



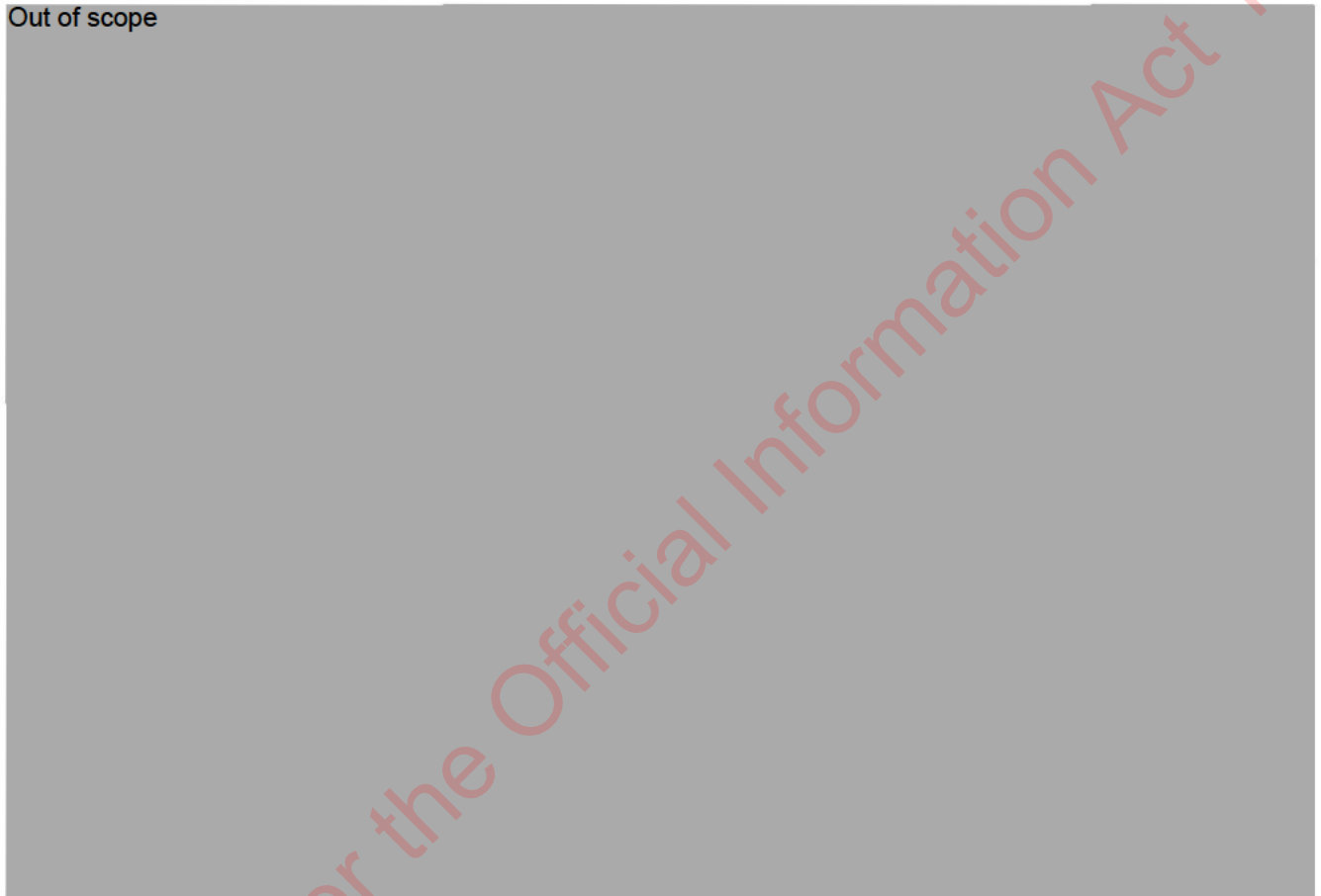
Internal Affairs briefing

Hon Brooke van Velden
Minister of Internal Affairs

Title: **Introduction to Citizenship**

Date: 5 December 2023

Out of scope



Contact for telephone discussions (if required)

Name	Position	Contact Number	Suggested 1 st contact
Maria Robertson	Deputy Chief Executive, Service Delivery and Operations	9(2)(a)	✓
Julia Wootton	General Manager, Services and Access	9(2)(a)	

Return electronic document to:	Michael Mahoney michael.mahoney@dia.govt.nz
Cohesion document reference	Citizenship Tier 2 Briefing - 2023.docx (cohesion.net.nz)
Ministerial database reference	IA202301050

Out of scope



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Strategies to improve efficiency, including automation to segment and check parts of applications

