

26 August 2022

Chris McCashin
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Tēnā koe Chris

Your Official Information Act request, reference H2022006994

Thank you for your email of 8 July 2022 requesting information relating to mortality data.

As part of the transformation of the health and disability system reforms, as of 1 July 2022 the functions previously under the Ministry of Health's Data and Digital team have now transferred to Te Whatu Ora Health New Zealand. As the matters you have raised now fall under the functions of Te Whatu Ora, our agency will respond to your request which has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act). You requested the following:

“Please provide the top 20 causes of death across New Zealand for the following years broken down into months 2015 – 2022”

On 27 July 2022, we contacted you to clarify your request and advised that Te Whatu Ora holds death data only up to 2018. To date, Te Whatu Ora has not received a response from you. For information relating to death data up to 2018, please refer to appendix 1. Your request for death data between 2019 to 2022 is refused under section 18(g)(i) of the Act, as the information requested is not held by Te Whatu Ora and there are no grounds for believing it is held by another agency subject to the Act.

Te Whatu Ora has a *Mortality Web Tool* that provides the most recent (2019) and the historical mortality data dating back to 1948. This web tool is publicly available on the Ministry of Health's website at: www.health.govt.nz/publication/mortality-web-tool. Please follow the link in the right-hand corner of the page to open the web tool. For all other published mortality data and statistics, please refer to the following page: www.health.govt.nz/nz-health-statistics/health-statistics-and-data-sets/mortality-data-and-stats

For more recent data, there is approximately a 6–8-week lag between a death occurring and the fact of this death being available from Te Whatu Ora data. The earliest fact of death information is available online from the Stats NZ COVID 19 data portal at: www.stats.govt.nz/experimental/covid-19-data-portal. Stats NZ also publish mortality statistics here: www.stats.govt.nz/tools/stats-infoshare. To access this information, select *Populations*, and then *Deaths*.

After the close of a calendar year, there is a 12–18-month process to assign cause of death codes to the majority of deaths in that year. The Ministry's clinical coding team reviews the death certificate and health history of the deceased, to assign cause of death codes. Approximately ten percent of deaths are referred to the Coroner each year to determine cause. Deaths which require a coronial inquiry can take 2-3 or more years for cause of death to be assigned. The Ministry does not make mortality data available publicly until the majority of deaths have been assigned a cause of death, to ensure that the data we release is complete and accurate.

Te Whatu Ora publishes preliminary mortality statistics, which do not include injury-related deaths information which are typically more influenced by coronial cases, in December each year. The 2020 preliminary data will be published in December 2022.

You are advised of your right to also raise any concerns with the Office of the Ombudsman. Information about how to do this is available at: www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or by phoning 0800 802 602.

Nāku iti noa, nā

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Gaynor Bradfield

Manager

Office of the Chief Data and Digital