



Minister for Defence, National Security and Foreign Affairs
Honourable Mr. Inia Batikoto SERUIRATU

**RESPONSE TO WRITTEN QUESTION 179/2019 BY THE
HON. PIO TIKODUADUA**

Would the Minister table the full details of police investigations from the years 2014 to date, by month, age, gender, division/area – on missing children and teenagers; the general circumstances of going missing; whether they remain missing or have returned home; the workforce hours spent on investigating these cases and trends related to these reported incidents.

**POLICE INVESTIGATION ON MISSING CHILDREN AND TEENAGERS
2014 – 2019**

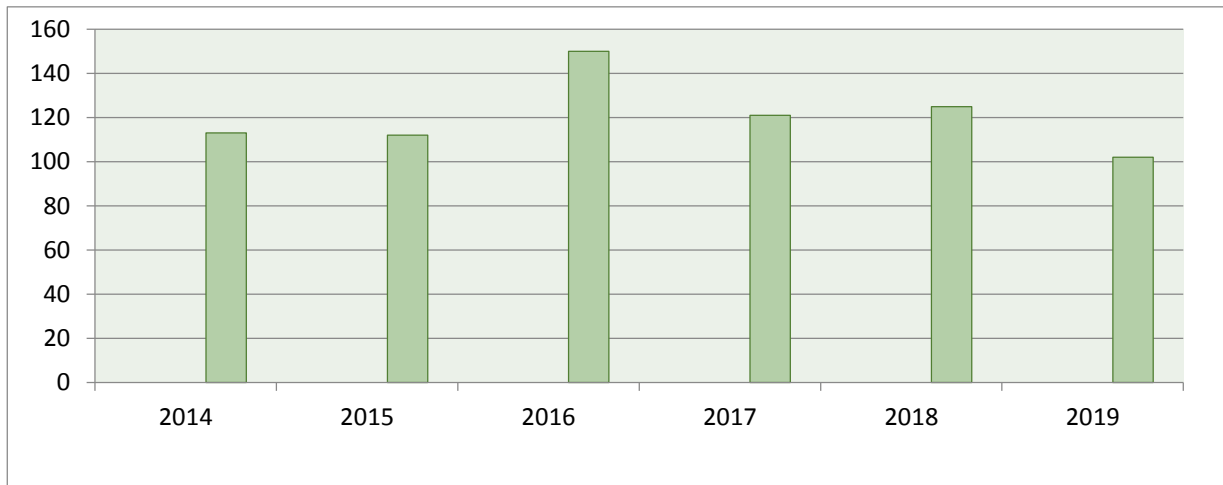
BACKGROUND

1. During the last Parliamentary Sitting on Thursday 8th August, 2019, Opposition Member of Parliament Hon Pio TIKODUADUA asked the Minister for Defence and National Security, Hon Inia SERUIRATU for a full and detail Police Investigation Report on missing children and teenagers from period 2014 – 2019.
2. **Reasons for brief.** This brief is written to provide Honorable Pio Tikoduadua a response to his question in Parliament on a report of missing children.
3. **Scope of brief.** This brief will:
 - a. provide graphs and corresponding summaries of missing persons by aggregates, and
 - b. outline circumstances surrounding the missing persons.

