obligations.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Some children are born into gang whānau

We heard through various engagements that adult gang members want better life outcomes for their children than they had themselves, which provides an opportunity for intervention. However, we recognise that being born to a gang whānau has a significant impact on a young person’s lived experience and worldview. We know that children who have a parent or primary caregiver incarcerated are more at risk of experiencing poverty, social deprivation, and engaging in criminal behaviours themselves. It is difficult to obtain reasonable data that speak to the numbers of children and young people in gang environments, and it is not clear from the limited data available the extent to which children born into gang whānau will remain in a gang themselves.

Youth gangs are not the same as adult gangs

Youth gangs are different to adult gangs, and only a small proportion of people involved with youth gangs go on to become adult gang prospects or members. And much of the crime associated with youth gangs is opportunistic in nature. While the GHIC maintain oversight of the National Gang List, youth gangs often do not fulfil the complete definitional criteria for their members to be included. As such, there is an absence of data on youth gang numbers. Further, youth gang membership can fluctuate rapidly which would make oversight of membership figures resource intensive.

It is important to highlight here incorrect recording and subsequent labelling could have a deleterious impact on the lives of young people. The practice of photographing youth, for example, has already resulted in widespread concern. Intervention will need to be youth and child centred.

* Throughout the engagement process we heard that desistance approaches that focus solely on an individual are not as effective as they could be, and that interventions to facilitate change must consider the wider community network.

What we know about young people who are gang affiliated

The Social Wellbeing Agency (SWA) reported on a sample of 2,000 young people (early 20s) identified by the Department of Corrections (Corrections) as gang members. Across their lifetime, the cohort were more likely than the population average to have had contact with Oranga Tamariki (OT), experienced an OT investigation, and to have been placed in state care. Almost one third of the cohort had had contact with truancy services and approximately one quarter had experienced alternative education. Most left school by age 17* with little or no educational attainment. The cohort were more likely than the population average to experience an admission to the hospital emergency department, make Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC) injury claims and require specialist mental health services. Enrolment with primary health organisations, and visits to a general practitioner dropped off rapidly after individuals reached 17 years. The entire cohort of young people had contact with Police and were reported as offenders one or more times throughout their lives. More than half were also victims of crime.

Strategies for the prevention of youth gang involvement are similar to those for youth crime prevention

We did not see evidence that the current patterns of child and youth offending we observe, including ram raids, are driven by involvement in youth gangs. That aside, strategies for prevention of youth gang involvement are similar to those for youth crime prevention. We know it is easier and cheaper to prevent young people from offending in the first place than it is to try and rehabilitate them at a later stage. Environments that offer alternative, prosocial pathways for young people are essential.

We know from the literature that young people may choose to leave a gang as they naturally mature. Factors such as getting a job, having children, developing prosocial networks, or experiencing levels of violence that they are not willing to tolerate, have all been documented as factors influencing young people to leave gang environments. As such, avenues to employment for former gang members are an important part of the gang exit pathway.

Reducing the flow of young people into the prison pipeline is essential

The 'prison pipeline' describes the conceptual pathway from an individual's first encounter with the criminal-justice system to eventual incarceration. While recently published data suggests that prisons do not necessarily act as the gang recruitment ground we have assumed they are, recruitment to gangs can occur during earlier points of contact with the justice system (for example, while serving community service hours). In that case, working to intervene as early as possible to keep young people from offending and out of the prison pipeline would provide vast benefits and in NZ we can and should do much better in this space.

Among cohorts of children who offended, the integrated data infrastructure (IDI) data highlights abuse, reports of concern to OT, out-of-home placement, exclusion from school and indicators of social deprivation. And we know that for most children who offend, the offending behaviour continues into adolescence with increasing frequency. These reports of interaction with the state prior to a child offending represent missed opportunities. We know that focussing on the wellbeing of babies and children and keeping them from offending in the first place is one of the most effective tools we have to prevent crime.

Reports from the Abuse in Care Royal Commission of Inquiry highlight how children and young people who were taken into state residential facilities were more likely to end up in prison. The findings highlight how young people were recruited to gangs while housed in state facilities. For many, especially tamariki Māori, their pathway into the prison pipeline was facilitated by the state.

* While the young people SWA reported on had all left school by age 17, we recognise that it is not uncommon to see young people leaving school, or being excluded from school, well before 17.

WOMEN

There is a dearth of research on women in gang environments

The experiences of women in gang environments are not extensively canvassed in the literature. Yet women do exist within gang communities. We recognise that gangs are not a monolith and that the internal cultures and practices within gang communities vary from gang-to-gang, region-to-region, and chapter-to-chapter. Just as the internal gang culture varies, so too will the experiences of women within these gang environments. It is a disservice to these women that their experiences remain largely unseen. It is also recognised that women in gang communities often act as change makers. This underscores the importance of understanding the many roles they hold.

Women are active in gang environments

There are no women recorded on the NGL. This is a definitional issue. While women in gang environments may wear gang logos on items of clothing, and anecdotally participate in gang-related criminal activity, to the best of our knowledge there is no *official* record to indicate women wearing gang patches. That is not to say no woman has ever worn a patch. We are aware that a small number of women have been patched into gang membership in the past. The relationship between women and gangs, whether patched or not, is complex.

The mixed experiences of women

In the process of writing this report, we engaged with organisations that work with women, and with women that have lived experience within gang environments. We heard that within some gang communities, women experienced protection, provision, whānau, and a deep sense of belonging. Some, having been born into gang whānau, have never known any other reality and identify as, for example, 'born Mongrel' or 'Black Power.' There were also stories of harm. We heard stories of parental disengagement, family violence, intimate partner violence, incarceration, unemployment, under-education, and substance abuse.

Organisations that support women

We heard from a range of organisations that provide services for women. These services included life skills support, health services, legal assistance, crisis response and reintegration support. In many cases programmes filled whatever gaps women identified. While the services for gang affiliated women were not necessarily unique, some service providers noted that access to gang affiliated women was often heavily dependent on permission from the men in their lives. In that respect, service provision for incarcerated women, some of whom are gang connected, presented a rare opportunity to interact with gang affiliated women without some of the gate keeping behaviours of gang men.

We heard that for service provision to be most effective, it needs to be delivered within the safety of a trusted relationship with the women and her whānau. This can be a time-intensive process but anecdotally in the absence of an established literature, achieves the best outcomes. Importantly, we also recognise that wāhine in gang environments are not just recipients of services. At times, they also render services within their own communities, forming networks of support to meet community needs.

Lived experience

We were privileged to sit with and hear from women with lived experiences in gang environments. In some instances, women had left their gang network. Others had chosen to remain. These decisions were never black and white. For example, being born into a gang whānau made decisions around leaving complicated, as did having children to a gang member where connection to a gang remained in order for children to have an ongoing relationship with their father.

For those with lived experiences within the justice system, we heard about various practical barriers that women experienced. For example, the inclusion of check boxes on many applications requiring an individual to declare their criminal history presents a limiting barrier for many women trying to access jobs and accommodation away from gangs. Further, we heard how access to services within Corrections is limited. In some instances, women could identify services that they felt would support them to achieve better life outcomes yet were restricted to participating in courses specific to the offence for which they were charged. These barriers are not specific to women and are acute for remand prisoners.

KNOWLEDGE GAPS

Gang specific data can be contentious

How 'gangs' are defined has flow on effects to data collection. This has further implications on the downstream data sharing and analysis between agencies. Collecting data on 'gang affiliates' is difficult and presents the risk of labelling individuals that have limited choice over their affiliation to a gang member or community.

Gangs are 'hard-to-reach' communities

Gang communities have been described as hard-to-reach for some agencies, which casts uncertainty over the completeness of any data that is reported. Data that is available, such as the NGL, is frequently contested. While factors that lead to an individual's inclusion are relatively straightforward, removal from the NGL is not so easy. For this reason, the NGL is not intended to be used as an accurate census of gang membership.

The labelling of hard-to-reach is described by some as being a convenient excuse to consider people 'too hard to deal with.' We heard through the engagement process that it is not the gang communities that are hard-to-reach, rather it is state agencies that are hard-to-reach. Gang communities and gang members are easy enough to reach within their own peer networks. Either way, complex communication between those with needs and providers who can support those needs presents a barrier for effective intervention and support.

Data is contested, but still useful.

While metrics such as the NGL are frequently contested, that does not make the data entirely unhelpful. We know that gangs can cause harms to our communities. There is room to understand the extent of that harm further. Understanding the relative harm caused by gang affiliated individuals, and their wider networks would be useful for developing appropriate intervention strategies. Further, understanding a person's historic interactions with Police might highlight where earlier targeted interventions might produce more beneficial outcomes.

Evaluation is essential

Prevention and intervention programmes (including early intervention) that work to minimise harmful behaviours and promote better outcomes within whānau and communities could benefit from data that describe programme outcomes. We heard from various community level organisations that evaluation presented a complex issue. For many service providers, ongoing funding was dependent on the ability to produce evaluations describing outcomes and benefits. Yet, resourcing to carry out evaluation was not always easily available, nor was evaluation easy to carry out. Further, we heard of perverse outcomes where reporting requirements narrowed service provision to meet narrow metrics, when broader provisions may have been more successful. Where an organisation partners with an individual and their whānau to support their needs in a customised way to enable them to attain better health and wellbeing outcomes, the broad range of outcomes can be difficult to capture in a standardised reporting framework. As individuals do not exist in complete isolation from whānau or community, reporting solely on an individual basis, excluding the needs of

the wider family and community, makes these reporting metrics of limited value. There is a need to invest in innovative, culturally informed, and methodically tested evaluations. This will support making cost-effective policy decisions and will ensure that whānau experiencing complex and inter-connected stressors are receiving the most effective support. Development of appropriate interventions should be done in partnership with the communities and organisations in question.

1. GANGS IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

“Whether gangs are good for society is a complex question. It assumes a number of readings of what we understand of gangs and also what we understand constitutes good society”

Associate Professor Tamasailau Suaalii in Taking Issue: can gangs ever be good for society? Ingenio, Politics and law, 2020

Gangs as we know them today have been a part of the NZ social landscape since the early 1960s.^{1,2} Following the establishment of the Gang Intelligence Centre (GIC) in 2016, recently renamed the GHIC, the NGL was established for the purposes of maintaining “oversight of the gang environment, to enhance our understanding of the scale of social harm caused by gangs, and to support the identification of prevention and intervention opportunities.”³

The NGL has been scrutinised for its accuracy before.⁴ Considering the extent of information collection and verification that is required to maintain oversight of the gang population, it is suggested that the NGL be understood as indicative. Police Commissioner Andrew Coster has stated that numbers reported by the NGL should be considered a guide but are not reliable enough to be taken at face value.¹ An overview of NGL membership from December 2016 to December 2022 is captured in Figure 1.

It is important to note that there are no women on the NGL although we know that they do exist within gang environments. Section 1.7 looks more closely at the experiences of women in the gang environment, albeit with limited academic literature to draw from.



Figure 1: NGL membership from December 2016 to December 2022. Note that GHIC refrain from releasing a breakdown of gang membership by specific gangs due to concerns around creating a competitive environment.³⁸

“NUMBERS REPORTED BY THE NGL SHOULD BE CONSIDERED A GUIDE BUT
ARE NOT RELIABLE ENOUGH TO BE TAKEN AT FACE VALUE”

Gangs are not a new phenomenon to the NZ social landscape. While there is evidence to suggest that gangs of some nature were active in the 1840s, it is the 1950s that is generally accepted as the birthplace of NZ gangs as we know them today.² *Patched*, by Jarrod Gilbert, provides a chronological timeline of gang development in NZ from the post-Second World War period.² Published in 2013, *Patched* does not describe the evolution in the gang landscape that has occurred within the past decade. That aside, it does provide a useful overview of some of NZ’s oldest gangs and their evolution across the decades.

Figure 2 attempts to capture some of the key milestones in NZ’s gang history, based largely on the work of Gilbert. He identifies four ‘pivot points,’ that he describes as events or activities that resulted in significant reconfigurations of the gang scene in NZ. While some key events include the launch of specific Police operations, these operations represent snippets of police activity and do not capture the day-to-day operations of Police and their interactions with gang communities and gang activity. Additional events of significance have been captured and placed within the timeline with a more robust overview of *Patched* provided in Annex 2. Conversations with various academics, community workers and individuals with lived experiences suggest that NZ may be approaching another pivot point.

1.1. GANGS ARE DIFFICULT TO DEFINE

The term 'gang' is an umbrella term, often used to describe outlaw motorcycle clubs, patched street gangs and incipient youth cliques. That the label of gangs is applied to such a broad range of groups makes it difficult to arrive at a universally accepted definition. This presents an ongoing challenge for many countries and is reflected in the literature where there are wide-ranging definitions of what constitutes a gang.^{2,5,6}

“THAT THE LABEL OF GANGS IS APPLIED TO SUCH A BROAD RANGE OF
GROUPS MAKES IT DIFFICULT TO ARRIVE AT A UNIVERSALLY ACCEPTED
DEFINITION”

A 2006 report prepared for the Ministry of Social Development provides an overview of the history of gang research and the academic debate surrounding a universal definition.⁷ The definition used to describe what a gang is plays a significant role in framing the issue. For example, Klein and Maxson define (street youth) gangs as follows:

“Any durable, street-oriented youth group whose involvement in illegal activity is part of its group identity.”⁵

The inclusion of illegal activity as a central identifier can create a tendency to look at gangs as an issue of law and order, neglecting to consider that gangs are also a symptom of social problems and not simply the problem itself.^{7,8} But gangs *can* be framed differently. For example, the definition put forward by Hagedorn describes gangs as follows:⁹

“Gangs are organisations of the street composed of either 1) the socially excluded or 2) alienated, demoralised or bigoted elements of a dominant racial, ethnic, or religious group.”

Here, the issue of gangs shifts away from one of simple criminality, which allows for broader social factors to be considered when trying to address the issue of gangs. Others avoid the term 'gang' entirely, instead preferring to use the term 'hard-to-reach' groups.¹⁰ The hard-to-reach label describes groups that are socially excluded and, as a result, lose some of their rights as citizens, becoming disengaged from services, opportunities, and responsibilities.

We heard throughout the engagement process that many who could be described as hard-to-reach have experiences of being treated poorly by the systems that were meant to look after them. In that sense hard-to-reach might better describe a cohort of people that are viewed as 'too hard to deal with' for service providers.

“INCLUSION OF ILLEGAL ACTIVITY AS A CENTRAL IDENTIFIER CAN CREATE A TENDENCY TO LOOK AT GANGS AS AN ISSUE OF LAW AND ORDER, NEGLECTING TO CONSIDER THAT GANGS ARE ALSO A SYMPTOM OF SOCIAL PROBLEMS AND NOT SIMPLY THE PROBLEM ITSELF”

More recently, Jarrod Gilbert, has put forward the following definitions for a gang.²

- i. “An *incipient gang* – defined as a group of youths, often from disadvantaged backgrounds, with a loose structure, few formal rules, a common identifier (colours, a name, hand signals etc.), whose activities are not primarily criminal but involve (mostly) petty crimes, and who see themselves as a gang and are identified as such by others in the community.
- ii. A *gang* can be defined as a structured group (of five or more people) that maintains an exclusive membership marked by common identifiers and formal rules that supersede the rules of the state.
- iii. A *criminal gang* can be defined as a structured group (of five or more people) that maintains an exclusive membership marked by common identifiers, formal rules that supersede the rules of the state, and an organisational focus on profit through crime.”

The definition of gangs is contentious within academic communities, yet repercussions extend well beyond the academic realm. How gangs are defined has significant implications on data collection, statistics, public concern, and subsequent policy decisions.^{11,12} The consequences of these policy decisions are far from academic.

The National Gang List

The definition of a gang employed by the GHIC is slightly different from those previously described. To be recorded on the NGL, a gang **must** demonstrate all the following attributes:¹³

- i. Group of five or more
- ii. A common name
- iii. Cause harm to the community through criminal activity
- iv. One or more common identifiers, for example patches, tattoos, symbols, gestures, clothing, language/terminology, and jewellery

At present, all gangs recorded on the NGL are referred to as a New Zealand Adult Gang (NZAG). Once captured on the NGL, a gang is then further categorised into one of the following groups:

- i. Outlaw Motorcycle gang (OMCG)
- ii. Other Patch-Wearing gang (OPWG)
- iii. Street gang

Where a group may not completely fulfil the criteria to be recorded on the NGL, they may be referred to as an ‘Incipient Gang.’ These incipient gangs are recorded in the Police National Intelligence Application (NIA) as a possible new gang. Figure 3 provides a breakdown of gang membership by gang type between December 2016 and December 2022.

This report adopts the definition(s) outlined by the GHIC.¹³ A more detailed breakdown of youth gang classification is provided in Section 2.1, Table 1.

NGL Membership by gang type



Figure 3: A breakdown of gang numbers, distinguishing between Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs and Other Patch Wearing Gangs. Note that the GHIC refrain from releasing a detailed breakdown of gang membership to avoid creating a competitive environment. Figures up to date as of December 2022.³⁸

We recognise that the gang definitions adopted for this report are operationally derived and that asking gang members and wider communities themselves how they would define themselves would likely result in even more criteria to consider. Throughout the engagement process we heard that gangs themselves are starting to reject the label, opting to redefine themselves and their membership on their own terms.

That current definitional criterion excludes women and children who exist within gang communities limits the extent to which the communities and their specific needs can be better understood and supported. And, while definitional labelling for the purposes of data collection is useful for some purposes, there is a significant risk of social ‘othering’ that is generally to the detriment of the group being labelled.

The GHIC offer some definitional guidance

There is still room within the definitional boundaries to distinguish various types of gangs (OMCG, OPWG, Street gang).¹³ The GHIC outlines indicators to distinguish gang type, summarised in Figure 4. The nature of the NZ gang landscape means that some gangs or chapters may exhibit behaviours spanning more than one gang type. There is also the chance that some gangs may transition over the course of their existence.¹³

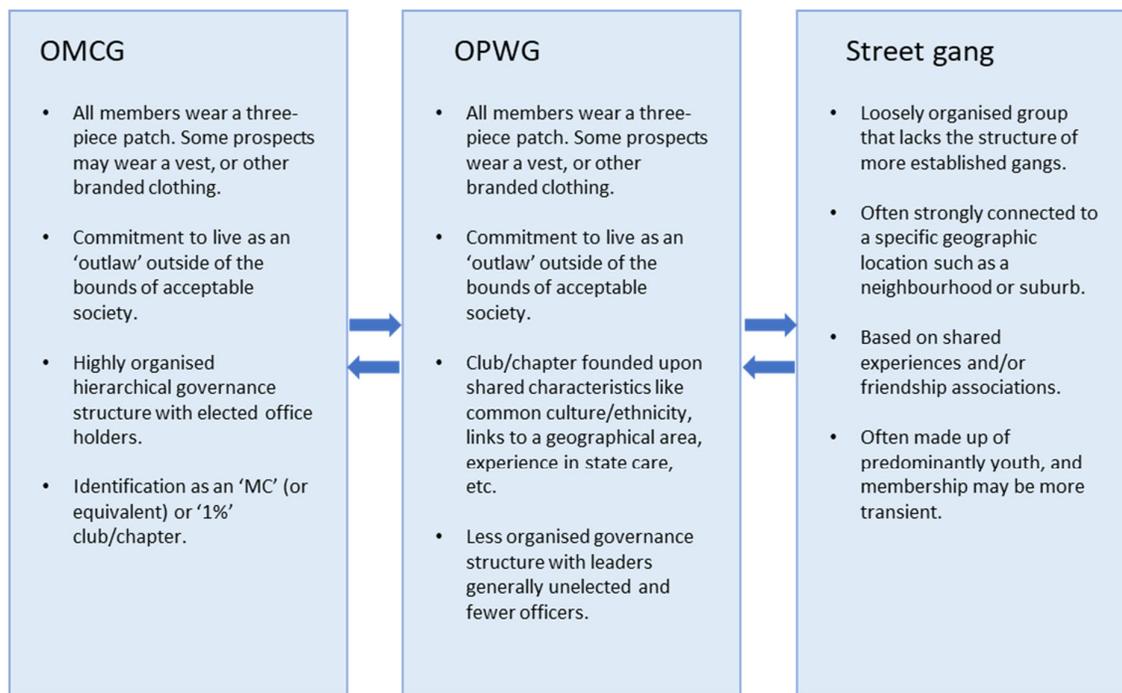


Figure 4: Definitional guidance to distinguish between OMCGs, OPWGs and Street gangs.¹³

1.2. AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND HAS ITS OWN UNIQUE CONTEXT

Annex 3 provides an overview of common themes highlighted in the international body of literature specific to gang formation. Importantly, these gang theories have emerged from international settings*, and while they are certainly useful, must be considered within our unique NZ context.¹⁴ Given the limited body of gang literature in NZ, this section draws largely on reports made available through Government agencies.

Common developmental precursors for gang membership such as a dysfunctional childhood, abusive home, school failure, peer rejection, delinquent behaviour, and early exposure to gangs are observed in our NZ context.^{15,16} This is consistent with the international literature.^{11,17,18} And, while we know that there is no ethnic group that is more or less inclined toward gang membership alone, contexts such as our colonial history are significant.¹⁹ For example, factors suggested to increase pressures toward gang membership among colonised peoples include alienation from ancestral lands, loss of indigenous language and culture, marginalisation within the colonising culture and racial discrimination.²⁰

We know that factors which facilitate gang formation can include environmental features. For example, gaming venues or alcohol outlets are associated with increased social harms such as violent crime.^{21,22} And NZ studies have highlighted that an increase in deprivation correlates with higher rates of gang membership at the neighbourhood level.²³ What's more, recent studies suggest that different spatial risk factors may play a role in the facilitation of different *types* of NZAGs (i.e., OMCG versus OPWG). That different environmental factors might facilitate the formation of different gang types reinforces that interventions would be best tailored to a particular gang type, rather than assuming all gangs are the same and developing policy responses accordingly.

* To the best of our knowledge there is no theory of criminology that has been developed from a uniquely NZ or Pacific perspective.

Despite the fact that some of our early gang populations were reportedly entirely Pākehā, references to the ‘urban drift’ and the mass movements of Māori away from their rural papakāinga to the urban centres is identified as a tipping point where disenfranchised Māori turned to gangs.²⁰ Other key themes include the immigration Dawn Raids in the 1970s and consequences of the intervention of the state and/or faith-based organisations as key places of youth gang formation in previous decades.²⁴

While white supremacist groups are beyond the scope of this report, we note that deprivation has contributed to their formation in the past. Describing the context within which white skinhead gangs first emerged in NZ, Gilbert notes that significant unemployment figures created social conditions critical to gang formation and maturation – poverty, strain and multiple marginality.²⁵ The skinhead subculture that arrived on our shores and was initially adopted as a fashion trend, transformed under the economic circumstances to give rise to Pākehā street gangs that displayed neo-fascist and white power tendencies. Gilbert goes on to describe how an influx of Asian immigrants in the 1990s created tensions for the skinhead gangs who frequently held anti-immigrant sentiments.

An intimate relationship with the state is a significant factor in our national gang story

Specific to our NZ context colonisation, marginalisation, and assimilation are viewed as drivers of Māori gang membership.^{20,26} And we know that state and faith-based care facilities have played a significant role in the early formation of gangs as we know them today.^{27,28} The Abuse in Care Royal Commission of Inquiry explores what happened to children, young people and vulnerable adults in state and faith-based care in NZ between 1950-1999. The Commission is tasked with investigating why people were taken into care, what abuse happened and why, and the effects of the abuse. Considering the disproportionate number of Māori, Pacific people and people with disabilities that have been identified, there is a specific focus on these groups.*

The economic development of NZ coincided with the state’s intervention into families, removing children who had been deemed ‘at risk.’²⁹ Children were placed into state care, either through fostering arrangements or placement within correctional settings (such as boys’ homes) which frequently led to the identity of a young person forming around metaphorical family structures rather than biological affiliations. A gang presence became increasingly apparent in the 1970s. In 1981, it is estimated that youths with gang affiliations accounted for more than 80% of admissions to Owairaka Boys’ Home.³⁰

The appeal of gang membership to young wards of the state was the promise of protection or power. Ex-wards of the state who either are or have been gang members describe the role of violence perpetrated by staff members in state facilities, teaching them as youngsters that violence was acceptable. In turn, as an expression of their mistrust of ‘the system,’ gangs allowed young people to demonstrate violent resistance.

“A SIGNIFICANT FACTOR IN THE CRIMINALISATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN
CARE WAS INFLUENCED BY A GANG PRESENCE WITHIN THE STATE CARE
INSTITUTIONS ”

The *Care to Custody: Incarceration Rates Research Report* analysed a list of more than 30,000 individuals that were placed in state residential care facilities (excluding those provided by faith-based institutions) between 1950 and 1999.²⁴ There has never been a comprehensive census of individuals kept in the numerous settings

* The Abuse in Care Royal Commission of Inquiry will be releasing a gang report drawing on survivor testimony in 2023.

that constitute direct or indirect state care. In some cases, records are no longer available, in other cases records were never kept in the first place. Where records are available, the task of tracing the pathway of an individual through multiple care settings over time is exceptionally difficult. From the limited data available it was identified that one in five and, sometimes, as many as one in three of the individuals who had been in care facilities went on to serve a custodial sentence later in life.²⁴ The Commission notes that the list of names compiled by OT was based largely on handwritten admissions registers. Further, OT note that a complete list of individuals placed into state residential facilities does not exist, that admissions registers may not always be filled in accurately, that some residences did not hold admissions registers and that some records may have been destroyed. The report highlights a pathway from state care to incarceration and provides an overview of demographics in state residential care.

The Abuse in Care Royal Commission of Inquiry reports that “recruitment to gangs while in state care set a number of tamariki Māori on a pathway to prison, with a subsequent effect on their life trajectories.” The report goes on to explain that excessive surveillance of Māori within society fed into a disproportionate number of Māori in state care facilities, laying a solid foundation for the intergenerational trauma and marginalisation that followed. In February 2023, the Royal Commission met with approximately 200 gang members to hear first-hand from the members what they had experienced in the welfare system when they were children.³¹ Key outcomes from the hui are not yet available.

We acknowledge the tendency for change to be viewed as a matter of personal choice, neglecting at times to acknowledge the structural issues that contribute to gang joining and subsequent offending. Yet, we see in NZ’s gang history how for some, their gang joining was largely facilitated by the state.^{24,28,30} While the development of theoretical frameworks, risk and protective factors that are reflective of our unique cultural context would be of great use, we also recognise a hesitation by some to develop culturally adapted frameworks and solutions to what are largely structural problems.²⁸

That intimate relationship continues to the present day

In 2022, the SWA reported on a sample of 2,000 young people (early 20s) identified by the Corrections as gang members.^{32,33} Across their lifetime, the cohort were more likely than the population average to have contact with OT, experience an OT investigation, and to be placed in state care. Almost one third of the cohort had contact with truancy services at high school and approximately one quarter experienced alternative education. Most left school by age 17 with little or no educational attainment. The cohort were more likely than the population average to experience an admission to the hospital emergency department, make ACC injury claims and require specialist mental health services. Enrolment with a primary health organisation and visits to a general practitioner dropped off rapidly after individuals reached 17 years. The entire cohort of young people had contact with Police and were reported as offenders one or more times throughout their lives. More than half were also victims of crime. While interactions with state services may look different in the present-day context, we observe how in their relatively short life courses to date, these young people already experience a consistent and enduring relationship with the state.

