



19 January 2023

Tēnā koe

On 1 December 2022, the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) received a letter from you requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

1. *How many Pasifika are on welfare, men (single), DPB mums, married couples and invalids.*
2. *How many Māori are on a benefit, single men, married couples, solo DPBs and invalids.*
3. *You can choose any year pre-COVID for this question:*
  - a. *How many fraud prosecutions are there in this year?*
  - b. *How many of these prosecutions were against Māori?*
  - c. *How many of these prosecutions were against Pasifika women?*
  - d. *How many of these prosecutions were against all other groups?*

We will respond to each of your questions in turn:

1. *How many Pasifika are on welfare, men (single), DPB mums, married couples and invalids.*
2. *How many Māori are on a benefit, single men, married couples, solo DPBs and invalids.*

The Ministry publishes Benefit Fact Sheet data on its website which provides the demographic breakdowns that you have requested. Here is the publicly available link to where this information can be found:  
[www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/statistics/benefit/index.html](http://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/statistics/benefit/index.html)

3. You can choose any year pre-COVID for this question:

- a. How many fraud prosecutions are there in this year?
- b. How many of these prosecutions were against Māori?
- c. How many of these prosecutions were against Pasifika women?
- d. How many of these prosecutions were against all other groups)?

The Ministry works hard to protect integrity of the welfare system to ensure it remains fair for all New Zealanders. It is vital that the public has trust and confidence in the Ministry, to ensure people receive their correct entitlement and do not take advantage of the support that is available.

Since 2015, the Ministry has been strengthening its fraud prevention focus. This saw the introduction of new non-investigative approaches to responding to lower risk allegations of fraud from 2018, and the establishment of a prosecution panel to support decision making in serious fraud cases where prosecution is recommended.

The Ministry's overall approach is to intervene early when concerns are raised, to make it easy for clients to do the right thing and avoid unnecessary overpayments and debt while still responding appropriately to serious fraud. The Ministry has a three-tier graduated model to respond to allegations of benefit and social housing fraud:

- **early intervention** – engaging with clients early to discuss any integrity issues raised, confirm obligations, and adjust entitlements where appropriate.
- **facilitation** – working more intensively with a client to assess their situation against their entitlements and adjust these entitlements where necessary. This could mean an overpayment for a client in some situations.
- **investigation** – gathering information and acting on serious client integrity issues, which could result in an overpayment and in the most serious cases prosecution. Prosecutions are considered in line with the Solicitor General's guidelines, taking into account the full circumstances of each individual case.

The three-tier approach helps the Ministry better manage fraud activity. All allegations of potential fraud or abuse of benefit payments are responded to in a manner proportionate to the nature of the information received and the potential seriousness of offending.

There will always be cases of serious fraud which will be fully investigated and prosecuted where it is appropriate to do so.

This approach has been endorsed by the Welfare Expert Advisory Group report.

Overall, the number of cases responded to across the Ministry's three-tier model has remained stable over the last five years. A greater proportion are now responded to without investigation or prosecution.

Over the 2019/20 financial year, investigation and prosecution numbers were impacted by responding to the Privacy Commissioner's inquiry [www.workandincome.govt.nz/about-work-and-income/news/2019/questions-about-serious-fraud-investigations.html](http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/about-work-and-income/news/2019/questions-about-serious-fraud-investigations.html), which meant pausing and reassessing investigations and prosecutions underway in light of the inquiry's findings, and by the need to support the COVID-19 response, which includes Wage Subsidy investigations.

Please see the **Appendix** which provides the number of successful fraud prosecutions between 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2020, by financial year, gender, and ethnicity.

The principles and purposes of the Official Information Act 1982 under which you made your request are:

- to create greater openness and transparency about the plans, work and activities of the Government,
- to increase the ability of the public to participate in the making and administration of our laws and policies and
- to lead to greater accountability in the conduct of public affairs.

This Ministry fully supports those principles and purposes. The Ministry therefore intends to make the information contained in this letter and any attached documents available to the wider public. The Ministry will do this by publishing this letter on the Ministry's website. Your personal details will be deleted, and the Ministry will not publish any information that would identify you as the person who requested the information.

If you wish to discuss this response with us, please feel free to contact [OIA\\_Requests@msd.govt.nz](mailto:OIA_Requests@msd.govt.nz).

If you are not satisfied with this response, you have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman. Information about how to make a complaint is available at [www.ombudsman.parliament.nz](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz) or 0800 802 602.

Ngā mihi nui



# Geoff Cook

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**Client Service Support**



**Appendix:** The number of successful fraud prosecutions between 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2020, by financial year, gender, and ethnicity.

Financial Year	Gender	Māori	European	Pacific Peoples	Asian	MELAA	Other	Unknown	Total successful prosecutions
2018/2019	Female	24	42	9	3	0	0	3	<b>72</b>
	Male	24	24	6	3	3	0	0	<b>48</b>
	No Record	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	<b>3</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>123</b>
2019/2020	Female	21	21	3	3	3	3	0	<b>45</b>
	Male	6	9	6	0	0	0	0	<b>21</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>63</b>

**Notes:**

- The Ministry of Social Development's financial year commences on the 1st of July and ends at the 30th of June.
- Gender and Ethnicity data is as at the end of each financial year i.e. 30 June 2019 and 30 June 2020.
- From 2 December 2019, The Ministry of Social Development has three options to record a client's or child's gender: Male, Female or Gender Diverse.
- A prosecution concerns only one person. But the same person can be prosecuted multiple times in a year.
- Successful prosecution refers to people who have been convicted of offences.
- Ethnicity data is self-identified and multiple ethnicities may be chosen by an individual as fits their preference or self-concept.
- Total response ethnicity means that if a person identifies with more than one ethnic group, they are counted in each applicable group.
- Because a client can choose more than one ethnic response, the total number of ethnic responses will be greater than the number of clients.
- MELAA refers to Middle Eastern, Latin American, and African.
- 'Unknown' is where ethnicity is not recorded. 'Other' is where ethnicities fall outside the reported ethnicities.
- To protect confidentiality the Ministry of Social Development uses processes to make it difficult to identify an individual person or entity from published data.
- These data tables have had random rounding to base three applied to all cell counts in the table.
- Random rounding does not round down to zero, a value of one or two will be rounded to three.
- The impact of applying random rounding is that columns and rows may not add exactly to the given column or row totals.
- The published counts will never differ by more than two counts.