ANALYSIS OF MISSING PERSONS DATA

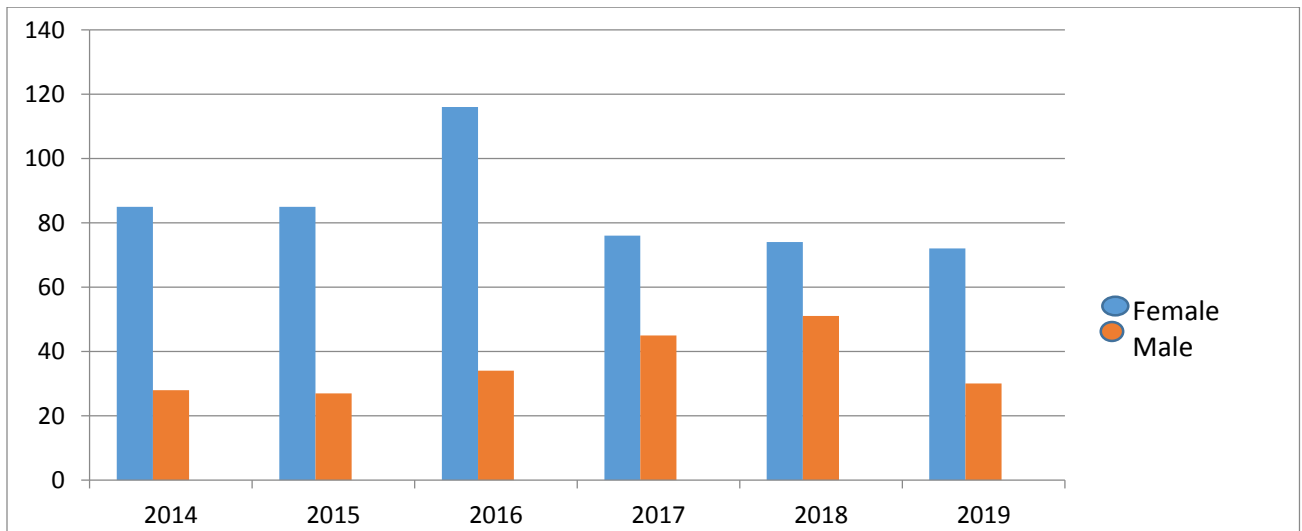
4. **Classification of missing children.** As defined in the Fiji Interpretation Act 1978, infant or minors are below the age of seventeen (17) years. The Fiji Police Force therefore in its investigation findings provide statistical breakdown by ethnicity, gender, locations and time of reports over the period 2014 through to 2019.

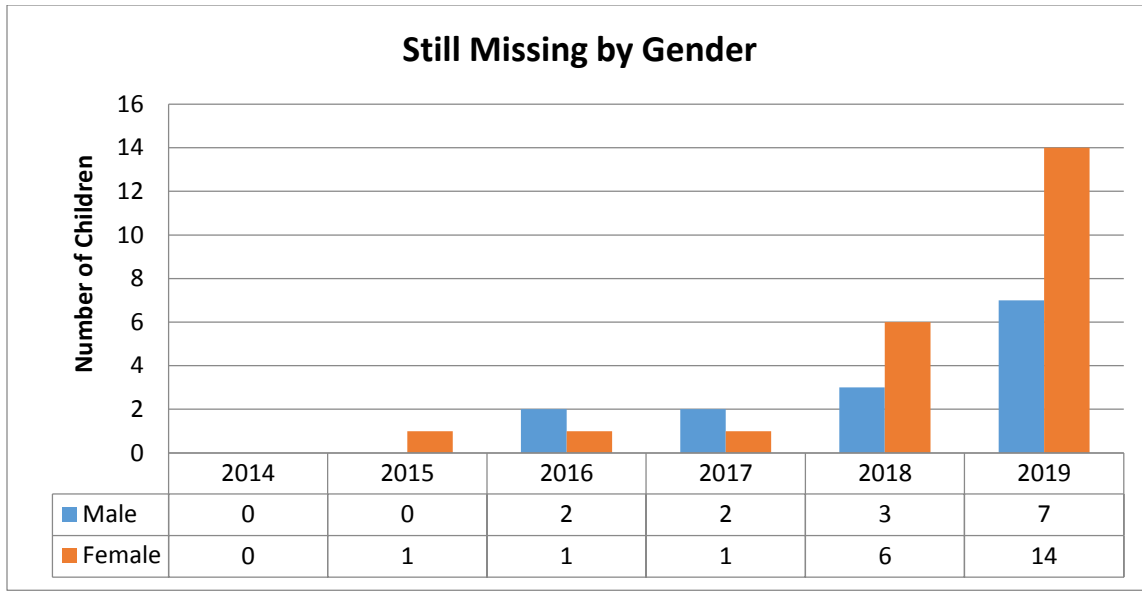
5. **Total Missing Children from 2014-2019.** A total of 723 cases reported and registered with 95% returnees recorded, while the 5% remain missing. A total of 120 children were reported missing within the period, with the highest missing aggregate recorded in 2016.