Gangs are whānau

We know that in NZ, kinship links are a factor that contribute to gang membership.²⁶ As gangs have matured, older members have introduced their children (and sometimes grandchildren) to gang life with multi-generational membership not uncommon.^{20,34} With limited options*, we know that many gang recruits simply join because their wider whānau are members.³⁵ In this sense, interventions that focus purely on individual change, without incorporating the wider whānau, will likely be limited in their efficacy.³⁶

Case Study 1

Fa'afete Taito

Fa'afete (Fete) Taito is a survivor of NZ's state care facilities. In his witness statement for the Abuse in Care Royal Commission of Inquiry, he describes his initial interactions with the state that led to him eventually being sent to Owairaka Boys' Home at 14 years of age. Experiences of uncertainty, racism and physical violence are threaded throughout his story. He goes on to describe the criminal skills that he picked up from other state wards while housed in Owairaka.

"I learned how to steal cars, how to pick locks, and I was introduced to cannabis for the first time."

Upon being sent to Waikeria Borstal he was reunited with other young people that he had met while in Owairaka. This time, many of them had gone on to join either the Mongrel Mob or Black Power. On reflection, Fete can see how his initial stint in Owairaka set him on a pathway that was almost inevitable thereafter.

Having been excluded from school he would often spend time on the streets with other young people from similar backgrounds. Joining the King Cobras at the end of 1978, Fete went on to serve his first sentence in Mt Eden Correctional Facility at the age of 17 years.

As a patched member of the King Cobras for 12 years, Fete developed various criminal networks and behaviours. Despite leaving the gang in 1990, the criminal behaviours were well ingrained. Many of the criminal networks that Fete had were with individuals that had been in the Owairaka Boys' Facility with him. Fete can see various points in his journey where there was a failure of the state to provide adequate support or interventions.

"My family and I were not offered support at the time I was taken into care. Instead, I was removed and placed in an environment where I was moved closer towards a gang lifestyle. This was partly through my introduction to crimes and offending and drugs at Owairaka and then being placed in close proximity to older, hardened criminals at the halfway house, at Waikeria and at Mt Eden Corrections Facility as a young man."

Now working as Pacific Engagement Advisor for the Abuse in Care Royal Commission of Inquiry, Fete can draw on his extensive networks, reaching out to other survivors from NZ's state care facilities. Having someone with extensive lived experiences working for the Royal Commission has opened many doorways, empowering survivors to testify who may otherwise not have.

Reflecting on his experience as a young Pacific person, Fete sees his pathway to gang membership through the state care facilities as somewhat unique. In his experience, the state facilities played a much larger role in the formation of Māori gang communities and as a young Pacific person, he was in the minority. He credits the formation of Pacific gang communities largely to the increased visibility of the bloods and crips gangs imported to our shores from the US. The red/blue divide was largely taken up by young Tongans and Samoans who in turn, tended toward the established adult gangs with the same colours as they got older.

* We note that structural forces contribute to the limited options that some gang whānau experience. Poverty, inequality, marginalisation, and racism are all very real barriers to enabling positive outcomes for whānau and communities.^{114,306}

1.3. 'GANG' IS A CONTESTED TERM

The word 'gang' means many things to many people. The contentious title of gang has led some to reject the label altogether. For example, Black Power community leader Eugene Ryder claims that, "*when people ask me am I in a gang, I am definitely not in a gang... 'cause I know what that word does for people's psyche you know, but Black Power is part of who I am.*"³⁷ Eugene articulates that Black Power is simply a part of who he is. To him, and many others who have experienced similar life courses, the two are not the same.

1.4. MEMBERSHIP SPANS A WIDE AGE RANGE

Since the inception of the GHIC in 2016, the NGL has grown continuously, and membership spans a wide age range (see Figure 5). The GHIC suggests patched gang membership is observed for some individuals as young as 14 years although the number of gang members in that age range is minimal.³⁸

Importantly, 'youth gangs'^{*} (sometimes referred to as 'ABC gangs' for their naming conventions) are not monitored on the NGL. Reporting on youth gang activity is slightly more difficult given their typical behaviours. A 2019 parliamentary report describes how youth gangs tend to be disorganised, with a transient membership whose activities are generally motivated by the pursuit of fun and excitement.³⁹ As such, maintaining an accurate database of youth gang membership would be a resource intensive task.

The international literature tends to describe gangs as youthful phenomenon that members eventually age out of. NZ's gang population is somewhat unique in that sense, with some members remaining within the gang well into their adult years. In some instances, older gang members will have been gang associated from a young age and likely have children and grandchildren raised within the gang context. However, intergenerational gang relationships do not necessarily equate to participation within organised criminal networks. It is important to recognise that longevity of gang membership and being born into a gang whānau are separate, if related, issues.

"THE INTERNATIONAL LITERATURE TENDS TO DESCRIBE GANGS AS
YOUTHFUL PHENOMENON THAT MEMBERS EVENTUALLY AGE OUT OF. NZ'S
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GRANDCHILDREN RAISED WITHIN THE GANG CONTEXT"

^{*} Youth gangs have been defined as: A group of youths, often from disadvantaged backgrounds, with a loose structure, a common identifier (colours, a name, hand signals, etc), whose activities are not primarily criminal but involve (mostly) petty crimes, and who see themselves as a gang and are identified as such by others in the community.³⁹

NGL Membership by age bracket

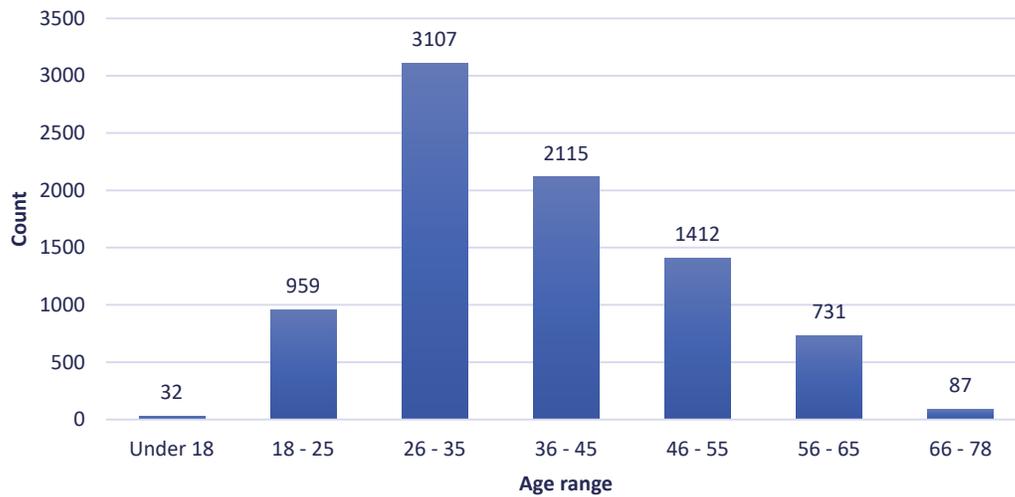


Figure 5: A breakdown of gang membership distinguished by age bracket. Figures up to date as of December 2022. Figures supplied by the GHIC.³⁸

1.5. KNOWN MEMBERSHIP IS NOT UNIQUE TO ONE SPECIFIC ETHNIC GROUP, ALTHOUGH THERE ARE DISPROPORTIONATE REPRESENTATIONS

While the formation of gangs is not unique to any ethnic group, it is of some interest to have an overview of reported ethnicities for individuals on the NGL (see Figure 6).^{*} Ethnicity data is sourced from the NIA and there are limitations in terms of the accuracy of this data. We heard throughout the engagement process that ethnicity is not captured consistently and, in some cases, might not be recorded at all. Further, where an individual might identify as having multiple ethnicities, only one might be recorded. We understand that incorrect reporting of ethnicity data is not restricted to NIA and has been an issue across government agencies.

No single ethnic group is more or less inclined toward gang membership based on ethnicity alone.⁸ Yet, ethnic minorities tend to experience greater social disadvantages described as ‘multiple marginality.’⁴⁰ Within the NZ context – this may explain to an extent the over representation of Māori and Pacific populations in gangs. It also indicates that addressing needs and harms that exist within gang communities might be best to be culturally tailored.

^{*} The term ‘ethnic gangs’ has been identified as problematic by some as it has the potential to racialise the issue, framing it as an ‘ethnic’ matter. A 2022 GHIC report that defines what a gang is and describes how individuals come to be listed on the NGL proposes a change in terminology.¹³ Previously, terms such as ‘ethnic gang’, ‘New Zealand-born gang’ and ‘Patched street gang’ were used somewhat interchangeably. The GHIC propose to use the term ‘Other Patch-Wearing gang.’

NGL Membership by recorded ethnicity

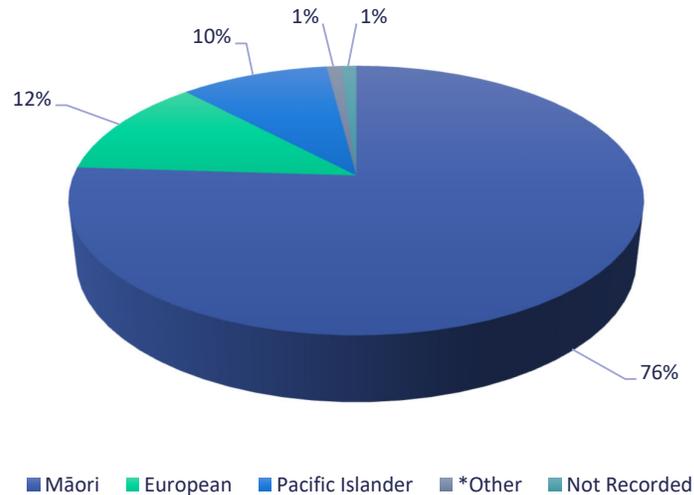


Figure 6: Known gang membership by ethnicity, as a proportion of total NGL numbers. Figures from December 2022.³⁸

Throughout the engagement process, various stakeholders raised the question of whether white supremacist groups or online communities might qualify as a gang and whether these communities were also monitored in the NGL. The GHIC suggest that white supremacist groups do not always exhibit the full breadth of attributes necessary for qualification as a gang. While these groups do pose risk, monitoring of their activity is beyond the mandate of the GHIC (though monitoring may be carried out by other groups) and as a result they are not counted on the NGL, nor are they explored in detail within this report.

“VARIOUS STAKEHOLDERS RAISED THE QUESTION OF WHETHER WHITE SUPREMACIST GROUPS OR ONLINE COMMUNITIES MIGHT QUALIFY AS A GANG AND WHETHER THESE COMMUNITIES WERE ALSO MONITORED IN THE NGL....MONITORING OF THEIR ACTIVITY IS BEYOND THE JURISDICTION OF THE GHIC AND AS A RESULT THEY ARE NOT COUNTED ON THE NGL. “

1.6. MEMBERSHIP VARIES BY REGION

Gang membership is not determined exclusively by area of residence. Yet, we know that our NZAG population is not evenly distributed through our regions. And where factors such as poverty and inequality are entrenched, opportunities for gang exit may be fewer resulting in a more adhesive gang environment. An understanding of regional membership might promote some understanding of the region-specific contexts within which gangs exist. Further, it may support the development of interventions that cater to the region-specific context.

There is value in understanding the distribution of gang membership across the country. We know for example that social deprivation and inequality serve as useful indicators for mapping gang affiliation.^{41,42} Further, we know that not all regions are equal. Noting when and where gang populations emerge may be a useful signal of a range of other social needs where support and intervention would be welcomed.

1.7. WOMEN AND CHILDREN

There is a dearth of literature to describe the relationship of women and gangs. Prior to the 1980s, researchers paid little attention to women in gang environments.⁸ On the occasion that women were acknowledged within the gang environment, they were typically defined in terms of their relationship to male gang members.

At present there are no women on the NGL. This does not mean that women do not operate within a gang environment. Nor does it mean there have never been women with patched gang membership. However, there is a limited understanding of the roles that women hold within gang environment.*

That women are frequently absent from gang literature is not an indication of their absence from the gang environment. It is a reflection of the fact that the research community has long overlooked their role. Despite the lack of available data and literature, we engaged with various stakeholders that could speak to the experience of existing as women in a gang environment. We heard that within some gang communities, women experienced protection, provision, whānau, and a deep sense of belonging. Some, having been born into gang whānau, have never known any other reality and identify as, for example, 'born Mongrel' or 'Black Power.' There were also stories of harm. We heard stories of parental disengagement, family violence, intimate partner violence, sexual assault, incarceration, unemployment, under-education, and substance abuse.

Some women describe the initial attraction in response to a source of protection

Gangs in NZ are largely male organisations and as such, there is often little formal recognition given to women.⁴³ Yet, given the nature of intimate relationships, women who are involved with gang men are socialised through less formal mechanisms to the extent that they 'learn their place,' the appropriate behaviours and expectations of them. '*The girls in the gang*,' authored by Glennis Dennehy (who herself has lived experience among NZAGs) and Greg Newbold, interviewed 10 women involved with gangs through the course of their lives.⁴³ For several of the women there was an observation that their relationships with NZAG members transitioned from being their source of protection to becoming a main source of fear.⁴³ The men generally displayed traits such as strength and an ability to stand up for themselves that the women initially found to be attractive qualities. Yet, these same traits often meant that, in time, the women themselves became targets of violent outbursts.

“RELATIONSHIPS SOMEHOW TRANSITIONED FROM BEING THEIR SOURCE OF PROTECTION TO BECOMING A MAIN SOURCE OF FEAR”

Recent developments have seen the establishment of female gang chapters

The relationship between women and gangs, whether patched or not, is complex. An all-female chapter of the Mongrel Mob was first announced in 2019 by president of the Mongrel Mob Kingdom, Sonny Fatu.⁴⁴ At the time of announcement it was suggested that the establishment of a wāhine chapter would work to challenge decades of negative attitudes within gang environments which tended to exhibit traits of hyper-masculinity. Perhaps in response to contention over the possibility of patch wearing, clarifying statements were issued to state that the wāhine toa chapter would not be wearing back patches, only t-shirts and side patches.⁴⁵ Leader

* We note that the GHIC have recently produced reports that look at women in the gang environment, and the impact of the gang environment on corresponding offending behaviour.^{307,308}

of the female Mongrel Mob chapter, Paula Ormsby, has noted that some women have been patched in the past.⁴⁴ This historically required fighting or being blocked.

And other communities of support have formed

We heard examples of communities of support formed amongst gang women such as the Mumzys.⁴⁶ The Mumzys were started by Liz McMillan-Makalio and Maria Burgess providing an environment of support for mums and their children.⁴⁷ In an effort to help people out of the ruts they were in, the pair opted to focus on women as the movers and shakers within their communities.⁴⁶ Other examples of communities of support for gang connected women include the Aroha Trust, a work cooperative formed in Wellington during the 1970s.⁴⁸

Case Study 2

The Girls in the Gang

Glennis Dennehy and Greg Newbold

The Girls in the Gang shares the experiences of women in NZ gangs.⁴³ The authors shed light on how and why women get into gangs, the roles they occupy, the relational dynamics that keep them there and, how women might escape.

Glennis Dennehy carries out in-depth interviews with ten women with similar backgrounds to herself. Given the size of the cohort, the authors acknowledge that there is a lack of statistical validity. Yet, an advantage of the small cohort is that the authors can establish a deep and close understanding of the stories shared. The women interviewed presented differing gang experience although several themes emerged.

- *A majority came from dysfunctional families where violence was a common feature.*
- *Most left school without qualifications.*
- *Most had experienced and tolerated chronic abuse from partners where the violent tendencies often became apparent early on.*
- *For those that made the decision to get out, there was often some crisis (such as a death or the imprisonment of a partner) that preceded the decision to exit.*
- *Religion featured prominently in several of the women's stories*

Adopting more prosocial attitudes towards women has been reported

Some gangs have made efforts to change,⁴³ for example, by opting to issue public statements denouncing rape, domestic violence, and the denigration of women. Further, efforts to provide support to whānau to address the issues of family violence and to support ongoing change have been reported.^{27,49} Given the difficulties faced with data collection, it is unclear at this stage whether such statements drive behavioural changes within the gang environment.

Children born into gang whānau don't know any other way of life

NZ's gang communities are largely located in some of the most deprived areas in the country. Deprivation and material hardship are difficult, serving as a significant barrier where children are concerned.⁵⁰ They contribute to a wide range of poor life outcomes and can at times result in children missing out on opportunities that many take for granted.⁵¹ These circumstances mean that children born into gang whānau face a narrowing of life course outcomes where they are likely to find it difficult to reach their full potential.

Being born to a gang whānau has a significant impact on a young person's lived experience and worldview. We know that for children who have a parent or primary caregiver incarcerated, they are more at risk of experiencing poverty, social deprivation, and engaging in criminal behaviours themselves. It is difficult to obtain reasonable data that speaks to the numbers of children and young people in gang environments, and it is not clear whether children born into gang whānau will inevitably remain in a gang themselves.

**“CHILDREN BORN INTO GANG WHĀNAU FACE A NARROWING OF LIFE COURSE
OUTCOMES WHERE THEY ARE LIKELY TO FIND IT DIFFICULT TO REACH THEIR
FULL POTENTIAL”**

Case Study 3

Mothers Project

While incarcerated, it can be difficult for mothers to maintain a meaningful relationship with their children. The Mothers Project is about helping incarcerated mothers to maintain an appropriate and meaningful connection with their kids. While the services is not targeted at women with gang affiliations, we heard that many of the women they work with are connected to gangs in some way.

There is recognition that mothers in prison tend to exhibit complex needs.⁵² Data published by the Mothers Project indicates that among women in Corrections facilities, approximately 68% have been victims of family violence and/or sexual violence, 70% have significant literacy barriers, 52% have a lifetime diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder, 75% have been diagnosed with some mental health problem, 46% have lifetime alcohol dependence and 44% have drug dependence disorders.

The Mothers Project recognises that the women they work with don't trust easily. While they have caused harms, they are also often victims themselves, of physical and emotional violence and sexual abuse. It also recognises that the inability to maintain meaningful relationships with children can result in negative outcomes for both parties. The Mothers Project works to help maintain a positive connection.

A team of trained volunteer lawyers visit every women's prison in NZ once a month to help women in prison understand their responsibilities and rights regarding their children. The team help mothers to understand where their children are, who is caring for them and what the mothers need to do in order to preserve their legal rights.

Support offered includes making calls to OT, family members, caregivers, schools and legal aid lawyers in order that lines of communication might be opened and information shared. They also provide support to arrange prisons calls and visits with children as appropriate.

While the Mothers Project does not take women on as clients directly, it is able to act as navigator for the women and in some instances provide them with assistance in finding legal counsel. The establishment of a community extension means that for women who are released into the community, the provision of support is still available if they feel they need additional support.

We heard how following the initial establishment of the Mothers Project, the demand for service quickly grew. While the service was initially available at Wiri prison, demand meant that the Mothers Project needed to scale in order to service other women's prisons around the country. The scaling up of service meant that the Mothers Project could service every women's prison around the country, although this service provision was disrupted by Covid-19 and to date has still not returned to some prisons.

Knowledge of children in gang environments is limited

We heard from those who had been raised in gang environments. While not well canvassed in the literature, those we engaged with reported positive childhood experiences, with strong experiences of whānau within their environment. Recollections of loving moments and key members within their whānau who played a significant role in their upbringing were common. That is not to say that there were not stories of harm. That harms are experienced is clear despite the limited data that is available. For example, we know that it is not common that children in NZ are reported as victims of family harm at the hands of gang members.⁵³ This is not to say that it does not happen, rather, that it is under reported and when it is reported, it is primarily through

neighbours. That aside, those we engaged with felt it important to note that it wasn't all 'Once were Warriors.'⁵⁴

Case Study 4

Reclaim Another Woman

Reclaim Another Woman (RAW) was founded by Annah Stretton and her sister Rebecca Skilton in 2014. Standing for 'Reclaim Another Woman' – RAW is an out-of-gate provider for incarcerated women offering support to enable wāhine to reintegrate back into the community and build a legal life for themselves and their tamariki.

RAW offers lifelong personalised and safe reintegration pathways and may appeal to women who have struggled to succeed under previous reintegration models. It offers wrap-around support services and can facilitate immediate connections with MSD, OT, social services, probation, therapeutic interventions, etc. It also supports with educational scholarships and vocational placements as a wāhine advances her pro-social journey.

For women choosing to enter the RAW facilities, there are six overarching goals

- *To lead a legal life*
- *Whānau restoration*
- *Education*
- *Employment*
- *Impact on community (RAW is active in local community)*
- *A life worth living (hope and purpose for a sustainable, legal, future)*

RAW recognises that reintegration comes with a lot of adjusting. There are new responsibilities, multiple pressures, decisions to be made, and significant expectations placed on recent releasees. RAW attempts to equip women with the necessary knowledge and resources to make that journey a prosocial one.

RAW also collaborates with their wāhine in research that informs transformational decarceration strategy mahi.

The Te Aroha site can cater for up to eight women at a time where they can stay for as long as needed.

A 2020 evaluation report describes how RAW creates social value across different aspects of peoples lives.⁵⁵ Taking into account the operational costs of RAW, it was determined that for every dollar invested into the programme, RAW returned a value of \$4.81 in social returns.

1.8. THE MEDIA

How gang related news is shared influences the public response

The reaction of the public and policymakers to deviance is informed largely by the information received about said 'deviant behaviour.'^{56,57} Further, reporting on gangs by the media can generate significant social concern.⁵⁸ Effective media reporting allows the community to remain informed of current events, and to make necessary inquiry of our legal system. However, crime reporting has the potential to provoke exaggerated fears and concerns.

In our NZ context, there are various moments where public perception has been drawn to the issues of youth delinquency and gangs (i.e., the Mazengarb Report of the 1950s).⁵⁹ The public perception of gangs is thought to have shifted in the 1970s.⁶⁰ Where previously gangs had come to public attention intermittently and were most often perceived as an issue of youthful misdemeanour, by the end of the decade the perception was that gangs were a significant threat to law and order. The change in perception can be attributed to increased membership and internal organisation, an increased intensity in intergang rivalry and, the growing number of Māori and Pacific Islanders in gangs turning them into a symbol of racial disharmony.⁵⁸

There are parallels between the situation we find NZ in today, with the circumstances of the mid-1990s.⁶¹ Territorial disputes labelled as 'unprecedented' coupled with a reported rise in youth crime concentrated largely in the Auckland area gives rise to significant community concerns and a growing demand for politicians to act for the safety of the public.^{62,63} 'Sentinel' events (events that are distressing and high-profile) have the potential to influence legislation and policy, often associated with significant community and political response.⁴¹ Such responses have the potential to trigger influential system changes, although changes rarely improve long-term services for victims and their wider family.

Skewed commentary can be harmful. For gang communities, where many are described as 'hard-to-reach,' commentary that portrays them in a negative light has the potential to further stigmatise and persecute. This can perpetuate the ongoing cycles of membership.⁵³ Where gang members are primarily viewed as criminals by members of the public or within government agencies, they will continue to mistrust efforts by any agencies to aid with them and their whānau. A focus on the organised crime and antisocial behaviour, rather than on the gangs *per se*, might provide a more useful focus.

Recent survey data highlight that the public feel that crime is increasing, with gang activity playing a key role in the increase in crime.⁶⁴ Despite crime statistics trending downward, the perceived increase by the public coupled with inflammatory reporting likely contributes to an appetite for punitive measures aimed at tackling gangs, rather than a focus on reducing specific crime harms.

“DESPITE CRIME STATISTICS TRENDING DOWNWARD, THE PERCEIVED INCREASE BY THE PUBLIC COUPLED WITH INFLAMMATORY REPORTING LIKELY CONTRIBUTES TO AN APPETITE FOR PUNITIVE MEASURES AIMED AT TACKLING GANGS, RATHER THAN A FOCUS ON REDUCING SPECIFIC CRIME HARMS.”

Key messages

- *There is no NZ specific theoretical framework that describes the conceptual pathway to gang membership.*
- *While international frameworks may not fully articulate our unique NZ context, they are still useful to develop some framework of understanding.*
- *Some aspects of NZ's gang culture are consistent with international themes. For example, dysfunctional childhood, abusive home, school failure, peer rejection, delinquent behaviour, and early exposure to gangs.*
- *The familial nature of some of our NZAG communities means that interventions that focus solely on change at an individual level will not be as effective as those that work within and alongside the wider whānau.*
- *The NGL has grown continuously since its inception in 2016.*
- *While difficult to verify, people are removed from the NGL. 1,074 individuals were removed from the NGL in 2021. In 2022, 565 individuals removed between January and April.*
- *While the NGL can act as an indicative guide of gang membership, it is not intended for use as an accurate census of gang membership.*
- *The term 'gang' means many things to many different people.*
- *Known gang membership in NZ spans a broad age-range, with Māori largely over-represented.*
- *Membership varies by region. Reasons for this are not so clear, although the research suggests that gangs form in areas of deprivation and social disorganisation. In that sense, a gang presence provides a useful indication of where additional supports might be useful.*
- *NZ specific gang research is important as it enables the consideration of our unique historical and cultural context.*
- *An intimate and ongoing relationships with state services is significant for many in the NZAG community.*
- *There is a dearth of information to describe the experiences of women and children that exist within gang whānau.*
- *Communities of support have formed and evolved that aim to support women and wider communities connected to gangs.*
- *Women and children within gang whānau represent a cohort who may face discrimination from services designed to help.*
- *We know that there are positive experiences too. Gangs are whānau and we heard from some that they have positive and loving memories of their childhood.*
- *The media plays a role in informing the public and policy makers on issues, including gang-related issues.*
- *Reporting has the potential to exaggerate fears and concerns.*
- *Implementing legislation or policy in response to sentinel events rarely improve long-term services for victims and their wider family.*

2. "GANG CRIME" IS A BLANKET TERM

"It's one of those words that...there's more than one meaning to it."

Eugene Ryder in Redefining Gangsterism: Social Change Agents in the Black Power. Davis et al., 2022

It is common to see opportunistic youth crime, crime committed by individuals who happen to be gang affiliated and, organised crime described under the same banner of “gang crime.”⁶⁵ Broad labelling of this nature makes specific harms and behaviours difficult to address. Importantly, this broad labelling also overlooks the fact that it is not against the law to be in a gang (although Section 4.4 describes how it is an offence to wear a gang patch in certain places).