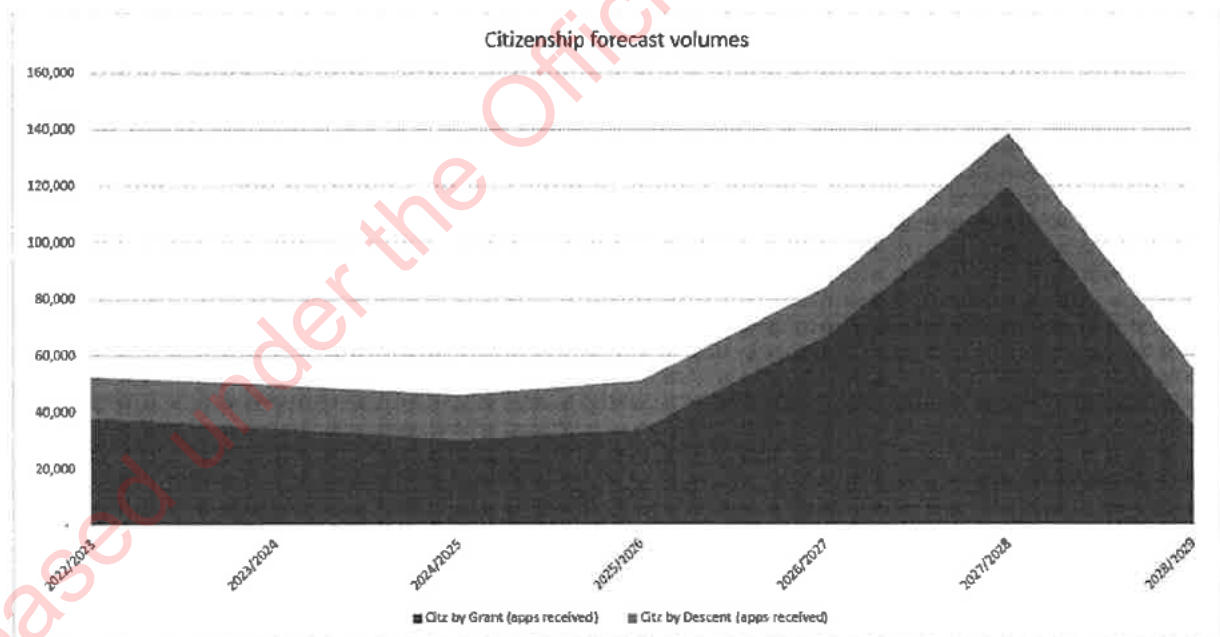
52. An increase in the number of citizenship by grant applications developed while the Department transitioned to the online processing system. This increase was exacerbated by COVID-19 lockdowns and peaked at 37,000 in March 2022. Citizenship services were not considered 'essential' under the COVID-19 Public Health Response Act 2020.
53. The Department is investigating various mechanisms by which we will manage the increased demand, including increasing the number of citizenship-trained life and identity services officers and further optimising the automated workflow within the customer-centred management system (CCMS).
54. We are consistently reviewing policies and procedures as we further develop CCMS functionality, to improve automation and increase efficiencies for the assessment process. Some applications can now be processed more quickly as they need fewer checks and are simpler to process, so can be worked on by officers who are more recently trained, while re-allocating more complex cases to more experienced officers.
55. As of 1 December, the number of citizenship applications waiting a decision is 28,161, a reduction of about 9,000 from the peak demand of about 37,000 in March 2022.

Almost half the citizenship by grant applications are being processed within the service level agreement target of an average of 50 working days.

- 56. While the average wait time has reduced, a disparity exists with about 15% of our most complex applications (those requiring more manual checks) waiting over a year. We are working to reduce this proportion with a focus on the oldest applications.
- 57. We will update you as part of the regular Department status report.

Our response to resident visa changes in 2021 that will increase citizenship by grant demand

- 58. Pre-COVID projections were that demand for citizenship would remain constant. However, changes in immigration policy settings in 2021 affected the volumes of residency class visas issued between September 2021 and July 2022. We now expect a significant increase in applications for citizenship by grant beginning in 2026.
- 59. Historically, about 80% of eligible people apply for citizenship as soon as they meet the presence requirement.
- 60. From 2026 to 2027, we forecast citizenship applications to increase from 39,000 applications (2022/23) to 166,400 applications. This is because migrants who received permanent residency status during border closures will become eligible to apply for citizenship.
- 61. The graph below provides a view of the forecast citizenship by grant demand. We predict that without intervention by the end of 2028, 138,000 unprocessed citizenship by grant applications will accumulate and the average time to process applications will exceed two years.




- 62. To prevent a significant growth in applications waiting a decision or an extensive increase to timeframes, options exist to temporarily extend the workforce to process the forecast influx of applications. This will have flow-on effects to citizenship fees due to increased costs. Our products and services are provided on a cost-recovery basis, so the fees collected must be sufficient to meet the cost of providing these services.
- 63. The fees for all identity and life event products and services are set in regulations. Citizenship fees are reviewed every three years and are due for review in 2024. Fees

were last increased in 2003. It is expected that fee increases will be required due to increases to all operational costs driven by the current inflationary environment and ongoing investment required for ICT systems.