Gender of Missing Children: 2014-2019

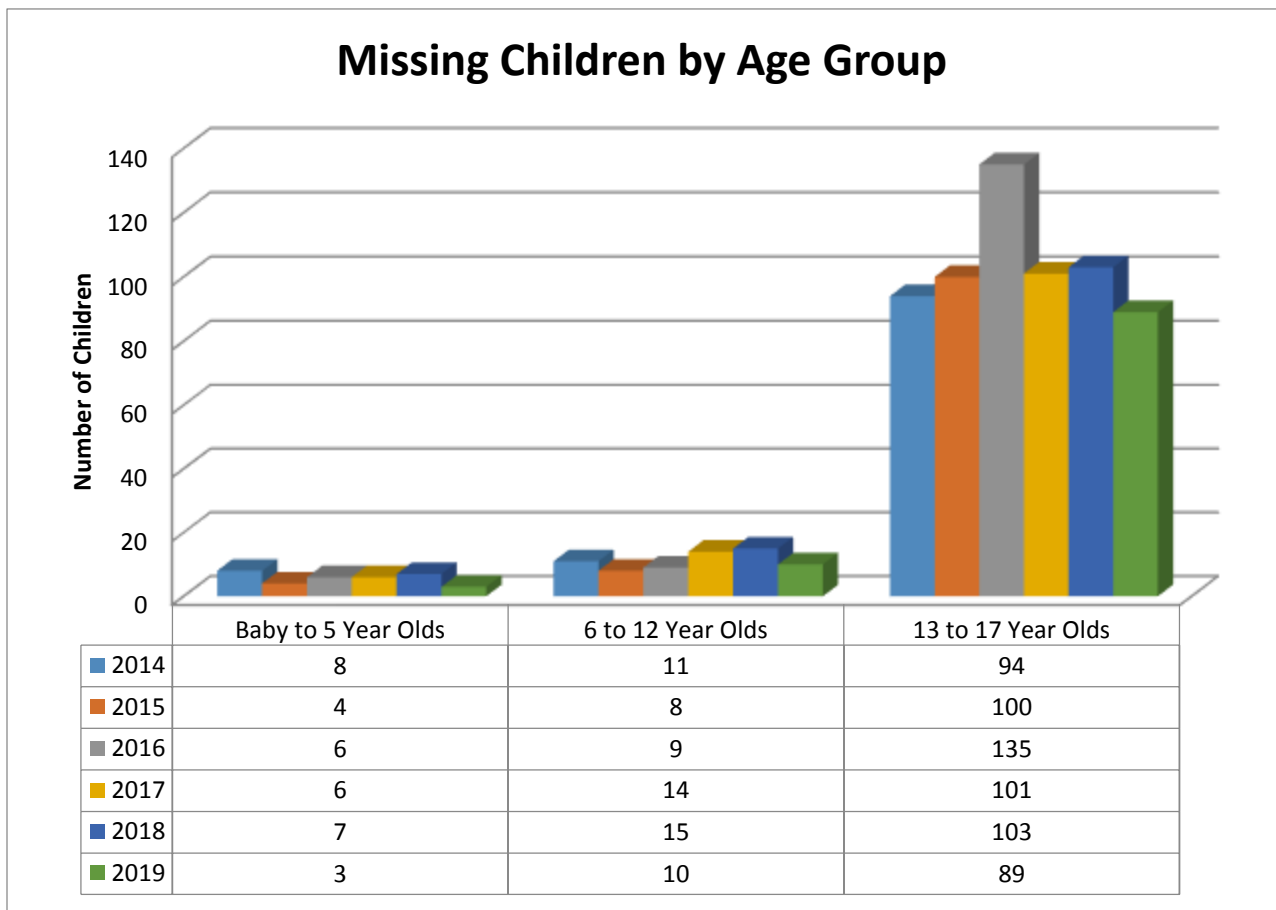
6. Reflective of the trend established below, more females were registered missing than their male counterparts. A random sampling on the general circumstances surrounding the nature of the case would be able to determine instances that would have been the cause of such events.