“IT IS NOT AGAINST THE LAW TO BE IN A GANG”

2.1. YOUNG PEOPLE WHO OFFEND

For NZ, a young person that offends refers to a person between the ages of 14-17 years who commits an offence and is then dealt with by Police and courts.⁶⁶ The *Crimes Act 1961* states that children over the age of ten, but under 14 can be convicted of an offence although conviction can be avoided if there was no knowledge that the act was wrong or contrary to the law.⁶⁷ Further to this, the *Oranga Tamariki Act 1989* allows for children aged from ten to 13 to be charged with particular serious offences.⁶⁸

Young people offending is an important issue to address but is separate to youth gang membership

At present there is a heightened focus on youth offending, including the recent spike in ram-raid incidents.⁶⁹ With the focussed attention on offending by young people, speculation that offending is being driven by adult gang operations have arisen.⁷⁰ We know that not all young people that offend are members of or go on to join gangs. However, a young person is more likely to *reoffend* in a violent manner if they are male, involved with violence in the family home, involved with drugs, and gangs or have a prior prison history.^{*,71}

Data compiled by the SWA shows that in the 12 months leading up to July 2022, there was an increase in Police proceedings against youth in Auckland of 14% compared with the 12 months prior.³² Proceedings against children under 13 years old increased by 24%, and for young people aged between 14 and 17 an increase of 11% was observed. These statistics stand in contrast to the fact that nationally, Police proceedings against youth generally decreased. While the spike in youth offending largely occurred within the Auckland City and Counties Manukau Police districts (with increases in Police proceedings of 18% and 33% respectively), there were also increases in Waikato (65%), Bay of Plenty (10%), Northland (20%) and Canterbury (18%). Recent claims of ram raiders being driven by adult gang operations are not supported by an evidence base.⁷⁰ There is also no evidence to suggest that the increase in youth crime is in any way impacted by youth gang membership, although some offenders do have gang associations.^{32,72}

“NATIONALLY, POLICE PROCEEDINGS AGAINST YOUTH GENERALLY DECREASED”

* Based on a study of Pacific Island, Māori and other young people who have committed a violent offence.

Young people can and do form gangs

Cohorts of young people forming ‘crews’ or some sort of street gang are a common observation, particularly in our urban centres.⁶⁵ And the factors that facilitate their formation are well known.^{39,65,73–75} Much of the crime associated with youth gangs is opportunistic in nature.⁶⁵ Very few young people that satisfy the definitional criteria to be considered part of a youth gang go on to develop into overt criminal youth gangs. Youth gangs, much like NZAGs, are diverse in nature with some posing a greater risk than others. Various categories of youth gangs are defined, which helps to inform the appropriate responses from Police and other agencies (see Table 1).^{65,73}

Table 1: Distinguishing features of youth gangs in NZ^{73,75}

Gang type	Distinguishing features
Wannabes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Erroneously categorised as gang members• Highly informal• May commit some petty crime (not necessarily group activity)• Similar dress codes• Shared signs (handshakes etc)
Territorial Gang	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Slightly more organised• Characterised by territorial boundaries• Dabble in opportunistic crime• Typically short lived
Unaffiliated Criminal Youth Gang	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Members not under any NZAG• Denoted by overt criminal intent and carry out criminal acts for their own benefit only• Tend to be organised by and around key figures or leaders• Become disorganised when the organising or motivating figure is absent
Affiliated Criminal Youth Gang	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gang is defined by a relationship to a NZAG• Some biological relationships to an adult criminal gang• Organised around criminal intent• Often carry out criminal acts on behalf of NZAGs

There is likely an overlap in young people that offend and those that go on to join gangs

That is not to say that these young people aren’t at risk of future gang membership. In a cohort of 2,000 young people in prison that self-identified as gang members, 100% were reported offenders as children.⁶³ In that sense, the young people that are offending may perceive that they have few life choices, putting them at heightened risk of future gang joining, depending on their various contexts. Gang joining may also be influenced by coercive behaviours of older gang members, a practice that young people are particularly vulnerable to.⁷⁶ Prevention and early intervention mechanisms are the most effective way to slow the flow of young people into a life of persistent offending and potential gang membership.

“THE YOUNG PEOPLE THAT ARE OFFENDING MAY PERCEIVE THAT THEY HAVE
FEW LIFE CHOICES”

2.2. OFFENDING BY GANG MEMBERS

Gang members do cause harm

There is data to indicate that individuals who happen to be gang members are more likely to commit more crimes than those who are not.^{50,77,78} This is reflected in our prison population where gang members are disproportionately represented in the sentenced and remand prison populations.⁷⁹ However, while offending may be normalised to some extent within gang communities, committing crime is not necessarily the same as committing organised crime. This is not to say that gangs do not participate in harmful activity. We know that they do. However, distinguishing the extent of crime harm and the nature of gang involvement is important.

2.3. ORGANISED CRIME

Organised crime generally refers to an organisation of criminals that carry out planned serious criminal activity to gain profit, power, or influence.^{80,81} Organised crime has been defined as a “continuing criminal enterprise that rationally works to profit from illicit activities that are often in great public demand. Its continuing existence is maintained through the use of force, threats, monopoly control, and/or the corruption of public officials.”⁸² However much like gangs there is a lack of universal definition for organised crime and organised crime groups and definitional boundaries vary between sources.^{83,84} While gangs and organised crime are not necessarily synonymous, the Police report that gangs are the most visible face of organised crime in NZ.⁷²

Lack of corruption has historically disrupted organised crime

We know that a primary factor that works to keep gangs from participating heavily in organised criminal activity is the lack of institutional corruption in NZ.⁸⁵ The 2022 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) released by Transparency International indicates that NZ is second equal with Finland as the least corrupt in the world.⁸⁶ This is a minor decrease from the first-place ranking held from 2019 to 2021. While the CPI may not measure corruption that is well hidden, it does represent one of very few available metrics that can speak to a crime which is not well reflected in our crime statistics.

However, this is changing

NZ's relative isolation previously served as a protective factor.² This is no longer the case. Increasing sophistication within transnational organised crime groups that are involved in corruption has seen these organised criminal enterprises establishing networks on our shores while simultaneously creating mechanisms for our domestic gangs to form international networks.^{72,87} And globally, corruption and compromising of officials for the benefit of criminal entities is a growing concern.^{88,89}

Organised crime is a growing concern

Some gangs and gang members are involved in organised criminal activity to varying degrees. It has been suggested that most OMCGs in NZ do not operate as organised criminal groups but have organised criminal elements within them that involves members coordinating with external parties.^{2,90} Regardless, the resulting illegal activity that arises from involvement with organised criminal networks has harmful effects on our communities. The lucrative drug trade is a significant driver for forging these expanding networks though it is important to note that the illicit drug trade which by its very nature, almost always meets the definition of organised crime, is not facilitated entirely by gangs or gang members.⁹¹ Organised crime in NZ is considerably more diverse than this. The distribution of harmful drugs throughout our communities, coupled with the use of violence and intimidation as mechanisms of enforcement generates fear within communities and threatens public safety.^{72,92}

Links between gangs and organised crime are a growing concern to the extent that a Transnational Organised Crime strategy was developed in 2019 and publicly launched in 2020.⁸¹ Police suggest that organised crime in NZ is expanding and diversifying.⁹³ Both domestically and internationally, organised crime groups are growing in strength, sophistication, and territory.⁹⁴

The GHIC identify that different gang types are involved in organised crime in different capacities.¹³ Recent reports suggest that OMCGs are more likely to act as importers and wholesalers of illicit substances, acting as a supplier to OPWGs and street gangs.¹³ Globally we have seen OMCGs associated with offending of a similar nature including murder, drug trafficking, and extortion.⁹⁴ Organised crime of this nature causes significant harm to NZ communities.

“ THE GHIC IDENTIFY THAT DIFFERENT GANG TYPES ARE INVOLVED IN ORGANISED CRIME IN DIFFERENT CAPACITIES ”

Key messages

- *Youth crime, crime committed by gang members and organised crime are different forms of offending and conflating the terms risks trying to address different harms with the same approach.*
- *Very few young people that satisfy the definitional criteria for a youth gang go on to develop into overt criminal groups.*
- *It is important to recognise that gangs are not monolithic. There are variations in internal culture and conduct.*
- *We recognise that some gang members do offend and cause harm to our communities. And to some extent, some NZAGs participate in organised criminal offending. Distinguishing crime and associated harm is important.*

3. BEHAVIOURS ASSOCIATED WITH GANGS

“While gangs and organised crime are not necessarily synonymous, gangs are the highly visible face of organised crime in New Zealand”

NZ Police Annual Report 2021/2022

3.1. FAMILY HARM

A significant and enduring social issue

The international literature describes violence as a defining characteristic of gang membership.^{95–97} In some instances violence is described as an outcome, with one US study identifying that exposure to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) increased the risk of violence perpetration in young people.⁹⁸ Yet violence is also described as an essential tool of gang membership and organised crime, necessary for intimidation and regulation of drug markets.^{91,95}

Family violence is a serious issue that we face in NZ*, accounting for 41% of Police response time.^{72,99} We have heard that violence is normalised in some gang whānau because of previous experiences of trauma and structural violence.⁵³ Gang members and their whānau are overrepresented in national statistics. Wives, girlfriends, and female associates of NZAG members are reportedly at a significantly higher risk of family and sexual violence.¹⁰⁰ And we know that living with violence on an ongoing basis has multiple and long-lasting impacts.

Women experiencing violence may have trouble trusting people which impacts the likelihood of help seeking.¹⁰¹ Fears that children might be taken by the state is another barrier to help seeking processes.²⁷ In effect, some women are not only trapped by their partners and their circumstances, but also by the systems designed to provide them with support.¹⁰¹

“FEARS THAT CHILDREN MIGHT BE TAKEN BY THE STATE IS ANOTHER BARRIER
TO HELP SEEKING PROCESSES”

Case Study 5

Queensland Police - Domestic Violence

Australian statistics suggest that women in relationships with members of OMCGs are 640% more likely to be a victim of domestic violence than the general population. Anecdotally, the Queensland Police are cracking down on domestic violence in a move that has the joint outcome of protecting vulnerable women while also holding to account perpetrators that are statistically likely to be a part of an OMCG.

Police found that 35% of members of OMCGs had been issued domestic violence orders and that a woman in a relationship with an OMCG member was 428% more likely to be a victim to a domestic violence incident that involved strangulation compared with the general population.

Alarming, only 38% of domestic violence victims associated with Outlaw Motorcycle Clubs accepted referrals for help from services.

Established in 2008, the Family Violence Death Review Committee (FVDRC) was initially tasked with supporting the Family Violence Ministerial Advisory Group and the Taskforce for Action on Violence within Families. Their fifth report, published in 2016, produced a systems overview which highlighted how the systems that existed

* Specific mention of family violence and intimate partner violence are referenced in this report in response to themes highlighted by the GHIC. It is important to note that family harm represents many behaviours beyond those listed within this summary report.

at the time were largely oriented toward crisis response.¹⁰² While there is certainly a necessary place for crisis response, the report highlighted that services were disconnected resulting in a disjointed rather than holistic, interconnected system of care for vulnerable people seeking help. Further, there is a need for a trauma informed response with appropriate resourcing to support vulnerable women and children.¹⁰³

The most recent FVDRC highlights a *duty to care*, a concept related to but distinct from the common *duty of care* that describes a legal obligation to ensure safety and wellbeing of others.³⁶ While no specific recommendations are made in the report, a strong emphasis is placed on the *duty to care*, a concept that describes relational obligations, values and practices which can only arise within the context of genuine, respectful relationships. The authors refer to Tūhoe Hauora (see Case Study 20) as an example of a well-respected Māori service provider that implements a *duty to care* within their professional practice.

We know that 74% of individuals on the NGL have been recorded as an offender in family harm* cases and that 19 NZAGs have over half of their members represented as offenders of family harm.⁵⁰ Further, 47% are recorded as victims in family harm cases and 43% have been recorded as both victim and offender. It is likely that the levels of reported family harm deviate from the true levels of harm experienced. Women associated with gangs represent a particularly vulnerable group at greater risk of abuse and violence, yet often subject to further abuse when attempting to seek help.^{101,103}

“WOMEN ASSOCIATED WITH GANGS REPRESENT A PARTICULARLY
VULNERABLE GROUP AT GREATER RISK OF ABUSE AND VIOLENCE, YET OFTEN
SUBJECT TO FURTHER ABUSE WHEN ATTEMPTING TO SEEK HELP”

Intergenerational violence

We know that most offenders in NZ’s criminal justice system are victims themselves.¹⁰⁴ They themselves will have experienced high rates of abuse, neglect, and violence throughout their life course.¹⁰⁵ It is common for the cycle of violence to be intergenerational with parents and grandparents also experiencing chronic victimisation. And, where children are exposed to family violence, we know that they are significantly more likely to become perpetrators of violence in adulthood.^{106,107}

* A report prepared by the National Collective of Independent Women’s Refuges (NCIWR) describes how New Zealand has an extraordinarily high rate of violence against women.³⁰⁹ Use of the term ‘family harm’ has the potential to obscure the gendered (and violent) nature of abuse, illustrating a lack of understanding about the drivers, dynamics and impacts of intimate partner violence.

Whāngaia Ngā Pā Harakeke

Whāngaia Ngā Pā Harakeke(WNPH) is a national framework where Police, iwi and qualified kaiāwhina work in partnership to attend to and reduce family harm.¹⁰⁸

WNPH represents a partnership between Police, local iwi, community social service providers and other government departments. Through WNPH, resources are directed toward the reduction of family harm in NZ and a multi-agency response is coordinated.

WNPH requires that all Police-attended family harm investigations or any event referred from an outside agency are considered by an inter-agency panel that meet daily to assess the events of the previous 24 hours. The panel are tasked with trying to understand the likelihood of re-offending, any vulnerabilities of persons involved with the incident, and stressors on the family. They must also consider the outcomes and levels of engagement of previous recommendations made and referral or support that has been provided.

The panel have access to the data systems of health, social services, justice, and Police records. In this way, when an incident is being reviewed, all circumstances of an individual can be reviewed including their histories with Police, health, justice and other relevant information. The panelists also consider the impact on children as witnesses to family harm.

Perhaps the most unique feature of WNPH is that the intervention is not dependent on the detection of a criminal offence. No charge needs to be laid or offence identified for a referral to be made.

*An initial evaluation of WNPH in the Counties-Manukau Police District involved the use of the NZ Crime Harm Index (CHI) to determine the extent to which the initiative reduces the **harm** of offending.¹⁰⁹ Analysis was carried out using data gathered over an 18-month period. The calculated benefit of the WNPH programme was a 15% reduction in the crime harm associated with offences.*

A second evaluation in Tairāwhiti, within the Eastern Police District found an estimated 18.7% reduction in crime harm when comparing WNPH treatment group to a matched control group.¹¹⁰

Further evaluations in Auckland City and Southern Police Districts found reductions in overall harm of 15% and 19.5% respectively.^{111,112}

Intimate Partner Violence

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is the most common form of family harm reported to Police related to gang members.⁵³ Reported victims included current partners, ex-partners, mothers, and children. It is likely that high levels of IPV and sexual violence go unreported. This may be because victims are fearful of retribution or, they do not recognise their experiences as abuse.⁵⁰

IPV is a form of entrapment with its own social and structural dimensions.¹⁰¹ It is associated with serious negative physical and mental health outcomes and is the leading cause of female homicide death.¹⁰⁴ When speaking specifically on the issue of victims that have a gang affiliated partner, the FVDR identify that a victim's help seeking is likely constrained by the actions of her abusive partner and the structural reality of her life.¹⁰² A victim who has a gang affiliated partner may call the police but may not be able to communicate with them openly upon arrival. It may be extremely socially dangerous to be seen publicly cooperating with the police but that does not mean she does not need help.

E Tū Whānau

E Tū Whānau is a kaupapa Māori movement for positive change with the aim of preventing violence in the home by working with communities in a culturally appropriate way. E Tū Whānau works directly with whānau, hapū and iwi to undertake action that will embed behavioural change.

It is a strengths-based programme, grounded in te ao Māori (the Māori world), supporting communities to identify and respond to their own needs and priorities. While the central Kaupapa of E Tū Whānau is proudly Māori, we understand that refugee and migrant communities have also seen significant value for themselves in the movement.

Whānau plans are a key element of the programme. These plans help to focus whānau aspirations and create objectives in the domains of education, health, and employment. Having written their own plans, whānau are responsible for monitoring and demonstrating their successes.

Co-author and Professor of Indigenous Studies Tracey McIntosh describes a focus group session with a group of people for whom E Tū Whānau had made a significant difference in their personal lives.¹¹³ The focus group was made up of seven participants: six wāhine Māori and one tāne Māori. The tāne was himself a senior member of the Mongrel Mob while the wāhine all had blood ties or intimate relationship ties with members of the Mongrel Mob.

Some themes that emerged from the focus group session are outlined below:

- *E Tū Whānau was introduced to most through a trusted relationship*
- *All participants recalled poor relationships with government agencies*
- *All of the wāhine felt that their association with Mongrel Mob gang members had led to the state criminalising them, and their tamariki*
- *Most did not have a strong appreciation for their cultural heritage*
- *There were common barriers to achieving a full expression of E Tū Whānau*
 - *Living within communities of deprivation and scarcity*
 - *Income instability*
 - *Lack of food security*
 - *Substance addiction*
 - *Ongoing marginalisation due to being gang whānau*

Programme participants suggested that at a government agency and government policy level, a focus on gang desistance was misplaced. It was felt that a focus on supporting and enabling education and work opportunities would provide the appropriate conditions for whānau to flourish.

While a number of evaluations of E Tū Whānau have already taken place, we are aware that a novel community measurement tool has been developed that aims to capture programme impact for participants. The metrics captured by this will form the basis of a forthcoming evaluation that will be published in 2023.

Control over a victim's circumstances may limit their ability to leave

Considering structural inequities that trap family violence victims in their context, it is not unusual that victims have little or no money.¹⁰¹⁻¹⁰³ Financial control is a strategy employed by abusive partners. And for victims attempting to leave their partners, access to essentials such as money, housing and food are essential for establishing a new life for themselves and their children.¹⁰² Victims who are not employed, who do not have transport to attend agency appointments, who do not have family able to provide temporary accommodation and support, and who receive little-to-no support from agencies are especially likely to be trapped in their situations. Such complex entrapment is thought to be acute for victims with gang affiliated partners as the associates of their partners have been previously reported to spread word throughout the wider social networks.¹⁰² What's more, a NZ study of urban poverty details interactions of 100 whānau with Work and Income NZ (WINZ).¹¹⁴ The authors describe how interactions with the agency responsible for administering financial support to families reflect aspects of an abusive intimate relationship, with help-seekers experiencing

a lack of sympathy, restrictions on personal autonomy, intolerance, punitive responses to mistakes, detailed monitoring, economic control and personal criticism resulting in a sense of mistrust, fear, helplessness, reduced dignity and in time, service avoidance. In this sense, services designed to support whānau experiencing hardship can at times exhibit the same coercive behaviours, trapping victims in their abusive circumstances.^{101,115}

Experiences vary

Not all women report the same experiences in gang environments. Throughout the engagement process we heard that some women had not experienced violence at the hands of their gang partners, or the wider community. We are also aware that some women describe domestic violence as being less of an issue for older women as generally younger patched members in their late teens or early 20s are most likely to be perpetrators.⁴⁶ In other cases we note reports of extreme violence. For example, a brief of evidence by Te Atawhai Nayda Te Rangi, submitted before the Waitangi Tribunal in 2022, recounts her experience of gang culture as a wāhine Māori.¹¹⁶ Nayda refers to the incidents that she witnessed during her time involved with the Black Power and the Mongrel Mob. She recalls the treatment of women, especially the practice of blocking (gang rape). In her experience, this behaviour was normalised by the gangs and the women subjected to blocking were often persecuted afterwards, rather than supported.

There is a desire for change

The GHIC report that while NZAG members may be highly represented within family harm statistics, it is likely that they desire better outcomes for their families.* And, we are aware of internal NZAG approaches that seek to address the harms of family violence, and to improve the well-being of their members and families.^{27,49} A lack of the appropriate tools to address the root causes of family harm will make it an ongoing prevalent issue.¹⁰⁴ Programmes and initiatives that provide individuals with the necessary tools and wrap-around support to achieve sustained change are widespread, however, they often require sustained funding and support from government to ensure long-term changes can be achieved and maintained on an ongoing basis.

Programmes such as E Tū Whānau (Case Study 7) and Safe Man Safe Family are examples of interventions that aim to eliminate violence and to build strong whānau and community. Interventions are place-based and often located in communities that experience deprivation and marginalisation. In these instances, local knowledge and deep relationships are key to establishing trust and partnering with whānau to facilitate positive change.

Case Study 8

Women's Refuge

The National Collective of Independent Women's Refuges (NCIWR) has been in operation for 50 years, providing support to women, children and whānau impacted by family violence. Women's Refuge is NZ's largest organisation that provides immediate crisis support and long-term family violence specialist advocacy to women. Most of the work that Women's Refuge does is in the community, not in safe houses. Entry points for these community level interactions include crisis calls, walk-ins, concerned family/friends, Police call outs and referrals from social services or the health sector.

The Refuge does not have specific policies for working with women that have a gang affiliation although understanding any affiliations is an important step for developing the appropriate support interventions. Refuges that admit someone to a safe house generally ask about experiences with gangs and affiliations so that they can:

* This was reflected in the discussions we had with various community level organisations working with gang members.

- Understand the risk relating to the perpetrator's behaviour (e.g. is there the potential for associates to find/intimidate/harass the victim, what resources does the perpetrator have to monitor or stalk the victim, how broad is the reach and influence of the perpetrator and, who else might form part of that pattern of risk)
- Understand any risks relating to that person being in the safe house, such as if someone from the same or different gang is already in the safe house and what risks might exist from either of them passing on information about the other, or inviting someone they are affiliated with to the premises

Conversations such as these inform the best mechanisms of support for the client given the available resources. Anecdotally we are told that women coming from gang environments have had negative experiences with the state and with helping services. In that instance, the goal of refuge is to connect with the victim in a way that honours their story and experiences with the goal of building toward a more positive service outcome.

Observation from Women's Refuge staff were that gang affiliated women exhibited similar support needs to those of any women that was help-seeking. However, it was acknowledged that women with gang affiliations may have partners with significant connections that can be used to track her whereabouts. Further, given that some gang environments function as a central whānau and peer network, attempting to leave an abusive partner necessitates leaving that entire network of care which is a daunting task.

In the same way that not all gangs and not all gang members are the same, not all gang affiliated women that are help-seeking present the same needs. Some exhibit complex and extensive needs, others are relatively straightforward.

Strategies for the prevention of family violence

While it is important to note that not all who experience violence and abuse early in life go on to offend, the data indicates that most offenders have experienced violence and early abuse in life. We know that ACEs including maltreatment or witnessing domestic abuse can have detrimental effects on developing neurological and physiological systems.¹¹⁷ Adverse life outcomes associated with ACEs are seen in education, employment, mental wellbeing and life satisfaction, substance abuse, and disease.¹¹⁸ And, there is a growing body of literature that looks beyond individual outcomes to understand the financial burden of ACEs with one study identifying that costs of US\$581 billion and US\$748 billion could be attributable to ACEs in Europe and north America respectively.¹¹⁹ Costs were attributable to four risk factors (smoking, alcohol use, drug use, and obesity) and six causes of ill health (anxiety, depression, cancer, diabetes, cardiovascular disease and stroke).

In our national context, we know that the majority of those who *do* offend have experienced violence and abuse early in life (not restricted to gang members or gang whānau).¹⁰⁴ To the best of our knowledge, costs attributable to ACEs in our national context are not well understood. That aside, early intervention to reduce ACEs would have wide ranging benefits. And it is important to have strategies for violence prevention which draw on the lived expertise of men, women, and tamariki.

An earlier report from OPMCSA authored by Ian Lambie, *'Every 4 minutes: A discussion paper on preventing family violence in New Zealand'* provides a strategy approach for the prevention of family violence in NZ (see Table 2).^{104,*} The approach is largely drawn from the international CDC report and health sector.¹²⁰

* We note that ACEs are not restricted to being experienced solely in the family environment. Other factors that might contribute to ACEs include personal traits and the wider community environment.³¹⁰

Table 2: Strategy approaches for the prevention of family violence in NZ, reproduced from Lambie (2018)

Strategy approach	Details
Understand the effects of ACEs	There is a need to broaden public and professional understanding of the effects of ACEs
Change social norms to support positive, healthy relationships and a non-violent NZ	Understand the media focus on victim-blaming and individual service failure vs awareness-raising and change
Strengthen economic support for families	While family violence can occur at all income levels, having financial resources can enhance options for leaving a violent relationship and keeping children safe
Build workforce capacity and capability	Staff in all sectors need to be adequately resourced to understand and respond to family violence and avoid re-traumatisation
Enhance parenting support and skills to promote healthy child development	Targeted, evidence-informed, home-based and sustained programmes to support high-risk families
Provide quality early childhood care and education	Early home-based support from pregnancy; high-quality early childhood care and education; school engagement and intervention around early challenging behaviour
Intervene to lessen harm and prevent future risk with a trauma-informed approach	Coherent, collaborative service delivery is required. Drawing on child-focused interventions, positive youth development, advocacy-based help, family supports, intervention for addictions and trauma, work with perpetrators, risk prediction and technology tools as appropriate
Implementation science: Take action; measure it; do more of what works; allow what is learned to inform next steps	A well-planned strategy is vital. There is a need to balance evidence-informed programmes and real-world contexts, evaluate appropriately and maintain programme fidelity when scaling

3.2. CRIMINAL OFFENDING

Criminal offending varies

Gang membership is associated with criminal offending resulting in imprisonment.^{96,121} And difficulties reintegrating into the community post release are common.^{15,28,41} A 2023 long term insights briefing on imprisonment from the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) suggests that gang members in the justice system tend to be in prison for more violent crimes than those who are not gang affiliated, and have a higher rate of reoffending following release.⁷⁷ It is also likely that there is a level of offending carried out by NZAG members that goes unreported and so is not reflected in the data.⁵⁰ Previous analyses of NZAG offending have shown decreases in the volume of offending behaviour while the nature of the offending has changed.⁵⁰ There has been a decrease in dishonesty-based offending but an increase in violence, drugs and firearms related offending.*

The GHIC report that due to the differences in their offending behaviours, OMCs present a greater risk to the public, although this is not to say that OPWs and street gangs don't pose any risk at all.¹³ The assertion is that OMCs tend to engage in more sophisticated feats of organised crime and show a greater willingness to corrupt public and private individuals and organisations.^{13,90,122} Considering available metrics such as the CHI, further analyses would be useful to consider *harm* associated with convictions, rather than quantity alone.¹²³

“OMCGs TEND TO ENGAGE IN MORE SOPHISTICATED FEATS OF ORGANISED
CRIME AND SHOW A GREATER WILLINGNESS TO CORRUPT PUBLIC AND
PRIVATE INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANISATIONS”

While those on the NGL do have, on average, a higher number of criminal convictions than the general population, there are still individuals that do not have convictions against their names.[†] Further, we note that the harms identified are not unique to gang members. As such, there may be benefit in addressing harmful behaviours rather than focusing efforts on reducing gang membership.

“THERE MAY BE BENEFIT IN ADDRESSING HARMFUL BEHAVIOURS RATHER
THAN FOCUSING EFFORTS ON REDUCING GANG MEMBERSHIP”

Violent offending is a common theme

Violence has been described by some as a currency of gang membership.⁴⁹ For many, violence has likely been experienced from a young age, predating gang membership. And for our NZ context, violence experienced within state care facilities is a reality experienced by too many.^{24,30} Gang members are frequently recorded as both victims and perpetrators of violence and trauma, and often have high rates of undiagnosed and

* This figure is true at the time of the GHIC report publication in 2021

† The definition outlined by the GHIC for inclusion on the NGL includes causing harm to the community through criminal activity. This definition is for the purposes of defining the gang itself, not the individual members. Therefore, while there are a small number of individuals on the NGL that do not have any criminal convictions, if they have been validated as patched or prospect members, they will be recorded on the NGL.

untreated mental and substance use disorders.^{41,124,125} These undiagnosed and untreated disorders are often risk factors for (or a consequence of) gang membership.¹²⁶

While crime rates have been falling, convictions for the most serious offences – serious violence, sexual offending and dealing methamphetamine – have increased.⁷⁷ For example, in 2022, 69% of the convicted prison population had charges for violent and sexual offending, up from 28% in 1980. The total convicted prison population increased from near 3,000 people in 1980, reaching a historic high of 10,800 in March 2018. Numbers have since fallen to just under 5,000 in 2022.

