



Public Service Commission

Te Kawa Mataaho

27 July 2026

9(2)(a) privacy

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Official Information Request **Our Ref: OIA 2026-0196**

I refer to your Official Information Act 1982 (OIA) request received by the Public Service Commission Te Kawa Mataaho (the Commission) on 26 June 2026. On 13 July 2026, you emailed the Commission refining your request to the following information:

- 1. Is it appropriate for the Institute to classify the New Zealand Police, New Zealand Defence Force and the Parliamentary Counsel Office as 'departments' for the purposes of the GDS Index?*
- 2. Please clarify why New Zealand Police, New Zealand Defence Force and the Parliamentary Counsel Office are omitted from your 'Departmental FTE changes' spreadsheet. Please provide a separate equivalent spreadsheet for these two organisations since 2015.*
- 3. Are we missing any other organisations similar to the New Zealand Police, New Zealand Defence Force and the Parliamentary Counsel Office, or are these the only two that are treated unusually? Please identify any additional organisations. Should these types of organisations form part of the GDS Index? Please explain.*
- 4. Why does your 'Departmental FTE changes' spreadsheet treat departmental agencies as departments, when they are in law hosted by a department?*
- 5. Please provide the definition used in the preparation of your 'Departmental FTE changes' spreadsheet.*
- 6. Does the PSC provide data and/or a definition of 'frontline' and 'backbone' and/or 'field-based staff' and 'office-based staff'? Is there a preferred or standard terminology used across government to describe different types of FTE roles? If yes, please provide the formula. Is there any guidance from PSC on how departments should report the different types of employee? Please explain.*
- 7. Please provide the number of FTEs that correspond to 'frontline' and 'backbone' roles (or equivalent terminology) for each department (including the New Zealand Police, New Zealand Defence Force and the Parliamentary Counsel Office), annually, from the year ending 30 June 2000.*
- 8. Can you advise when the 30 June 2026 year FTE data will become available?*

9. *We want to use the most accurate and reliable data for comparing one department's FTE numbers over time and comparing those of different departments. Given that we have found discrepancies between your data and the data in the annual reports of departments (see discussion below), which would you suggest we use?*
10. *Has there been or is there any ongoing work to ensure that the FTE data can be compared by departments over time and between departments at a particular point in time? Do we need to add a disclaimer that the data is not verified and inconsistencies were found between PSC data and the data in annual reports of departments?*
11. *Has the PSC prepared any insights to explain changes in FTE numbers? If yes, please direct us to the relevant report/website.*
12. *Can you explain, very generally, the reason for the changes in FTE numbers from 2000 to today? For example, we imagine the increase in 2020/21 is in response to COVID-19. Can you provide any guidance on the other changes over time?*
13. *Has the PSC completed any analysis comparing department or public service FTE data with changes in New Zealand's population? If yes, please explain and provide any relevant documents.*

Information being released - Parts one, two, three, four, eight, nine, ten and twelve

In response to parts one and three of your request, Departments of the Public Service are those organisations listed as departments in [Schedule 2 of the Public Service Act 2020](#). These organisations are subject to the provisions of that Act. However, New Zealand's wider state services include other organisations that are considered departments under separate legislation.

New Zealand Police, the New Zealand Defence Force, and the Parliamentary Counsel Office are departments within the Executive Branch of government but are governed by their own legislation and are generally referred to as non-Public Service departments. The Parliamentary Service and the Office of the Clerk are departments within the Legislative Branch of government.

The definition of "department" adopted for the purposes of your index is a matter for your organisation. The Commission generally uses the term to refer to departments of the Public Service, as those entities fall within the scope of the Public Service Act 2020. However, it is open to other organisations to adopt a broader definition that includes all departments, regardless of the legislation under which they operate.

The Commission has reported Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) information for New Zealand Police, the New Zealand Defence Force, and the Parliamentary Counsel Office from June 2023 onwards. These figures can be found in the *Crown Entity FTE Changes* table and spreadsheet in the same section of the website where the departmental FTE figures are [published](#). We have also received FTE estimates for these agencies for the period prior to June 2023 and have provided these figures in the table below (please note the data warning that applies to figures before June 2023). We have included figures for the New Zealand Security Intelligence Service, as it was a non-departmental agency before being included in the departmental FTE figures from June 2018 onwards.

The figures for New Zealand Police, the New Zealand Defence Force, and the Parliamentary Counsel Office prior to June 2023 were provided to the Public Service Commission for benchmarking purposes and have not been published by the Commission (figures provided by the NZDF over this period were for the civilian workforce only). While we have supplied the figures held by the Commission, the originating agencies may hold more accurate or authoritative records for this period.

