



10 July 2025

Tēnā koe

Official Information Act request

Thank you for your email of 9 June 2025, requesting information about homelessness, social housing and living in emergency housing.

I have considered your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act). Please find my decision on each part of your request set out separately below.

- 1. Firstly if someone is receiving no support from work and income nz and is sleeping in a tent or is homeless how can they receive a benefit if they have no residential address? Can a person use a P.O Box instead?*

A person's postal address does not determine whether they are entitled to a main benefit from the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry).

However, we do ask that they provide us with a contact address where we can send their mail. This could be a family member, designated agent, hostel, or community organisation, for example.

We need to be able to write to them to check if they've had any change in circumstances, so we can ensure they're receiving their correct benefit entitlement.

There will be times where we have not been provided with a current contactable address or a letter is returned to us from the address that we sent it to. In these instances, if we are not able to reach the client through other means, their benefit may be suspended or cancelled. This is one way we can get the client to re-engage with us and ensure they are getting the support they need.

- 2. How many people have left social housing?*

Please find attached **Appendix:** Number of primary tenants ended their Public Housing tenancy from 1 January 2020 to 31 May 2025, by month, age, gender, number of children, and Territorial Local Authority (TLA). There are five data tables, providing the following:

- **Table 1:** Number of primary tenants ended their Public Housing tenancy from 1 January 2020 to 31 May 2025, by month and age group.
- **Table 2:** Number of primary tenants ended their Public Housing tenancy from 1 January 2020 to 31 May 2025, by month and gender

- **Table 3:** Number of primary tenants ended their Public Housing tenancy from 1 January 2020 to 31 May 2025, by month and number of children.
- **Table 4:** Number of primary tenants ended their Public Housing tenancy from 1 January 2020 to 31 May 2025, by month and Territorial Local Authority.
- **Table 5:** Number of primary tenants ended their Public Housing tenancy from 1 January 2020 to 31 May 2025, by month and accommodation type.

3. *How many people are waiting for social housing?*
4. *How many are single people, how many are couples waiting for social housing?*
5. *How many are families with children, waiting for social housing?*

You can view the answer to questions 3 to 5 on two areas of the Ministry Ministry's website, as follows.

The Housing Register shows the number of applicants on the Housing Register as at the latest reporting available, which is on 31 March 2025. The Housing Register contains applicants not currently in public housing who have been assessed as eligible and who are ready to be matched to a suitable property, here: www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/statistics/housing/housing-register.html.

The Ministry's Transfer Register contains numbers of applicants already in public housing who need to be rehoused for reasons such as there being too few or too many bedrooms in their current public house, or for health reasons. You can view information on the Transfer Register, here: www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/statistics/housing/transfer-register.html.

6. *How many people are living in cars ?*
7. *How many people are living in tents?*
8. *How many people are living on the streets?*

The Ministry does not have data on "all people" who are living in cars, tents, or on the streets. Accordingly, your requests 6, 7 and 8 are refused under section 18(g) of the Act as the information you had requested is not held by the Ministry and I have no grounds to believe that the information is either held by or closely connected to the functions of another department, Minister of the Crown, or organisation.

However, in the interest of being helpful, the most authoritative information on severe housing deprivation (homelessness) is from the 2023 Census by Statistics New Zealand, available here: www.stats.govt.nz/information-releases/2023-census-severe-housing-deprivation-homelessness-estimates/

In addition, please see Table 5 in the attached appendix, which lists the number of Ministry clients on the Public Housing register by month from 1 January 2020 to 31 May 2025, (who at the time of their application being listed on the register) by type of accommodation, including car, tent, and a category labelled "sleeping rough".

9. *Please give an indication of age , male or female and how many children in this break down of information. Time frames , information from 2020 up till June 2025. Break down of information for per month, per year please, per region.*

Please see the attached appendix with tables that provide the information you seek by age, gender, and number of children by month for the period 1 January 2020 to 31 May 2025.

10. *Can a person live in a tent if they have no accommodation and still get or receive a benefit , without accommodation suppliment?*

A person may be entitled to receive a main benefit if they are living in a tent. However, this would depend on whether they meet the associated qualifying criteria for a main benefit. We encourage clients to approach the Ministry to discuss their individual circumstances and check what financial assistance they may be entitled to. The Ministry also provides support to people who need help to find somewhere safe and healthy to live.

11. *How is emergency accommodation regulated and monitored to make sure businesses are not charging excessive rates on work and income clients?*

The Ministry uses accommodation suppliers who have met our standards to provide housing for those of our clients who need emergency housing. You can find details on our website here:

www.workandincome.govt.nz/providers/housing-providers/emergency-housing/index.html.

Information on the emergency housing supplier standards is available here:

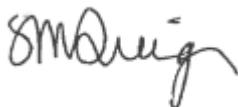
www.workandincome.govt.nz/providers/housing-providers/emergency-housing/supplier-standards.html.

I will be publishing this decision letter, with your personal details deleted, on the Ministry's website in due course.

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 my decision on your request, 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. 

Anna Graham
General Manager
Ministerial and Executive Services