Current issues

64. We are working on several operational matters relating to citizenship. These matters include:
- 64.1 continuing to reduce the number of applications on hand awaiting a decision
 - 64.2 continuing to innovate in the way we assess applications, by progressively using the features of our new system to automate aspects of the application process, and
 - 64.3 working with other agencies⁶ to mitigate risks arising from intercountry movement of children through adoption (particularly from Samoa and people born of surrogacy overseas) and on issues arising from the interplay of citizenship legislation and other legislation affecting children who are adopted, born of surrogacy or born to more than two parents.
65. We will also support other agencies where their work touches on citizenship. We will update you on these issues as they progress.

Out of scope



Out of scope



Out of scope



Maria Robertson
Deputy Chief Executive

Hon Brooke van Velden
Minister of Internal Affairs

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Internal Affairs briefing

Hon Brooke van Velden
Minister of Internal Affairs

Title: **Citizenship processing update**

Date: 8 May 2024

Key issues

- Your office has asked for information on citizenship by grant processing times.
- This report sets out the current work on hand, and average processing times for work completed in April 2024.
- We can provide you with regular monthly/weekly updates on citizenship by grant processing.

Action sought

We recommend that you **advise** if you would like any further or different information in your briefing

Timeframe

At your convenience

Contact for telephone discussions (if required)

Name	Position	Contact Number	Suggested 1 st contact
Maria Robertson	Deputy Chief Executive, Service Delivery and Operations	9(2)(a)	✓
Adrian Jarvis	General Manager, Services and Access	9(2)(a)	

Return electronic document to:	Rachel Prosser, rachel.prosser@dia.govt.nz
Cohesion document reference	Briefing - Citizenship Processing Update 7 May 2024.docx
Ministerial database reference	IA20241972

Purpose

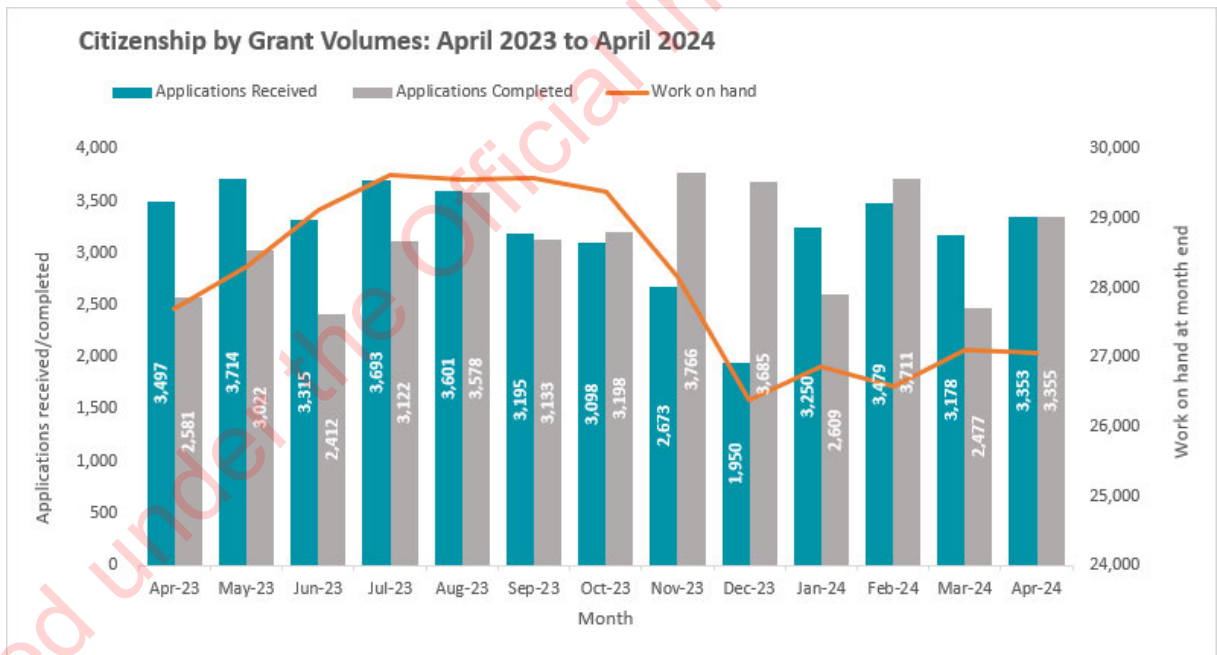
1. To provide you with an update on the processing of applications for citizenship by grant, including the reasons for the differences in processing time for applicants.

Background

2. Requirements for the grant of New Zealand citizenship are described in the Citizenship Act 1977 and Citizenship (Western Samoa) Act 1982. Every applicant must meet all legislative requirements for grant, other than in exceptional circumstances.
3. There is no automatic entitlement to be granted citizenship. Each application is unique, and each is assessed as an individual “case” by an experienced Life and Identity Services Officer.
4. Your office regularly receives queries about timeframes for assessing applications for citizenship by grant, and requested we provide you with information.

