

1 August 2023

Section 9(2)(a)

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Our ref: OIA 105647

Tēnā koe Section 9(2)(a)

Official Information Act request: Jury service

Thank you for your email of 29 June 2023 to the Ministry of Justice (the Ministry), in which you requested, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), information regarding jury service.

On 28 July 2023 the Ministry advised you that your request had been granted, however the information had not yet been finalised for release. I apologise for the delay in getting this information to you and any inconvenience this may have caused.

Your request and the responses are set out below:

- 1. The number of potential jurors who try get out of jury duty each year for the last five years by sending a letter to the court.*
 - 2. The reasons potential jurors send to the Ministry of Justice in an attempt to get off jury duty, including any photographs they send.*
- If possible, it would be good to have this data broken down over the last five years.*

I have interpreted your request to be for the number of applications received for deferral and excusal from jury service and the reasons provided by the applicant.

Potential jurors can apply for a deferral if they are not able to do jury service on the date they are summoned. If granted by the court, their summons will be deferred to another date within the following 12 months. Jurors can also apply for an excusal if they are unable to do jury service at all. Serving on a jury is an important civic duty. There is more information at: justice.govt.nz/courts/jury-service/respond-to-a-jury-summons/. We are grateful to the people who attend a summons, and every year thousands of New Zealanders give their time to serve on juries.

In response to your request, please see Tables 1 and 2 attached. Table 1 provides you with the number of applications received to defer jury service and the reasons for seeking a deferral. Table 2 provides you with number of applications received to be excused from jury service and the reasons for an excusal. The data is provided to you by financial years from 1 July 2018 to 31 May 2022. Please note the complete data for the 2022/23 financial year is not yet available.

As advised on 28 July 2023, Registrars consider requests for deferral/excusal on the merits of each individual application, including any supporting documentation, as allowed under section 15 of the Juries Act 1981. Therefore, the Ministry is unable to provide any photographs sent by applicants as any photographs received by the court are considered court information. As the courts are not subject to the Act by virtue of section 2(6)(a) your request has been refused under section 18(g) on the grounds that the information is not held by the Ministry or any other agency subject to the Act.

If you require any further information, please contact Media & Social Media Manager Joe Locke at media@justice.govt.nz

Please note that this response, with your personal details removed, may be published on the Ministry website at: justice.govt.nz/about/official-information-act-requests/oia-responses/

If you are not satisfied with this response, you have the right to make a complaint to the Office of the Ombudsman under section 28(3) of the Act. The Office of the Ombudsman may be contacted by email to info@ombudsman.parliament.nz or by phone on 0800 802 602.

Nāku noa, nā

pp 

Richard Williams
Acting Group Manager, Courts & Tribunals, Regional Service Delivery

Table 1: Number of applications received to defer jury service and the reasons provided, 1 July 2018 to 31 May 2023

Deferral reason	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023*
Aged 65 or over	90	83	67	89	154
Family Commitments	2,646	2,400	3,082	3,378	3,394
Health	1,462	1,223	2,132	2,413	2,469
Occupation/Business	20,025	16,033	20,346	22,125	21,730
Personal Circumstance	8,062	7,378	6,831	7,423	9,400
Physical Disability	1	1	5	5	6
Previous Excusal	0	1	1	0	2
Religious Belief	7	5	14	11	19
Previous service in 2 Years	4	4	7	10	23
Total	32,297	27,128	32,485	35,454	37,197

* The data in 2022/2023 covers 1 July 2022 to 31 May 2023. The complete data for 2022/23 is not yet available.

Notes for Table 1:

- This table provides the number of applications received to defer jury service, including the reasons for seeking a deferral.
- Deferrals: Potential jurors can apply for a deferral if they cannot do jury service on the date summoned.
- Data covers both the District Court and High Court.
- Financial years start 1 July and end 30 June.

Table 2: Number of applications received to be excused from jury service and the reasons provided, 1 July 2018 to 31 May 2023

Excusal reason	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023*
Aged 65 or over	16,003	15,373	19,068	22,387	22,507
Family Commitments	4,893	4,099	5,681	6,516	6,518
Health	5,658	4,835	6,751	7,676	7,513
Occupation/Business	6,531	4,981	8,199	11,253	11,835
Personal Circumstance	2,794	3,061	3,728	4,400	4,726
Physical Disability	13	15	47	34	38
Previous Excusal	21	19	23	30	36
Religious Belief	297	224	297	287	272
Previous service in 2 Years	2,735	2,529	2,242	2,515	2,497
Total	38,945	35,136	46,036	55,098	55,942

* The data in 2022/2023 covers 1 July 2022 to 31 May 2023. The complete data for 2022/23 is not yet available.

Notes for Table 2:

- This table provides the number of applications received to be excused from jury service, including the reasons for seeking an excusal.
- Excusals: Potential jurors can apply for an excusal if they may not be able to do jury service at all.
- Data covers both the District Court and High Court.
- Financial years start 1 July and end 30 June.