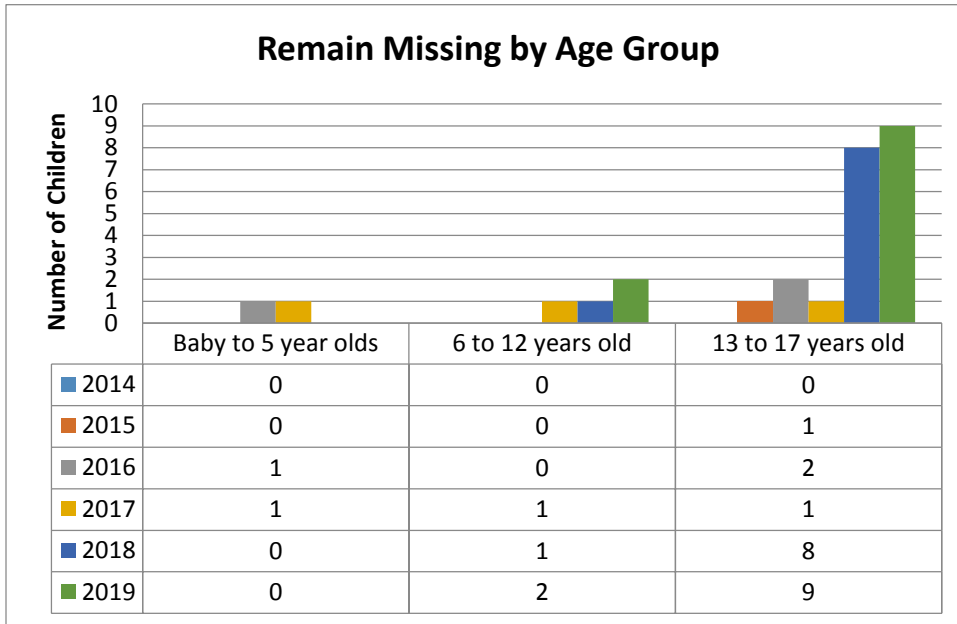


7. In 2014, 100% of the reported cases were resolved however, in 2015- till to date, 23 females are still missing with 14 males.

