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Hon. Kelvin Davis
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23 April 2020

Dear Minister,

Open Letter: urgent release of official records on prison lockdown hours

I am writing on behalf of **1337 people** who, in just 48 hours, have added their names to the call for the urgent release of "lockdown" hours in our prisons.

Thank you for your response to my letter on the 17th of April 2020. However to date, no official records on prison lockdown hours have been released.

We appreciate that Corrections is working hard to prevent COVID-19 from entering or spreading in correctional facilities in order to protect the right to health for prisoners and staff. Our concerns remain however regarding the reports from different people and organisations that prisoners are being held well over 22 hours on lockdown.

Solitary confinement is defined as the confinement of prisoners for 22 hours or more a day without meaningful human contact. Human rights standards that New Zealand has agreed to specify that solitary confinement of vulnerable groups, or prolonged solitary confinement is still prohibited, even during a national emergency.

Releasing the data on prison lockdown hours would be a simple way for the public and civil society organisations to be reassured that human rights are indeed being upheld in New Zealand prisons during the response to COVID-19 and enable organisations like Amnesty International to verify any discrepancies.

Therefore, we reiterate our urgent call for:

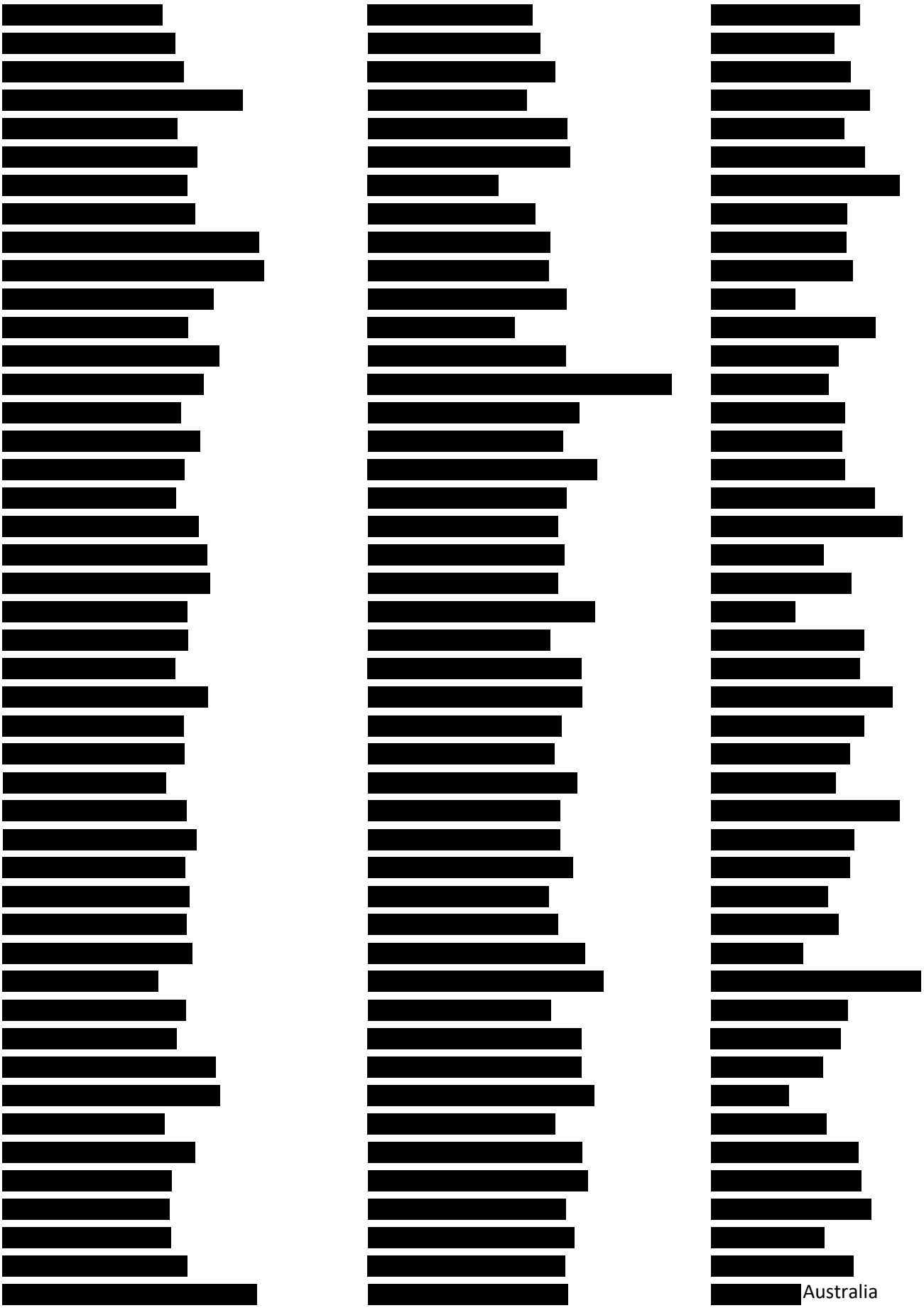
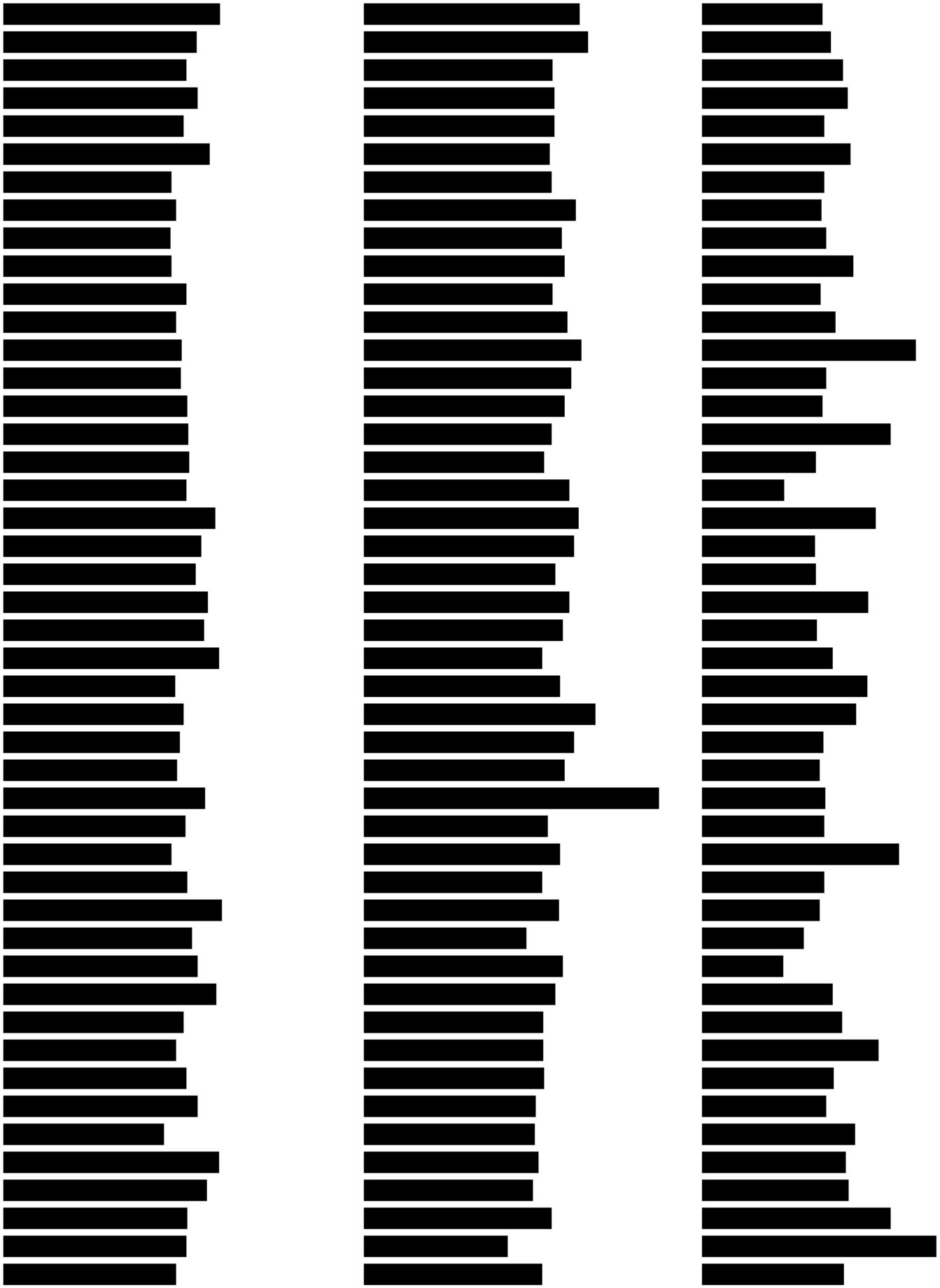
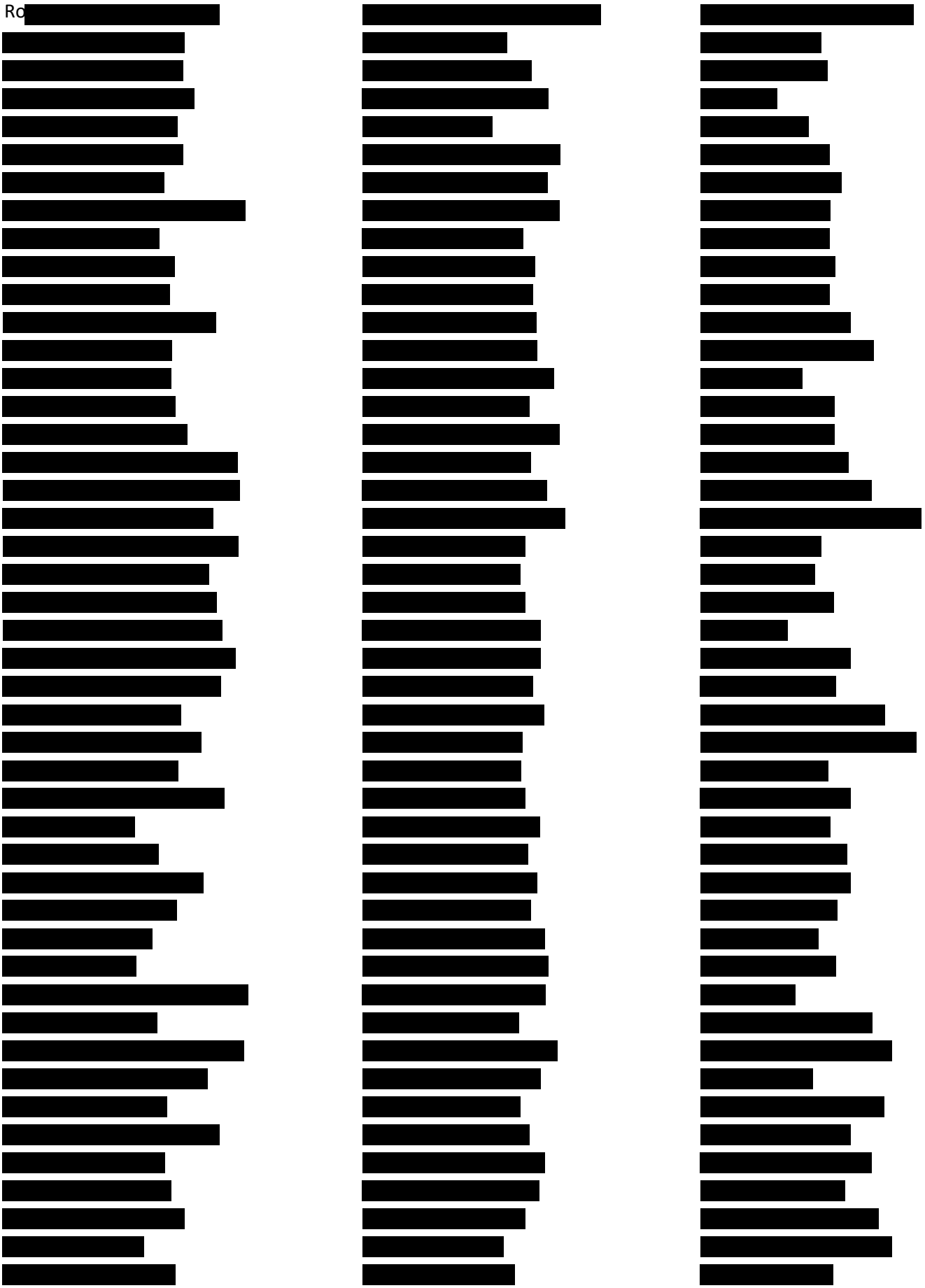
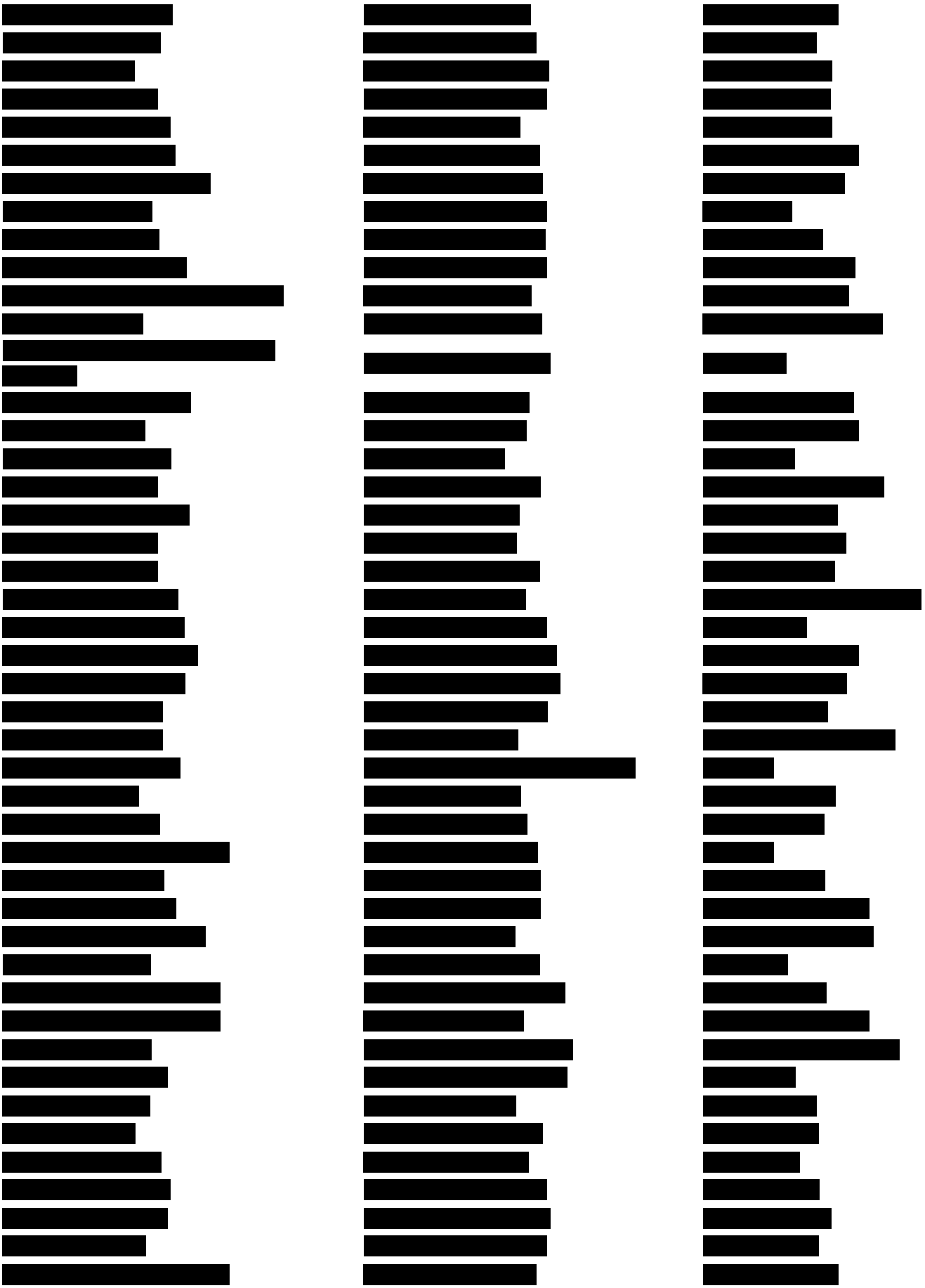
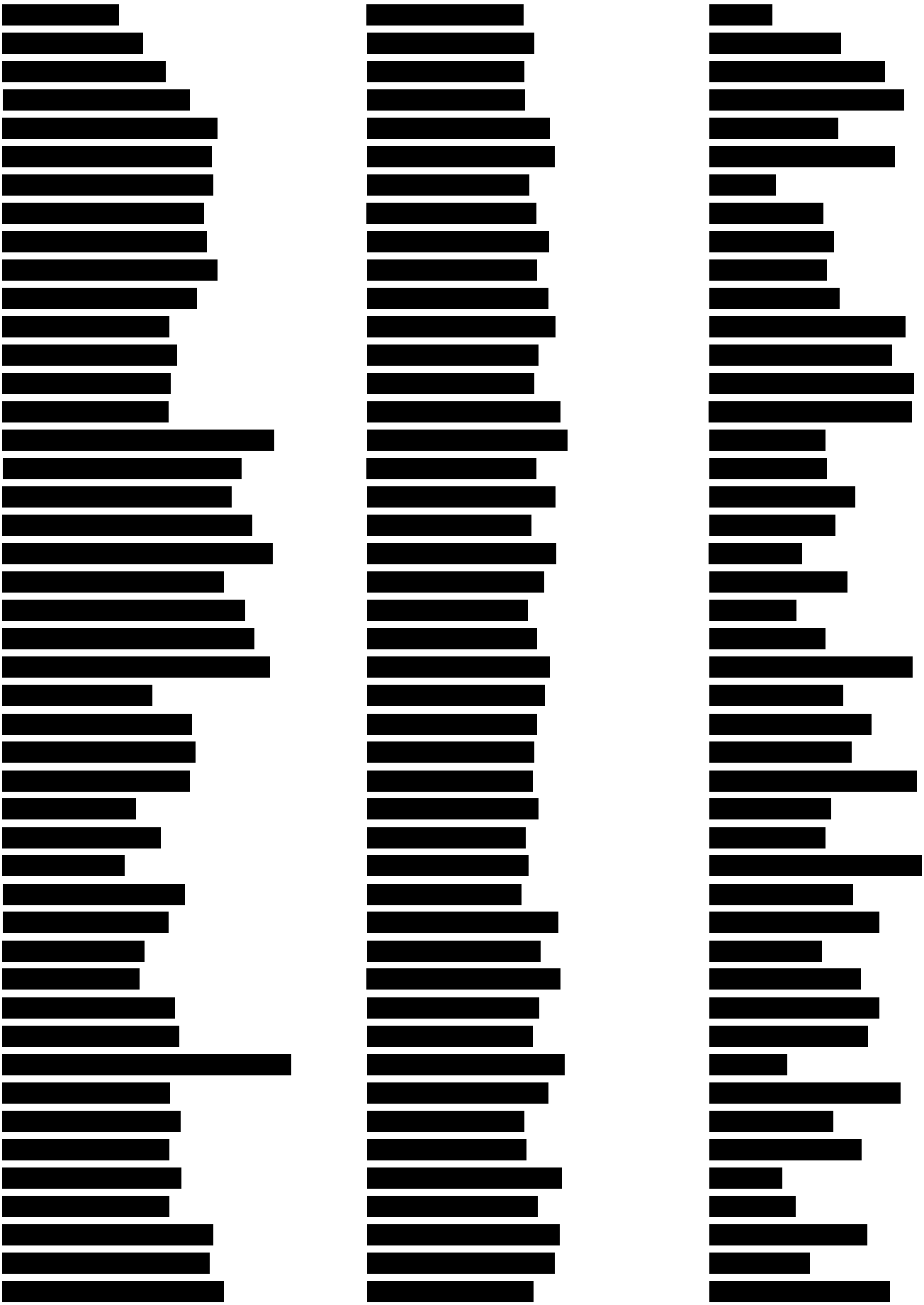
