

30 July 2021

Wes

Email: fyi-request-15762-fbaffbca@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear Wes

Request for information

IR-01-21-19325

Thank you for your request dated 12 June 2021 asking information in regards to the number of individuals visited by Police in relation to holding "extreme views".

On 12 June 2021 you requested:

I am requesting information regarding the visitation of individuals by the NZ Police in relation to their "extreme political views", this is often as a result of posting on various social media sites, for example, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube.

Please provide the number of individuals visited by NZ Police because of their "extreme views" over the past 3 years, please break this information down by political classification (eg: far right / far left), region, date (month / year)

On 2 July 2021, following some emails between Police and yourself, you refined your request as follows:

If there is no record of the number of visits conducted by NZ Police based on individuals political view. Are you able to provide a number of people identified by NZ Police that have classed as having "extreme political views", with the same classification? This must be recorded, given that there are numerous recorded incidents of NZ Police visiting people over the past few years because of their "extreme views" or "comments" online.

Your request has been considered in accordance with the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA).

In regard to your use of the terms "extreme political views" and "extreme views" in the wording of your questions it is important to note that it is not illegal in New Zealand for a person to hold any ideology or believe in any cause, and therefore the political alignment of a person in of itself is not a matter of Police concern. Police may on occasion inquire about a person's beliefs and motivations in order to understand and identify if any threat of violent extremism exists. Police is concerned with detecting, understanding, and preventing violent extremism through enforcing relevant laws and offences.

In response to your original question about the number of individuals visited by Police in relation to their "extreme political views", and reiterating that Police does

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not investigate political views but rather concerns itself with violent extremism, I confirm that Police refuses to provide this information under section 18(f) of the OIA as the information requested cannot be made available without substantial collation and research.

With regards to your refined question, this is not information that Police holds substantial records of, and therefore your request must be refused under section 18(g) of the OIA as the information is not held.

This is the conclusion I have reached after conducting a substantial collation and examination effort in an attempt to answer your refined question. As a result of that effort I have established the following.

The classification of extremism is not information that established Police systems are set to capture or record. Police information systems are primarily designed to record information regarding specific, established crime types and occurrences, and characteristics of violent extremism falls outside the normal information requirements for Police business. In addition, as I previously responded to you, Police focuses on all types of violent extremism regardless of ideology or cause, because Police's aim is to detect, understand, and impact extremism that may directly or indirectly result in violence, including terrorism.

There are other obstacles for Police to accurately record the type of cause or extremism an individual holds. In the absence of a specific statement by a person, the precise views, cause, or type of extremism held by an individual can be hard to identify, may change over time, and often blend elements from a variety of different views and ideologies. In addition, establishing precise ideology is not usually necessary for an effective investigation into potential offending.

The relevant information that can be extracted from Police systems is not consistently recorded, requires professional judgement to interpret and sort, and is an incomplete record of Police activity, and therefore does not answer your questions.

If you are not satisfied with the Police response to your request, you have the right to ask the Ombudsman to seek an investigation and review of the Police decision.

Yours sincerely,



Inspector David Kennedy
New Zealand Police