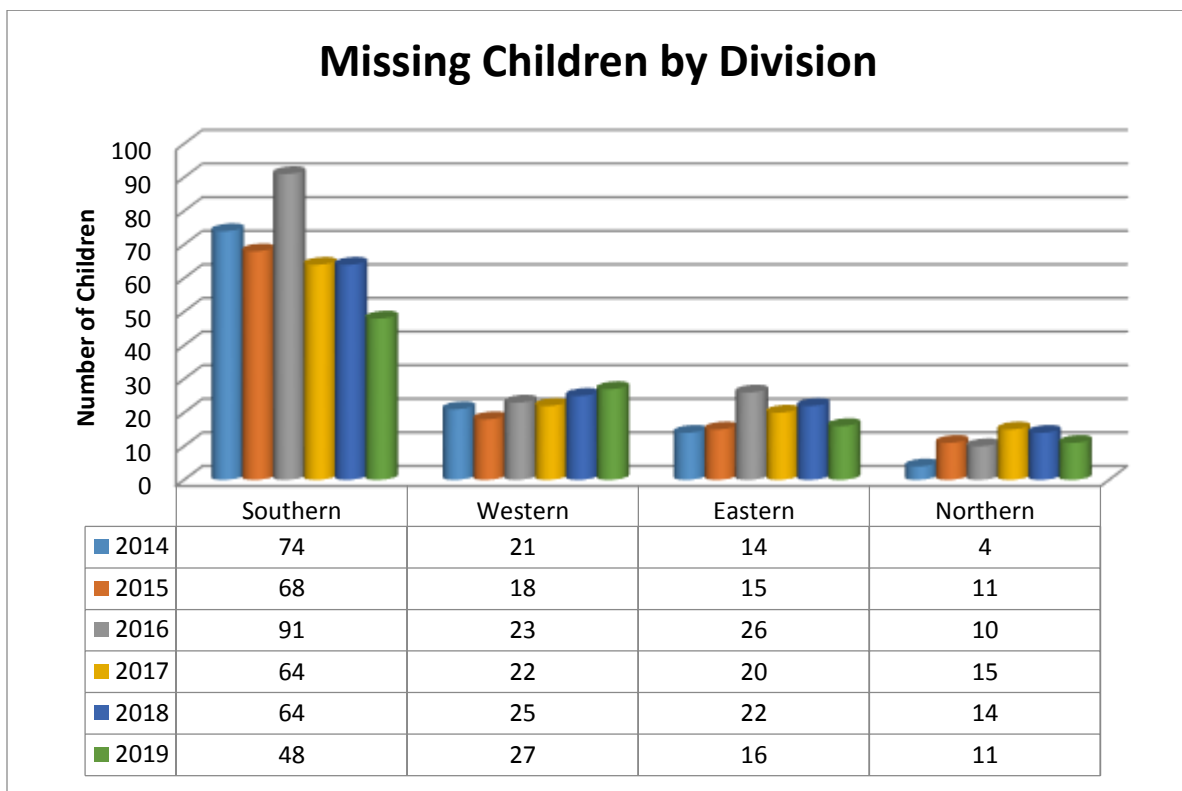
8. **Age Group from 2014 - 2019.** Reported numbers of missing children are from the age of 13 years – 17 years.



