

8 April 2022

C Nowland

By email: fyi-request-19028-c8cd402f@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear C Nowland

Official Information Act Request

On 1 April 2022 you sent a request for information under the Official Information Act 1982 to the Ministry of Health (reference H202204863), who transferred your request to ESR on 4 April 2022. The request transferred to ESR was as follows:

As the PCR test does not differentiate between covid variants, how many of the positive PCR tests from 27/1/22 to 31/3/22 were sent for genomic sequencing to determine that the variant was Omicron?

Our response to your request

As the PCR test does not differentiate between covid variants, how many of the positive PCR tests from 27/1/22 to 31/3/22 were sent for genomic sequencing to determine that the variant was Omicron?

ESR performed Whole Genome Sequencing on samples from 3,858 cases with a report date between 27 January 2022 and 31 March 2022 (inclusive).

The following variants were observed:

- 58 Delta
- 3538 Omicron
- 262 Could not determine the variant.

Source: Cases reported to EpiSurv¹ at 2359 hours 3 April 2022 & Whole Genome Sequencing outputs available at 0900 hours 4 April 2022.

It should be noted that as case numbers have increased and as rapid antigen tests have become more widely used, only a subset of PCR positive cases has been sequenced.

This sample is influenced by urgent sequencing requests from public health units and may not accurately reflect the distribution of Omicron and Delta cases circulating. Whole Genome Sequencing is a time and resource-intensive process and results are not available instantly.

¹ EpiSurv collates notifiable disease information on a real-time basis from the Public Health Services in New Zealand.

Your right to seek a review

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.

Thank you for your request.

Yours sincerely



Jill Vintiner
**Joint General Manager Health and Environment - Health
ESR**