We know that gang members make up an increasing proportion of the prison population and, that people with gang affiliations are more likely to be in prison for violent crime than those who are not gang affiliated.^{77,127–129} Gang members are also more likely to be involved in violent incidents that occur within prisons (e.g. assault on other inmates or staff) and are more likely to be placed in segregation where access to rehabilitation programmes and reintegration activities is limited.¹³⁰

Methamphetamine is a growing concern

Frequent and continued use of methamphetamine can lead to several physical, psychological, and social harms that affect both the user and wider whānau.⁹¹ Use of methamphetamine has been associated with an increased risk of violence perpetration, intimate partner violence perpetration, and violence victimisation. Regular use of methamphetamine (at least weekly) increases the likelihood of violence involvement compared to those who used less, or not at all.¹³¹

Throughout the engagement process we heard about the harsh realities for whānau and communities that were plagued with methamphetamine. We also met with community service providers that sought to reduce methamphetamine harm in communities. In some instances, this looked like supporting an individual and their whānau to access the appropriate services while some providers were able to provide the support themselves. For those that we engaged, the need to include the entire whānau on the journey to wellness was a common theme. We recognise that addiction is a complex issue, and that methamphetamine is not the only substance with associated addiction issues. We heard that the demand for addiction support outstrips supply and that many community groups struggled to pathway people into effective services.

We know that methamphetamine is a driver of ongoing harm

The Evidence Based Policing Centre (EBPC) suggest that over time, NZ gangs have become increasingly involved in the methamphetamine trade to the extent that it may now be prioritised over dealing cannabis.¹³² More recently, the 2021 evaluation of Te Ara Oranga describes how gangs in Northland employ a sophisticated business model, refined through trial and error, to push methamphetamine into the community, rather than the drug being *pulled* in through market demand.⁹²

When comparing the offending behaviours of OMCGs and OPWGs between 2017 and 2021, the GHIC found that rates of serious offending (violence, sexual, and drugs and antisocial) were similar between groups.¹³ However, a more noticeable distinction is reported when looking at Drugs & Antisocial offending behaviours. Statistical significance was not assessed however, the report indicates that OMCGs and OPWGs appear to sit at different tiers of the methamphetamine business structure and intervention to address the two may benefit from being tailored accordingly.¹³

The EBPC report that addiction, financial gain, and coercion by organised crime groups are significant drivers for participation in the manufacture of methamphetamine.¹³² There are consequences associated with both dealing and manufacturing methamphetamine which include threats, violence, and thefts. Violence is highlighted as a potential outcome of participation in the meth trade where an individual owes money to a gang.¹³²

Anecdotally, some gang members actively recruit into their multi-level business models while in prisons, promising a better life to the individual.¹³² Individuals that are offered the chance to participate in the sale of methamphetamine may then be misled into a cycle of dependency.⁹² While gangs are not the sole force behind the methamphetamine trade in NZ, we know that gangs are involved in the trade and are well placed to exploit vulnerable communities.⁹² And once established within a community, there is no doubt that methamphetamine is a significant driver of crime and negative health and other social outcomes. Importantly, while we recognise that imprisoning serious drug offenders might provide a level of public safety, there is a need for services to reduce substance use disorders, interrupting the longer-term demand for drugs.⁴¹

“THROUGH STRONG MARKETING TECHNIQUES (DRIVING DOWN COMPETITOR SUPPLIES, PRODUCT GIVEAWAYS, DEFERRED PAYMENTS, ETC) GANGS ARE DESCRIBED AS PUSHING METHAMPHETAMINE INTO NORTHLAND, RATHER THAN THE SUPPLY ARRIVING IN RESPONSE TO OTHER SOCIAL PROBLEMS”

Case Study 9

Te Ahi Mauri

Te Ahi Mauri is a meth harm reduction programme that operates out of Te Ika Whenua Counselling Services in Murupara. The model is based on Te Ara Oranga though has been renamed to better suit the community.

Te Ahi Mauri is open to anyone who is ready to address their addiction. While the programme is not specific to gang members, there is a strong gang presence in Murupara and many of the programme participants come from gang whānau.

We visited Te Ika Whenua Counselling Services to learn about Te Ahi Mauri and to understand more about how the programme operates. We saw that through Te Ahi Mauri, participants have access to counselling services, as well as opportunities to engage with various workshops. Staff informed us that participants exhibit strong tendencies toward Kaupapa Māori activities such as rongoā harvesting, romiromi, mirimiri and pounamu carving.

We heard from programme graduates (many with gang affiliations) and staff at Te Ika Whenua Counselling services.

A number of themes emerged in conversation:

- *There is a level of risk associated with seeking help for meth addiction. Concern over being viewed as a 'nark' can present as a significant barrier to people accessing help.*
- *Multiple programme participants commented on reconnecting with their Māoritanga and the value they found in that.*
- *Murupara was noted as having a strong gang presence in the community. While the exact nature of the relationship between gangs and the methamphetamine supply was not well defined, those we spoke to had no doubts of gang involvement.*

Te Ara Oranga – Methamphetamine Harm Reduction Programme

Te Ara Oranga is a unique partnership of agencies that are working to reduce the harms caused by methamphetamine in Te Tai Tokerau. Northland District Health Board, Police and community agencies have been leading Te Ara Oranga since its launch in October 2017. The aim of Te Ara Oranga is to reduce the demand for methamphetamine through community and individually targeted projects that align the resources of all involved organisations.

Meth use in Te Tai Tokerau is driven by aggressive marketing of the product by organised crime groups and gangs. Anecdotal data captured within the evaluation suggests that gangs actively recruit in prisons to maintain their multi-level business structure. Of course, the manufacture and distribution of methamphetamine is not restricted solely to gangs. Similarly, the harms of methamphetamine use and addiction are experienced by many, not just gang members.*

An evaluation of Te Ara Oranga was carried out by Crow's Nest Research in 2021 and delivered in a three-part report consisting of a Process Evaluation, Outcomes Evaluation, and a Cost Benefit Analysis.⁹² The outcomes evaluation uses administrative data to monitor interactions that people have with Health and Police systems both before and after referral to the programme between October 2017 and October 2019. The objective was to understand whether the introduction of Te Ara Oranga produced measurable outcomes within the community.

The evaluators found that individuals who were referred to Te Ara Oranga reduced their post-referral offending by approximately 34%. This figure is based on average aggregated crime-harm. While the analysis is able to assess pre- and post-referral periods to understand changes in offending behaviour, the authors acknowledge that impact on life-long outcomes is not evaluated. Long-term follow up would be required in order to understand the life course outcomes for individuals referred to Te Ara Oranga. From a cost-benefit perspective the evaluators determine a return of between \$3.04-\$7.14 for each dollar invested in the programme.

3.3. RECRUITMENT OF NEW MEMBERS

Recruitment can be a targeted effort

Internationally, recruitment of young people to gangs is sometimes framed as an act of exploitation.^{76,133} In framing the issue this way, strategies are established to protect children and young people from criminal exploitation and being drawn into gang activity and serious violence. For example, an analysis of localities that participated in the Ending Gang and Youth Violence (EGYV) programme in the United Kingdom found that EGYV areas were better equipped to identifying emerging changes and respond more efficiently to issues such as exploitation and coercion.⁷⁶

Some NZAGs actively scout for and recruit new members.⁵⁰ Numbers of NZAG members recorded in the NGL are increasing, which while contestable, might be attributed to actual growth coupled with better information collection methods. Anecdotally, we are told that prospect members can outnumber patched membership and that some types of gangs are willing to transition a prospect to fully patched membership much faster than others. This is difficult to confirm and highlights a significant data gap.

Traditional methods of recruitment include targeting disaffected, impoverished, and socially marginalised communities. While reports are conflicting, Police indicate that some NZAGs offer assets such as motorbikes,

* Note that the report is referring to gangs recruiting individuals into their business model, rather than recruiting into the gang itself.

cars, or money as an incentive to join, a ploy that is corroborated by ex-gang members.¹³⁴ For young people living in conditions of scarcity and deprivation, material rewards of this nature would be extremely compelling reasons to join a gang. This is especially true when that scarcity and deprivation is inter-generational in nature as is the case for some of our NZ population.²⁰ The accepting of gifts might contribute to building trust between a young person and an older gang member aiming to recruit. This is consistent with the idea that gang recruitment might be seen as an act of coercion.⁷⁶

**“FOR YOUNG PEOPLE LIVING IN CONDITIONS OF SCARCITY AND DEPRIVATION,
MATERIAL REWARDS OF THIS NATURE WOULD BE EXTREMELY COMPELLING
REASONS TO JOIN A GANG”**

There is a high likelihood that life course outcomes for young people are negatively affected by gang membership. Once recruited, associating with procriminal peers locates an individual within a network of relationships that shape, reinforce and generalise procriminal thinking and consequent offending behaviours.¹³⁵ We have heard that inter-gang competition, the lucrative drug market and increased territorial conflict are some of the main reasons for the significant recruitment drive.⁵⁰

With a shift of OMCs toward more sophisticated business ventures such as money laundering and collaboration with organised criminal groups, the ability to distinguish the true boundaries of gang membership and their networks of associates is likely to become more complex.¹³⁶ While the international literature speaks to the shifting operation of OMCs, it is not clear whether OPWs are undergoing a similar shift in recruitment and operation. Where gangs have whānau connections and intergenerational links, distinguishing the nature of gangs may be even more complex, with risks of negatively labelling those who have limited control over their proximity to a gang.

Prisons have been thought of as a key recruitment ground

A recurring argument is that prisons serve as recruitment grounds for those looking to join gangs. Throughout the engagement process we heard that individuals may join a gang while inside prison. We also heard that it is common that individuals desist from their gang affiliation upon release. There is limited data available to expand on this however, there is research currently being undertaken on the matter by Jarrod Gilbert.⁷⁷ Administrative data from Corrections suggests that most gang members within NZ prisons were identified as gang members upon arrival.^{77*} Only a small handful of individuals that arrived in the prison system without a gang affiliation were recorded as having left with one. This is not to say that engagement with Corrections has no consequences on gang recruitment. It is possible that gang recruitment occurs at different stages of interaction with Corrections such as community-based sentencing. While difficult to measure and quantify, it is feasible that an influence to join gangs is experienced at earlier stages of the Corrections process.

And the arrival of new gangs by way of 501 deportation is said to have spurred on recruitment

While it is unclear precisely how the deportation of Australian gang members has affected the NZAG landscape, it is possible that the deportation of gang members to NZ has accelerated the speed at which trends from Australia are observed in NZ. Throughout the engagement process we heard that gang members that had arrived in NZ by way of 501 deportation had altered the gang landscape.¹³⁷ Anecdotally, their arrival

* We have heard through the engagement process that the labelling of individuals as gang members within the Corrections setting is at times an ad-hoc process that is heavily subjective.

triggered territorial disputes and recruitment drives to bolster numbers. Further, we heard that their method of operation demonstrates levels of ruthlessness and sophistication that were previously not common within the NZAG gang environment.*The Australian Institute of Criminology report that the cancellation or refusal of a visa for 184 organised crime offenders between December 2014 and May 2018 saved an estimated \$116 million (AUD) for the Australian Government.¹³⁸ We know that 1.5% of 501 deportees were recorded on the NGL as at June 2022.¹³³ However, the consequences of the establishment of new gangs by way of 501 deportation (both financially and otherwise) for NZ and the wider Pacific region are not well understood.

“THROUGHOUT THE ENGAGEMENT PROCESS WE HEARD THAT GANG MEMBERS THAT HAD ARRIVED IN NZ BY WAY OF 501 DEPORTATION HAD ALTERED THE GANG LANDSCAPE”

Social media is playing a greater role

While international research suggests that some gangs have used the internet to commit or promote criminal behaviour, to coordinate street-level illegal activities, or to effectively keep a digital score of which gang is ‘winning’ in any given turf war, the extent to which this is true for NZAGs is not clear.^{133,1391}

We have heard that, where an individual faces pressing financial circumstances, this heightens the appeal of gang membership. Where there are dependent children or wider whānau networks that require support, the ability to gain large sums of money quickly can encourage an individual to join. Recruitment videos showcasing the lavish lifestyles of those within gang communities are said to be a compelling factor for joining a gang. Displays of wealth seen on social media likely offer a strong incentive for individuals to join. And the development and dissemination of sophisticated social media content reveals the level of organisation within some gangs.¹⁴⁰²

The precise nature of the relationship between social media videos and rate of gang recruitment is not clear, however what is known is that gang networks can now reach larger audiences much faster through new and emerging technologies. We heard how, in general, social media and other emerging technologies have meant that globally organised criminal groups have started to exhibit similar methods of operation where historically this has not always been the case.

“GANG NETWORKS CAN NOW REACH LARGER AUDIENCES MUCH FASTER THROUGH NEW AND EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES ”

* It is important to note that not all stakeholders expressed this view. Some felt that the gangs that had arrived by way of 501 deportation had similar underlying needs to our more traditional NZAGs. Their outward behaviours simply reflected their time spent in a different gang environment

3.4. LIFE COURSE OUTCOMES

Victimisation is common

The international literature demonstrates a clear interrelationship between victims and offenders.^{125,141} Where gang membership is reported, we know that individuals are more likely than non-gang members to both engage in violent offending and to experience violent victimisation.⁹⁶ That gang members are both victims and perpetrators of trauma is also true in our national context.⁴¹ A 2016 MSD report suggests that in a cohort of adult gang members accessing benefit income, 60% of the known cohort of children of gang members had reports of abuse or neglect.¹⁴² Abuse was most frequently emotional abuse and neglect. More recent reporting by SWA indicates that of a 2,000-person cohort of young people in prison who self-identify as gang members, over half were victims of crime.⁶³ And it is likely that the true extent of victimisation is unknown as there is likely under reporting.

“OF A 2,000-PERSON COHORT OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN PRISON WHO SELF-IDENTIFY AS GANG MEMBERS, OVER HALF WERE VICTIMS OF CRIME”

Incarceration is disproportionate

Gangs present a complex issue for law enforcement and correctional facilities.⁵ In international settings, gangs are reported as occupying a significant role in the social order within prisons, controlling the flow of contraband, and engaging disproportionately in disorder incidents.^{130,143} What’s more, incidents between gangs within prison facilities are said to influence gang dynamics on the outside to the extent that correctional staff are at times required to manage prisoner housing arrangements.^{143–145}

For our NZ context, we know that gang members are disproportionately represented in our prison and remand populations (see Figure 7 and Figure 8). As recently as 2020 gang members made up 37% of the remand prison population and 32% of the sentenced prison population.⁷⁹ A 2022 long-term insights briefing on the NZ justice sector highlighted how in the past 60 years the nature of the prison population has drastically changed.⁷⁷ Corrections data indicates that the *number* of people in prison affiliated with gangs peaked in June 2020 at 3,200 and has since declined by 16% to 2,700 as at June 2022. We now have an older prison population with people likely to be incarcerated for violence and/or sexual offences. The prison population also contains a disproportionate number of Māori and Pacific peoples and houses a disproportionate number of people who are gang affiliated.* This is likely to disproportionately impact negatively on young people where the experience of incarceration has been correlated with a range of negative health, behavioural, and psychological outcomes. One of which include increased involvement in criminal activity.¹⁴⁶

The data suggests that gang affiliated individuals are likely to be classified as at higher risk of reoffending and are more likely than non-gang members to serve a greater proportion of their sentences due to having, on average, longer and more serious criminal histories.⁷⁷ Gang affiliated individuals are more likely to be in prison for violent crimes; more likely to be involved in violent incidents within prison; have higher levels of

* This is true of the men’s prison population. For the women’s prison population, only two to four percent of women over the last decade have a recorded affiliation with gangs. Anecdotally we understand that the Corrections data on incarcerated women is poor. In some instances, women are recorded as having no known gang affiliation, despite being gang related and very staunch in their gang relationship. Records of gang relationships for women likely underestimate affiliations and relationships.

reoffending compared to people who are not gang affiliated (70% compared to 50% in 2021/22); and are more likely to be placed in directed segregation.

Male remand offenders

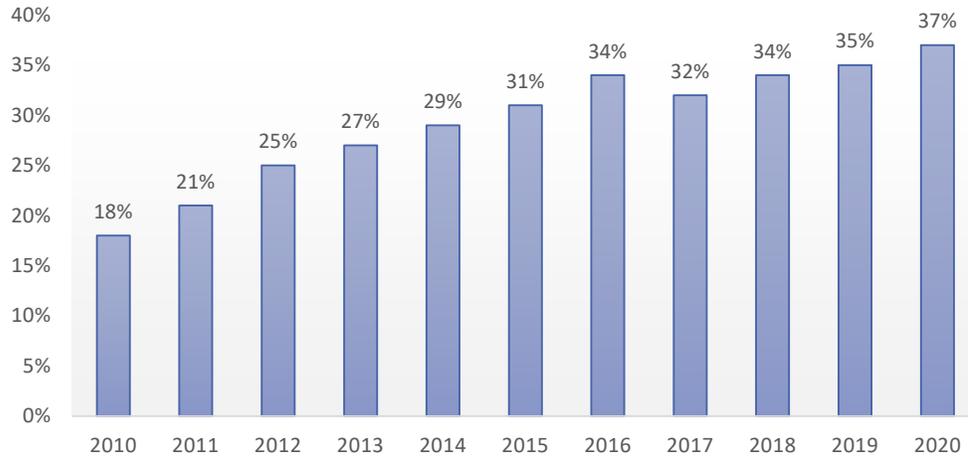


Figure 7: Percentage of remand offenders affiliated with a New Zealand gang. Figures taken from Corrections Volume Report 2019-2020.⁷⁹

Male sentenced offenders



Figure 8: Percentage of sentenced offenders affiliated with a New Zealand gang. Figures taken from Corrections Volume Report 2019-2020.⁷⁹

Income and employment

International data suggests that gang members are more likely to be unemployed although the full extent of the barriers to unemployment are not clear.¹⁴⁷ Additional research highlights the potential for discrimination by employers who might shy away from an individual with a criminal record.¹⁴⁸ Yet, like much of the general population, gang communities face financial pressures that includes paying for housing, purchasing necessities, and providing for partners, children, and whānau. Gang members who have criminal convictions, visible and prominent gang related tattoos and limited or inconsistent educational and employment history may struggle to find another source of legitimate income if their current employment is disrupted.⁵⁰ And unexpected reductions in sources of legitimate incomes may have flow on effects, such as increased reliance on benefit income or, the generation of income via illicit means. Where legitimate employment opportunities are limited, pathways toward more prosocial behaviours are also limited. In this sense, gangs have a certain adhesion about them whereby it is increasingly difficult to choose a different, prosocial life course once in a gang.

Poor mental health highly prevalent

International research identified that adult gang members exhibit higher levels of psychiatric morbidity and associated health service use in comparison to cohorts of violent men and non-violent men.⁹⁵ Relative to non-violent men, gang members scored higher across various measures of psychiatric morbidity (psychosis, anxiety, drug and/or alcohol dependence, attempted suicide) except for depression.¹⁴⁷ In lower age brackets, youth gang members are reported to have significantly higher rates of depression relative to non-gang youth.^{149,150} Exposure to violence is likely to play a role in gang members experiencing symptoms of paranoia, anxiety and PTSD. With ageing and continued gang involvement, where violence is an ongoing experience, experiences of mental illness and paranoia may be exacerbated with potential downstream consequences including an inability to maintain employment and control outbursts of anger.^{97,151}

For NZ, we know that 91% of prisoners have been diagnosed with either a substance abuse or mental health disorder across the course of their lifetime.¹⁵² In comparison with the general population, those in prison are reportedly seven times more likely to have a lifetime prevalence of any substance-use disorder, and one in three have a clinically significant personality disorder.⁴¹ We also know that the prison population have higher levels of both childhood and adult trauma and greater lifetime exposure to violence.⁷⁷ In light of this, trauma-informed practices are important across all ministries involved within our present justice system.⁴¹ While much of the available data describes prisoners and is not gang specific, we know that gang members make up a disproportionate share of the prison population.⁷⁹ Our prisons present an opportunity to engage closely with some gang members however there is a shortage of research to understand the specific mental health needs that exist within wider NZAG communities, including partners, children and wider whānau.⁵⁰

**“91% OF PRISONERS HAVE BEEN DIAGNOSED WITH EITHER A SUBSTANCE
ABUSE OR MENTAL HEALTH DISORDER ACROSS THE COURSE OF THEIR
LIFETIME ”**

We know that NZAG members will each have their own unique life courses. However, it is likely that some similarities exist in interactions with state services throughout their lifetime. Tools such as the creation of representative timelines could provide useful insights about people’s interactions with government services,

providing richer insights and useful for the development of more tailored responses to recurrent areas of need.*¹⁵³

Case Study 11

Wesley Community Action

Wesley Community Action (WCA) is a place-based collective impact initiative, supporting community led initiatives that increase the quality and dignity of life of those they work alongside. WCA employs members of communities to work with their own communities which has proven vital for meaningful engagement.

The work carried out by WCA is based on the belief that people are the experts in their own lives. WCA work to support people to identify their strengths and skills. Beyond that, they support people toward the changes they believe will allow them to have a better life.¹⁵⁴

WCA work alongside anybody that needs support, some of whom happen to be gang members. One example includes working with the Mongrel Mob. In recognising that people are experts in their own lives, WCA began by simply building relational trust between staff, Mongrel Mob member,s and their extended whānau.

As a result of the strong relational trust that was established, various outcomes emerged organically. Some examples include the formation of the Mumzys, a group of mums seeking to improve life outcomes for families (see section 1.7), and the formation of NZ P-Pull, a community-led movement supporting Mongrel Mob members address their methamphetamine addiction.¹⁵⁵

NZ P-Pull specifically seeks to connect to whānau who are dealing with the highest burden of methamphetamine addiction and who may not get the help and support they need from our current system setup. At present there are 14 walk-ins operating in the North Island of NZ.

The receipt of funding through the Proceeds of Crime Fund enabled WCA to establish a national coordination function and formalise support for the movement. While the access to funding has been a great assistance, it is noted that it has also added stressors. The administrative burden associated with funding (contracts, reporting, evaluation, etc) has diverted people resources away from the preferred space of doing good in its whānau and communities.

Seeing itself as a movement, rather than a service provider, NZ P-Pull remained flexible and responsive to the needs of its community. In that sense, activities are not delivered the same between localities. That aside, the four main activities that make up NZ P-Pull's work include regional walk-ins (group, face-to-face mahi), one-to-one intensive support, a national members Facebook page and community outreach (local and national community events and resource distribution).

Reported impacts of NZ P-Pull include:

- *Raised awareness of the movement as a result of increased media attention*
- *Interest and support from certain government agencies and the addiction sector*
- *A demand for service*
- *The potential of community-based initiatives with a predominantly non-health workforce to adequately meet people's needs associated with problematic methamphetamine use*

* Engagement with some stakeholders highlighted that we need to be careful that IDI level analysis doesn't inadvertently deploy resources to places that are less effective from a prevention/early intervention point of view. For example, while IDI analysis might highlight a child's interaction with truancy services as an early intervention point, some argue that this might be seen as a 'lag' indicator and, that the 'lead' indicators might be the police call out to a family violence incident while the mother was pregnant with said child.

3.5. PROSOCIAL ATTRIBUTES

Gangs are whānau

It is well established that one pull factor for gang membership is the sense of belonging that an individual can experience.^{2,39} In some cases within the NZ context, actual whakapapa links exist and so a person's experiences within gang communities can be one of strong familial relationships. Throughout the engagement process we heard that for those born into gangs, they are first and foremost "whānau" and, those born into gang whānau articulate that they are not gang affiliated, but gang related.^{28,113} For some, desistance efforts that focus purely on an individual leaving the gang environment would involve leaving their whānau, friends, and community. In these instances, an individual might find themselves socially isolated and bereft of support networks.

Outcomes from a 2017 focus group with members of the Mongrel Mob whānau capture the reflections of one wahine who noted that, "*just because they are known to others as bad this is not the view I had and I was sheltered from a lot of the bad stuff. I am going to say that Mongrel Mob shaped me. That is the truth, they are not just Mongrel Mob they are your family. Helping me be the person I am today.*"¹¹³ Similar sentiments were heard throughout the engagement process. In some instances, we heard individuals identified as the gang whānau they were born into (for example "I was born Mongrel," or, "I was born Black"). The sense of identity, belonging and community that gangs provide is significant.³⁷ While their role in wider society is contentious, it is clear that gangs in NZ provide some value to their members.²

In some instances, gangs become the chosen whānau

For some of our NZAG population, their affiliation to their gang community is the most enduring and sustained relationship they have ever had.²⁸ Tuhoe Isaac describes that receiving one's patch was viewed as the pinnacle of success.¹⁵⁶ At that point in time, patched membership held more significance to a member than one's wife, children, family, and friends. Family ties were often severed to the extent that a person might find themselves brawling against their own brothers or cousins who happened to be in rival gangs. In short, your most important allegiance as a Mob member was to the brotherhood, which has the effect of generating internal loyalty and discipline among members.¹⁵⁷

While section 3.3 draws from the criminogenic literature to describe gang recruitment, we have also heard through the engagement process of the non-criminogenic benefits that people experience. For some, wanting to join a gang was influenced by having shared experiences with other members. For others, gangs offered an accepting environment in contrast to the rejection they experienced from mainstream society.

A move toward prosocial behaviour

We have heard that there is a move toward prosocial activity within some older members of our NZAG landscape. This competes against the move toward organised crime by others and, we know that many NZAG members want better life experiences for their children and families, opting to take on more prosocial behaviours in their later years.¹⁵ There are various examples of gangs engaging in prosocial activities such as the feeding of school children, standing guard at Mosques following the Christchurch terrorist attack, partnering with Waikato DHB for the Hearty Hauora event, and encouraging whānau to vaccinate as part of the Covid-19 vaccine drive.¹⁵⁸⁻¹⁶¹ And NZAG members have described strategies they are employing to help their members from within the gang, for example the Mongrel Mob introducing the 'Whānau First' rule which advocates for no violence within gang whānau, or the Black Power Movement Whakatāne, aspiring to improve the wellbeing of their members and their families through a tikanga based process.^{27,49}

“ MANY GANG MEMBERS WANT BETTER LIFE EXPERIENCES FOR THEIR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES, OPTING TO TAKE ON MORE PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOURS IN THEIR LATER YEARS ”

They are well placed to reach their own communities

We heard accounts of gang members (both ex members and current members) who had played a key role in supporting positive changes within gang networks. For example, Karl Goldsbury, employed by Te Tuinga Whānau (see Case Study 18), now works alongside the Bay of Plenty Gang Harm Reduction Team to speak with other gang members in prison.¹⁶² The team visit influential gang figures in prison with the hopes of encouraging prosocial behavioural changes and gaining their support to help their wider gang community, upon release. Speaking at the Nga Tūmanakotanga symposium in 2021, Karl describes how figures like himself are best placed to reach back into their own communities. *“We will only listen to us – all our bros in jail, all our Mongrel Mob whānau, even all our Blacks, we’ve got bros in all different gangs since we’ve done that much jail.”*¹⁶² Programmes such as E Tū Whānau (Case Study 7) and Wesley Community Action (Case Study 11) are additional examples of organisations that work alongside gang communities and employ those with lived experience.