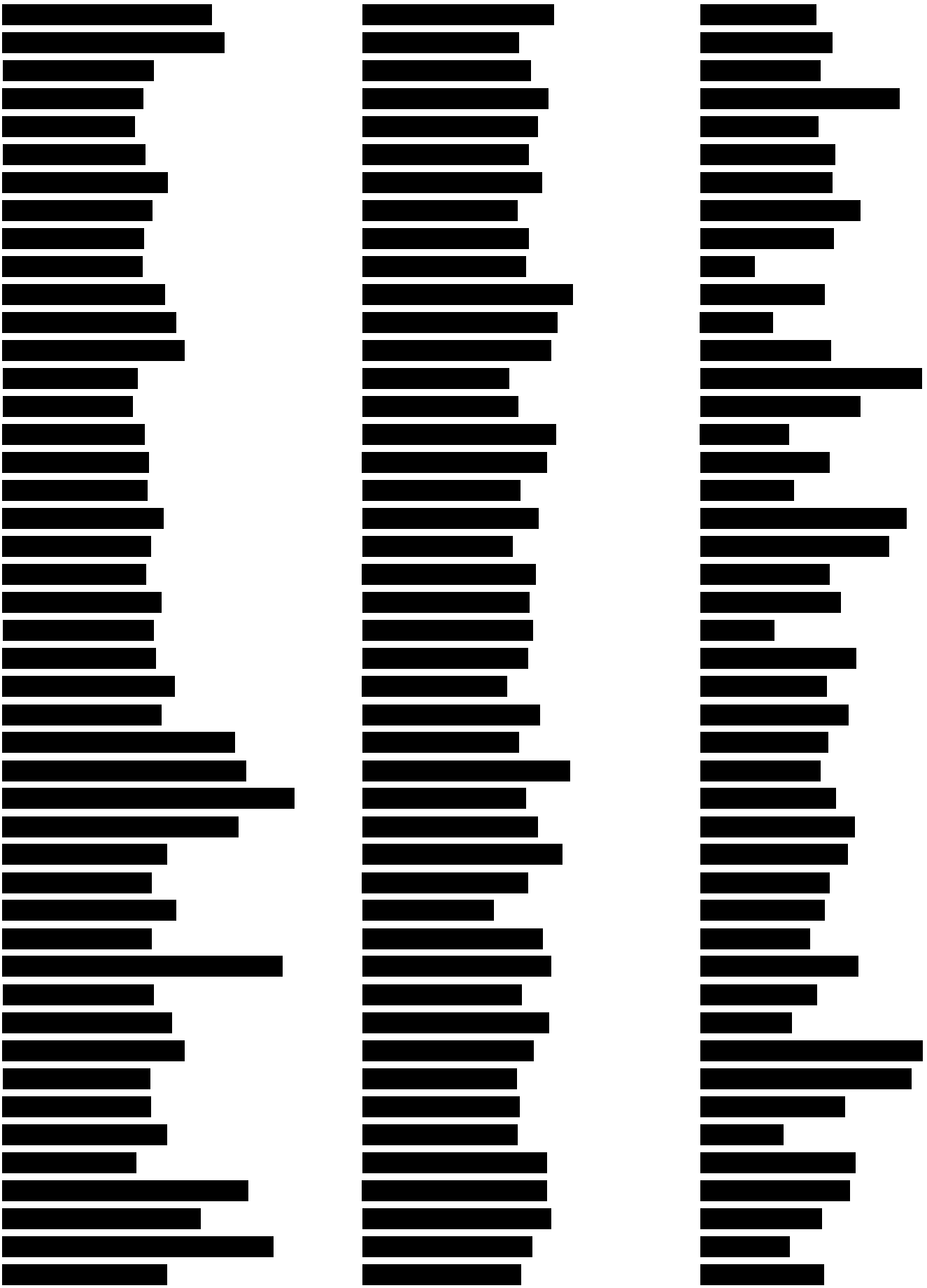
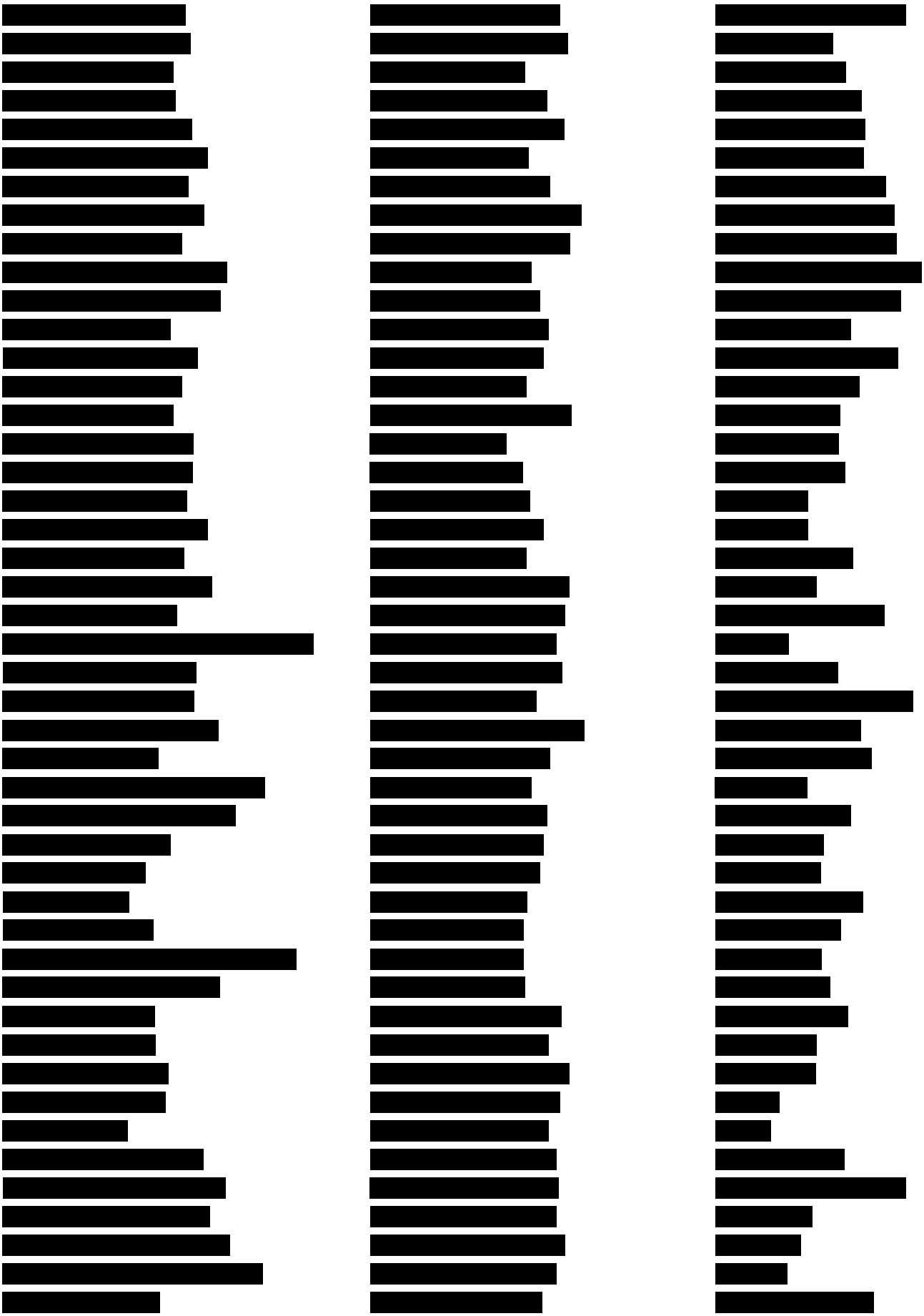
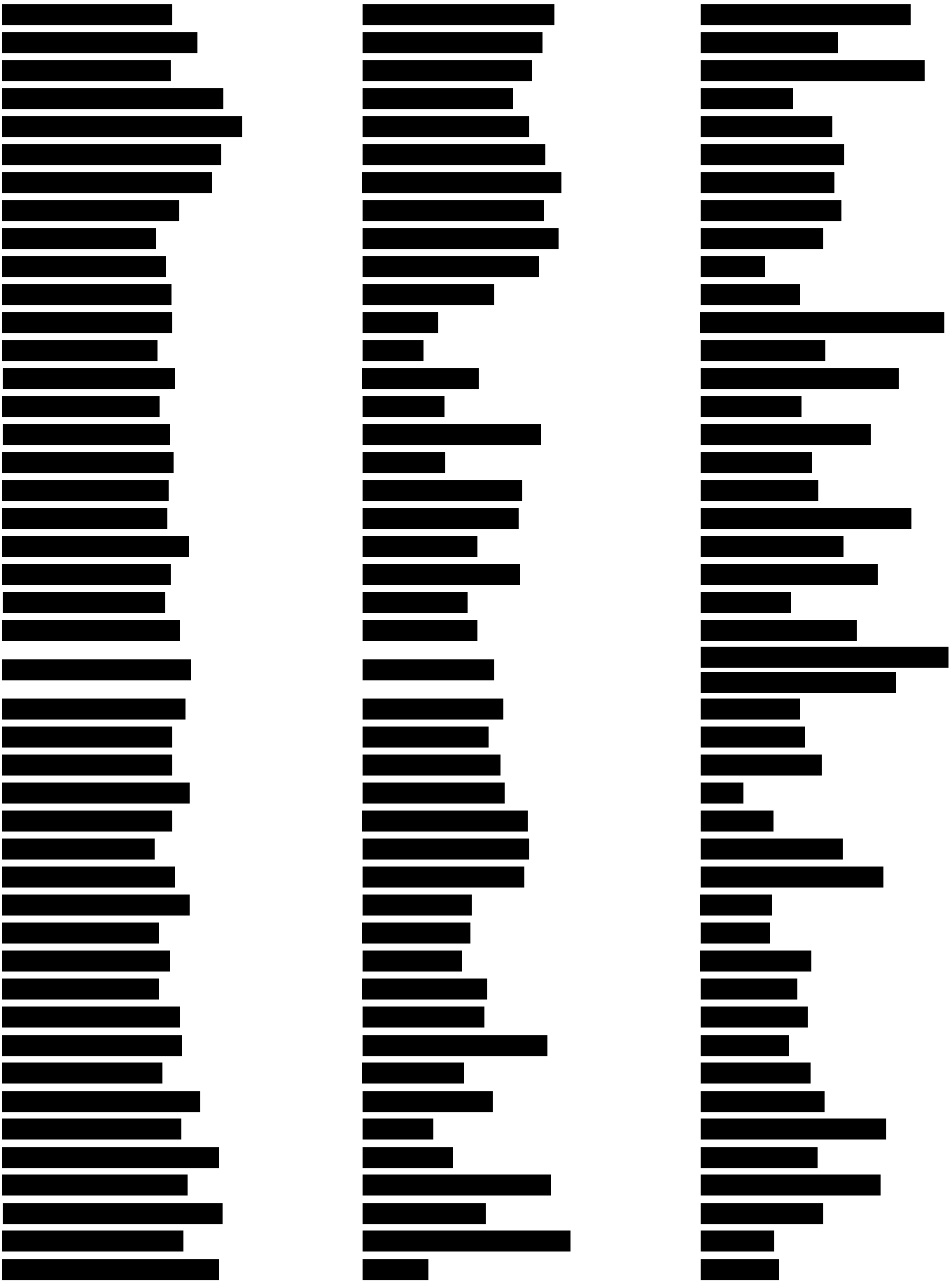
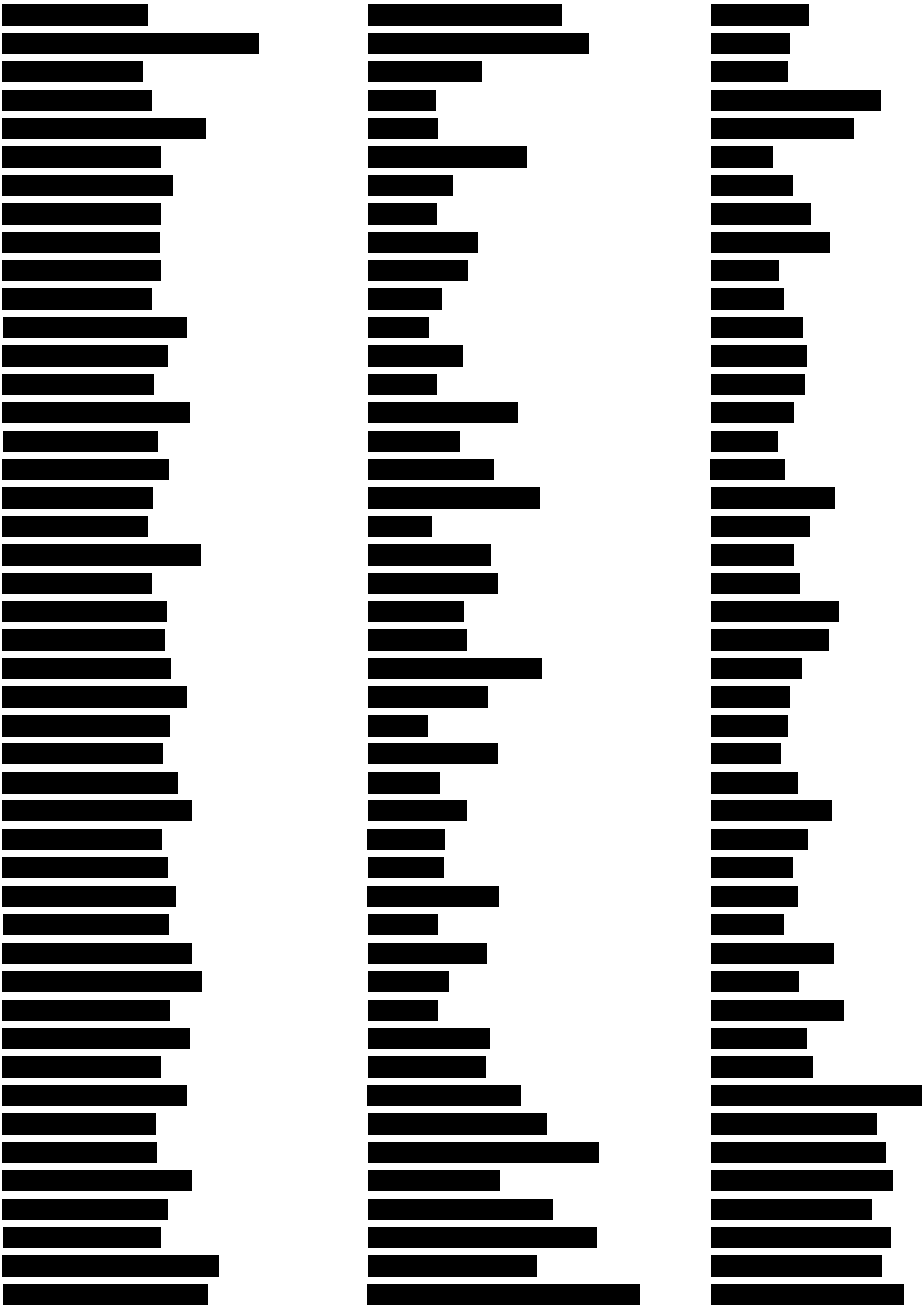
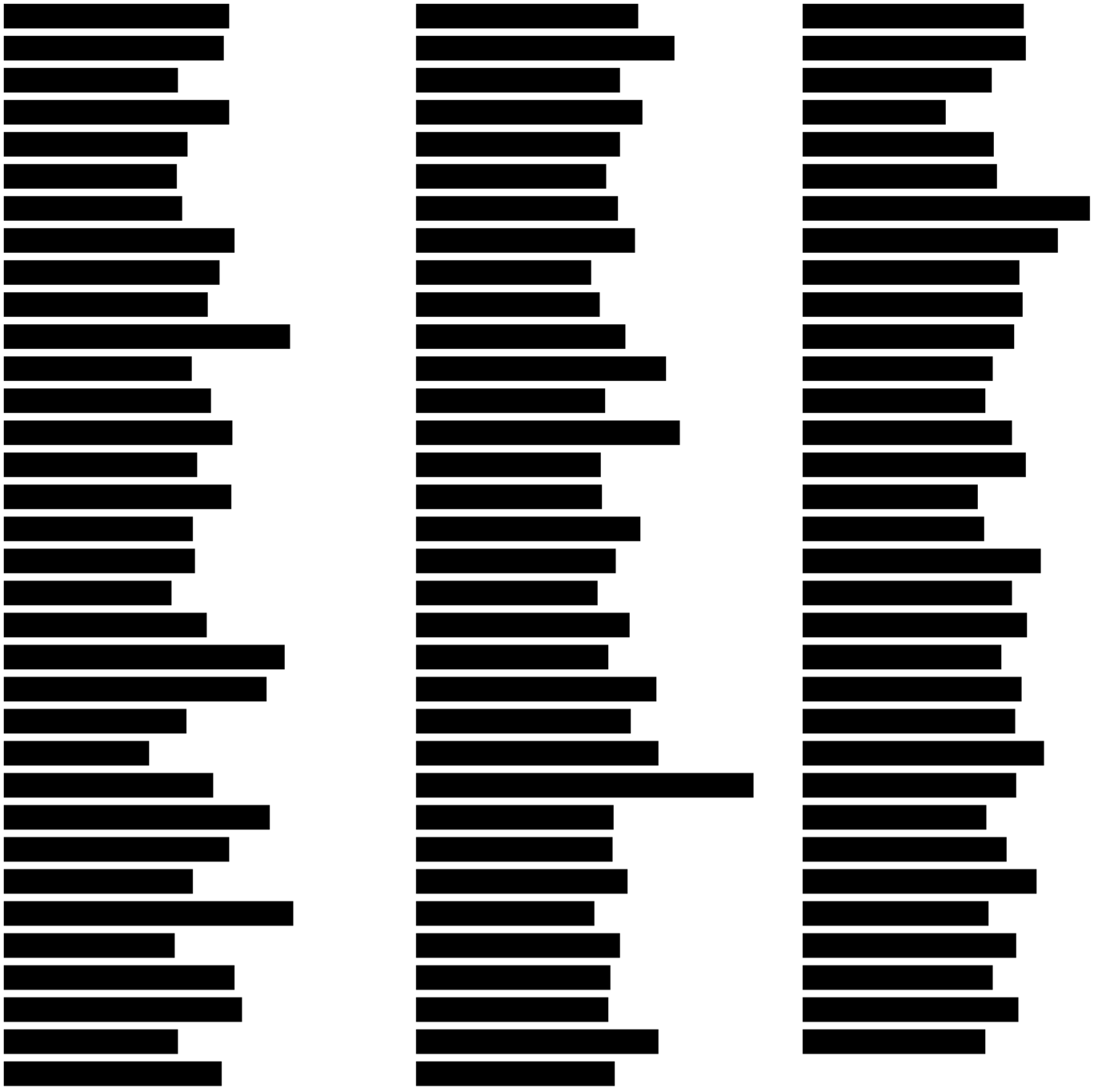
- Government transparency and assurance that human rights are being upheld in places of detention;

- The release of official records of any prison lockdown hours longer than 22 hours in the last four weeks.

Yours faithfully,

Meg de Ronde

Executive Director
Amnesty International Aotearoa New Zealand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