Current work on hand

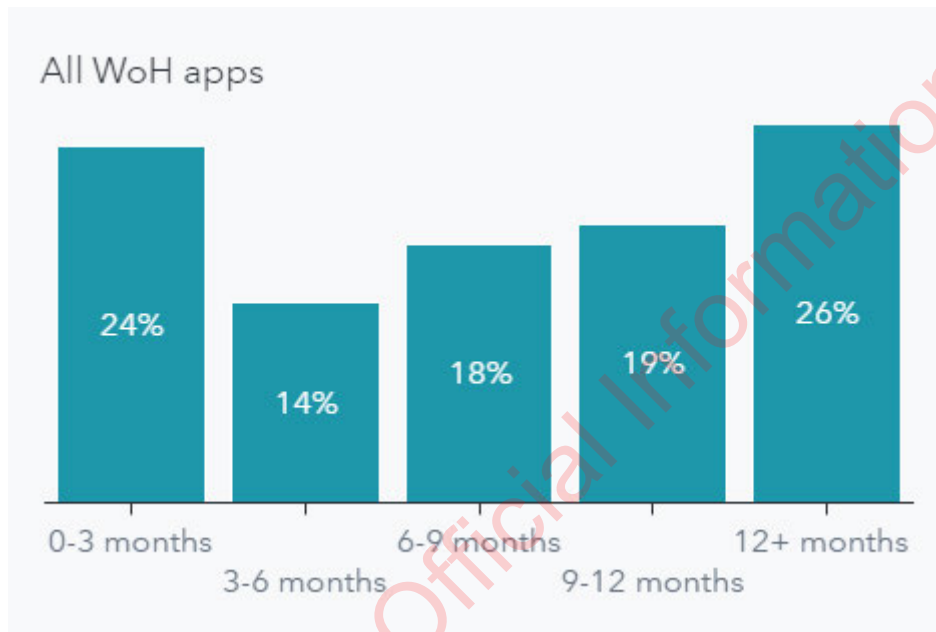
5. As of 5 May 2024, we have 27,209 applications for citizenship by grant on hand, a reduction of 10,000 from the peak in April 2022, and 1,000 fewer than December 2023.
6. Citizenship processing has been stable in 2024, fluctuating around 27,000 applications on hand. Month-to-month volumes completed vary, depending on the number of applications routed to expedited workstreams, and the number Life and Identity Services Officers (LISOs) tasked with processing applications in highly automated or less automated workstreams.



Work completed in April 2024

7. In April 2024 we received **3,353** applications (2,956 online, and 397 on paper) and **3,355** applicants received an outcome (of which 3,343 were approved).
8. The number of people who received citizenship at a ceremony in April was lower than typical at **1,466**, due to public holidays for Easter, Anzac Day, and the school holidays leading to Councils scheduling fewer ceremonies). April also followed two peak ceremony months in February and March.

9. Of applications decided in April 2024:
 - 60% of applications decided in April 2024 were decided in the target average time of 50 working days or less.
 - 50% of all applications were decided in less than 33 working days.
10. The median time it took an application to be allocated to a LISO was **4.7 months** and the average time for decision **6.2 months**.
11. Within this is the average, a disparity exists with some applicants whose application require more manual checks waiting over a year for processing. We are working to reduce this proportion and most LISOs are working on the oldest and most complex applications.
12. The distribution of applications on hand is shown below.



Age and stage of applications on hand

13. Of current applications:
 - 22,425 are awaiting allocation to a Life and Identity Services Officer (LISO) for processing.
 - 4,784 are allocated to a LISO, of which 3,151 are waiting on external checks.
14. A graph in the appendix shows the status of applications by the month they were received.

Comment: why application processing times differ

15. Citizenship applications are progressed in stages. All applications have a mix of manual and automated assessment steps. Most applicants (88%) apply online, and the remainder are digitised by the Department and progressed in an online system.
16. When applications are received or digitised, our systems run a series of preliminary automated checks which are used to triage them into different workstreams.

Applications are filtered to workstreams

17. Low risk applications which can meet maximum automated checks receive a simple identity verification by a LISO before standard external checks with the Police and Security Intelligence Service (SIS). These checks provide information about convictions, fines and traffic demerits, and information about whether the police have attended family violence incidents.