The value of support being delivered through those with lived experiences is emphasised by members of the Hastings Mongrel Mob attempting to address drug, violence, educational, and employment issues within their Mongrel Mob whānau.²⁷ Mongrel Mob members Rex Timu and Johnny Apatu emphasise that to address the issues within the community, *“you need to have walked in their shoes. Only then will you see results.”* This is especially true in light of the distrust that exists toward the state within a lot of gang whānau. There was strong advocacy from Mr Timu for interventions such as Waka Moemoeā (see

Case Study 14) which he credits for improved relationships between Black Power and Mongrel Mob leadership, as well as their relationships with other gangs. Partnership between service providers and those with lived experiences, supported by evidence-based interventions, is key to reaching into hard-to-reach communities and supporting them to achieve change.

3.6. GAPS IN KNOWLEDGE

The issue with data

How ‘gangs’ are defined has flow on effects to data collection (see section 1.1). This has further implications on the downstream data sharing and analysis between agencies. What’s more, gang definition and data collection varies between agencies.¹³³ Agencies involved in the GHIC do not record consistent data on gang affiliated individuals. Where information is recorded, most agencies are reported to only record *if* someone is a gang member with limited additional information to specify which gang a person is affiliated with. As recently as 2022, IRD and Police were reported to be the only agencies to distinguish by gang *type*.

Differences in data collection across agencies does not necessarily point to a system failure. Not all agencies require a labelling criterion for the individuals that they work with and introducing a gang label would likely not support their work in any way. Further, unnecessary labelling may only serve to add bias and contribute to the ongoing alienation of gang communities.

Data is limited, but available

Gang communities have been described as hard-to-reach for some agencies, which casts uncertainty over the completeness of any data that is reported.* And, data that is available, such as the NGL, is frequently contested. While factors that lead to an individual's inclusion are relatively straightforward, removal from the NGL is not so easy. For this reason, the NGL is not intended to be used as an accurate census of gang membership.¹³⁴⁵ Beyond intelligence gathering, data involving gang members such as survey research presents challenges with some researchers suggesting that gang norms inhibit reliable and valid survey responses or discourage participation entirely.¹⁶³³

What is not clear from the NGL is the unique life course of an individual. We know in general that gangs are a cohort of individuals with complex histories of intergenerational family violence and trauma. We also recognise that societal structures contribute to the lived experiences of many that live within gang communities.

Some researchers describe gang communities as inhabiting the margins of society, having historically formed in resistance to the society that has rejected them.^{2,156} The data indicates that gang members tend to commit crimes more frequently than other offenders, are overrepresented in NZ's prison population, and are at higher risk of reoffending upon release from prison compared with non-gang members.^{50,77}

“THE DATA SUGGESTS THAT GANG MEMBERS TEND TO COMMIT CRIMES MORE FREQUENTLY THAN OTHER OFFENDERS, ARE OVERREPRESENTED IN NZ’S PRISON POPULATION, AND ARE MORE LIKELY TO REOFFEND UPON RELEASE FROM PRISON”

Individuals on the NGL have on average 38 convictions. Yet, gang members are also frequently recorded as victims of family harm, live in the most deprived areas of NZ, are disproportionately represented in the receipt of benefit income, have poorer health (including mental health), and have higher levels of unmet healthcare needs.⁵⁰ It is common for gang connected individuals to have been interacting with state services in some capacity from a young age (such as interactions with OT, truancy services, and Police).³²

There is a need to establish a firmer understanding of the life courses of gang affiliated individuals including their interactions with government services. This would provide useful insights into when and where the appropriate services might be proactively distributed to support communities in minimising harmful behaviours and adopting prosocial lifestyles.

* Some argue that it is not the gang communities that are hard-to-reach, rather it is the agencies that are hard-to-reach. Gang communities and gang members are easy enough to reach within their own peer networks. Either way, complex communication between those with needs and providers who can support those needs presents a barrier for effective intervention and support.

“GANG MEMBERS ARE ALSO FREQUENTLY RECORDED AS VICTIMS OF FAMILY HARM, LIVE IN THE MOST DEPRIVED AREAS OF NZ, ARE DISPROPORTIONATELY REPRESENTED IN THE RECEIPT OF BENEFIT INCOME, HAVE POORER HEALTH (INCLUDING MENTAL HEALTH), AND HAVE HIGHER LEVELS OF UNMET HEALTHCARE NEEDS”

That aside, there is room to understand NZAG members to a greater extent. While we acknowledge that there are limitations around the accuracy of available data, that does not mean that analysis is entirely unhelpful.²² We also recognise metrics such as the NZ CHI, developed as a measure to illustrate the relative harms from crime and utilised for evaluation purposes such as the evaluation of Iwi community justice panels and Te Ara Oranga.^{92,123,164}

There is capability for analysis

There is an opportunity with the data available to establish an analysis of the relative risks of harm that gang affiliated individuals introduce to their communities, or not. This would provide a deeper understanding of gang affiliated persons historic interactions with Police (inclusive of victimisation events and youth offences) and could potentially elucidate shared attributes in offending histories. Where possible, a comparison of the offending harms between gang and non-gang affiliated individuals would help to confirm the extent of harm unique to gangs and their members, drawing on tools such as the CHI.¹²³ In addition, analyses of groups of associates would develop an understanding of the broader levels of Police contact.

Case Study 12

Maatua Whāngai

Maatua Whāngai deliver social services to families living in the Te Arawa rohe. They provide marae-based social services and embrace the whānau ora concept in the delivery of best outcomes for whānau.

Maatua Whāngai take referrals from Police, OT and Whānau Ora. Referrals are then able to access services such as Te Pae Oranga, Youth Services, Te Kooti Rangatahi and Whānau Ora support.

We sat with the team from Maatua Whāngai to learn about the services they provide and their on-the-ground experiences.

We heard that there are consistent themes they observe with the individuals and whānau they work with. These include:

- *Mental health difficulties*
- *Addiction/substance abuse issues*
- *A lack of identity and belonging*

When discussing gangs, the team at Maatua Whāngai acknowledged that NZ has a well-established link between our state care services and the formation of our early gangs. In that sense, they see their service provision as “cleaning up the mess left by the state.”

Maatua Whāngai highlighted the work carried out by Fred Haumaha. With a wealth of lived experiences to draw from, Fred is well known in the local community and is well positioned to reach into networks that might otherwise be labelled ‘hard-to-reach.’

The team note that in response to a spate of public feuding between warring gangs, Fred played a key role in establishing monthly hui with gang members and their whānau. Because of his standing in the community he was able to create a neutral space where issues could be talked through kanohi ki te kanohi (face to face).

In response to these monthly hui, the community saw a drop in the outbursts of public violence.

In many ways, Fred is an example of the need to ensure the right people are working amongst high needs communities.

The team at Maatua Whāngai were clear that if the goal is to reduce harms, that communities need to be empowered to create programmes catered to their specific needs. Where possible, employing local people to facilitate these programmes is ideal as there will be existing relational networks.

“IF THE GOAL IS TO REDUCE HARMS, COMMUNITIES NEED TO BE EMPOWERED TO CREATE PROGRAMMES CATERED TO THEIR SPECIFIC NEEDS”

Key messages

- *Themes of family harm, criminal offending and recruitment emerge when considering the harms associated with gangs.*
- *In international settings, recruitment is framed as an issue of coercion and exploitation which drives interventions to protect vulnerable young people.*
- *There is some variation in the type and extent of harm caused by different gang types (i.e., OMCGs compared with OPWGs).*
- *The arrival of newer Australian gangs deported under Australia’s 501 legislation have changed the gang landscape and relational dynamics. The extent to which that is the case is largely unknown.*
- *Social media is playing a greater role. Where gangs share content that showcases their material wealth, this might serve as a significant pull factor for gang membership. And beyond that, we heard that globally gangs are displaying more similar methods of operation due to the ease at which information can be distributed.*
- *There is opportunity to better understand the relative harms caused by gangs in our communities through tools such as the CHI.*
- *In some instances, prosocial behaviours are observed where gang communities have contributed to the wellbeing of their community.*
- *Efforts to support prosocial behaviours within gang communities is best done alongside the communities themselves.*
- *Common life course outcomes for gang members include victimisation, incarceration and income and employment disadvantage.*
- *International literature indicates that gang members score high across various measures of psychiatric morbidity.*
- *There is limited information to describe mental health outcomes and needs within gang communities in NZ however, we know that large cohorts of our prison population have been diagnosed with substance abuse or mental health disorders across the course of their lifetime.*

4. ADDRESSING GANGS

“Just as it is better to vaccinate against a disease than it is to treat the disease, it is better (and cheaper) to prevent violence happening in the first place than to react once it has occurred.”

Scottish Violence Reduction Unit, 2022

4.1. DESISTANCE IN THEORY

Gang desistance is an understudied aspect of gang membership.¹⁶⁵ The literature speaks more often to the transition into gangs than out of gangs, and any impacts on subsequent offending behaviours.¹⁶⁶ However much like gang joining, various theoretical push and pull factors for gang desistance are noted in the literature.¹⁶⁷ Behavioural Science Aotearoa (BSA) provide an overview of useful behaviourally informed interventions for encouraging desistance from harmful gang behaviours, summarised in Table 3.⁷⁸

Table 3: An overview of behaviourally-informed interventions that encourage desistance from harmful gang behaviours⁷⁸

Desisting from harmful gang behaviour	
Capitalising on teachable moments	The timing of intervention is key to the effectiveness of uptake. An example of capitalising on a teachable moment is the deployment of youth workers in hospital emergency departments. Here, youth workers can screen and provide intervention to young people, reducing the risk of repeat occurrences. Similar points of timely intervention may include leaving school, starting a new job, the birth of a child. ³⁴ BSA identifies that further research in NZ would benefit from understanding how to engage with the wider whānau as part of capitalising on teachable moments.
Reducing inter-group conflict	Research from conflict resolution initiatives indicates that one way to mitigate inter-group conflict is to bring opposing groups into contact for the sake of carrying out a purposeful activity. ¹⁶⁸ Increased social contact provides a mechanism to reduce inter-group tensions that might exist.
Leveraging social networks	There may be methods to convey a message through leveraging social groups. ¹⁶⁹ One study identified that when Police delivered a message to prolific offenders, subsequent offending decreased among offenders that had received the message directly and those who did not directly receive the message, illustrating how information can travel through social networks to have flow-on deterrence effects. ¹⁷⁰ Leverage social networks does not need to be restricted to Police intervention. Initiatives of this nature could be explored with key community leaders and agencies (iwi, hapū, Māori wardens, health care providers etc).

Gang focussed programmes have been designed

In addition to formal gang exit programmes, there are some examples of gang-specific interventions aiming to prevent young people from joining.¹⁷¹ One example is the Gang Resistance Education and Training (GREAT) programme (see

Case Study 15). Reportedly, GREAT is the only programme in the US that has a specific focus on reducing gang membership that has been rigorously evaluated.¹⁷² Using GREAT as a partial template, Growing Against Gangs and Violence (GAGV) was developed in partnership with the UK Metropolitan Police Service (MPS), with a similar aim of reducing gang involvement, delinquency, and violent offending.¹²⁸ While evaluation of GAGV did not demonstrate a statistically significant programme effect, evaluators saw indications that the programme was effective in reducing levels of gang membership, and the frequency and variety of delinquency and violence.

Another example is The Boys and Girls Clubs Gang Prevention Through Targeted Outreach (BGPTTO) programme which reaches at-risk young people. The programme works by offering relationship with and

mentoring by older youth, and the provision of exciting activities to provide a sense of belonging. An additional case management component assures school attendance and performance and supports increased participation in the community. An evaluation of BGPTTO revealed several positive outcomes including delayed onset of gang-like behaviour, less contact with the juvenile justice system, decreased delinquent behaviour, improved school performance, and better prosocial relationships.

Although gang membership doesn't need to be the primary focus

We know that some organisations have adopted a wellbeing focus, rather than focusing on recidivism, when working with gang members in a rehabilitative capacity.¹⁷³ This focus on the individual as a whole person rather than as simply a gang member was reinforced throughout the engagement process by those who work alongside gang communities. For many, gang membership is frequently seen to be of lesser importance and is even seen by some as a consequence of agency intervention, rather than the cause of agency intervention. Effective interventions were noted to require long term investment for both the gang member and the wider community.

“EFFECTIVE INTERVENTIONS WERE CONSIDERED TO REQUIRE LONG TERM INVESTMENT FOR BOTH THE GANG MEMBER AND THE WIDER COMMUNITY”

We have heard that there are likely many community level organisations that run some form of intervention programme to address needs within their own communities. These might be run through local marae, churches or within community groups, and it is likely they remain unseen to those who are not within the immediate communities they serve. Other interventions will be provided through government agencies, delivered within government facilities (schools, corrections, etc) or where resourcing is made available through government funding.

4.2. IS GANG DESISTANCE REALISTIC?

Desistance is not easy

Desistance from gang association and desistance from criminal behaviours are separate but overlapping processes. Gang disengagement is described by some as the event of gang membership de-identification and, the corresponding process of decreased gang embeddedness (a concept encompassing identity, network characteristics, and time use with respect to the gang).¹⁶⁶ The process of desisting from crime and anti-social behaviour for gang members, how this occurs and what factors facilitate the transition is not a clear pathway although the international literature indicates that disengagement often occurs in the transition to adulthood.^{135,174}

There are various barriers

An individual is likely to experience various challenges in the short term process of gang exit such as social ostracism, loss of social support, threats of violence (toward the individual or their family), loss of assets (e.g. taxing), financial losses, mental health difficulties, relational breakdowns, difficulty finding employment, and difficulty engaging with mainstream society.^{175,176} Where an individual has prior convictions, visible gang related tattoos and limited or inconsistent employment and education histories, the road to employment is

likely more complex (see section 0).^{50,171} And where an individual remains within the same physical environment, desistance and changed behaviour will likely be more difficult.

Disengagement from a gang requires that an individual be willing to distance themselves from their former identity.^{34,171} For many, cutting ties to gangs, whether active or historic, will often be synonymous to cutting social and whānau ties. That gang identity is often linked with self-identity presents a barrier to an individual relinquishing their gang connection.¹⁷⁷ That aside, there is some evidence to indicate that where an individual has desisted from gang association, positive outcomes are noted in the longer term.^{34,178}

What supports are available to support desistance?

An offender's pathway to desistance from crime can involve several relationships including probation officers, psychologists, programme facilitators, therapists, and spiritual guides.¹⁷³ These relationships support an individual to adjust their behaviour and to hopefully desist from offending upon prison exit. However, services are generally accessed within the context of an individual's sentencing and are not always easily accessible beyond prison gates. And, we have heard from those with lived experience who felt that these formal relationships existed purely to ensure they complied with the conditions of their release, rather than supporting them to live an offence-free lifestyle. This can present significant challenges for an individual who is effectively thrust back into the 'real world,' with a sudden change in circumstance, amongst a community that is not always welcoming of their presence.*

But some gang members do leave?

The literature indicates that there is no singular reason for gang exit although ageing is described as significant.^{34,179,180} Often there are multiple interacting factors, with many relating to life-course turning points.^{15,171} Common themes within the literature include:

- Maturation (ageing out of the gang)
- Significant others (offering support in the process of leaving)
- Parenthood and an increase in familial responsibility
- Relational strains within family
- Victimization (fear of violence, vicarious victimisation)
- Disillusionment (members feeling betrayed or abandoned)
- Deterioration of relationships within the gang (intra- and inter-gang conflict)
- A change in gang culture
- Desensitisation to previously rewarding aspects of gang life
- Physical removal (moving to a different area for example)
- Self-reflection

While these life-course turning points might describe the experiences of some of our NZAG cohort, it is also clear that this is not the case for all. Given the longevity of membership for some on the NGL who are well into their 60s or 70s (see Figure 5) with children and perhaps even grandchildren in the gang, it is clear that for some, rather than leaving their gang environment at these life-course turning points, their children were simply born and raised within these communities.³⁵ Where an individual may have chosen to leave their gang whānau, one's gang affiliations may have continued to be an important element of their gang identity.²⁸ We also know that more recently, some gang communities have made efforts to adopt prosocial behaviours for

* Therapeutic staff at Matapuna Special Treatment Unit (STU) noted that once an individual has left the programme, they lose contact. There are ethical limitations to follow up after the programme has been completed so, unless a participant voluntarily initiates contact there are limitations as to how much knowledge they have of an individual's wellbeing and reintegration efforts.

themselves and their whānau (see section 3.5).^{27,49} Dynamics of this nature stand in contrast to the idea that decreased offending must correlate with a reduction in gang embeddedness.¹⁶⁶ Indeed, for our NZAG community, the adoption of prosocial behaviours can sometimes take place within the gang context.

Importantly, we know that NZAGs are their own forms of communities. Behaviour changes and efforts to engage with and support members to adopt more prosocial behaviours would benefit from being informed by members within their own community.^{15,162}

Women and children often face circumstances that make leaving gang environments difficult

Throughout the engagement process we heard from a range of women who have lived within gang communities. Most had strong desires for their children to have better life outcomes than what they were experiencing. Yet, many of the women had their own experiences interacting with the justice system and considering their offending histories faced barriers to employment, education, and housing.

For women and children that exist within gang whānau, the choice to exit is not a simple one. We know that in some instances, gangs represent a chosen whānau. At times, these connections are ones of actual whānau and as such, shared whakapapa links make desistance from gang involvement complex (see section 1.7). For children born into gang whānau there are limitations to their ability to change their circumstances. In some instances, the state or other whānau members may intervene, or a young person might run away. However, the ability for children to exit gang environments is largely dependent on the adults in their world.

4.3. WHAT ABOUT A FORMAL EXIT STRATEGY?

What works to support gang exit?

Gang membership and the dynamics within a gang environment are complex. Equally, gang disengagement while perhaps an aspirational goal is not straight forward, better described as a process rather than an event.^{34,178} Moving through various phases of gang exit is not necessarily a well mapped pathway and, significant social, economic and safety risks are often prominent challenges that require overcoming. In light of the wide-ranging areas of need, exit programmes should adopt a multi-dimensional approach to gang exit.¹⁸¹

An overview of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, identified in various international exit strategies are described by the GHIC.¹⁷¹ These findings are captured in Table 4 with additional considerations where relevant.

Table 4: Summarised overview of international gang exit strategies and considerations for NZAGs – based on a recent GHIC report.¹⁷¹

International Exit Strategies Overview		Considerations for NZAGs
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A tailored approach was effective for supporting participants appropriately • Assessment tools helped to identify risk • Case managers helped reduce individual risk factors • Inclusion of family members or close peers saw positive impacts • Significant reduction in offending and victimisation were seen in participants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supposedly there would be a high demand for coordinated support to leave • Finding a sense of purpose after exit is identified as important for seeing success
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some participants experienced barriers to engaging with exit programmes • Little focus given to prosocial support in some instances presented challenges to individuals • Challenges with information sharing and coordination of support undermined some strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The high rate of gang membership, coupled with our social interconnectivity likely presents barriers to exit • Being a former member likely prevents employment opportunities
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some agencies reflected on the lack of information sharing and built on that • Opportunities for staff training were identified • Additional support services were incorporated • Community support identified as important to increase visibility and understanding of gang exit strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing initiatives could be leveraged to support the development of a disengagement programme • Culturally adapted programmes could see positive outcomes but evaluation is needed
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Securing sustainable funding was an issue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Familial and intergenerational links are complex, and severing those ties could cause further harm • Returning to gang activity is a risk for NZAG members

How applicable are international strategies to our NZ context?

The evidence suggests that while establishing an exit programme is complex, there are positive benefits for individuals that opt to leave gangs and the wider community.^{34,171} We also recognise that post-exit life presents an equally complicated issue. Issues around safety and reintegration into a functional community where departing members and their families can establish new routines, patterns, legitimate income sources, access to relevant services and support must be considered in the longer term.

Throughout the engagements process we presented the idea of a formal exit strategy to a variety of stakeholders. While we have not carried out primary research, key themes that emerged from the engagements are captured in Table 5.

Table 5: An overview of key themes that emerged throughout the engagement process when we raised the idea of a formal exit pathway

What we heard
A specific focus on gang membership was seen by many as misplaced. A focus on whānau and on addressing harm was seen as likely to be more effective.
Some were optimistic about exit strategies suggesting that a positive outcome for even a small cohort would make the investment worth pursuing.
We heard there was likely an appetite for some gang members to leave. However, there was scepticism about whether a formal exit programme would be the pathway of choice for gang exit.
Queries were raised regarding safety of individuals attempting to exit from their gang.
Strong familial links were raised as a point of concern. You cannot exit from your whānau.
A formal, government-initiated gang exit programme may be seen as state intervention. For many NZAG members, this is simply another form of intervention to rebel against.*
Various barriers to exit were raised, including employment opportunities, housing opportunities, over-policing, access to education or training, etc.

Annex 3 describes various international frameworks to describe the gang joining process and, presents an overview of various risk and protective factors. Similar to the theoretical understanding of gangs, the extent to which gang desistance strategies employed in international contexts can and should be applied in our national context needs further consideration.

We know that a proportion of our early NZAG community formed at the hands of state intervention.^{24,28,30} To the present day, whānau that live with complex and inter-connected stressors who attempt to interact with state services describe experiences of continued marginalization, reinforcing a sense of mistrust.^{114,115} We recognise that some government agencies are making efforts to address long standing mistrust, for example with the establishment of the multi-agency Resilience to Organised Crime in Communities (ROCC) and the introduction of a Gang Harm Reduction operating model with a focus on prevention.⁷² However, how NZAG communities might respond to a formal exit strategy is not clear and there might be benefit in asking the communities themselves if such an opportunity is both desirable and feasible for members.^{15,162} Importantly, much like prevention efforts, we recognise that an individual is likely to find desistance difficult if the social and environmental conditions that facilitated their gang joining and criminal offending behaviours remain.¹⁸²

In light of disproportionate representations of Māori, any gang exit strategy would benefit from being culturally adapted (see Figure 6). And while the development of a gang exit strategy reflective of our unique cultural context would be useful, we recognise there may be hesitation by some to develop culturally adapted frameworks and solutions to what are seen by some to be structural problems.²⁸ What's more, for a cohort of our NZAG population, gangs are whānau and gang connections are not *like* family, they *are* family. Efforts to encourage gang desistance (i.e., change at the individual level) are unlikely to succeed without involvement of

* We recognise too that for our NZ context, distrust of state intervention stems from a history of state abuse. In these cases, scepticism of state services is not entirely rooted in rebellion and may reflect a sense of cynicism and mistrust.

and participation of the wider whānau. Developing a firm understanding of the differences between NZAGs (i.e., OMCG, OPWG, street gang), their particular needs, their socioeconomic contexts and their wider networks (through whānau, peer networks and affiliations etc) is necessary to better inform interventions efforts.

Case Study 13

Te Pae Oranga Iwi Community Panels

Te Pae Oranga Iwi Community Panels are a mechanism for Police and iwi to deal with crime and prevent reoffending. The approach is suggested to hold offenders accountable while also helping them to address the problems they are facing. Te Pae Oranga Iwi Community Panels are available to people of all ethnicities. Victim participation is encouraged however uptake is low (less than 10%) although of those who do attend, the experience is noted as being positive.¹⁶⁴

Loosely translated to mean “to talk, listen and become well”, Te Pae Oranga Iwi Community Panels use tikanga, kaupapa Māori and restorative justice processes. A key feature is the panels of local community leaders who have valuable knowledge and experience. They support offending participants to make a plan and put things right. Those plans might include actions that participants must complete and conditions they must adhere to. Beyond looking at the nature of the offence, Te Pae Oranga also aims to look at the reasons driving the behaviours and understanding what is going on in people’s lives. This allows the panel to connect offenders to the right kind of services and support moving forward.

A 2019 evaluation of Te Pae Oranga Iwi Community Justice Panels found that panel participants tend to re-offend with offences which are minor compared with those of a control group drawn from offenders charged with similar offences and propensity-matched by age, gender, ethnicity, offending history, and location.¹⁶⁴

The aim of the 2019 analysis was to assess the impact of attendance at iwi panels and, subsequent completion of plans, on re-offending. Re-offending of panel participant was compared to matched controls using data obtained from Police with details of individuals spanning 2010–2016.

*Post-panel participants do go on to re-offend. But the authors discuss how the data have the capacity to mislead if the dependent measures were simply ‘re-offending,’ or ‘time to re-offend,’ without also considering the seriousness of what the offences are. For example, re-offending could include a minor breach of probation conditions (i.e., reoffence by breach of conditions, not necessarily a criminal offence). Therefore, while the analyses did not identify a reduction in the rate of offending after attending an iwi community panel, there was an observed reduction in **harm** (in reference to the NZ CHI).¹²³*

Importantly, it was found that panels work well for all offenders with no distinct consideration for Māori or Non-Māori. Similarly, there is no effect for ‘youth.’

4.4. SUPPRESSION EFFORTS ATTEMPT TO STOP GANGS FROM EXISTING

Suppression efforts are not new

Suppression programmes generally involve specialised units and are often led by the police. Gang members and any associated illicit activity are targeted through law-and-order mechanisms.¹⁸¹ Suppression is perhaps the most invoked strategy (when comparing prevention, intervention, and suppression mechanisms).^{29,183} Yet, despite rising to popularity as the most employed strategy since the 1980s, it is generally viewed as the least successful approach.⁴¹ Not only are gangs and gang related harms likely to remain in the wake of targeted suppression efforts, there is the added risk that suppression efforts simply strengthen gang cohesion and solidarity.¹⁸⁴

Within a prison setting we know that some gangs play a significant role in the social dynamic to the extent that the literature describes their presence as a threat to prison security, controlling the flow of contraband, and featuring disproportionately in disorderly conduct.^{130,143,145} Co-author and Chief Science Advisor to the Justice Sector, Ian Lambie, has described prison as an “expensive training grounds for gangs, intimidation, and further offending.”¹⁸⁵ In the absence of successful interventions during incarceration and consistent pathways to rehabilitation on release, for many gang members there is a likelihood of recurrent offending and imprisonment.⁷⁷

We have made targeted legislation changes before

NZ is no stranger to targeting gang harm through legislative mechanisms. For example, we know that a swathe of gang laws were introduced in the 90s in response to numerous high profile gang related events but were far from effective (outlined in Annex).⁶¹ Planned measures were originally bundled as the ‘Harassment and Criminal Associations Bill.’ By the time of being introduced to parliament for the final reading, the initial bill had been split up into a series of new laws and amendments to existing laws. Despite the urgency with which the laws were created, the majority were rarely used in the five-year period that followed. What’s more, most of the new laws were used more often against non-gang members than against those with gang alerts reinforcing the idea that focussing on crime is more practical than targeting gangs themselves.⁶¹ This serves as a useful reminder of how the rush to draft ‘criminal laws’ can prevent the examination of whether existing laws are sufficient to deal with the problem.¹⁸⁶

Gangs can generate a large political reaction

Following violent gang events in Whanganui in the early 2000s, the mayor at the time responded by suggesting Police ‘harass’ the gangs, and voiced the idea that gang patches should be banned.² Calls for strong action against gangs increased following the drive-by shooting that claimed the life of a two year old girl.¹⁸⁷ The *Whanganui District Council (Prohibition of Gang Insignia) Bill* was introduced to parliament on 2 April 2008.¹⁸⁸ The introduction of the Bill was said to prevent incidental gang clashes and to prevent public intimidation, yet the link between patches and violence was never well established. While the Bill was passed into law in May 2009, following challenge by the Hells Angels, it was later struck down by the High Court on the ground that it violated the Bill of Rights.^{2,135} Following that, the *Prohibition of Gang Insignia in Government Premises Act 2013* was introduced making it an offence to wear gang insignia on government premises.¹⁸⁹ More recently, the idea of implementing patch bans in more places has arisen once more with suggestions that the ban extend to online content.¹⁹⁰ Resurgence of the idea to ban gang patches has been met with criticism, with claims that the proposal was designed for ‘big headlines’ and would be ineffective in practice.¹⁹¹ Enforcement of wider patch bans would be difficult, if not impossible, and has the potential to be confrontational.

