



27 June 2022

Tēnā koe

On 31 May 2022, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

- *I was wondering if I could have some information about the number of threats/violent incidents there have been at W&I offices this year?*

Due to the broad nature of your request and after discussion with the Ministry's media team on 3 June 2022, you agreed to refine the request to:

- *The number of times Police have been contacted by Work and Income centres since 1 January 2020, broken down by calendar year (i.e. 2020, 2021, 2022)*
- *The number of assaults in Work and Income centres since 1 January 2020, broken down by calendar year (i.e. 2020, 2021, 2022)*

The Ministry places a high priority on the safety of its staff and clients and has in place a detailed security approach 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 will always be a degree of security risk.

The Public Service Act 2020 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 has zero tolerance to threatening and abusive behaviour towards its staff and other clients.

For the sake of clarity, I will address your questions in order.

- *The number of times Police have been contacted by Work and Income centres since 1 January 2020, broken down by calendar year (i.e. 2020, 2021, 2022)*

Please find **Table One** in the Excel spreadsheet attached to this response, which covers the number of times Police have been contacted each year for the calendar years 2020, 2021, and 2022, broken down by Work and Income site.

The Police are notified for a wide range of matters. This can include but is not limited to the following: threats of self-harm, threats to staff members, notification of anticipated trespass, and clients seeking protection (such as in a domestic violence situation).

It is important to note these figures include incidents where someone has threatened self-harm. These threats are always taken seriously. The Police are notified so that they can check in and ensure the safety of the client.

The Ministry is continually looking at ways to improve our reporting and since March 2021 some historically recorded incidents have been re-categorised so these tables may not precisely match previous reporting.

- *The number of assaults in Work and income centres since 1 January 2020, broken down by calendar year (i.e. 2020, 2021, 2022)*

The Ministry defines assault according to the Crimes Act 1961, which defines assault as the act of intentionally applying or attempting 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.

Please note recorded assaults include assaults on staff, clients, security guards and non-clients.

Please find **Table Two** in the Excel spreadsheet attached to this response, which covers the number of assaults in Work and Income centres each year for the calendar years 2020, 2021, and 2022, broken down by region.

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 and attachment 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.

If you are not satisfied with this response regarding data on assaults on Work and Income staff and Police calls made by Work and Income staff, 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.

Ngā mihi nui

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'MP' with a stylized flourish above it.

Mark Painter
General Manager
Health Safety and Security