



19 FEB 2020

Dear [REDACTED]

On 21 October, you emailed the Ministry requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, the following information:

- *figures relating to benefit sanctions applied against beneficiaries with outstanding warrants to arrest where there are children involved.*
- *a breakdown of the ethnicity of all the children who have had a benefit sanction for a WTA applied to their parents.*

On 26 November 2019 you also requested information regarding the ethnicity of the individuals subject to the warrant to arrest sanction with children attached to their benefit.

Warrants for arrest are issued by the Courts, and actioned by the Police. Warrants can be resolved at any courthouse. The Ministry of Justice advises the Ministry of any outstanding arrest warrants that have not been resolved within a 28 day period, and this information is matched against Ministry records. The Ministry sends a letter to advise the client that they have ten working days to clear their warrant, otherwise their benefit payments may be reduced or stopped.

The Ministry's warrant to arrest policy uses the Social Security Act to promote compliance with the justice sector obligations to improve the clearance rate of arrest warrants issued for criminal proceedings. The Ministry does not hold discretion on when the warrant to arrest policy is applied, the Ministry of Justice is responsible for issuing and clearing warrants to arrest.

When a warrant to arrest sanction is imposed, no more than 50 percent of a person's benefit is stopped for clients with children. For couples, payment will be stopped for the client who has the outstanding warrant, and the remaining portion is still paid to the spouse's partner. It is important to note that many people clear a warrant to arrest before any sanction is applied.

You can read more about the policy regarding warrants to arrest at the following link: www.workandincome.govt.nz/on-a-benefit/arrest-warrants.html.

Please find enclosed Table One which provides the number of warrant to arrest sanctions imposed on working-age main benefit clients with children attached to their main benefit for the period 1 January 2014 to 30 June 2019 broken down by year and the ethnicity of the client.

The Ministry does not record the ethnicity of children attached to the main benefit of a client. As such, I am refusing that part of your request under section 18(g) of the Official Information Act as the information you have requested is not held by the Ministry and I have no grounds to believe that the information is held by another department or Minister of the Crown or organisation

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 shortly. 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 regarding figures around the warrant to arrest sanction, 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



Bridget Saunders
Manager, Issue Resolution, Service Delivery

Table One: The number of warrant to arrest sanctions imposed on working age main benefit clients with children attached to their main benefit for the period 1 January 2014 to 30 June 2019 broken down by year and the ethnicity of the client

Ethnic Group	Calendar year					
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Māori	421	407	494	544	608	362
Pacific Peoples	50	46	69	84	57	22
NZ European	52	58	89	87	76	36
Other	S	S	S	S	18	S
Unspecified	S	S	S	S	11	S
Total	535	527	666	744	770	437

Notes:

- This is a count of sanctions not clients. A client may have had multiple sanctions.
- This table includes working-age people only between 18 and 64 years of age.
- Main Benefits exclude New Zealand Superannuation, Veteran's Pension, Non-Beneficiary assistance, Orphan's Benefit and Unsupported Child's Benefit.
- Low numbers have been suppressed with 'S' to protect client privacy.
- The unspecified ethnic group is when the ethnicity of the client has not been provided.
- Please note the ethnicity classification that is used to construct this table does not necessarily align with the current Statistics New Zealand classification of ethnicity. Ethnicity details recorded by the Ministry have been gathered under a varied of classification methods as clients come into contact with the Ministry. The ethnicity data may be self-identified based on an individual's preference or self-construct.
- 2019 only covers the period to 30 June 2019.