“THE LINK BETWEEN PATCHES AND VIOLENCE WAS NEVER WELL ESTABLISHED”

More recently, the *Criminal Activity Intervention Legislation Act 2023* was enacted to address the harm caused by criminal activity, including that caused by gangs.¹⁹² The intent of the proposed changes is to allow Police to tackle gangs and intimidating behaviour, and to make communities safer (details outlined in Table 13). Further, the recent passing of the *Criminal Proceeds (Recovery) Amendment Bill* is hoped to make it harder for gangs and gang leaders to benefit financially from crime that causes considerable harm to communities.¹⁹³

Lessons from Australia

Following a series of significant violent events that took place in Australia between OMCGs, an attempt was made to suppress OMCG and organised crime activities through legislative mechanisms. Between 2009 and 2019, Australian lawmakers passed 79 pieces of new legislation that in some way targeted gangs.^{61,194}

The state of Queensland created ten separate statutes aimed at stamping out the gang problem.¹⁹⁴ Patched clubs were declared illegal and were given no right to appeal. Further, if any individual went to an illegal clubhouse, or if members gathered with three or more present, they could be arrested. Under such circumstances, bail was forbidden and, those convicted were required to serve a mandatory six-month prison term. The same penalties were applied to any person who was found wearing regalia denoting membership in one of the banned clubs.

There were mixed reviews following the introduction of the new laws. While some felt that the public could now sleep safely in their beds, others questioned the passage of the laws under urgency stating that the laws did “not match the scale of the crime threat posed by bikies.”¹⁹⁵

In 2015, a taskforce on organised crime legislation reviewed the impact of the Queensland legislation and found that of the 202 people charged under the *Vicious Lawless Association Disestablishment (VLAD) Act 2013*, 82% had no known link to gangs.⁶¹ Much like in NZ, laws were frequently introduced as ‘anti-gang’ laws but were more often used on non-gang members. Unlike in NZ, several laws (non-consorting and non-association) reduced gang visibility and the number of visible club houses throughout Australia. This may have affected public visibility of gang violence and reduced public intimidation. However, it could be argued that this simply moves the problem underground, or to other places, rather than fixing it.¹⁹⁶

“LAWS WERE FREQUENTLY INTRODUCED AS ‘ANTI-GANG’ LAWS BUT WERE MORE OFTEN USED ON NON-GANG MEMBERS THAN GANG MEMBERS ”

You can’t just arrest your way out of the problem

We sought to understand whether the ‘zero-tolerance’ style of policing which is consistent with the ‘tough on crime’ rhetoric has a substantial evidence base and if it could actually work. There have been mixed analyses. For example, the ‘broken windows’ approach was coined in 1982 and describes the developmental sequence of neighbourhoods descending into disorder.¹⁹⁷ Wilson and Kelling present a metaphor that a broken window left unrepaired will lead to the eventual breaking of all windows in a building. In short, the authors suggest the crime is a contagious epidemic and spreads throughout communities via environmental features. The epidemic

can be reversed, and neighbourhoods made safer by dealing with disorderly conditions. However, aggressive order maintenance strategies, such as ‘zero-tolerance policing’ initiatives are questionable in their efficacy.¹⁹⁸ These types of policing practices can have the effect of distancing Police from the communities they serve leading to a host of other issues such as increased complaints against Police,¹⁹⁹ increased racial disparities in the criminal justice system,^{200,201} and the criminalisation of vulnerable populations such as the homeless and mentally ill.²⁰² Further, ‘tough on crime’ policies have historically been called ‘tough on children.’²⁰³ Where the numbers of incarcerated people increases, so too does the number of children whose lives are disrupted.

We know that targeted enforcement efforts run the risk of strengthening internal gang cohesion, reinforcing anti-social attitudes, and simply displacing offending elsewhere rather than addressing the problem at its root.^{182,184} Further, we heard throughout the engagement process that negative outcomes of a zero-tolerance approach are not restricted to policing and could be equally damaging in a correctional setting for example.

“VARIOUS ANALYSES HAVE PROVIDED MIXED RESULTS FOR THE EFFICACY OF ‘BROKEN WINDOWS’ POLICING”

Case Study 14

Waka Moemoeā

The Waka Moemoeā trust was established in 2012, supported by then Minister of Māori Affairs Pita Sharples. In the year prior, Minister Sharples had directed Te Puni Kōkiri to extend the governments Drivers of Crime work programme by establishing a specialised approach to mobilise hard-to-reach whānau (i.e., gang members and their whānau).²⁰⁴

Waka Moemoeā is described as a ‘behavioural-ecological model of intervention where the entire community was viewed as an individual client where weaknesses and strengths are diagnosed and subsequently addressed.’ Waka Moemoeā relied on social mobilisation to bring about whānau wellbeing.²⁰⁴ A strength of this method of intervention was that it did not rely on a single behavioural outcome. Rather, a range of outcomes were assessed, all of which would contribute to whānau well-being, social mobilisation, and cohesion.

A plan was established that involved six specialised Whānau Development Coordinators located in five regions throughout the country. Whānau Development Coordinators had a specific aim, to reduce violence, increase social functioning, and improve community safety. Min. Sharples supported government funding of Waka Moemoeā as he acknowledged that gang members, through a process of social mobilisation, were best placed to respond to their own needs.²⁹ The trust was formed to provide governance, direction, and support to Whānau Development Coordinators. There was a strong focus on education, training, employment, health, and housing as core areas of change.

A summary of key outcomes included:²⁷

- *An increase in safety - Agreements to cease intergang rivalry and conflict*
- *A shift in gender roles - Increasing the appreciation of the role of women within whānau*
- *Crime reduction – Creation of prosocial environments and discouragement of offending from gang leadership*
- *Education attainment – Participants grew to understand the importance of education for their children, and in some cases adult education*
- *Employment – A high proportion of chapters’ members obtained full time employment*
- *Improved housing and health outcomes*

A cost-benefit analysis carried out by Te Puni Kōkiri to evaluate the Waka Moemoeā intervention estimated a total cost savings to government of between \$956,946 and \$1,298,991. A second order benefit associated with employment and education was estimated at \$788,361.

4.5. PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION

Section 3 highlighted themes of family violence, criminal offending and gang recruitment as consistent harms seen in relation to gang members and gang communities. Except for recruitment, these harms are not unique to gang communities. Delivery of interventions to address specific harms provides scope to address problem behaviour more broadly than gang communities. However, we also note that gang communities are considered hard to reach for some service providers and that gang members are best placed to reach their own communities.¹⁶² While intervention methods to address harms may be universal, gaining trust and access to gang whānau to deliver interventions may require targeted effort.

Prevention is cheaper

Prevention programmes typically focus on discouraging children and youth from joining gangs. Efforts are focussed on those who are at high risk.¹⁸¹ Yet, prevention efforts that focus solely on the individual will have limited impact while the social and community factors conducive to gang formation and criminality go unaddressed.¹⁸²

“PREVENTION EFFORTS THAT FOCUS SOLELY ON THE INDIVIDUAL WILL HAVE LIMITED IMPACT WHILE THE SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY FACTORS CONDUCTIVE TO GANG FORMATION AND CRIMINALITY GO UNADDRESSED”

The research indicates that interventions to prevent individuals from joining gangs are more cost effective than interventions that aim to facilitate disengagement.^{181,205} And the economic benefits of prevention programmes have the potential to extend beyond reducing criminal justice costs. For example, the estimated costs attributed to the average conduct-disordered boy (in Canada) accumulates to \$2.2million (in 2019 Canadian dollars) in victim, corrections, and other justice system costs.²⁰⁶ Positive outcomes can also extend to healthcare, social services, decreased need for specialist education services, and increased employment.²⁰⁵ Further, we know that the younger a child is at intervention (i.e., redirecting through planned prevention strategies), the more effective intervention is likely to be.¹⁸⁵

“THE YOUNGER A CHILD IS AT INTERVENTION (I.E., REDIRECTING THROUGH PLANNED PREVENTION STRATEGIES), THE MORE EFFECTIVE INTERVENTION IS LIKELY TO BE”

While prevention efforts won't necessarily deliver an immediate reduction in crime or harmful behaviours, it is useful to consider how prevention efforts might allow communities with complex needs the opportunity to engage with a broader range of prosocial life course outcomes. Prevention is cheaper in the longer term; investing in prevention will require decision makers to identify where funding is best to come from.

Investing in our children and young people is where the answer lies

A 2022 report by OT provides a breakdown of children arrested by Police in the 2020/2021 period.²⁰⁷ The report details that 953 arrests were reported, made up of 491 distinct children (under the age of 14). Māori children were overrepresented in the data, accounting for 79% of arrests.*

We know that young people who have been dealt with for a serious offence present the highest risk of future offending, and that the offending behaviour is often linked with various unmet needs. For example, SWA reports that the 10% of young people with the highest needs[†] in our communities commit over 75% of crimes by young people.³² Of that 10% of young people, one percent are identified as having ‘very high’ needs where a majority (83%) live with an adult that has a Corrections history and over half live with an adult who has received support for a mental health or addiction issue. By the time this ‘very high needs’ group of young people reach the age of 18, it is likely that all will have had an OT contact or report of concern, nearly half (49%) will have been reported to Police once, or more, as a victim of crime and nearly one third (30%) will have received a mental health referral. The interactions with the state present examples of contact points that serve as potential points of intervention. And we know that there is promising evidence to suggest that early intervention for children under 13 can reduce teenage and adult offending.²⁰⁸ Beyond the individual, we know that the right programmes can produce desirable benefit-to-cost ratios, where decreased participation in crime and improvements in health, education, and employment result in positive economic returns.²⁰⁹

“THE 10% OF YOUNG PEOPLE WITH THE HIGHEST NEEDS IN OUR COMMUNITIES COMMIT OVER 75% OF CRIMES BY YOUNG PEOPLE”

Addressing the prison pipeline

The ‘prison pipeline’ describes the conceptual pathway from one’s first encounter with the criminal-justice system to eventual incarceration.^{41,185} The prison pipeline has been described as: “engagement with the child welfare and Family Court system, child offending, youth justice system involvement, and entry into the adult criminal justice system.”¹⁶ Importantly, developmental crime prevention indicates that opportunities to change the trajectory of a young person and keep them from entering the prison pipeline in the first place begin with the previous generation.^{104,105,210} Intervention to keep young people from entering the prison pipeline in the first place necessitates working with and supporting their whānau to break intergenerational cycles of harm and to ensure a broader number of positive life opportunities for them to engage with.¹⁰⁴

We know that child offending in NZ is not a phenomenon isolated from our wider social issues. A 2022 report on childhood offending found that those who offended as both a child and youth were more likely to have a justice-involved parent.¹⁶ Rates of offending were found to increase if both parents had had justice involvement, with nine percent of children who offended as a child and young person having two justice-involved parents. A charge laid against at least one parent *before* the child was born was significantly associated with a child’s repeat offending: 68% of those children went on to offend as both a child and a youth, relative to 53% of others who offended.

* It is important to note that only one ethnicity was recorded in police data for each child. Where ethnicity was not recorded for a child, in some cases it was possible to find ethnicity recorded against the child in OT records.²⁰⁷

† “High needs” in this context refers to young people who are at risk of offending

These reports of interaction with the state prior to a child offending represent missed opportunities to intervene. We know that focussing on the wellbeing of children and keeping them from offending in the first place is one of, if not the most, effective tool we have to prevent crime and harm.¹⁶ In most cases there are significant child welfare concerns raised and child welfare and child offending proceedings present various missed opportunities to support the wellbeing of children and families. IDI data highlights abuse, reports of concern to OT, out-of-home placement, exclusion from school and indicators of social deprivation. And we know that for most children who offend, the offending behaviour continues into adolescence with increasing frequency and severity.²¹¹ While we know that not all children who offend go on to become gang members, there are overlapping risk factors. A 2018 OPMCSA report authored by Ian Lambie identifies 10 ways to intervene on the entry pathways into the prison pipeline, later adapted in 2022.^{105,185} High level recommendations are summarised in Table 10. Importantly, there is no one solution for change. It is a combination of solutions implemented sustainably, with room to adapt and evolve over time, that will increase opportunities to realise change.

“IDI DATA HIGHLIGHTS ABUSE, REPORTS OF CONCERN TO OT, OUT-OF-HOME PLACEMENT, EXCLUSION FROM SCHOOL AND INDICATORS OF SOCIAL DEPRIVATION”

Table 6: High level summary of opportunities to intervene on the entry pathways into the prison pipeline.^{105,185}

Opportunity for change	Examples
Break the intergenerational cycle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parenting programmes in prison • Maternal mental health support before, during, and after pregnancy
Support families of infants 0-2 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home visitation programmes that support high risk families • Support with caregiver mental health and substance use disorders • Build neighbourhood and community resources (such as quality childcare)
Tackle childhood adversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address environmental components of childhood adversity (poverty, parental problems, child abuse) • Address child adjustment problems • Adjust child mental health
Address severely challenging behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put in place effective programmes as early as possible for children with challenging behaviour²¹²
Offer effective parent education programmes for parents of children under 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide evidence-based parent education programmes
Establish early childhood centres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish early childhood centres where staff can help with self-regulation, social and verbal skills, caregiver warmth and behaviour management strategies²¹³
Support schools to make a vital contribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure schools are well-resourced to manage children who are most in need

<p>Intervene with aggressive children, and child and adolescent offenders</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intervene for all aggressive children, child offenders (10-13 years) and delinquent youth to prevent potentially lifelong negative outcomes²¹¹
<p>Find ‘family’ alternatives to gangs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intervene early to prevent the pathway ‘from care to custody’²⁴ • Promote prosocial relationships, cultural and community engagement and belonging as a counterforce to gang recruitment • Find positive options for youth to support children and youth to find another ‘family’ to assist their growth and development¹⁸
<p>Provide multi-level therapeutic interventions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide well-planned, well-implemented, and carefully evaluated intensive home-based programmes to care for families • Target individual, family, peer, school and community elements that underlie or contribute to problematic behaviour

Case Study 15

Gang Resistance Education and Training

The GREAT Programme was a gang and violence prevention programme that was intended as “an immunization against delinquency, youth violence, and gang membership for children” (see section 4.1).²¹⁴ Law enforcement officers from over 2,500 criminal justice agencies were certified to teach GREAT to fourth-through to eight-grade students (the equivalent of year five to year nine in NZ).

The GREAT programme offered four components:

- **Middle School Component (NZ intermediate equivalent)**
Officers delivered a 13-part curriculum to students in their classroom during the school day. The students cover violence prevention and life-skill programmes. The intention is to help students avoid destructive behaviours and set attainable personal goals.
- **Elementary School Component (NZ primary school)**
Officers deliver a six-part curriculum to students in the NZ equivalent of years five and six. The goal is to prevent violence while developing a positive bond between law enforcement and children.
- **Summer Component**
The summer education programme is an opportunity for GREAT instructors to continue building on the cognitive and social skills that are taught in the GREAT Programme at middle and elementary school.
- **Families Component**
The GREAT Families Component consists of six facilitator-guided life skills-based sessions that aim to provide parents/guardians and their children with opportunities to bond and strengthen healthy behaviours within the family unit.

A multi-site evaluation of the GREAT programme found that, at the one-year follow up, the odds of gang membership were 39% lower for students who had completed the GREAT programme relative to a control group.²¹⁵ GREAT students also reported more resistance to peer pressure, more use of refusal skills, less positive attitudes about gangs, fewer associations with delinquent peers and more positive attitudes toward police. However, the evaluation also reported no significant differences between the GREAT students and the control groups for general delinquency or violent offending.

“A MULTI-SITE EVALUATION OF THE GREAT PROGRAMME FOUND THAT, AT THE ONE-YEAR FOLLOW UP, THE ODDS OF GANG MEMBERSHIP WERE 39% LOWER FOR STUDENTS WHO HAD COMPLETED THE GREAT PROGRAMME RELATIVE TO A CONTROL GROUP”

Case Study 16

Bay of Plenty Youth Development Trust and Te Aranui Youth Trust

Established in 2017 to improve the lives of young people in Tauranga, the Bay of Plenty Youth Development Trust (BOPYDT) delivers programmes shaped around its core values. The purposes of the Trust include:

- *To help and support the educational, social and physical development of BOP youth*
- *To provide support for BOP youth who are socially disadvantaged and from dysfunctional families*
- *To provide facilities and other appropriate assistance to BOP youth*
- *To foster and encourage interests enabling youth to improve self-esteem and behaviour*
- *To provide support and funding for programmes that provide educational, social and physical development*

BOPYDT offers multiple programmes in its facility including Tauranga Boxing Academy, Imagine Believe Achieve, Aiga, Te Aranui Youth Trust (TAYT), Ki Tai (To the sea) and Te Hono.

We met with the team from BOPYDT and TAYT to understand more about the services offered and the outcomes that they see. The service providers work with many young people who happen to come from gang whānau, although they tend to not work directly with patched gang members.

*We heard from the team that one of the strengths of their service offering is that they can cater for ages ranging from 7 -24 years old. Catering to a wide age range means that they can form long term relationships with the young people that they work with and, across that period, provide them with opportunities to see different life pathways available to them. There was a strong emphasis on needing the **right** people to work with the young people that access their services ranging from needing the right staff to facilitate programmes, to the right businesses to partner with when creating employment opportunities.*

BOPYDT work mostly with the young people who access its services, although some interaction with the wider whānau is necessary. TAYT operate slightly differently in that the trust works in conjunction with the Police and Ministry of Education to provide a number of interventions for vulnerable youth aged 7- 14. TAYT works with vulnerable children in the Western Bay of Plenty region and provides four services:

- *Breakfast club*
- *Holiday programmes*
- *One-on-one mentoring*
- *School-based life skills*

Given the range of needs that exist in the young people that it works with, TAYT can also provide other interventions to support school needs, personal needs, developmental needs or whānau needs.

The range of programmes on offer allow BOPYDT and TAYT to support at-risk youth, transitioning them through a range of different programmes to the point of finding meaningful employment.

Interventions for offenders – what works to reduce reoffending

There is strong evidence for putting resources into crime prevention, early intervention, and a smarter approach to rehabilitation and subsequent social inclusion for those in the criminal justice system.^{41,208} We also recognise that policy makers often target the wrong end of the criminal justice system, attempting to reduce offending behaviour only after a person is regularly engaging with the criminal justice system rather

than intervening early.^{41,105} One way we see this inconsistency play out is in availability of services. Psychologists employed by Corrections outnumber those working for OT.^{216,217} This is inconsistent with the knowledge that children who exhibit persistent disruptive behaviour are at higher risk of offending during adolescence and adulthood than children who do not have conduct problems.²⁰⁸

If implemented well, early intervention programmes provide a range of positive outcomes including a reduction in crime, improved intellectual development, increased academic achievement, reduced health problems, better parenting skills and practices, and improved parental mental health.²⁰⁸

For our NZ specific context, it is generally accepted that there is a need to be responsive to the needs of different cultural cohorts, avoiding a ‘one size fits all’ approach.²¹⁸ The research indicates that culturally adapted interventions* are most effective when they are holistic and address multiple risk factors, involve whānau and the wider community and use culturally informed personnel.²¹⁸ There is a need to expand the current evidence base surrounding cultural interventions to better understand when and how they are most effective.

Intervention programmes typically target active gangs and gang members.¹⁸¹ Efforts generally look to rehabilitate individuals and to reintegrate them into a prosocial lifestyle. In the NZ context, intervention efforts sit across a broad range of providers and are delivered in various settings. Programmes delivered in therapeutic communities that provide an environment supportive of change are seen to achieve the best outcomes.⁷⁷ And more recently, NZ prisons have increasingly involved bicultural models, partnering with iwi and Māori service providers to design and deliver interventions.²¹⁸ Publications by the Department of Corrections describes how gang members in correctional facilities made up significant numbers in the Māori Focus Units and Māori Therapeutic Programmes.^{219,220} The effect size describes the extent to which reoffending is reduced by comparing rates of reconviction and reimprisonment amongst offenders that receive a rehabilitative intervention compared to those who do not. Effect sizes for gang affiliated programme participants were found to be as large, and sometimes larger, than the effect size observed for non-gang members. While outcomes appear promising, there is more evaluation required to determine the effectiveness of these innovations.²¹⁸

There is growing evidence to suggest that rehabilitation programmes that follow the Risk-Needs-Responsivity (RNR) model and principles of effective intervention are conducive to reducing reoffending in some cases by five to ten percentage points.⁷⁷ And the adaptation of programmes such as the Good Lives Model (GLM), traditionally used as a rehabilitation framework for offending, shows some promise to complement the RNR model.^{221,222} There are opportunities to learn from best practice and make it standard practice throughout our prison system.

“PROGRAMMES DELIVERED IN THERAPEUTIC COMMUNITIES THAT PROVIDE AN ENVIRONMENT SUPPORTIVE OF CHANGE ARE SEEN TO ACHIEVE THE BEST OUTCOMES”

We know that the best reintegration support services can help to reduce reoffending.⁷⁷ There are a diversity of results observed over time and across different types of interventions. The most effective reintegration

* Culturally adapted interventions refer to mainstream therapeutic interventions that have been adapted to better suit the cultural needs of participants. This is distinct from culture-based interventions that have a primary focus on cultural learning and identity.²¹⁸

programmes are those that employ a cognitive behavioural and/or social learning approach.⁷⁷ This is especially true for programmes that provide targeted, practical support in areas such as housing, employment, coping, and problem solving. And it is important that these programmes are culturally adapted.²¹⁸

**“THERE ARE OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN FROM BEST PRACTICE AND MAKE IT
STANDARD PRACTICE THROUGHOUT OUR PRISON SYSTEM”**

A systematic evidence review summarised the effectiveness of 12 types of interventions to reduce youth offending and antisocial behaviours, the outcomes of which form the basis of Table 7.²²³ The review suggests that the most effective interventions to reduce juvenile offending and anti-social behaviours include parent training, focussed deterrence, child skills training, cognitive-behavioural therapy, mentoring, and family therapy. Still having some effect though not to the same extent are anti-bullying programmes, anti-cyberbullying programmes and pre-court diversion programmes. Interventions such as school exclusion reduction, after-school programs, and boot camps were found to be least effective. Detailed outcomes are captured in Table 7 with considerations from additional literature sources and, where possible, NZ-specific insights.

**“THE MOST EFFECTIVE INTERVENTIONS TO REDUCE JUVENILE OFFENDING
AND ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOURS INCLUDE PARENT TRAINING, FOCUSED
DETERRENCE, CHILD SKILLS TRAINING, COGNITIVE-BEHAVIOURAL THERAPY,
MENTORING AND FAMILY THERAPY”**

Table 7: An overview of effective intervention to reduce youth offending and antisocial behaviours. Based largely on the evidence review of Farrington et al. and adapted to include supporting resources.²²³

	Intervention	Considerations
Most effective	Parenting training ^{224,225}	<p>Parenting training seeks to provide families and parents with training and skills that help them better attend to the physical, mental, and social skills of their children.</p> <p>Effective parenting programmes tend to have a clear theoretical framework and processes. This helps to ensure they are delivered as intended.²⁰⁸</p>
	Focussed Deterrence ²²⁶	<p>Focussed deterrence strategies combine law enforcement, community mobilisation, and social services to reduce offending behaviour for specific crime types. Often a focus is placed on serious violent crime, recurring offending, and crime and disorder problems.</p>
	Child Skills Training ^{227,228}	<p>Child skills training approaches aim to promote healthy prosocial development, preventing antisocial behaviour and crime.</p> <p>There is good evidence to demonstrate that skills training can reduce problem behaviours associated with violence. Courses might target communication, anger management, interpersonal problem-solving, self-control or empathy training.^{78,212,229,230}</p>
	Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) ^{231,232}	<p>CBT assumes that cognitive deficits and distortions are learned rather than inherent. Interventions involve activities and exercises to help individuals recognise distortions and thinking patterns and to apply techniques to modify distortions accordingly.</p> <p>Most correctional rehabilitation programmes in NZ are based on CBT where they are evaluated each year and typically demonstrate statistically significant reductions in reconviction.²³³ CBT is reportedly very effective for young offenders and so would support an early intervention approach to reduce persistent offending. There is a need in our NZ context to consider cultural needs in the delivery of CBT.⁷⁸</p>
	Mentoring ^{234,235}	<p>Mentoring programmes frequently target at-risk youth, assigning a peer, older youth, or non-parental adult as a mentor figure. Mentor-mentee relationships typically focus on life skills, employability, self-esteem, problem solving, communication skills, tutoring and academic support.</p> <p>Only a small portion of known mentoring programmes in NZ have been evaluated for effectiveness. As such there is insufficient evidence to describe their effect in a national setting, however, we know that mentorship is a reasonably popular intervention delivered in a variety of settings. Mentors who share similar experiences to the mentee are most likely to help young people disengage from criminal behaviours.²³⁶ This reinforces the need for mentors who have lived experiences and demonstrates the importance of culturally informed mentoring services.</p>

	Family Therapy ^{237,238}	Reviews of family therapy intervention included Functional Family Therapy (FFT) and Multisystemic therapy (MST). A range of family-based services are provided throughout NZ. Provision is largely decentralised, and coverage is localised to geographic areas and are provided by contracted organisations such as Youth Horizons Trust or Central Health Ltd. ²³⁹
Quite effective	Anti-Bullying Programmes ²⁴⁰⁻²⁴²	Often a multi-faceted approach that includes anti-bullying policies, classroom rules, information for parents, peer involvement, curriculum materials, and work with victims.
	Anti-Cyberbullying Programmes ^{242,243}	Often delivered in school settings, some programmes are designed to reduce bullying and cyberbullying simultaneously. Others are designed specifically to reduce cyberbullying.
	Pre-court Diversion ²⁴⁴⁻²⁴⁶	Pre-court diversions intervene with young people who have already encountered the criminal justice system. ²⁴⁷ While the intervention occurs after offending has already taken place, there is room to support a young person to not reoffend. Diversion programmes may work by (1) avoiding labelling, (2) avoiding association with anti-social peers, (3) reintegrative shaming and (4) connection to services which address problems the individual is facing. Diversion programmes are largely seen as effective although it is important to note that there is variation between programmes. ²⁴⁸ NZ already makes use of informal processing for young offenders, both through Police Youth Aid and through the justice arm of OT. ²⁴⁹ There is promising evidence that informal processing of young offenders reduces reoffending behaviour in the longer term.
Least effective	School Exclusion Reduction ^{250,251}	Programmes are generally designed to reduce in-school or out-of-school exclusions or suspensions. Typically, interventions target individual and school level factors.
	After-School Programmes ^{252,253}	After-school programmes aim to reduce involvement in delinquency. Programmes may involve help with academic work, mentoring, social or cognitive skills training and recreational activities. It is unclear whether after school programmes reduce crime in our NZ context. ²⁵⁴ However, it is likely that after school or holiday programmes <i>could</i> support a reduction in offending behaviour if designed and implemented well.
	Boot Camps ^{255,256}	Programmes emphasise military style discipline. They are based on the idea that routine, discipline, and interaction with programme staff might teach individuals self-control and respect. A military regime alone is not effective for reducing offending behaviour. Any effect seen is often due to some secondary, rehabilitative component. ²²³

“INTERVENTIONS SUCH AS SCHOOL EXCLUSION REDUCTION, AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS, AND BOOT CAMPS WERE FOUND TO BE LEAST EFFECTIVE”

We know that some approaches are ineffective and will make things worse

The historical use of programmes such as ‘Scared Straight’ involves taking at-risk youth on tours of adult prison with the intent of warning them off a life of crime.²⁵⁷ Not only are these programmes ineffective but the research suggests that offending has historically increased as a result.

