MINISTRY OF BUSINESS, INNOVATION & EMPLOYMENT
HĪKINA WHAKATUTUKI

12 July 2021

Jill Liu
By email: fyi-request-15706-4c2d52fe@requests.fyi.org.nz

File No: DOIA 2021-2500

Dear Jill Liu

Thank you for your email of 8 June 2021, requesting the following information under the Official Information Act 1982 (the OIA):

I would like to request data on a daily basis on the no. of onshore resident visa applications lodged up to Jan 2020 that are yet to be allocated to case officers, categorised as to priority and non-priority queue.

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

Thank you for clarifying your request on 14 June 2021 as follows:

1. I would like to the number of onshore skilled residence visa applications accepted by Immigration New Zealand on or before 31 January 2020 that are yet to be allocated to case officers, broken down by date the applications were accepted and broken down by queue type (e.g. priority/non priority).

2. I would also like to request the number of skilled residence applications that were allocated each week to case officers from 1 May 2021 to the date you respond to this request, broken down by priority status (priority/non-priority); and the accepted date of the oldest application left in the queue each week.

Our response
1. I would like to the number of onshore skilled residence visa applications accepted by Immigration New Zealand on or before 31 January 2020 that are yet to be allocated to case officers, broken down by date the applications were accepted and broken down by queue type (e.g. priority/non priority).

Please refer to Table One attached, for the number of unallocated onshore skilled residence (Skilled Migrant Category and Residence from Work) visa applications accepted before 31 January 2020 (inclusive), broken down by accepted date and priority queue

We have withheld application counts of five or fewer under section 9(2)(a) of the OIA in order to protect the privacy of natural persons.

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;
- The lodgement of an application may take several days or weeks, depending on the completeness of the application. Applications are back-dated once lodgement requirements are completed which can cause fluctuations in the number of applications accepted in a particular month.

Most data used in OIA responses is pulled directly from the Immigration New Zealand (INZ) Application Management System (AMS), and reflects the date that the data entry relating to the application was completed in AMS. On occasion an application is received by INZ on one date, but the data entry is not completed until a later date. In the interest of fairness, when allocating applications the Manukau office use the date that all information required for the acceptance of the application was actually received by INZ rather than the date the data entry was completed – which reflects when a client will perceive their application to have been submitted. This means that there may be differences noted in the allocation data, which is sourced directly from the Manukau office, when compared with other statistics about skilled residence, including number and dates of applications in the queues.

2. I would also like to request the number of skilled residence applications that were allocated each week to case officers from 1 May 2021 to the date you respond to this request, broken down by priority status (priority/non-priority); and the accepted date of the oldest application left in the queue each week.

Please refer to Table Two attached for allocation information relating to skilled residence (Skilled Migrant Category and Residence from Work) applications and Table Three attached for the accepted dates of the last applications allocated from the non-priority skilled residence queue, broken down by week.

Allocations of skilled residence applications to immigration officers occur weekly and the number of applications that are allocated is dependent upon processing capacity. INZ's role as a regulator is to process and approve applications in line with immigration instructions and the New Zealand Residency Programme (NZRP) planning range set by the Government of the day. The Government is currently reviewing its approach to the NZRP. 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.

Any updates in regards to the allocation of applications can be found via the following link: https://www.immigration.govt.nz/new-zealand-visas/waiting-for-a-visa/how-long-it-takes-to-process-your-visa-application/smc-and-rfw-timeframe-information

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this decision. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

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

Yours sincerely

Nicola Hogg
General Manager, Border and Visa Operations
Immigration New Zealand
Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment

Table One: The number of unallocated onshore skilled residence (Skilled Migrant Category and Residence from Work) visa applications accepted before 31 January 2020 (inclusive), broken down by accepted date and priority queue.