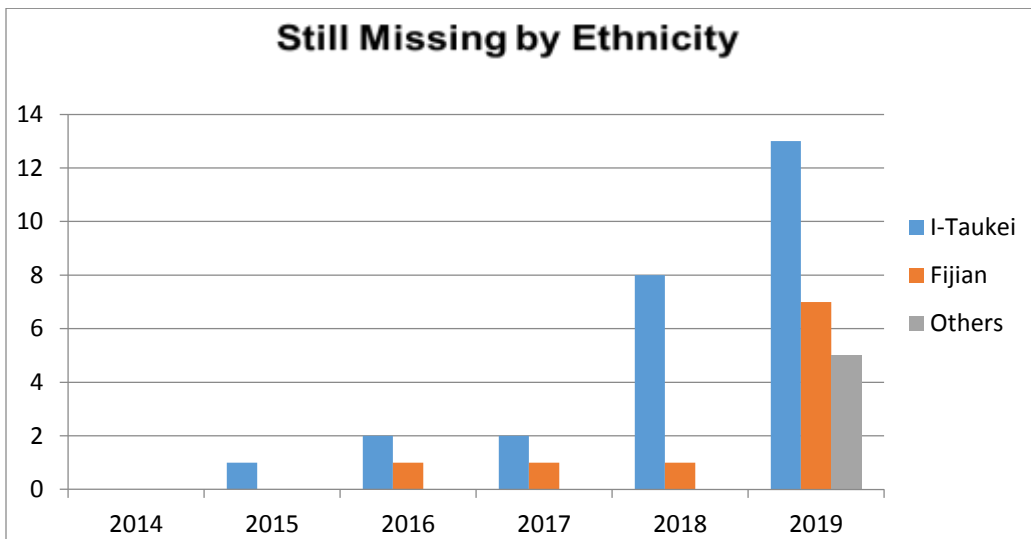
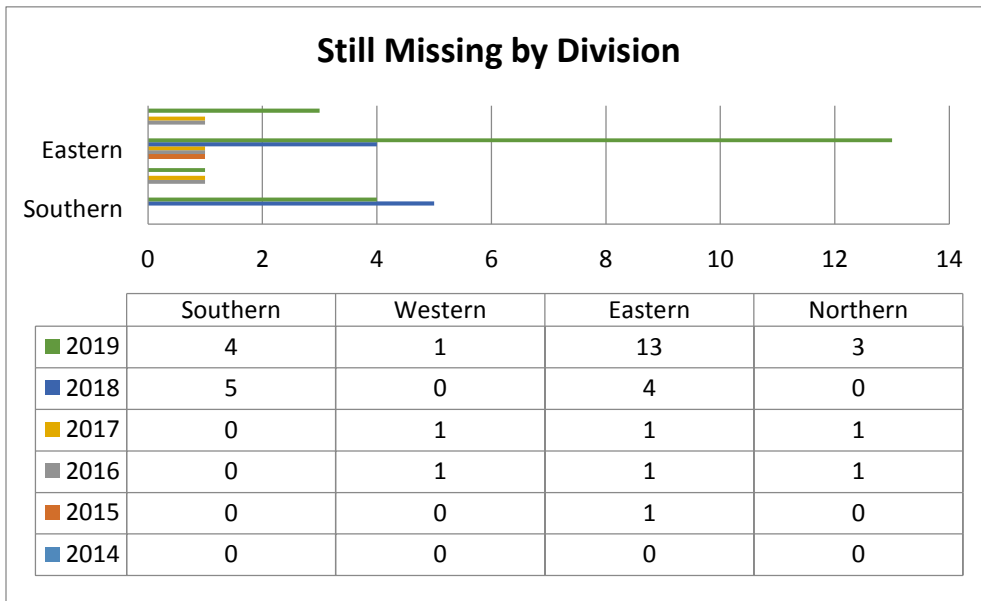
9. Chart below records the children that are still not found or reported to have been found during the reporting period. Two reported cases were below the age of 5 years and four cases between the ages of 6yrs- 12 years. However, a total of 21 cases of children between the ages 13 - 17 years are registered missing.



10. **Missing Children by Division from 2014-2019.** Most missing children reported were from the Southern Division.



