Your rights under the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act

The New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990 sets out some basic rights. These rights must be respected by the police, the courts and all other state services. The government may limit some of these rights and show why limitations are necessary, although Parliament can choose to override rights by law. Everyone has the same rights, and sometimes your rights are restricted to protect the rights of others.

**No one has the right to take your life, to torture you or to treat you with cruelty.**

If you are an adult citizen or resident, you can vote for Parliament.

If you are an adult citizen, you can stand for Parliament.

You have the right to think what you want.

You have the right to observe a religion of your choice or to have no religion.

You can say what you like and can share information and ideas with other people.

You can join together with other people and hold peaceful meetings to share or express your views.

You can come and go as you wish within New Zealand and are free to leave New Zealand. If you are a citizen, you have the right to enter New Zealand. If you are not a citizen but are in New Zealand lawfully, you can only be made to leave by law.

No one may treat you unfairly:
- because of your sex, race, nationality, age, sexual orientation, political or religious beliefs or absence of such beliefs; or
- because you are pregnant or have a family, are disabled, are unemployed, are related to a particular person; or
- because you are, or are not, married, in a civil union or in a de facto relationship.

No one can search you, your belongings or your home without good reason and only if the law allows it. Any search must be carried out in a reasonable way.

No one can imprison you without good reason and then only if the law allows it.

If you are imprisoned, you must be told why, must be allowed to see a lawyer and must be brought before a court without delay.
The New Zealand Coat of Arms is a symbol of Crown authority. It is restricted to use by government, including in the courts. The Coat of Arms can only be used or published with the permission of the Ministry for Culture and Heritage.

The first quarter of the shield shows four stars that represent the Southern Cross, then three ships symbolising the importance of New Zealand’s sea trade. In the second quarter a fleece represents the farming industry. The wheat sheaf in the third quarter represents the agricultural industry, and the crossed hammers in the fourth quarter represent mining.

The supporters on either side of the shield are a Māori chief holding a taiaha (a Māori war weapon) and a European woman holding the New Zealand Ensign. St Edward’s Crown, shown above the shield, was used in the Coronation ceremony of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

The New Zealand Citizenship Story

Te Kōrero Raraunga o Aotearoa

If you are charged with a crime:
- you must be told the charge against you;
- the charge must be heard promptly, almost always in public and by an independent court and, in serious cases, by a jury if you wish;
- you have the right to have legal assistance, to prepare and present your defence, to question any witnesses and, if you need one, to have an interpreter;
- you cannot be made to admit the crime or to say anything else;
- you must be considered innocent unless you are found guilty by a court;
- if you are a child, you must be treated as one;
- if you are convicted of a crime, you have a right to appeal; and
- if you are found not guilty, you can be retried for the same crime only in certain circumstances.

No one can give you medical treatment or make you take part in a medical or scientific experiment without your consent.

You have the right to enjoy your culture and your language.

You cannot be punished for doing something that was not a crime.

The government must act fairly when making decisions about you.

You have the right to take the government to court and to challenge any decision about your rights in the courts.