Accepted Date	Onshore general (non-priority) applications	Priority applications
5 October 2019	<=5	0
7 October 2019	<=5	0
9 October 2019	<=5	0
10 October 2019	<=5	0
11 October 2019	<=5	0
15 October 2019	<=5	0
16 October 2019	<=5	0
17 October 2019	<=5	0
19 October 2019	6	0
22 October 2019	<=5	0
24 October 2019	7	0
25 October 2019	<=5	0
29 October 2019	17	0
30 October 2019	42	0
31 October 2019	33	0
1 November 2019	23	0
4 November 2019	36	0
5 November 2019	28	0
6 November 2019	29	0
7 November 2019	34	0
8 November 2019	40	0
11 November 2019	38	0
12 November 2019	45	0
13 November 2019	32	0
14 November 2019	39	0
15 November 2019	37	0
18 November 2019	41	0
19 November 2019	33	0
20 November 2019	39	0
21 November 2019	36	0
22 November 2019	29	0
25 November 2019	26	0
26 November 2019	21	0
27 November 2019	38	0
28 November 2019	51	0
29 November 2019	22	0
2 December 2019	41	<=5
3 December 2019	57	0
4 December 2019	27	<=5

5 December 2019	49	0
6 December 2019	42	0
7 December 2019	45	0
9 December 2019	45	0
10 December 2019	41	0
11 December 2019	26	<=5
12 December 2019	36	0
13 December 2019	44	0
14 December 2019	43	0
16 December 2019	35	<=5
17 December 2019	36	0
18 December 2019	31	0
19 December 2019	37	0
20 December 2019	38	0
23 December 2019	31	0
24 December 2019	24	0
27 December 2019	<=5	0
30 December 2019	9	0
31 December 2019	<=5	0
3 January 2020	9	0
6 January 2020	33	<=5
7 January 2020	27	0
8 January 2020	32	0
9 January 2020	19	0
10 January 2020	29	0
11 January 2020	63	0
13 January 2020	30	0
14 January 2020	25	0
15 January 2020	26	0
16 January 2020	18	0
17 January 2020	23	0
18 January 2020	40	0
20 January 2020	13	0
21 January 2020	23	0
22 January 2020	23	0
23 January 2020	31	0
24 January 2020	25	0
28 January 2020	24	0
29 January 2020	23	0
30 January 2020	14	0
31 January 2020	20	0

You will note there are some priority applications accepted several months ago. This is because as applicants' circumstances change, some non-priority applications may meet the prioritisation criteria (current occupational registration where registration is required by immigration instructions or an hourly rate at or above twice the median wage). Such applications are moved to the priority queue and allocated within two weeks.

Table Two: Allocation information relating to skilled residence (Skilled Migrant Category and Residence from Work) applications

Week commencing	Number of priority skilled residence applications allocated (including via the employment visa escalation (EVE) process[1])	Number of general (non-priority) skilled residence applications allocated
3 May 2021	41	46
10 May 2021	69	83
17 May 2021	68	101
24 May 2021	57	197
31 May 2021	43	150
7 June 2021	76	170
14 June 2021	55	150
21 June 2021	64	271
28 June 2021	55	131
5 July 2021	45	47

Table Three: Accepted dates of the last applications allocated from the non-priority skilled residence queue, broken down by week.

Week commencing	Date of last application allocated from the general (non-priority) queue
3 May 2021	Not recorded
10 May 2021	22 August 2019
17 May 2021	Not recorded
24 May 2021	30 August 2019
31 May 2021	Not recorded
7 June 2021	17 September 2019
14 June 2021	Not recorded
21 June 2021	17 October 2019
28 June 2021	Not recorded
5 July 2021	Not recorded

You will note that the information is not available for every week. This is because the data is recorded manually. If the information is not captured at the time the allocations were being made, there is no way for INZ to capture it retrospectively.

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[1]   Employment Visa Escalation is a process to respond to escalation requests for urgent allocation for employment related visas (and associated family members) for both Temporary Work Visas and Skilled Resident Visas. For more information see the INZ website here: https://www.immigration.govt.nz/about-us/media-centre/newsletters/korero/korero-july-2019/employment-visa-escalations-eve