

[AB 943](#) (Assemblymember Ash Kalra) Breaking Down the “Other” Act

Problem

The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) [publishes data points](#) monthly that provides the number of people currently in the department’s custody, people admitted, released and paroled. Data points that are public are broken up into four categories in terms of ethnicity: Black, White, Hispanic and Others. Common examples of ethnicity under the “Others” category are American Indian, Asian, and Hawaiian/Pacific Islander. This category also includes individuals who did not report their ethnicity. As of November 2022, there are currently 95,793 people in CDCR’s custody, and 6,246 of those are under the “Other” category, making it difficult for the public to learn how many Asian Pacific Islanders and Indigenous people are in the California prison system.

Putting Asian Pacific Islanders and Indigenous people under the “Other” category has three main issues.

First, without accurate data, communities are unable to identify program gaps that exist in the prison system. Following the state’s commitment to close more prisons to reduce the state’s prison population, there must be sufficient programs by the department and community-based organizations to provide in-prison and re-entry programs that fit the needs of these individuals. Culturally competent programs are critical for people in the prison system to heal, rehabilitate and reenter society successfully. **Second, disaggregating data and making it available can help better inform public opinion and policy.** Better data will help researchers and community-based organizations better understand the needs of people in the system, and actively create services on the ground to serve the community. For example, disaggregated data from the [San Francisco Juvenile Probation Department](#) shows that while Samoan youth represent 0.56 percent of the county’s population, [they made up 5 percent of the county’s Juvenile Hall population](#). With accurate data, the community and the state can provide more well-rounded service programs to ensure all community members can thrive. **Third, under-reporting and not-reporting the number of APIs and Indigenous people erase and diminish their existence and experiences.** Although APIs make up a small portion of the total prison population, [reports have shown that](#) the number of incarcerated Asian men in state prisons rose by 7 percent from 2010-2019 and the number Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander men in state prisons rose by 44%. Missing and inaccurate data leads to further oppression and fortifies institutional bias in our policy and state system.

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According to CDCR’s website, ethnicity is self-reported by individuals in the system who choose from a list of 28 ethnicity types. However, it is unknown which 28 ethnicities individuals can choose from. This bill directs the department to begin breaking up the “other” category of its population data points to use separate categories for major Asian and Pacific Islander groups along with American Indian and Alaska Native people, and making that data public.