18. Other applications require thorough checks to confirm identity before external checks are generated. Once the external checks have been received and if they are clear, the application moves forward to approval under delegated authority.
19. Some applications require considerable manual assessment to determine identity, or eligibility, which may require gathering information regarding the applicants claim for reduced presence due to special circumstances particular to the applicant, a second-generation grant to a child of a citizen by descent, or a claim for a grant due to public interest factors.
20. Where information is received via the external checks it is assessed against operational policies and the Ministerial Citizenship Guidance Document, to determine whether a submission needs to be prepared for Ministerial decision.
21. Under current delegation settings, only applications which clearly meet the requirements may be approved by officials, and only the Minister can decline an application. To encourage people to withdraw if they are unlikely to succeed, regulations were amended in 2006 to provide that applicants who are advised they do not meet a requirement may withdraw and receive a \$310 refund.

Key differences between workstreams.

22. The wait time across three main workstreams for an application to be assigned to a LISO is currently:
 - Three weeks (15 April 2024) for online applications with maximum automated checks
 - Seven weeks (17 March 2024) for Samoan applicants who do not meet automated checks and are processed under the provisions of the Citizenship (Western Samoa) Act 1982.
 - 13.5 Months (19 March 2023) for applications in the standard queue which are more complex to process. This queue includes applications which cannot be automated, the applicants do not meet the criteria, and those which have results from external checks that require assessment.
23. Common areas where manual intervention may be required include where applicants:
 - 23.1 changed their name after they migrated to New Zealand.
 - 23.2 have a gap in their residency status and therefore do not meet the standard presence requirement in the Act.
 - 23.3 did not meet the presence requirement on the day they applied for citizenship.
 - 23.4 have a photo that does not meet the required quality standards.
 - 23.5 cannot be matched to data held by Immigration New Zealand.
24. Applications may take longer where:
 - 24.1 applicants apply early and seek to be considered for a reduced presence requirement or under exceptional circumstances.
 - 24.2 they were not born in and are not resident in New Zealand and are seeking a second-generation grant for the children of citizens by descent.
 - 24.3 the Police report is returned with results which need to be assessed against policy, and further information sought from the applicant.
 - 24.4 Immigration New Zealand has alerts.
 - 24.5 applicants find it difficult to provide evidence to fulfil the requirements of the Citizenship Guidance Document to qualify for a reduced presence requirement, or to substantiate their good character.

25. Applications take considerably longer to process where a Ministerial decision is required as the Department requires significantly more information from the applicant and must prepare a submission for your consideration.

Current focus

26. We are currently focussing on processing the oldest applications to reduce the disparity in application times. We are also considering how we can more efficiently progress applications which require the most engagements with customers, to free up resource to reduce overall work in hand.
27. We are briefing you separately on updates to the Citizenship Guidance Document and will be working to implement these changes.

Recommendations

28. We recommend that you **advise** if you would like any further or different information in your next briefing **Yes/No**



Maria Robertson
Deputy Chief Executive, Service Delivery and Operations

Hon Brooke van Velden
Minister of Internal Affairs

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Internal Affairs briefing

Hon Brooke van Velden
Minister of Internal Affairs

Title: **Citizenship processing update June 2024**

Date: 6 June 2024

Key issues

- This report sets out the current work on hand, and average processing times for work completed in May 2024.

Contact for telephone discussions (if required)

Name	Position	Contact Number	Suggested 1 st contact
Maria Robertson	Deputy Chief Executive, Service Delivery and Operations	9(2)(a)	✓
Adrian Jarvis	General Manager, Services and Access	9(2)(a)	

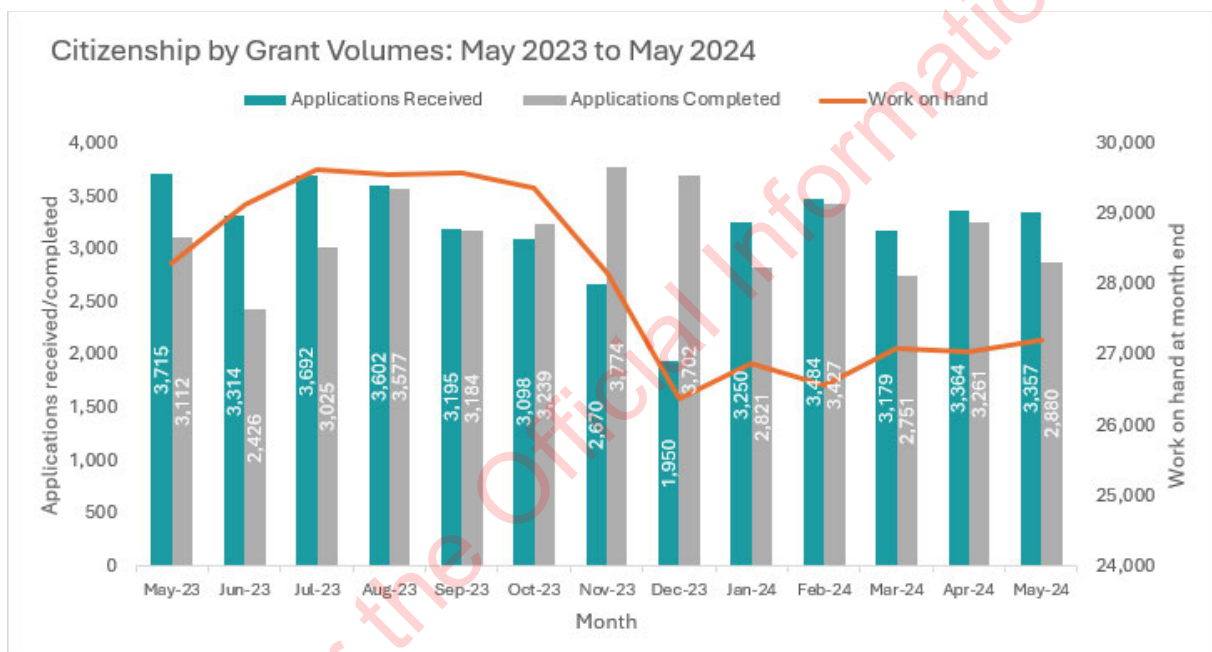
Return electronic document to:	Michael Mahoney, Michael.Mahoney@dia.govt.nz
Cohesion document reference	Citizenship Processing Update for May 2024 - June 2024.docx (cohesion.net.nz)
Ministerial database reference	IA20242677

