



18 July 2022

Tēnā koe

On 14 April 2022, your request for the following information was transferred to the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) for response under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act):

1. *Number of children/young people (aged under 18) living in emergency housing (and for how long) from 2015-2022 by quarter – broken down by region and ethnicity*
2. *Number of children/young people (aged under 18) living alone in emergency housing by quarter – broken down by region and ethnicity*
3. *Number of families waiting for accessible Public Housing from 2015-2022 by quarter broken down by region and ethnicity*
4. *Number of households with children on the Public Housing waitlist (and for how long) from 2015-2022 by quarter – broken down by region, ethnicity and number of children aged under 18*
5. *Number of households with children living in Public Housing who are waiting for housing with more bedrooms (and for how long) from 2015-2022 by quarter – broken down by region, ethnicity and number of children aged under 18*
6. *Number of households waiting for accessible Public Housing (and for how long) from 2015-2022 by quarter – broken down by region, ethnicity and number of children aged under 18*
7. *Number of households currently living in Public Housing who are waiting for an accessible property (and for how long) from 2015-2022 by quarter – broken down by region, ethnicity and number of children aged under 18.*

On 30 June 2022, the Ministry advised you that we were granting your request in part and that more time was required to prepare the information for release, and a decision will be with you by 19 July 2022.

Demand for housing across New Zealand is growing and more people are experiencing a severe and immediate need. This demand is generated by a shortage of affordable housing driving up house prices and rents. People on low incomes are most affected by rising housing costs and many seek financial assistance through the Ministry.

The Emergency Housing Special Needs Grant (EH SNG) is available to people who cannot remain in their usual place of residence, if any, and do not have access to other accommodation which is adequate for them or their family's needs. The Ministry pays EH SNGs directly to the accommodation supplier and assistance is generally granted for up to seven nights but can be extended dependant on individual circumstances.

The Ministry works hard to support people in emergency housing to secure a long-term housing solution, either through Public Housing and private rental accommodation. Other options including transitional housing can also be explored as an option depending on availability and the individual's circumstances.

The Ministry recognises that motels are not a long-term solution or the solution that we want to deliver for people who are potentially in a vulnerable situation. They provide a short-term solution while more sustainable options are progressed.

Some people may struggle to access suitable housing due to a lack of available supply or they simply may not be able to meet the high cost of housing which may result in them receiving EH SNG support for an extended period of time. Please note that the Ministry does not hold any contracts or official agreements or arrangements with any emergency housing supplier.

The Public Housing Register consists of the Housing Register and the Transfer Register. The Housing Register records those who are not currently in Public Housing but who have been assessed as eligible for Public Housing. The Transfer Register represents those already in Public Housing who are eligible to be rehoused, generally due to a change in circumstances prompting a move to somewhere more appropriate to their needs.

The criteria used to determine the housing need of a household is based upon the household composition, housing circumstances and housing history. These criteria are grouped into five categories: adequacy, suitability, affordability, accessibility and sustainability. To qualify for Public Housing, a client must be assessed as having an 'at risk' (Priority A) or 'serious' (Priority B) housing need.

Please note that from December 2021, the Ministry has changed its ethnicity reporting to an approach called 'total response'. This change reflects our clients more accurately, aligns our approach with Statistics New Zealand reporting and reflects best practice.

Ethnicity is about people's identity and sense of belonging, measuring cultural affiliation, rather than race, ancestry, nationality, or citizenship. Ethnicity is self-perceived, and people can identify with more than one ethnic group. Previously, the Ministry reported ethnicity using an approach called 'prioritised ethnicity', meaning people were allocated a single ethnic group in an order of priority. The priority previously used by the Ministry was Māori, Pacific Peoples, Other and NZ European. For more information about 'total response' for ethnicity reporting, please see: www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/tools/how-we-report-ethnicity.html.

For clarity I will respond to each of your requests in turn.

1. *Number of children/young people (aged under 18) living in emergency housing (and for how long) from 2015-2022 by quarter – broken down by region and ethnicity*

The Ministry does not report on the ethnicity or ages of children in emergency housing, nor does the Ministry report on how long children have been in emergency housing. However, the Ministry has provided **Table One** in the enclosed **Appendix 1**, showing the number of children or young people under the age of 18 years living in emergency housing as at quarter end from June 2020 to 31 March 2022, by the Territorial Local Authority (TLA).

2. *Number of children/young people (aged under 18) living alone in emergency housing by quarter – broken down by region and ethnicity.*

Table Two in the enclosed **Appendix 2**, shows the number of children or young people under the age of 18 years living alone in emergency housing as at quarter end from June 2020 to 31 March 2022, by TLA.

