



10 May 2021

Jill Liu

fyi-request-15135-2ff0ba91@requests.fyi.org.nz

Ref: DOIA 2021-1907

Dear Jill Liu,

Thank you for your email of 12 April 2021 requesting under the Official Information Act 1982 (the OIA), the following information:

"I would like to request data on a monthly basis on the no. of onshore resident visa applications lodged up to 23rd Jan 2020 that are yet to be allocated to case officers."

I would also like to request data on the no. of applications that were allocated weekly to case officers from Mar 2021 to the date you respond to this request showing the lodgement date of each application, categorised as to priority and non-priority queue."

Our Response

Question One: "I would like to request data on a monthly basis on the no. of onshore resident visa applications lodged up to 23rd Jan 2020 that are yet to be allocated to case officers."

As you may be aware, Immigration New Zealand (INZ) has one queue for skilled residence applications. The applications in this queue include Skilled Migrant Category (SMC) and Resident from Work (RFW), and are not split into two separate queues based on the application category.

Please see table one below which provides the number of unallocated skilled residence applications in the onshore non priority queue as at 27 April 2021, that were accepted for processing up to 23 January 2020. This has been broken down by month the application was accepted.

Please note that the skilled residence queue data is not static due to the complex nature of visa processing operations. Applications move between queues and this needs to be taken into account when comparing data over time. The data changes over time for reasons such as, but not limited to:

- Applicants arriving into New Zealand on critical purpose visas result in their applications moving from the offshore queue to one of the onshore queues;
- A change in an applicant's circumstances resulting in their application meeting the priority criteria and being moved to the priority queue;
- Applications being escalated via the Employment Visa Escalation (EVE) process - <https://www.immigration.govt.nz/about-us/media-centre/newsletters/korero/korero-july-2019/employment-visa-escalations-eve>;
- Applications selected to be used in training new Immigration Officers.

Table One

Accepted Month	Number of applications
Aug-19	238
Sep-19	579
Oct-19	625
Nov-19	721
Dec-19	753
Jan-20	464
Total	3,380

Question Two: “I would also like to request data on the no. of applications that were allocated weekly to case officers from Mar 2021 to the date you respond to this request showing the lodgement date of each application, categorised as to priority and non-priority queue”

Please see table two below which provides the number of skilled residence applications that were allocated from the onshore non priority and priority queues, between the periods 01 March 2021 to 26 April 2021. Please note there are consultation processes involved in obtaining data. There is also sign out processes involved prior to the external release of any information under the OIA. This means we are unable to provide data information as at the date the request is responded to.

Allocation of applications to immigration officers occur weekly and the number of applications that are allocated is dependent upon processing capacity. The Government is currently reviewing its approach to the New Zealand Residence Programme (NZRP) and is considering replacing the planning range with a more targeted approach that focuses on management of specific residence visa types. In the meantime, INZ will continue to process applications at the same volume and with the same level of resourcing as the previous NZRP allowed for. This has an impact on the number of applications that can be allocated and the timeliness of application processing.

Also note that in February 2021, the Auckland region moved into Alert Level 3 twice which had an impact on the processing of skilled residence applications, and the capacity for immigration officers to be allocated new applications. With reduced processing capacity and reduced ability for some staff to access INZ offices during the COVID-19 response, for several weeks the INZ Manukau office had limited numbers of staff processing skilled residence applications from the office and reduced productivity for those working from home.

Table Two

Allocation week	Priority Queue	Non Priority Queue
1-Mar-21	35	30
8-Mar-21	52	0
15-Mar-21	73	49
22-Mar-21	16	118
29-Mar-21	26	80
5-Apr-21	47	20
12-Apr-21	37	31
19-Apr-21	79	4
26-Apr-21	45	39

Any updates in regards to the allocation of applications can be found via the following link: www.immigration.govt.nz/about-us/media-centre/news-notifications/how-we-prioritise-resident-visa-applications/smc-and-rfw-timeframe-information

If you wish to discuss any aspect of your request or this response, please contact Lautalie Leausa Vaa, Senior Business Advisor, Operations Support, Immigration New Zealand at Lautalie.Leausavaa@mbie.govt.nz.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nicola Hogg', written in a cursive style.

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Nicola Hogg
General Manager - Border and Visa Operations
Immigration New Zealand