Purpose

1. To provide you with an update on the processing of applications for citizenship by grant, including the reasons for the differences in processing time for applicants.

Current work on hand

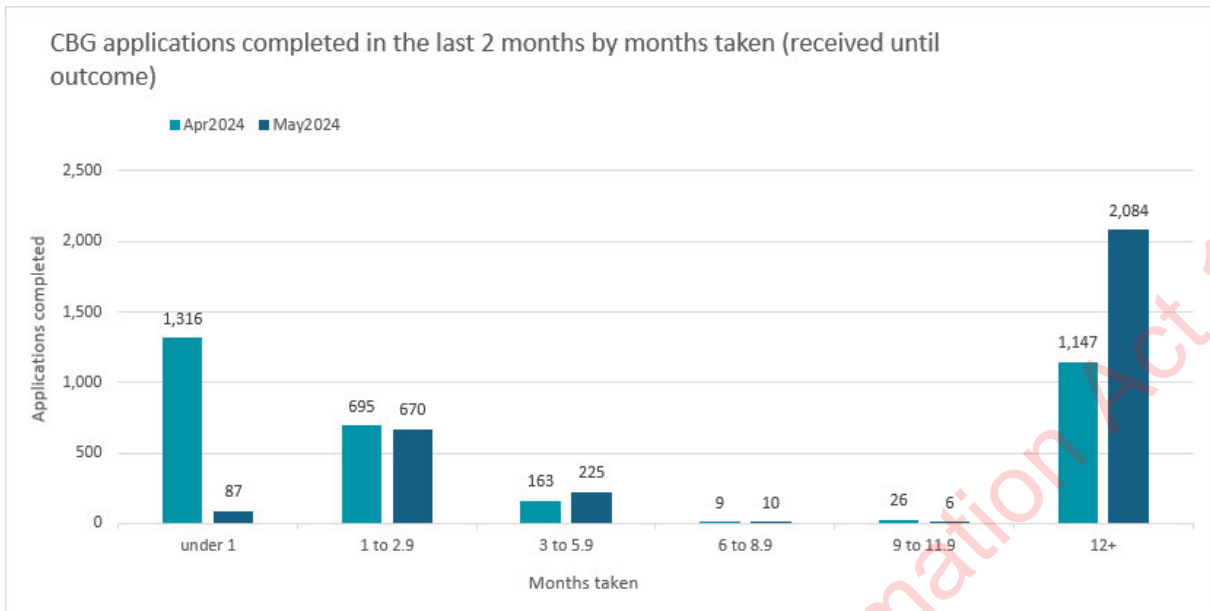
2. A total of 3,082 citizenship by grant applications were completed in May. The total work on hand as of 4 June 2024 is 27,494, an increase of 1% from last month. Of these applications, 5,938 are allocated and being processed and 21,556 are unassigned. Applications that were allocated and being assessed for eligibility in May were received in March and April 2023.
3. The increase in applications on hand is due to our focus on processing our older applications to reduce the disparity in processing times. These applications require more manual intervention and take longer to process.
4. The graph below shows the applications we received and completed from May 2023 to May 2024.



Age of applications on hand

5. In May we focussed on processing a large number of older applications, to reduce the overall wait time for citizenship by grant. We will continue this focus in June. Older applications usually require more manual processing and enquiries with applicants or other agencies. As we concentrate more on older applications, we expect the age of applications on hand and those completed each month to reduce.
6. Each month a number of newer applications are able to be processed through largely automated checks. These checks match the information and photos supplied against that held by Immigration New Zealand, check the applicant has the correct visa and meets the requirement to have been present in New Zealand, and can establish the applicant's English language capability through their country of nationality or visa type. Once character checks with Police and security agencies are complete, many of these applications can be approved within a very short time.

