



23 FEB 2021

On 12 January 2021, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, the following information:

- *For points 1, 2, and 3, can you please provide the figures specific to Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, and Otago.*
 1. *How many instances of property damage have been recorded at Work and Income Service Centres nationally in 2018, 2019 and 2020. (Please present the years individually)*
 2. *How many instances of assault have been recorded at Work and Income Service Centres nationally in 2018, 2019 and 2020. (Please present the years individually)*
 3. *How many instances of disruptive behaviour have been recorded at Work and Income Service Centres nationally in 2018, 2019 and 2020. (Please present the years individually)*
 4. *Concerning instances of property damage covered in point 1, can you please provide me with details of the five most serious damages and cost of repair.*
 5. *Concerning instances of assault covered in point 2, can you please provide me with details of the five worst cases, what injuries were sustained, and how, when and where the instances occurred.*

The State Sector Act 1988 and the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 outline the Ministry's obligation to be a 'good employer.' This includes the Ministry's obligation to provide a safe working environment for its employees.

The Ministry places a high priority on the safety of its staff and clients and has in place a detailed security policy in order to reduce the potential security risks. We recognise that given the frontline role of many of our staff and the nature of the work, there is an increased security risk.

I will now answer your questions in turn.

1. *How many instances of property damage have been recorded at Work and Income Service Centres nationally in 2018, 2019 and 2020. (Please present the years individually)*

The Ministry only records instances of wilful property damage, but not instances where the damage was unintentional. Please see **Table One** and **Table Two** below for the number of recorded instances where wilful property damage has occurred broken down by selected Work and Income regions for the years 2018 to 2020, as well as the national total.

Table One: Instances of wilful property damage, broken down by Work and Income region

Regions	2018	2019	2020
Auckland Central Region	2	1	4
Auckland North Region		0	1
Auckland South Region		4	2
Canterbury Region	0	6	3
Southern Region	0	0	2
Wellington Region	3	0	3
Total	5	11	15

Table Two: Instances of wilful property damage, national total

	2018	2019	2020
National Total	9	32	25

2. *How many instances of assault have been recorded at Work and Income Service Centres nationally in 2018, 2019 and 2020. (Please present the years individually)*

The Ministry defines assault according to the Crimes Act 1961 which defines assault as the act of intentionally applying or attempting to apply force to the person of another, directly or indirectly, or threatening by any act or gesture to apply such force to the person of another, if the person making the threat has, or causes the other to believe on reasonable grounds that he or she has, present ability to effect his or her purpose; and to assault has a corresponding meaning.

Assaults usually involve a number of different parties and may have occurred between clients and staff, clients and clients or clients and members of the public. To answer question two of your request, please find **Table Three** and **Table Four** below for the total number of recorded instances of assault broken down by selected Work and Income regions for the years 2018 to 2020, as well as the national total.

Table Three: Instances of assault, broken down by Work and Income region

Regions	2018	2019	2020
Auckland Central Region	3	3	5
Auckland North Region		2	
Auckland South Region		2	3
Canterbury Region	2	2	2
Southern Region	0	2	2
Wellington Region	0	2	0
Total	5	13	12

Table Four: Instances of assault, national total

	2018	2019	2020
National Total	9	27	21

3. *How many instances of disruptive behaviour have been recorded at Work and Income Service Centres nationally in 2018, 2019 and 2020. (Please present the years individually)*

Disruptive behaviour is more commonly defined by the Ministry in its security event categories as abuse, intimidation, aggression and threats. To answer your third question, please see **Table Five** and **Table Six** below for the total number of recorded instances of disruptive behaviours broken down by selected Work and Income regions for the years 2018 to 2020, as well as the national total.

Table Five: Instances of disruptive behaviour, broken down by Work and Income region

Regions	2018	2019	2020
Auckland Central Region	119	102	163
Auckland North Region		84	99
Auckland South Region		144	134
Canterbury Region	104	164	96
Southern Region	46	61	46
Wellington Region	101	103	77
Total	370	658	615

Table Six: Instances of disruptive behaviour, national total

	2018	2019	2020
National Total	712	1240	1082

4. *Concerning instances of property damage covered in point 1, can you please provide me with details of the five most serious damages and cost of repair.*

The Ministry is unable to provide you with the top five most serious cases of wilful property damage as the Ministry does not rank or collate the information held in this way. As such, this part of your request is refused under section 18(e) of the Act as the information requested does not exist.

5. *Concerning instances of assault covered in point 2, can you please provide me with details of the five worst cases, what injuries were sustained, and how, when and where the instances occurred.*

The Ministry is unable to provide you with details of the five worst cases of assault, including injuries sustained and when, where and how those instances occurred. This is due to the fact that the Ministry does not rank or collate this information and it is

not the place of the Ministry to rank the severity of assaults against each other. As such, this part of your request is refused under section 18(e) of the Act as the information requested does not exist.

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 available to the wider public. The Ministry will do this by publishing this letter on the Ministry of Social Development'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.

If you are not satisfied with this response concerning instances of damage, assault or disruption at Work and Income Service Centres, 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 or 0800 802 602.

Yours sincerely



Pauline Stenhouse
General Manager
Health Safety and Security