If you require confirmed historical FTE figures, we recommend contacting New Zealand Police, the New Zealand Defence Force, and the Parliamentary Counsel Office directly, as they are best placed to provide official information about their workforce data.

Figures for periods before June 2023 were provided to the Public Service Commission on the understanding that they would not be published. As a result, they may not have been subject to the same level of quality assurance as later FTE figures published on the PSC website.

Please find enclosed the following documents within scope of parts two and twelve of your requests. Item two provides the high-level commentary on workforce composition and drivers of change for 2015 to 2024.

Item	Document Description	Decision
1	Part 2: Additional FTE data for Question 2	Release in full
2	Part 12: Change in staff number commentary 2015-2024	Release in full

In response to part four of your request, the spreadsheet provided by the Commission is intended to provide transparency about workforce changes within departmental agencies. While staff in departmental agencies are employed under delegation from the chief executive of the host department, as provided for in [section 68 of the Public Service Act 2020](#), they work within and contribute to the departmental agency. Reporting these staff against the departmental agency provides visibility of the size and composition of those agencies and is intended to reflect their operational workforce.

In response to part eight of your request, the Commission expects to publish workforce data for the year ended 30 June 2026 in October 2026. The specific publication date has not yet been confirmed. Once confirmed, the publication date will be included in the Commission's [data release calendar](#).

In response to part nine of your request, the Commission's workforce data is collected from agencies using a common methodology and consistent workforce definitions. This supports comparisons over time and across agencies. The data is available on the Commission's website through the [Public Service Commission Workforce Data](#) publication.

In response to part ten of your request, the Commission publishes workforce data annually as at 30 June, including FTE data for Public Service departments. This data is collected from agencies using a common methodology and consistent workforce definitions. One of the purposes of collecting and publishing this information is to support comparisons of workforce data over time and across Public Service agencies.

Information publicly available – parts five, seven, eleven and thirteen

The following information is covered by parts five, seven, eleven and thirteen of your requests and is publicly available on the Public Service Commission Te Kawa Mataaho website at the links provided for in the table below.

Item	Document Description	Website Address
3	Part 5: Workforce data – definitions and codes	HRC Data Definitions and Codes
4	Part 7: Occupation	Occupation - Public Service Commission Te Kawa Mataaho
5	Part 11: Workforce Size	Workforce size - Public Service Commission Te Kawa Mataaho
6	Part 13: Long-term trends	Long-term trends - Public Service Commission Te Kawa Mataaho

With reference to part five of your request the ‘*Departmental FTE changes*’ spreadsheet uses the Public Service Commission’s standard definition of Full-Time Equivalent (FTE). FTE is a measure of workforce size that converts employees’ hours worked into full-time equivalent units. Employees are assigned an FTE value between 0 and 1 based on the proportion of full-time hours they work, and these values are aggregated to calculate an organisation’s total FTE workforce. The full definition is available on page 9 of the linked document.

With reference to part seven of your request the Commission does collect occupational information and publishes workforce data by occupational group, and this is available in the link above. Some analyses have aggregated these occupational groups into broad frontline and back-office categories for specific policy purposes using various aggregations, but these are not collected data series.

With reference to part eleven of your request, each year, the Commission publishes high-level commentary on workforce composition and the factors contributing to changes in workforce numbers.

Information on workforce changes for the year ended 30 June 2025 is available on the Commission’s website using the link provided in the table above. Information from 2015 and 2024 is available in item 2.

With reference to part thirteen of your request, the Commission publishes analysis on its website comparing FTE data with changes in New Zealand’s population. This information is publicly available and can be accessed through the link provided in the table below.

Accordingly, I have refused your request for the documents listed in the above table under section 18(d) of the OIA on the grounds the information requested is or will soon be publicly available.

Information does not exist – part six

The Commission does not have formal definitions for “frontline”, “backbone”, “field-based staff”, or “office-based staff”. The Commission also does not prescribe standard

terminology across government for these types of roles and does not provide a formula for classifying employees into these categories.

The Commission also has not issued formal guidance on how departments should report different types of employees using these classifications.

We are therefore refusing part six of your request under section 18(e) of the Official Information Act 1982 on the grounds the information requested does not exist.

If you wish to discuss this decision with us, please feel free to contact Enquiries@publicservice.govt.nz.

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.

Please note that we intend to publish this response (with your personal details removed) on the Commission's website.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Nicky Dirks'.

Nicky Dirks

Manager – Ministerial and Executive Services
Public Service Commission Te Kawa Mataaho