7. The graph below shows the age of applications completed in April and May. It shows the impact of shifting our processing resource to focus on older applications.



Out of scope

Current focus

10. We are currently focussing on processing the oldest applications to reduce the disparity in application processing times. We are also considering how we can more efficiently progress applications which require the most engagements with customers, to free up resource to reduce overall work in hand.
11. We are drafting changes to guidance for staff, in anticipation of changes to the Citizenship Guidance Document.
12. Across the Branch we are focussing our resources on reducing passport processing times. Once passport processing is within 10 working days, we are planning to cross-skill some staff to process citizenship by grant applications.

Maria Robertson
Deputy Chief Executive, Service Delivery and Operations



Internal Affairs briefing

Hon Brooke van Velden
Minister of Internal Affairs

Title: **Citizenship processing update July 2024**

Date: 4 July 2024

Key issues

This report sets out the current work on hand, and average processing times for work completed in June 2024.

Contact for telephone discussions (if required)

Name	Position	Contact Number	Suggested 1 st contact
Maria Robertson	Deputy Chief Executive, Service Delivery and Operations	9(2)(a) [REDACTED]	✓
Adrian Jarvis	General Manager, Services and Access	9(2)(a) [REDACTED]	

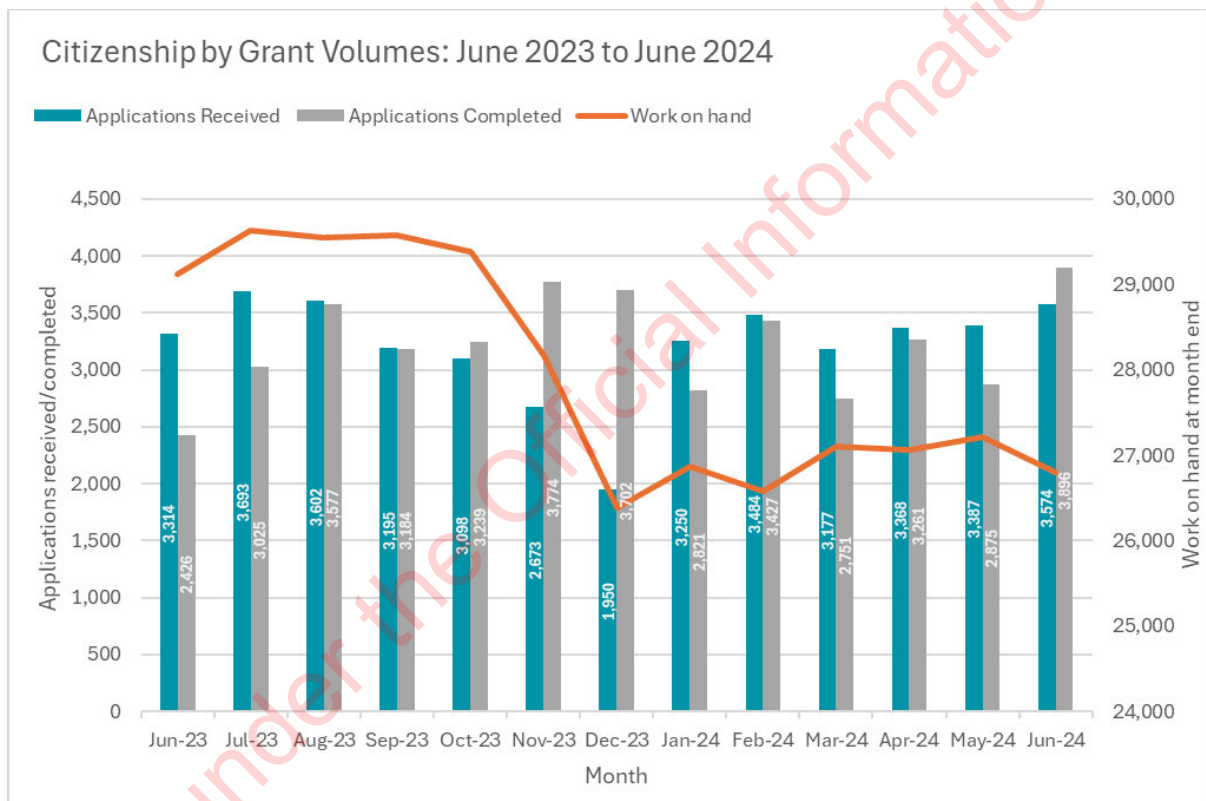
Return electronic document to:	Michael Mahoney, Michael.Mahoney@dia.govt.nz
Cohesion document reference	Citizenship Processing Update for June 2024 - July 2024.docx (cohesion.net.nz)
Ministerial database reference	IA20243020

Purpose

1. To provide you with an update on progress in assessing applications for citizenship by grant in June 2024, including the reasons for the differences in processing time for applicants.

