



3 February 2022

Tēnā koe

On 17 January 2022, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

- *A breakdown of the Social Housing Register priority data for the latest available quarter and a breakdown for the same quarter for the last five years*

Please note that the Social Housing Register is currently referred to as the Public Housing Register.

The Public Housing Register (the 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.

There is a high demand for housing – Emergency, Transitional and Public housing – across the country, which is reflected in the enclosed data. The Ministry has strong relationships with local government, non-government and other community organisations working together to support people who present with housing needs, as well as offering other wrap-around services people may need.

Many factors contribute to the numbers presented in the Public Housing Register for the years in question. The needs of New Zealanders are changing, and many families are finding it harder to access the private rental market. This is particularly true for those who have been renting for a long time and

are now looking to buy their first home in an increasingly competitive and expensive housing market.

The Public Housing Register is dynamic rather than static, and it changes as people's circumstances and situations change. As such, the length of time spent on the Register awaiting housing can vary significantly. Placing people and families into houses is about matching them with the right house in the area they want to live. This includes ensuring the family has the right number of bedrooms, is close to essential services such as schools, and that the accommodation meets any disability needs if appropriate. Those assessed as having the greater need for housing will be prioritised higher.

Nationally there is an issue of housing demand exceeding supply. More housing is needed to support the most vulnerable people in our community and the Government, through a number of agencies, is working to increase the amount of Public Housing. More information about Public Housing is contained in the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development's quarterly reports which can be found at the following link: [Public housing quarterly reports | Te Tūāpapa Kura Kāinga - Ministry of Housing and Urban Development \(hud.govt.nz\)](https://www.hud.govt.nz/public-housing-quarterly-reports/).

Further information regarding the assessment of a client's housing need, housing need priority ratings and the calculation of overall priority ratings can be found on the Work and Income website at the following link: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/social-housing/assessment-of-eligibility/assessment-of-housing-need-01.html.

Please see **Table One** in the enclosed **Appendix**, which shows the data for primary applicants on the Public Housing Register as at the quarters ending December 2017 through to December 2021.

The Ministry works hard to make sure the Public Housing Register accurately reflects the needs of people who contact us for assistance. The Ministry assesses priority ratings based on system generated outputs and staff discretion.

You will note that **Table One** includes only applicants in priority categories A and B. These categories represent those with the greatest need. Those with a lesser need are placed in priority categories C and D. The Ministry supports these applicants into housing through other methods such as Kainga Ora's Options and Advice Service. The distinction enables the Ministry to maintain a clear picture of wider housing need. You can find further information at www.beehive.govt.nz/release/new-rules-fairer-social-housing-system.

The information in the article above refers to Housing New Zealand's Options and Advice Service. The name has now changed to Kainga Ora's Options and Advice Service.

You will also note that the data features increase in Public Housing Register numbers for the years 2020 and 2021. The impact of COVID-19 is on-going and widespread across the country. The associated lockdowns and loss of work have led to more people requiring housing assistance. The Ministry is working hard to support New Zealanders affected by COVID-19.

The principles and purposes of the Official Information Act 1982 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 and
- 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'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 on Public Housing Register priority data, 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.

Ngā mihi nui

PP 
Karen Hocking
Group General Manager
Housing