“NOT ONLY ARE THESE PROGRAMMES INEFFECTIVE BUT THE RESEARCH SUGGESTS THAT OFFENDING HAS HISTORICALLY INCREASED”

Similar results were also found for deterrence-based or sharp shock approaches.²⁵⁸ On interventions such as boot camp, the results are mixed.^{65,223} In general, the ‘tough-love’ approach consistent with boot camps does not work.^{65,223} Where these approaches do show positive outcomes that is usually because of secondary social work such as education, vocational training, relationship building, and therapeutic interventions.²²³

“WHERE THEY DO SHOW POSITIVE OUTCOMES THAT IS USUALLY BECAUSE OF SECONDARY SOCIAL WORK SUCH AS EDUCATION, VOCATIONAL TRAINING, RELATIONSHIP BUILDING AND THERAPEUTIC INTERVENTIONS”

Case Study 17

The Taita Project

A report compiled by Te Puni Kōkiri describes The Taita Project, which came about following concerns raised by Taita College staff and Board members about the number of disciplinary issues the school was facing with Māori students.²⁵⁹ Approximately half of the Māori students at Taita College at the time came from gang associated families.

A restorative reintegration process was applied, a process that is more commonly used when working with prisoners that are integrating back into the community.

It was found that:

- *From 2005 to 2009 (noting that the project was initiated in 2007) there was an increase in enrolment of Māori and Pacific students coupled with a decline in European student enrolments.*
- *The number of Māori students stood down reduced from 37 to 26 between 2007 and 2008.*
- *The number of Māori students expelled reduced to zero in 2008 and exclusions reduced.*
- *The number of Māori parents at school meetings increased from roughly 15 to 103.*

Observationally it was also noted that the wearing of gang colours to school ceased and graffiti on school premises largely disappeared.

4.6. REINTEGRATION

It is important to recognise the distinction between reintegration and rehabilitation services.²⁶⁰ While rehabilitation services are interventions designed to support behavioural or attitudinal change, reintegration services are designed to mitigate challenges that offenders might face in transitioning back into the community.^{55,173,260} Reintegration services play a key role in supporting the transition of offenders from prison to community.²⁶⁰ For gang members, the challenges of reintegration can be exacerbated. For some, integration rather than reintegration into communities remains the challenge. For some always being in the margins of society means that they have always felt socially excluded.

We know that people can face a range of challenges upon release from prison including homelessness, unemployment, poverty, familial and relational tensions, and isolation.²⁶¹ The evidence suggests that reintegration, when done well, can significantly reduce reoffending.⁷⁷ Services that provide practical supports around housing, prosocial support, employment, coping and problem solving are important.^{261,262}

Rehabilitation and reintegrative efforts for people exiting prison, including those who are gang affiliated, are complex and we recognise there are significant barriers that can slow or prevent the desistance journey. The journey to desistance can involve numerous relationships for example probation officers, psychologists, programme facilitators, therapists, and spiritual guides.¹⁷³ Services are generally available within the context of an individual's sentencing. Post release, access to services can be difficult. This can present challenges for an individual who enters back into the 'real world,' with a sudden change in circumstance, amongst a community that is not always welcoming of their presence.*

Throughout the engagement process we met with a range of gang connected men and women, some of whom had experiences within the corrections system, others who did not. Where relevant, they shared some of the difficulties they had experienced both pre- and post-release. While we have not engaged in primary research, we have captured some of the key messages that we heard throughout the engagement process where people conveyed the difficulties they experienced in reintegrating. Importantly, where reintegration into prosocial lifestyles is perceived as being too difficult, the option to return to antisocial behaviours can at times seem like the only feasible option.

“WHERE REINTEGRATION INTO PROSOCIAL LIFESTYLES IS PERCEIVED AS BEING TOO DIFFICULT, THE OPTION TO RETURN TO ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOURS CAN AT TIMES SEEM LIKE THE ONLY FEASIBLE OPTION”

Table 8: An overview of what we heard throughout the engagement process from those with lived experience

What we heard	
Pre-release	For remand prisoners, access to services is limited. In many cases, access to a full range of therapeutic service requires admission of guilt. Yet some prisoners on remand, having expressed a desire for specific services, could not access them.
	For sentenced prisoners, we heard that resourcing issues meant they were unable to access desired services in the first place, or services were disrupted due to staffing.

* Therapeutic staff at Matapuna STU noted that once an individual has left the programme, they lose contact. There are ethical limitations to follow up after the programme has been completed so, unless a participant voluntarily initiates contact there are limitations as to how much knowledge they have of an individual's wellbeing and reintegration efforts.

	<p>For example, we heard an example where Corrections being short staffed meant that inmates were locked in their cells for extended periods of time which disrupted their daily routine and in some cases disrupted their access to therapeutic services.</p>
	<p>Some expressed frustration that they were only able to access services relevant to their sentencing. For example, some individuals recognised they might benefit from support for an addiction but due to sentencing conditions were restricted to anger management type interventions.</p>
	<p>We heard that in some instances, people were shifted to other prisons which disrupted their access to therapeutic services.</p>
	<p>We heard from some that imprisonment was a necessary circuit breaker that enabled them to address their offending behaviour.</p>
	<p>Where prisoners were sent to prisons outside of their locality, visits from friends and whānau became increasingly unlikely. Many felt this disrupted their ability to re-engage with the external world upon release.</p>
	<p>We heard from those with experience in maximum security units where access to services is limited*. There are not always clear pathways for inmates to transition into lower security units where they might have access to a greater range of services that would benefit their reintegration process.</p>
	<p>We heard that the choice to engage with rehabilitation and reintegration services was a personal decision often based on prior experience with such services. Access to services didn't necessarily mean an individual would embark on a journey of change unless there was a strong internal resolve to engage with the process.</p>
	<p>We heard some positive experiences of reintegration processes. One individual recalled their experience in prison where various changes allowed them to connect with their children with greater ease. Changes included ensuring visitation hours were not restricted to hours where children were at school, the introduction of whānau days, and the opportunity to carry out a home visit to cook dinner in the weeks prior to being released on parole.</p>
Post-release	<p>We heard how experiences of reintegration support varied considerably. While some people felt well supported by Corrections staff to reintegrate back into the community, others felt completely un-prepared. The development of adequate safety plans was highlighted as a key component of reintegration and in some instances, there was a felt lack of support.</p>
	<p>We heard how issues with finding a suitable parole address made the process of re-entering the community difficult. This issue is acute for individuals who are homeless, or who come from gang whānau and are limited in their ability to identify suitable housing options outside of their gang networks.</p>
	<p>For those who live rurally, we heard examples of certain addresses being denied for parole as the electronic monitoring equipment did not get adequate coverage of the area in question. This became problematic as paroling someone to an area they are unfamiliar with can make reintegration more difficult.</p>
	<p>We heard how poorly fitting parole conditions can affect the reintegration process. For example, where an individual is told not to associate with known gang members,</p>

* We understand that young Māori are often over-represented in both men and women's maximum-security units. In effect, the impact of limited access to support services is felt more acutely by that portion of the prison population.

	this can be difficult if there are familial links or, if their only support networks are gang members.
	The need to declare criminal convictions negatively affected the ability of individuals to get jobs, take out insurance, apply for rental properties and in some cases affected their potential avenues of further training/study.
	We heard that the release from prison can be quite jarring. When transitioning from a structured prison environment with therapeutic services available to them, it is difficult for some to thrive when they no longer have consistent routine, regular meals, a controlled environment, and therapeutic communities of support.
	We heard how a lack of life skills made reintegration difficult. Not being able to read, cook, set up a bank account and other relatively simple tasks felt daunting to those who had not needed to be self-reliant for significant stretches of time.
	We heard how limited prosocial opportunities post release made reintegration difficult. Faced with difficulties getting a job, paying for rent, and meeting basic needs, the temptation to return to criminal activity is heightened.

Case Study 18

Te Tuinga Whānau

First established in 1987, Te Tuinga Whānau aims to weave communities together through the provision of multiple social services. It is a registered charitable trust that offers a free social work, advocacy, information and support service to everyone. The scope of its service provision continues to expand in an attempt to meet the ever-growing need of its community.

Our team were able to visit Te Tuinga Whānau and to speak with members of their team with the particular aim of wanting to understand their Prison Reintegration and Gang Harm Reduction services.

Karl Goldsbury, a Reintegration Facilitator Coordinator shared with us some of his life experiences and his observations of the reintegration work that they carry out within the community. Their work is carried out in close relationship with Police including members of the Gang & Drug Harm Reduction Team.

*The work involved in supporting the reintegration process is wide in scope and is highly responsive to individual needs. Karl's lived and continuing experience as a long-time member of the Mongrel Mob is a significant factor that influences his ability to connect with prisoners and offer them support in their process of reintegrating back into the community. Karl notes that having the **right** people to support a prisoner to reintegrate is of key significance for an individual's journey.*

Key themes that emerged from our conversation at Te Tuinga Whānau include:

- *The need to place the right support around an individual who is reintegrating back into the community.*
- *The importance of fostering a connection between an individual and their whānau, while they are still in prison, to support a smoother transition back into the community upon release.*
- *The importance of engaging with the power of key figures within gang communities, to act as champions of change within their own communities.*
- *The need to tailor reintegration support to the specific needs of the individual, and their context.*

Christchurch Men's Prison – Matapuna Special Treatment Unit

Matapuna STU is a therapeutic community that operates within the rehabilitative programmes offered at Christchurch Men's Prison. The STU has the capacity to house up to 60 men at a time. During a recent visit to the facility by the Chief Science Advisor and team, Corrections staff noted that due to resourcing constraints, some of the beds in the 60-person unit were occupied by men that were not programme participants however, there was nowhere else to house them within the prison facility. Further, at that point in time, the STU was host to members of approximately 14 different gangs. These circumstances required close management by Corrections staff.

The treatment programme on offer at Matapuna is nine months and involves men spending 2-3 hours in therapeutic sessions, for three days a week. Upon completion of the programme, some become graduates while others may be designated as having completed the programme but with particular risks that still need to be managed. Men are also given the chance to exit the programme if, for whatever reason, they are not ready or willing to participate any longer. Men who participate in the programme are assessed as 'high risk of serious violent reoffending' but have progressed into a low security unit.*

Therapeutic staff shared that 50% of the men eligible to engage in the high intensity group psychological treatment programmes offered at Matapuna, in Christchurch Men's Prison, are deemed high security and as such cannot access programmes such as Matapuna. What's more, men who are remanded in custody prior to conviction, are unable to access therapeutic services. Despite presenting with complex needs that would benefit from robust therapeutic interventions, remand prisoners are maintained in somewhat of a limbo state while they await conviction and sentencing.

When discussing effective intervention, therapeutic staff point to various factors that have supported them in working with the highly complex needs of men housed within the facility. A therapeutic community of practice, a bicultural model of operation, having a place of belonging, and developing highly structured reintegration plans are all highlighted as significant.

A long-term insights report on imprisonment in NZ suggests there is good evidence that rehabilitation programmes that follow a Risk-Needs-Responsivity model and principles of effective intervention can reduce reoffending.⁷⁷ Programmes that are well designed can reduce reimprisonment by as much as five to ten percent and reoffending is often of reduced seriousness than earlier offending. Services delivered within therapeutic communities, such as Matapuna, tend to see the best outcomes. Further analysis will be needed as more services are implemented.

"I spent a good 40 years in and out of prison. I have 278 convictions. I left Matapuna in 2017 and that's where my convictions ended. I have tried my best to make my therapists proud. Over the years I lost who I was as a person. No one trusted me or gave a shit about me, right through prison until I was made to do Matapuna program. I got love, respect and trust. And I believe in me, and I had to BE HONEST. One more thing, I got a new family with my group and therapists. When I feel lost sometimes now, I still read my card from the guys and our therapists. Coming up to 6 years now and still have no police in my life. Honesty is the answer for me. I wish you all the best. You all are the best"

ASOTP Grad 2016 (Feedback received August 2022)

4.7. LOOKING BEYOND GANG MEMBERSHIP

Prescribing gang exit as an antidote to our current gang harms is a narrow approach. And we know that there is limited evidence for the effectiveness of gang prevention programmes in the absence of interventions that alleviate contributing social risk factors.^{41,263} We have described in section 4.2 and 4.3 the extent to which gang exit is a difficult process for an individual. Beyond that, we know that the harms experienced by and

* Throughout the engagement process we heard that returning to the general prison population following completion of therapeutic programmes such as Matapuna can be difficult. Programmes that did not require a return to the general prison population would be a useful outcome although we recognise this is complicated.

within gang communities are not unique. In that sense, understanding the drivers of harmful behaviour do not necessarily require a specific focus on gang membership although we acknowledge that gang membership might be used by some agencies as an indication of where to concentrate efforts in terms of social supports (coordinated with appropriate enforcement if needed). Looking beyond the patch and considering how we might address the harms associated with gang membership might prove more fruitful.

“LOOKING BEYOND THE PATCH AND CONSIDERING HOW WE MIGHT ADDRESS THE HARMS ASSOCIATED WITH GANG MEMBERSHIP MIGHT PROVE MORE FRUITFUL”

A public health approach

The WHO has recommended taking a public health response to the issues of violence and offending.^{*,264} While not gang specific, both violence and offending are highlighted as key themes of gang harms (see section 3). The WHO report that a health approach to any problem is an interdisciplinary and science-based response. Emphasis is placed on collective action, demonstrating that coordinated efforts from multiple sectors (health, education, justice, etc) are necessary to solve issues that are often assumed to belong with a single industry. Recognising that gang harms are not simply an enforcement issue enables us to draw upon the knowledge of various disciplines, allowing for innovation in response to complex issues.²⁶⁵ Interventions of this nature of have been employed before in international settings, such as the Boston ceasefire model, the Cincinnati initiative to reduce violence, and the Glasgow community initiative to reduce violence.^{266–268} We are also aware that local multi-agency efforts such as ROCC employ a similar approach to addressing harm in communities.

“DEMONSTRATING THAT COORDINATED EFFORTS FROM MULTIPLE SECTORS (HEALTH, EDUCATION, JUSTICE, ETC) ARE NECESSARY TO SOLVE ISSUES THAT ARE OFTEN ASSUMED TO BELONG WITH A SINGLE INDUSTRY”

Gangs have primarily been viewed as an issue of law and order, with limited consideration of the related social factors that draw people into affiliation.⁴¹ Yet, we know that gangs emerge largely from areas of deprivation, and are made up of individuals who have complex histories of trauma and maltreatment.^{42,50,269} In line with the WHO response to violence and offending, there is room to apply a health lens to gang harms.⁷⁸ In that sense, interventions can be targeted accordingly.

- Primary interventions: Addressing the root causes of gang harm[†]

* Throughout the engagement process we heard how the phrase “public health” approach risks placing the responsibility of addressing gang harms solely on the health system. The WHO description of a “public health” approach necessitates the inclusion of voices from multiple sectors to address complex issues. We have retained the “public health” naming convention although recognise that some may prefer “wellbeing,” “health,” or “collective prevention” response.

† There is bandwidth here to include early interventions that aim to prevent the flow of young people (gang connected or not) into the prison pipeline.

- Secondary interventions: Preventing gang harms before they occur
- Tertiary interventions: Responding to those who have already engaged in gang related harms.

Section 1 discusses how the definition given to gangs has the potential to narrow the framework within which gangs are considered. The temptation is often to consider gangs as purely an issue of law and order. In that instance, the main solution would be to send in law enforcement to maintain peace. Broadening the scope to consider a health type response through programmes such as ROCC allows multiple voices into the conversation.

Globally, there are various examples of how adopting a health response to the issue of violence and offending has provided useful outcomes. The formation of the Scottish Violence Reduction Unit (SVRU) is one example.^{265,270} Assuming that violence shared similar traits to an infectious disease, including that it might be passed on generationally, the SVRU took the approach of prevention.²⁷¹

The SVRU took four steps to applying the health approach:²⁶⁵

- Define the problem through the systematic collection of information and data
- Establish the causes of violence and what factors could be changed through intervention
- Design, implement and evaluate interventions
- Scale-up effective interventions to have as wide an impact as possible

Across the 2004/5 period, 137 people were murdered in a single year in Scotland.²⁶⁵ Glasgow saw a significant increase in gang activity, contributing to 41 of the 137 deaths. The WHO had declared Glasgow the most violent city in Europe and, the United Nations had branded Scotland the most violent country in the developed world.²⁷² Comparing data from the 2008/9 period to the 2017/18 period Scotland saw:

- 39% decrease in homicides
- 64% reduction in handling offensive weapons
- Hospital admissions for assault and assault with a sharp object more than halved
- 46% decrease in the reported experience of violent crime

Prevention doesn't come at the expense of enforcement

Taking a health approach includes additional voices in the conversation, but not at the expense of law enforcement. For example, following the creation of the SVRU, meetings were held with those at high risk of offending.¹²⁴ Individuals were reminded that if they continued offending, the police would continue to enforce the law. However, they were also offered support with housing, employment, relocation, and training, and given contact details that would enable them to reach out for assistance in future.

“TAKING A HEALTH APPROACH INCLUDES ADDITIONAL VOICES IN THE CONVERSATION, BUT NOT AT THE EXPENSE OF LAW ENFORCEMENT”

Addressing harms, not membership

NZ has a deeply entrenched, multi-generational gang population (see section 1.4).²⁷³ The GHIC report that gangs are, and will almost certainly continue to be, a key element of NZ's social landscape.⁵⁰ Indeed, gangs are their own form of whānau and community, possessing norms, values, processes, and practices that are

understood and generally adhered to by their members.^{15,134} Given the longevity of our gang population, the GHIC propose that there is benefit in shifting focus from preventing gang membership and growth, to addressing the underlying causes that influence the associated anti-social behaviours. Efforts to change gang behaviours would benefit from being ‘gang informed.’^{15,162}

“THE GHIC PROPOSE THAT THERE IS SOME BENEFIT IN SHIFTING FOCUS FROM PREVENTING GANG MEMBERSHIP AND GROWTH, TO ADDRESSING THE UNDERLYING CAUSES THE INFLUENCE THE ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOURS ASSOCIATED”

Case Study 20

Tūhoe Hauora

Tūhoe Hauora is located in Taneatua and provides health services largely tailored to the needs of Māori, although it is not exclusive to Māori and is willing to walk alongside anybody who needs assistance. Tūhoe Hauora developed out of a recognition that a range of statistics reported by government agencies portrayed Tūhoe, and Māori in general, negatively.³⁶ In response to these observations, Tūhoe Hauora developed a therapeutic model underpinned by mana Motuhake – the self determination of iwi, hapū and whānau.

The organisation’s strategic goals are:

- *To establish community and tribal-based health and social services*
- *To broaden the range of health and social services portfolios to meet the needs of all those who live in the community*
- *To advance the collaboration amongst health and social service providers locally, regionally and nationally*

The core business of Tūhoe Hauora is (1) Mental Health & Addiction services, (2) Social Services and (3) Health promotion.

We visited Tūhoe Hauora to gain a better understanding of the services on offer for those seeking to overcome Methamphetamine Addiction. While the service is not restricted to gang members, there are a high proportion of gang members in the community and so those seeking to access help for their addictions may also be gang members.

*Crucial to service delivery is the knowledge that **nobody exists in isolation**. The organization is whānau centred, working to address the needs of an individual and their wider whānau at the same time. When an individual approaches Tūhoe Hauora for assistance the service delivery envelopes the entire whānau, recognising that without the entire whānau being onboard, change is exceptionally difficult. While a number of the whānau whom Tūhoe Hauora has journeyed with are gang members, their needs are rarely any different to any other individual who is presenting with complex needs and the process is much the same.*

Tūhoe Hauora generally meet with whānau in their homes, rather than in the Tūhoe Hauora centre. For many whānau whom they work with, their experiences in clinical settings have been largely negative. Working with whānau in their home environment is one way of ensuring that the whānau are in charge.

Tūhoe Hauora view prevention and early intervention as crucial to the health and wellbeing of whānau. This can only be achieved by preventing whānau from entering the ‘system’ in the first place. Tūhoe Hauora demonstrates a commitment to engaging whānau at the earliest opportunity so that issues do not escalate to the point that government agencies intervene.

Case Study 21

Pou Oranga Whaiora

Funded by the Proceeds of Crime Fund, Pou Oranga Whaiora will provide a community-based whānau support service and supported accommodation facility.

The programme aims include:

- *Achieving a sustained reduction in methamphetamine harm and harm caused by the use of other substances*
- *Working in partnership with Police to support an increased focus on prevention rather than enforcement*
- *Supporting whānau to lead their own oranga to achieve Toiora*
- *Working in partnership with local health agencies and other services to strengthen pathways to wellness – mahi ā toi*

Through a series of co-design hui, the steering group came to understand some of the key desires within the community that Pou Oranga Whaiora will serve. These hui helped to inform the Model of Care Principles that Pou Oranga Whaiora aims to exemplify.

Some of its model of care service features include:

- *Indigenous kaupapa informed harm reduction approach*
- *Rapid triage, assessment and referral supported by a shared IT platform*
- *Wrap around support – Alcohol and other drug counselling, social, employment and cultural support*
- *Brief interventions, assessment, treatment planning, case management, whānau therapies, mobile assertive outreach*
- *Health referral pathway rather than justice pathway*
- *24/7 residential facility – supported accommodation facility with access to continuing care support, planned respite care including community and medical/social detox, peer support 8-12 weeks*
- *Integrated clinical and cultural network comprising hospital, community mental health, health & social providers, primary care, community and voluntary sector, government agencies*

We met with members of the Eastern Bay Iwi Provider Alliance and Bay of Plenty Police to hear more about establishment of Pou Oranga Whaiora. While the service is not targeted specifically toward gang members, we heard how there are many gang members and gang whānau that are affected by addiction. We also heard the importance of ensuring that those who come for support are not reduced to the single label of ‘gang member.’

Case Study 22

Start Well – A Prototype of the South Auckland Social Wellbeing Board

Start Well is one of a number of prototypes of the South Auckland Social Wellbeing Board (SASWB). The SASWB is a place-based initiative, established in 2016. It involves 13 agencies, partnering with community and providers to support positive life course outcomes for children, tamariki and whānau. The focus of the SASWB is on enriching wellbeing outcomes for children aged 0-5 years and their whānau. It is a locally-led enabler for social and health integration and collaborative ways of working. The SASWB learns from prototypes to drive system change at national, regional and local levels, and has a focus on developing new, cross-agency ways of working to meet the needs and aspirations of whānau experiencing multi-generational disadvantage.²⁷⁴ There is a focus on employing holistic approaches, with whānau leading.

The Start Well prototype, established in 2017, brings together professionals from various backgrounds such as nurses and social workers to provide a relationship based model of care for young mothers and their whānau, beginning in pregnancy and continuing until their children are aged at least five. It is a whole-of-whānau life-course approach to health and social support. In its five years of operation, staff recall that

there has been a continuous learning approach in order to provide the support that matters most to whānau and whānau-led outcomes.

Feedback from whānau indicates that they have had positive experiences and appreciate the holistic approach of working with the wider family.²⁷⁴ There was a sense of feeling supported and whānau expressed appreciation for the ongoing connection that enabled them to seek support when new situations arose that they needed assistance to navigate.

There have been significant positive impacts for whānau, including safer homes, becoming violence-free, confidence to seek the right support at the right time (determined by whānau), reduced substance use, greater emotional 'bandwidth' for parenting, and attaining educational and employment goals. Whānau are consistently encouraged to explore pathways for change, and feel empowered as a result. This allows them to feel a greater sense of control over their future, and the future of their children and for future generations.²⁷⁵

The highly relational model of care allows Start Well to meaningfully engage with whānau who may typically be considered 'hard to reach', journeying with them on a transformative change pathway.

4.8. EFFECTIVE EVALUATION WILL HELP TO SUPPORT THOSE MOST IN NEED OF HELP BY PROVIDING THEM WITH THE BEST INTERVENTIONS

Evaluation needs to be embedded across the whole process

A 2022 overview by SWA found that the evidence on the evaluation outcomes from a range of identified programmes that work with high-needs young people is mixed.³² While the report does not focus on programmes that work specifically with gang affiliated people, we recognise that the service is likely targeted at overlapping cohorts.

The SWA examined 35 programmes, searching for evaluation/impact studies in the public domain or in academic journals. Of the 35 programmes identified by SWA, only 15 appeared to have any form evaluation or monitoring report published. Several available evaluations were process evaluations, employing qualitative methods that did not attempt to measure programme outcomes. Only 10 evaluations had any focus on outcomes for participants. Many of these evaluations were retrospective surveys of clients or involved pre-post comparisons only. Only four of the evaluations compared outcomes for participants relative to a control group.*

“OF THE 35 PROGRAMMES IDENTIFIED BY SWA, ONLY 15 APPEARED TO HAVE ANY FORM OF EVALUATION OR MONITORING REPORT PUBLISHED”

Evaluation is tricky

Prevention and intervention programmes that work to minimise harmful behaviours and promote better outcomes within whānau and communities could benefit from data that describe programme outcomes. We heard from various community level organisations that evaluation presented a complex issue.²⁷⁶ For many service providers, ongoing funding was dependent on the ability to produce evaluations describing outcomes and benefits. Yet, resourcing to carry out evaluation was not always easily available, nor was evaluation an easy task. Further, we heard of perverse outcomes where reporting requirements narrowed service provision

* While many of the programmes were relatively new, rendering evaluation not yet feasible, numerous programmes had committed to future evaluation.

to meet specific metrics, when broader provisions may have been more successful. It is hard to capture in a standardised reporting framework where an organisation partners with an individual and their whānau to support their needs in a customised way to enable them to attain better health and wellbeing outcomes. As individuals do not exist in complete isolation from whānau or community, reporting solely on an individual basis, excluding the needs of the wider family and community, makes these reporting metrics of limited value.

And a lack of evaluation does not mean that an intervention is ineffective

Throughout the engagement process we saw that service providers take great care in delivering effective service to communities. And we recognise that various contextual and cultural considerations have meant that service provision has been adapted to best suit community needs. The flexibility of service providers to meet the needs of their communities is admirable and, anecdotally, sees positive outcomes.