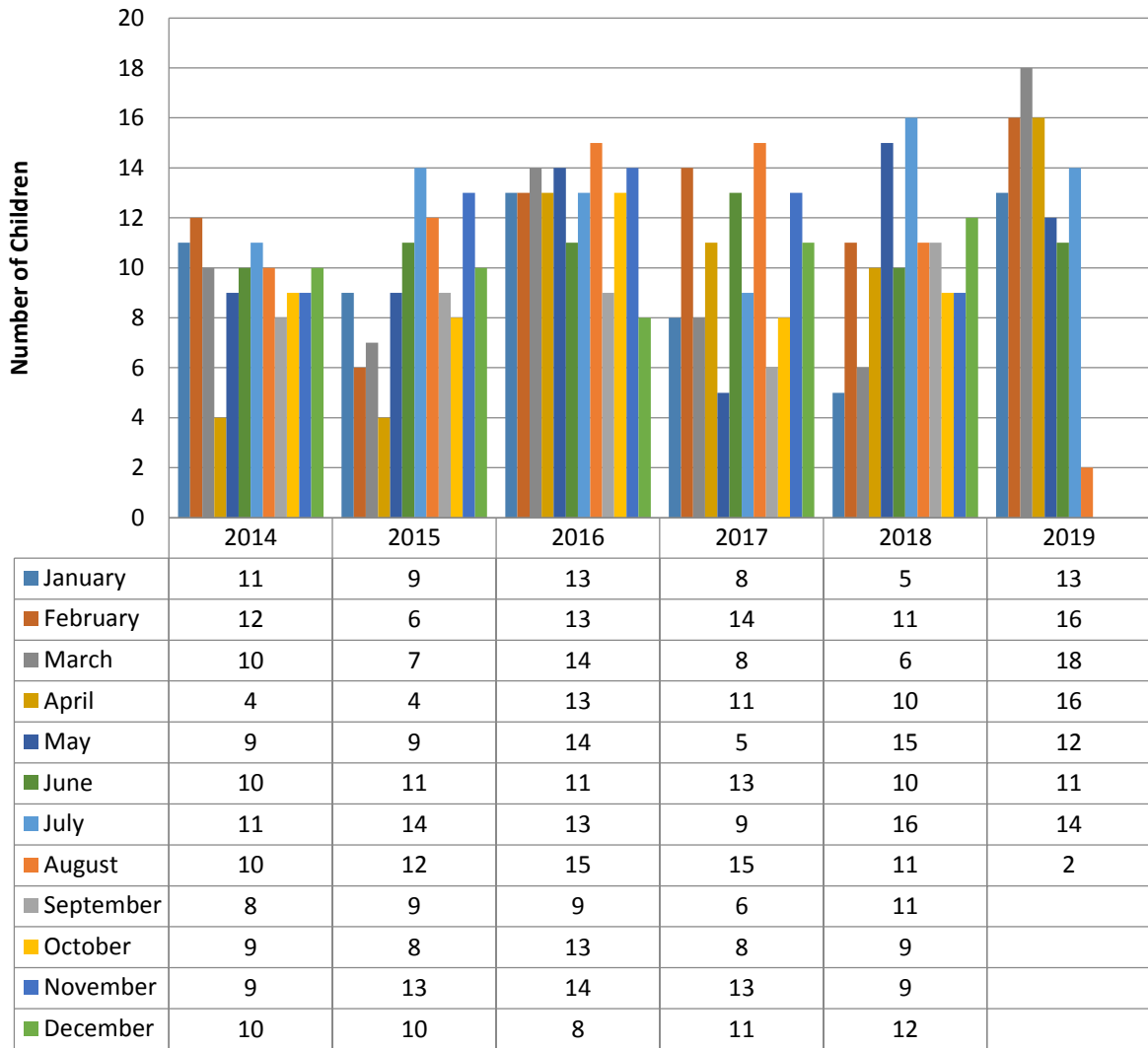
11. With a comparative analysis per division, the Eastern division records a total of 20 cases still missing.



12. The I’Taukei ethnic group dominates the numbers of registered missing children through the reporting period with a dramatic surge recorded in 2019.

13. **Missing Children by Month from 2014-2019.** In the past 5 years, it was evident that in the month of June and August witnessed the increase number reported cases of more than 10 cases per month.

Missing Children by Month



14. In generally analyzing the entire report and formulating assumption to cover information gaps noted, the major factor contributing to the conditions that inevitably forces a child from fleeing home are as follows:

- a. Children do not receive adequate support or attention from homes that lead to their erratic behavior,
- b. They undergo traumatic experiences in or outside their homes sexually, physically or mentally,
- c. Impoverish home environment; and
- d. Children who are mentally retarded and lacks home support.

15. In making a comparative analysis of the trends established from the reported of graphs informs that increase reporting are registered during the months of January through to March, August, and the month of September through to December. This trend has been consistent throughout the reporting period and the investigation highlights the circumstances surrounding it stems directly due to the following:

- a. School holidays,
- b. Major Social events; and
- c. Peer pressure

16. The time devoted in administering works related to missing children, it is no doubt astronomical in terms of man hours, cost and mobilization of resources. This can essentially be reduced should community members know what to do in terms of timely reporting of missing children and they have to ensure that the conducive environment is created in the homes to stop the propensity of a child being forced to desert at own free will.

CONCLUSION

17. During the reporting period, the Fiji Police Force has recorded a high number of cases relating to missing persons however, they are working tirelessly on addressing these issues collaboratively with relevant stakeholders and interested parties.

Enclosure:

- 1. Police Investigation Report