3. *Number of families waiting for accessible Public Housing from 2015-2022 by quarter broken down by region and ethnicity*

Please note that household composition is based on the adults and children staying in the Emergency Housing (EH) and may not be reflective of their ordinary family/household situation.

The Ministry started capturing information about household composition of EH SNG applicants from 1 April 2020. Please note that this data does not record distinct children and therefore is not representative of the number of children housed in EH over the relevant period. However, in order to meet the intent of your request, the Ministry has provided you the following Tables:

- **Table Three** in the enclosed **Appendix 3**, shows the number of Social Housing clients waiting for modified housing as at each quarter end for the period July 2015 to 31 March 2022, broken down by TLA and household composition.
 - **Table Four** in the enclosed **Appendix 3**, shows the number of Social Housing clients waiting for modified housing as at each quarter end for the period July 2015 to 31 March 2022, broken down by ethnicity and household composition.
4. *Number of households with children on the Public Housing waitlist (and for how long) from 2015-2022 by quarter – broken down by region, ethnicity and number of children aged under 18*

The Ministry is unable to advise you accurately of how long applicants are waiting on the Public Housing Register.

Please find **Table Five** in the enclosed **Appendix 4**, showing Social Housing clients with children as at each quarter end during the period July 2015 to 31 March 2022, broken down by TLA.

Please find **Table Six** in the enclosed **Appendix 4**, showing Social Housing clients with children as at each quarter end for the period 1 July 2015 to 31 March 2022, broken down by Ethnicity.

Please find **Table Seven** in the enclosed **Appendix 4**, showing Social Housing clients with children as at each quarter end for the period 1 July 2015 to 31 March 2022, broken down by Number of Children.

5. *Number of households with children living in Public Housing who are waiting for housing with more bedrooms (and for how long) from 2015-2022 by quarter – broken down by region, ethnicity and number of children aged under 18*

In regard to question five of your request, I am unable to provide you with this information. The Ministry does not centrally record the information you have requested and if this information did exist, it would be held on individual case files. In order to provide you with the requested information Ministry staff would have to manually review thousands of files. As such, I refuse your request under section 18(f) of the Act. The greater public interest is in the effective and efficient administration of public service.

I have considered whether the Ministry would be able to respond to your request given extra time, or the ability for charge for the information requested. I have concluded that, in either case, the Ministry's ability to undertake its work would still be prejudiced.

6. *Number of households waiting for accessible public housing (and for how long) from 2015-2022 by quarter – broken down by region, ethnicity and number of children aged under 18*

Please find **Table Eight** in the enclosed **Appendix 5**, showing the number of Social Housing clients waiting for modified housing as at each quarter end for the period 1 July 2015 to 31 March 2022, broken down by TLA.

Please find **Table Nine** in the enclosed **Appendix 5**, showing the number of Social Housing clients waiting for modified housing as at each quarter end for the period 1 July 2015 to 31 March 2022, broken down by Ethnicity.

Please find **Table Ten** in the enclosed **Appendix 5**, showing the number of Social Housing clients waiting for modified housing as at each quarter end for the period 1 July 2015 to 31 March 2022, broken down by Number of Children.

7. *Number of households currently living in Public Housing who are waiting for an accessible property (and for how long) from 2015-2022 by quarter – broken down by region, ethnicity and number of children aged under 18*

Please find **Table Eleven** in the enclosed **Appendix 6**, showing Social Housing tenancies as at quarter end for the period 30 June 2020 to 31 March 2022, broken down by TLA.

Please find **Table Twelve** in the enclosed **Appendix 6**, showing Social Housing tenancies as at quarter end for the period 30 June 2020 to 31 March 2022, broken down by Ethnicity.

Please find **Table Thirteen** in the enclosed **Appendix 6**, showing Social Housing tenancies as at quarter end for the period 30 June 2022 to 31 March 2022, broken down by number of children.

It is important to note that some numbers in the tables provided have been suppressed and are represented by an 'S', in order to protect client privacy. The Ministry is unable to provide you with the exact number as releasing this information is likely to risk identifying the individuals concerned. As such, this information is withheld under section 9(2)(a) of the Act. The need to protect the privacy of these individual outweighs any public interest in the information.

The principles and purposes of the Act 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
- 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. The Ministry will do this by publishing this letter and attachments 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, 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.

Nāku noa, nā



Karen Hocking
**Group General Manager
Housing**