A strong evidence base is essential

The search for ‘what works’ interrogates any given programme with a focus on an outcome (or outcomes) of interest to determine the programme’s impact. We know that evaluation has the potential to provide significant information to decision makers and policy writers. Outcome evaluation has the potential to inform on programme efficacy, and the extent to which a treatment group might be expected to exhibit benefits. One example is the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP), a nonpartisan public research group who are directed by the Washington State legislature to identify “evidence-based” policies.²⁷⁷ The WSIPP benefit-cost model estimates the dollar value of offering a particular programme or intervention to an individual. Estimates reflect the difference between a person who does receive the programme and a person who does not. While there are limitations in that the WSIPP benefit-cost model cannot monetise certain programmes, there is strength in a model that uses a consistent framework for all initiatives (where possible).

Keeping in mind our unique NZ context, a programme being effective in an overseas context does not mean it can be copy-pasted to NZ with the same efficacy. While a lack of evaluation does not make an intervention ineffective, the absence of formal validation creates difficulty when trying to inform the policy domain on what works best.²⁷⁸ There is a need to increase our collective investment in learning what works and what makes the most difference to whānau, tamariki and young people. Evidence briefs compiled by the MoJ are a useful starting point to guide policy makers around interventions that do (or do not) work, as are earlier reports by OPMCSA authored by Ian Lambie.^{41,104,152,260,279} And, at a programme level, various evaluations have been carried out that are found in the public domain.^{32,92,164,204,276} Effective, culturally informed, and methodically tested evaluation is an important tool for informing decision making.

Key messages

- *Various formal exit strategies have been implemented in international contexts with mixed outcomes.*
- *Gang disengagement and exit is best described as a process, rather than an event.*
- *Barriers to gang exit are not an issue unique to NZ, although our unique gang context should be considered when seeking to establish any formal exit scheme.*
- *We recognise that a number of our NZAG communities formed in response to state intervention. As such, a formal exit strategy may be viewed by some as another form of state intervention.*
- *A specific focus on gang membership and gang disengagement will be insignificant if the social conditions in which gangs exist and operate are not addressed.*
- *Public pressures to ‘crack down’ on gangs have historically driven the development of ‘gang laws.’ In hindsight, many of these gang laws were applied to non-gang members more than gang members.*
- *Efforts to ban patches have been implemented in the past, both in NZ and in international settings. In Australia, a decrease in public violence and visibility resulted, however, there is a high likelihood that a public ban simply pushed illegal activity underground.*

- *Taking a 'zero-tolerance' approach runs the risk of distancing Police from the communities they serve, leading to a host of other issues. Strengthening internal gang cohesion, reinforcing anti-social attitudes and displacing offending are potential outcomes.*
- *There is room to apply a health lens to gang harms.*
- *Taking a health approach includes additional voices in the conversation, but not at the expense of law enforcement.*
- *Delivery of interventions to address specific harms provides scope to address problem behaviour more broadly than gang communities.*
- *While intervention methods to address harms may be universal, gaining trust and access to gang whānau to deliver interventions may require targeted effort.*
- *Prevention efforts that focus solely on the individual will have limited impact while the social and community factors conducive to gang formation and criminality go unaddressed.*
- *We know that focussing on the wellbeing of children and keeping them from offending in the first place is one of the most effective tools we have to prevent crime and harm. While we know that not all children who offend go on to become gang members, there are overlapping risk factors.*
- *There is growing evidence to suggest that rehabilitation programmes that follow the Risk-Needs-Responsivity model and principles of effective intervention are conducive to reducing reoffending.*
- *Culturally adapted interventions are most effective when they are holistic and address multiple risk factors, involve whānau and the wider community and use culturally informed personnel.*
- *Effective, culturally informed, and methodically tested evaluation is an important tool for informing decision making.*

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

Gangs represent a complex segment of society. They are not monolithic and there is a need to recognise different types of gangs and corresponding behaviours. While there is a broad literature base to help understand reasons for gang existence and driving forces for membership, the harms experienced by and within gang cohorts are not unique. In that sense, interventions to address harmful behaviours would likely provide greater social benefit than targeting gangs alone.

We know that the harms experienced by, to and within gang communities are vast, and that addressing these harms presents its own complexity. Prominent themes that emerged from the research included the social harms of poverty, marginalisation, and discrimination. There is a recognition that family violence, criminal offending (including violent offending and participation in the methamphetamine trade), and the recruitment of new members perpetuate ongoing cycles of harm. These harms are not exhaustive, however they emerged as prominent themes both in the literature and throughout the engagement process.

Early intervention delivered within trusting, respectful relationships and that incorporates the wider whānau will help to support sustained change. We know that taking action with children and young people (up to 25 years) for the purposes of developmental crime prevention can make a significant difference in life course outcomes. And specific to NZ, interventions must be culturally informed and adapted. We can do much better here.

We know that for some, gangs are a highly political issue. And we recognise that there are strongly held views within our communities on the best mechanisms to address gang harms. Addressing the harms associated with gang membership will not be quick. Short term suppression interventions might provide immediate outcomes, but medium- to long-term intervention and prevention strategies are required to build the society that we want. Addressing gang related harms cannot be left purely to Police. Multi-agency collaboration is essential, and it is equally important that interventions to facilitate behavioural change in gang communities are informed by the communities themselves.

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ANNEX 1 – TERMS OF REFERENCE

Gangs have long been a flashpoint for the media, the public, and politicians, with the extent of harm caused by them often over-stated.² Against this backdrop, recent years have seen an increase in their association with transnational organised crime.⁸⁵ In 2022, then Prime Minister, Jacinda Ardern commented on the changing nature of gangs and gang formation after a spate of alleged gang-related shootings, reporting a surge in membership and influx of 501 deportees.²⁸⁰ “The way that organised crime operates is changing and we have to change with it.” In 2023, gang related criminal activity remains of concern and there is a growing understanding that in NZ gangs are forging larger global networks.^{87,281}

A recent snapshot of NZ gang membership supports the idea that gang numbers have grown continuously since 2010 with figures from the NGL estimating 7,722 gang members in NZ as of April 2022,³ although this list is not designed as an accurate census of gang membership. Factors that lead to an individual being added to the NGL, such as wearing a patch, are much easier to verify than factors that lead to an individual being removed. While the NGL serves as a helpful indicator, figures should be interpreted with caution.^{3,282} That aside, the 2020 Corrections volume report shows that gang affiliated prisoners in NZ made up 32% of the sentenced prison population in 2020 (total sentenced prison population 5,977), an increase from 17% in 2010 (total sentenced prison population 6,835).⁷⁹

Despite the high degree of media and political attention received by gangs, there is surprisingly little known about them. Armon Tamatea notes that a poor understanding of gangs hinders the ability to develop a theory of gangs which would help to guide an appropriate response.¹⁵ When seeking to minimise harms associated with gangs in NZ the context within which gangs are formed and subsequently sustained needs to be understood. A 2021 study exploring the spatial risk factors associated with gang membership in NZ cites various complex and overlapping domains that influence gang membership including, individual characteristics, family factors, peer groups, schooling and truancy, and community conditions.⁴² Pathways to gang disengagement and eventual exit are similarly complex where gang members are often presented with challenges such as employment difficulties, broken familial relationships, threats of violence, and mental health challenges.

“A POOR UNDERSTANDING OF GANGS HINDERS THE ABILITY TO DEVELOP A THEORY OF GANGS WHICH WOULD HELP TO GUIDE AN APPROPRIATE RESPONSE”

A recent restricted report by NZ’s GHIC carried out a review of international gang exit strategies.¹⁷¹ The review highlighted strengths, weaknesses opportunities and threats of each exit strategy. A second report on factors which influence individuals to join gangs is pending. These provide a solid platform for our work.

We build on this work by looking in more detail at the academic and grey literature to understand the factors that facilitate gang joining and gang exit, the complexities of harm experienced by and within gang communities, and the extent to which various types of intervention might support a more effective response to gang harms in our communities.

ANNEX 2 – AOTEAROA GANG HISTORY

1950s

NZ's gang landscape has certainly been influenced by international movements. In the 1950s, the imitation of Anglo-American working-class youth trends saw the emergence of 'bodgies' and 'milk bar cowboys.'²

"Bodgies," their female counterparts "Widgies" and, "Milk Bar Cowboys" who rode motorcycles were identified as a social concern in the 1950s.⁷³ Toward the end of the 1950s two reports were written, each with a focus on the youth gang problem of the day. One report (the Levett) report, focused on gangs in Auckland while the other (the Green report) focused on gangs in Wellington.^{283,284}

The contents of both reports suggest that 'gang activity' was generally in line with typical youthful behaviour of the time. This included listening to rock and roll, going to movies and attending drinking parties where drunkenness, disorderly conduct and sexual offences may result. In attempting to document the nature of gangs at the time, both studies shared similarities. The reports indicate that the gangs of the 1950s were largely made up of young males from poor, working class families, and were largely of European descent. The Green report also highlights how gang youths in Wellington were largely from broken homes (43%).⁷³

1960s

In the decade prior to the Second World War, 90% of the Māori population lived rurally.²⁸⁵ Ranginui Walker describes how the war served as a catalyst, compelling Māori to leave their rural homes, in favour of the job opportunities in the urban centres. This was facilitated by various Government interventions such as The Manpower Act (1944). Following the Second World War, NZ experienced an economic boom that was in part responsible for an uptick in internal migration that saw more Māori continuing to migrate to urban centres.⁷ By 1966, roughly 44% of Māori lived in urban centres.²⁸⁶ Within the same period, the strong economy and high labour demands attracted workers from a variety of neighbouring Pacific Island nations.⁷³ By 1966 the Pacific Island population in NZ had grown to over 26,000 people, an increase from approximately 2,000 people just two decades prior.²⁸⁶

The 1960s saw the first Hells Angels (Motorcycle Club) chapter established in Auckland. The loose, informal style of the incipient youth gangs in the 1950s was phased out, with clubs adopting a structured organisation, clear rules, leadership, and patches.* Various outlaw clubs formed. Gilbert describes how many adopted an openly rebellious method of operation.² Distinct from the motorcycle clubs, street gangs such as the Mongrel Mob were also established. By the end of the 1960s, in response to the 'urban drift', the Mongrel Mob evolved to the point that a large majority of its members were Māori. A similar change in ethnic makeup occurred with many other gangs throughout the country.

* This internal club structure is maintained by many of our Motorcycle Clubs and Street gangs to the present day

1970s

Meek describes how, throughout the 1970s, gangs sporadically came to the attention of the public, often in relation to intergang conflict or due to offending by individual members.⁶⁰ However, toward the end of the decade, the public perception of gangs shifted. Where gangs had once been perceived as an issue of juvenile crime, they were now perceived as a significant threat to law and order.

The increase of Māori and Pacific Islanders settling into low-income city areas changed the make-up of urban NZ. When the economic shock of the 1970s hit, the nation's blue-collar workers were hit hardest. Māori and Pacific Island peoples were significantly affected. The overlapping factors of social dislocation, economic hardship and marginalisation created an ideal environment for the formation of urban gangs in NZ.^{7,42,285}

1980s

The 1980s saw significant unemployment. While previously gang membership had been a transient life stage for young people, increased difficulty finding legitimate work meant that gang members were maintain their membership for longer periods of time. Gangs thus experienced a membership maturing in both age and organisation. A 1981 police report estimated that there were at least 80 different gangs or gang chapters in NZ, made up of approximately 2300 individuals. This number would increase to 5,356 gang members and associates by 1989.³⁹ It is worth noting that the reported numbers of gang membership are frequently contested for their accuracy, nonetheless, the implication is that there appeared to be an increase in gang membership throughout the country.

Toward the 1980s and 1990s the formation of skinhead gangs came to national attention.² The economic difficulties of the 1980s once again hit those in the lowest socioeconomic communities the hardest and this was generally reflected by a largely Māori and Pacific demographic. However, as economic hardship worsened in the early 1990s the impact became far reaching and urban Pākehā communities were also stung. With disruptions such as unemployment, and facing dire social and economic futures, a sense of alienation crept into Pākehā youth.

Throughout the 1980s gangs became increasingly interested in making money. The most well-known historical intervention is likely the Group Employment Liaison Services (GELS).^{2,29} The GELS was established after the 1981 Committee on Gangs suggested that various social factors contributed to an individual joining a gang, one significant factor being unemployment. GELS never aimed to eliminate gangs. The schemes intent was simply to encourage gang members to work together with the belief that prosocial engagement would result in crime reduction. While there was an observed increase in prosocial employment and a corresponding decrease in intergang conflict, a change in government coupled with a handful of significant gang incidents resulted in the GELS initiative ending after only two years.²

1990s

By the 1990s, the perception of the public had shifted once more. Many assumed that gangs dominated the profit-driven crime and drug market within NZ (though, it is important to note that this assertion of gangs controlling or dominating the market has been challenged on various occasions). In addition to the change in public perception, high profile crimes continued, an example being the 1996 murder of Christopher Crean by Black Power members before he was due to testify against them in court on serious assault charges.

Looking beyond the patched gang scene, the 1990s brought with it growing concerns over bandana wearing youth groups dressed like US gangs and referring to themselves with names such as the Tongan Crip Gang (TCG). As many of the youth gangs adopted acronyms for their gang name, Police frequently referred to them as 'ABC' gangs.⁶⁵ This new style of street gang appeared heavily influenced by American street gang culture, hip-hop culture and Hollywood movies (such as *Colors* or *Boyz n the Hood*). While these youthful gangs attracted some attention during the 1990s and first half of the 2000s, it was only in 2006 that they became seen as a serious issue.

2000s

October 2005 marked the first killing related to the LA style street gangs, after which a further nine associated deaths occurred Auckland in 2006 alone. Like the gangs of the 1950s and 1960s, most of these youth gangs had little organisational structure and tended to diffuse as quickly as they formed. However, this was not the case for all ABC gangs; for example, the Killer Beez maintained an ongoing membership that persists to the present day. More recent reporting indicates 7,722 individuals registered on the NGL (as of April 2022). This reflects an increase from 4,361 in February of 2016 although of course, figures should always be interpreted with some caution.³

In more recent years, the Australian Federal Government has attempted to tackle outlaw biker groups in light of their contribution to various social harms. Through its visa cancellation legislation, the Australian government effectively facilitated the export of Australian outlaw biker clubs to NZ.²⁸⁷ Motorcycle clubs such as the Rebels established in NZ as early as 2011, patching over several of the Tribesman motorcycle clubs with membership further supplemented by the Australian deportation policies. And some motorcycle clubs such as the Comancheros and the Mongols had no presence in NZ prior to the visa cancellation legislation.²⁸⁸ The presence of the Australian outlaw motorcycle clubs here by way of the Australian deportation has naturally evoked various response from motorcycle clubs and gangs in Aotearoa NZ.²⁸⁹

ANNEX 3 – GANG THEORY

Various theoretical frameworks exist that are useful to understand both why gangs exist and why individuals might choose to join. The literature highlights various risk and protective factors.

Importantly, while the international literature provides a useful baseline for understanding gangs, much of our unique NZ context requires further understanding. To the best of our knowledge, there is no NZ-specific theory to describe gang formation and membership. Further, while much of the international literature describes gang membership as a largely youthful phenomenon, there is room to gain a better understanding of our NZAG demographic which can span multiple generations (see Figure 5).

Theoretical frameworks of gangs

Researchers have established various frameworks and theories to understand gangs. These can be described at a macro-level with theories such as Interactional or Social Disorganisation to explain *why gangs exist*.^{14,290} Frameworks can also be described at the micro-level to describe *why an individual might join*. Some of these factors are summarised in Table 9. It is important to note that these theories are limited in their application to our NZ context given their establishment in international social and cultural contexts. Further, application of these theories in the NZ context should marry these considerations with structural factors, ensuring resilience to organised crime and the social drivers that feed gang recruitment is built into our communities, environments, and systems.

Table 9: Various theories to describe the pathway to gang membership

<i>Theory</i>	<i>Description</i>
Interactional Theory	Interactional theory was developed by Thornberry to explain delinquent behaviour. ²⁹¹ At different stages in life, different priorities will result. In early adolescence the priority tends to be family; in middle adolescence it is school and peer groups, and in adulthood the priority tends back toward family and conventional activities. Interactional theory suggests behaviour is a part of the developmental process. As youth interact with people and places, their behaviour is inevitably informed by these interactions. Applying this theory, gang membership would be a result of being involved in negative peer relationships, having weak relationships, poor structural environments and existing in an environment where crime is prevalent. ¹²¹
Developmental Model of Gang Involvement	Howell and Egley effectively continued the work of Thornberry and developed a theoretical model which specifies four distinct developmental stages in the pathway to delinquency and eventual gang membership. ²⁹² The life course model of gang involvement is based on repeated findings from longitudinal studies of gang involvement. The authors identified that the presence of risk factors across multiple developmental domains – <i>individual, family, peer, school, and neighbourhood</i> experiences – increased the likelihood of future gang involvement. Their theoretical framework spans four distinct developmental stages; preschool, school entry, childhood, and adolescence. Importantly, the model does not explain why gangs form <i>in</i> communities. Nor does it describe the escalation and de-escalation of gang behaviours such as violence and delinquency.

Social Disorganization Theory	This theory describes how neighbourhood conditions increase the likelihood of crime and delinquency. ²⁹³ In short, crime is more likely when conditions make control of public behaviour more difficult. Conditions include poverty, weak social networks, residential mobility, and ethnic heterogeneity. Social disorganisation generally exists in areas of economic instability, leading to a breakdown in families and schooling. In these areas, gang involvement and activity can be more prevalent. ²⁹⁰
Multiple Marginalization Theory	Multiple marginality describes how urban and minority populations are destabilized by various societal forces. For example, lack of employment, poor living conditions, poverty, and family and community stressors. ²⁹⁴ There are many factors acting outside of an individual's control that can make it seem as though there is no way out. In that context, a gang may seem like an enticing pathway out of an otherwise narrow set of life course options.
Strain Theory	Strain theory describes how living in poverty causes strain due to the perceived inability to achieve the typical picture of success. ²⁹⁵ In this context, people turn to crime knowing that they cannot achieve 'successes' with the employment options available to them. Where gangs exist in an area, they provide a means to achieve these otherwise unobtainable goals. ²⁹⁰
Social Learning Theory	Social learning theory suggests that people exhibit behaviours they have learned through observing role models such as family. ²⁹⁵ The theory assumes that delinquent behaviour is a learned behaviour and as such, if young people interact with peers displaying anti-social tendencies, they are more likely to adopt the same behaviours. ^{291,295}
Systems Theory	Systems theory describes how gangs can have an internal hierarchy that resembles a family network. ²⁹⁵ For this reason, gangs can serve as a replacement family for at-risk young people. ²⁹⁰
Social Control Theory	Social control theory describes how delinquent behaviour is observed more in communities that lack social and cultural limitations over human behaviour. ²⁹¹ From this standpoint, crime is likely to occur when the bonds between people and society are weak. The literature describes how a strong attachment to school, family, and community are essential for a community to be successful. ²⁹⁵ In the absence of these strong attachments, a young person might prefer not attending school if alternative means exist to make money. A gang may become an attractive option at this point. ²⁹⁰ Self-control theory is an extension of Social Control Theory which states that youth who are lacking in self-control are more likely to be involved in peer delinquency and criminality.
Street Capital Theory	Street capital provides a means to measure, accredit and exchange types of capital in a social field. ²⁹⁶ In 'street life,' street capital is premium and there is imperative to build up reputation/status and to and protect this. Existing within a gang community provides a means to build and maintain street capital.

The gang theories described in Table 9 are not an exhaustive list. It is important to note these theories are from international sources, and as such, will be based on observations of gang communities in particular cultural contexts. We heard throughout the engagement process that it is important to consider the evidence base within our unique NZ context. We also heard that while there is value in the research, the only *gang experts* include those with real, lived experiences within gang environments.

Risk and protective factors

We cannot predict whether an individual will join a gang or not. However, various risk factors* are identified in the literature which serve as indicators of negative life-course outcomes (see Table 10). Risk factors can help to determine the pathways some children and young people might take when they become involved in delinquent peer groups and gangs. However, risk factors on their own do not cause youth to join gangs.²⁹⁷

“IT IS IMPORTANT TO CONSIDER THE EVIDENCE BASE WITHIN OUR UNIQUE NZ CONTEXT”

Risk factors function in a cumulative and interconnected fashion. For example, an individual may present with the cognitive and learning difficulties categorised in Table 10 as an individual level risk factor, yet this may be an outcome from exposure to other risk factors that sit within other domains. The larger the number of risk factors, the greater the risk of eventual gang involvement.²⁹⁸ A brief overview is captured in Table 10 with additional notes in consideration of our NZ context.^{121,292,295,299–302}

“RISK FACTORS FUNCTION IN A CUMULATIVE FASHION. THE LARGER THE NUMBER OF RISK FACTORS, THE GREATER THE RISK OF EVENTUAL GANG INVOLVEMENT”

Table 10: An overview of developmental domains and risk factors for future gang involvement

<i>Domain</i>	<i>Risk Factors</i>
Community/Social Environment Risk Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Living in an area with a heavy gang presence• Lack of neighbourhood safety• Neighbourhood disorganisation• Community poverty/disadvantage/inequality• High neighbourhood crime and arrest rate
Peer Group Risk Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Availability of cannabis (and other social hazards, alcohol, methamphetamine, etc)• Victimisation by peers• Lack of prosocial peer networks• Association with aggressive or antisocial peers• Association with gang members
School Risk Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Low attachment or investment in school• Poor school performance• Frequent school transitions• Truancy, absences, suspensions, expulsions• Poorly defined school rules and expectations

* We recognise that the utilisation of risk factors is problematic for some, presenting an individualistic focus that often ignores historical processes and policies that maintain the current economic and social inequities.³¹¹ For example, School Risk Factors do not fully articulate the impact of institutional racism in school settings, do not capture that some schools are better positioned to invest in poverty-stricken students than others and, that poor performance in schools can be a symptom of educational delivery and curriculum.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labelling of students by staff/teachers
Family Risk Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of secure attachment to primary caregiver • Lack of parental involvement/supervision • Lack of parental discipline • Low parental education • Proviolent parenting attitudes • Family violence • Low family income/financial stress • Having gang involved family members • Antisocial parents and/or siblings • Neglect
Individual Risk Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hyperactivity • Cognitive and learning difficulties • Mental health problems • Early and persistent non-compliant behaviour • Lack of social skills • Lack of empathy • Low self esteem • Experiencing abuse and neglect • Exposure to violence • Alcohol or drug abuse • Neurodiversity

It is also important to consider protective factors* which are often the opposites of identified risk factors.²⁹⁹ For example, where family violence or early exposure to drug use might present a risk factor, the absence of family violence or access to illicit substances might serve as a protective factor. These are the positive factors in a young person’s life that can help to dissuade them from joining a gang. Risk factors can interact with protective factors to the extent that a young person is kept from adopting delinquent behaviours or participating in anti-social peer groups.²⁹⁷ A range of protective factors are summarised in Table 11.^{127,299,303–305}

Table 11: An overview of developmental domains and corresponding protective factors from gang membership

<i>Domain</i>	<i>Protective Factors</i>
Family protective factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong attachment to family • High level of parental supervision • Positive relationship with a parent of the same sex • Positive role models • Stable family environment (including absence of family violence, financial stability, etc)
School protective factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High investment in school • High attachment to school and school staff • Environment of belonging and acceptance among peers and staff • Positive role models
Peer and Community/Social Environment Protective Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive/prosocial peer influence • High involvement and attachment to local community • After school activities involvement

Much like the frameworks theoretical frameworks identified inTable 9, the risk and protective factors described in the literature are drawn from international contexts and as such will be informed by different social and cultural contexts. While these provide useful guidance, further understanding of risk and protective factors in our NZ context would be useful to guide intervention efforts.

“POSITIVE FACTORS IN A YOUNG PERSON’S LIFE CAN HELP TO DISSUADE THEM FROM JOINING A GANG”

* Throughout the engagement process we heard that cultural identity and connection to whakapapa served as significant protective factor. We acknowledge the significance of cultural identity and connectedness however to the best of our knowledge there are no theoretical risk or protective factors that describe our unique cultural context. As such we have been unable to reference an academic source to affirm the protective nature of cultural identity and connection.

ANNEX 4 – LEGISLATION

Table 12: An overview of legislative changes introduced in NZ during the 1990s to ‘tackle gangs’⁶¹

Legislation	Details of change
<i>The Harassment Bill (1997)</i>	The law would make it an offence to “harass another person so that the person fears for his or her safety or the safety of members of his or her family.”
<i>Amendments to the Crimes Act (1961)</i>	Created new offence of “participation in a criminal gang,” where a criminal gang was defined as “three persons having previously committed or attempted to commit three or more serious offences.”
	Definition of “organised criminal enterprise” amended to reduce the number of people who need to be involved in an enterprise from six to three. This had the effect of extending Police powers to intercept private communications.
	Amendments made to make interception warrants available for the offence of money laundering by members of an organised criminal enterprise.
	Amendments made to certain offences relating to perverting the course of justice.
	Amendments made so that serious violent offences were punishable by seven years imprisonment or more, in certain circumstances.
	Amendment sought to extend powers relating to vehicles stopped, allowing Police to search vehicles in a wider range of situations; to require a person to supply his or her date of birth; and to arrest without warrant for breach of section.
<i>Amendments to the Criminal Justice Act (1985)</i>	Judges given discretion to impose non-association orders when sentencing offenders for periods of twelve months or less.
	A court’s power to impose non-associating conditions would be increased so that non-associating conditions could last for longer periods.
<i>Amendments to the Local Government Act (1974)</i>	Amendment sought to replace section 695A, a section dealing with gang fortifications and allowing for their removal under certain circumstances. Changes broadened the grounds on which removal orders could be made.
<i>Amendments to the Misuse of Drugs Act (1975)</i>	Amendment sought to widen the range of situations where a warrant could be obtained. Importantly, such warrants could be obtained in relation to dealing in or cultivating cannabis.
<i>Amendments to the Summary Offences Act (1981)</i>	New offences created would make it an offence for a person to habitually associate with violent or drug offenders when it

	could reasonably be inferred that the association would lead to the commission of crime.
	Amendment sought to Section 21 so that stopping, confronting, or accosting a person in a public place was added as a further category to the list of behaviour deemed to be intimidation.
	Amendments sought to Section 21 so that the <i>mens rea</i> element was reduced. Offenders only needed the knowledge that their behaviour was 'likely to reasonably cause' a person to be frightened or intimidated.
	Amendment sought to increase the level of fines for most of the offences incorporated under the Act.
<i>Amendments to the Telecommunications Act (1987)</i>	Amendments sought to regulate the obtaining of call-associated data obtained through the use of telephone analysers or by other technology.

Table 13: Details of an omnibus bill announced in 2022 to address harm caused by criminal activity including gangs

Legislation	Proposed changes
<i>Amendments to Crimes Act (1961)</i>	Amendments sought to include a new offence of discharging a firearm with intent to intimidate.
<i>Amendments to Land Transport Act (1998)</i>	Amendments sought to expand the powers of law enforcement officers to seize and impound vehicles in response to dangerous, reckless, and aggravated careless driving.
<i>Amendments to Search and Surveillance Act (2012)</i>	Amendments sought to provide a warrant power to search for and seize weapons during a gang conflict.
	Amendments sought to provide power to seize cash found in suspicious circumstances and believe to be over \$10,000.
<i>Amendments to Anti-Money Laundering and Countering Financing of Terrorism Act (2009)</i>	Amendments sought to prohibit cash transactions over a specified value for certain high-value goods.