Current work on hand

2. A total of 3,703 citizenship by grant applications were completed in June. The total work on hand as of 1 July 2024 is 26,798, a decrease of 2.5% from last month. Of these applications, 4,930 are allocated and being assessed and 21,868 are unassigned. Applications that were allocated and being assessed for eligibility in June were received in May 2023.
3. A focus on applications where applicants clearly met the standard requirements and required less manual assessment resulted in an increase of 621 applications being completed in June compared to May.
4. The graph below shows the applications we received and completed from June 2023 to June 2024.

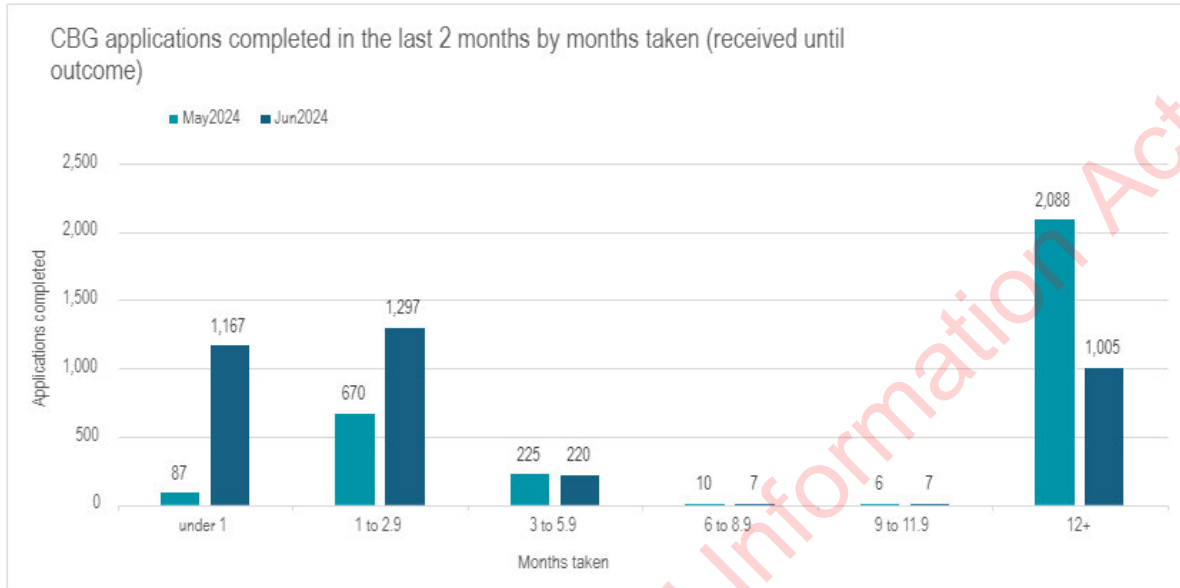


Age of applications on hand

5. Each month a number of newer applications are able to be processed through largely automated checks. These checks match the information and photos supplied against that held by Immigration New Zealand, check the applicant has the correct visa and meets the requirement to have been present in New Zealand, and can establish the applicant's English language capability through their country of nationality or visa type. Once character checks with Police and security agencies are complete, many of these applications can be approved within a very short time.
6. In June we focussed on the applications where applicants clearly meet the standard requirements set out in the Citizenship Act. This means we had less focus on applications where the information available (either through the automated checks or provided by the applicant) did not demonstrate the applicant met the requirements, or on applicants asking you to exercise your discretion and waive one or more of the requirements. Many of these applications pass most or all of the automated checks. This meant we processed a high

number of applications for the month but did not significantly reduce the older applications on hand. We continue to balance the number of staff working on newer and older applications. As applicants that do not meet the requirements take significantly more work, and usually require a lot of correspondence with the applicant, these applications progress at a slower rate and require more staff time.

7. The graph below shows the age of applications completed in May and June. It shows the impact of shifting our processing resource to focus on older applications.



Out of scope

Current focus

11. In July we are focussing on processing the oldest applications to reduce the disparity in application processing times. We are also considering how we can more efficiently progress applications which require the most engagements with applicants, to free up resource to reduce overall work in hand.
12. We have updated and published the Citizenship Guidance document which is now available to the public on the Department's website.
13. We are finalising our guidance to staff around the changes and have started to implement these where you have agreed a submission is now required in relation to good character, you should start seeing the effects of this in the coming months when reviewing submissions.
14. Once passport processing is within 10 working days, we are planning to cross-skill some staff to progress citizenship by grant applications.

Next briefing

15. You will receive the next briefing on Thursday 8th August 2024.



Maria Robertson
Deputy Chief Executive, Service Delivery and Operations

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Internal Affairs briefing

Hon Brooke van Velden
Minister of Internal Affairs

Title: **Citizenship processing update August 2024**

Date: 8 August 2024

Key issues

This report sets out the current work on hand, and average processing times for work completed in July 2024.

Contact for telephone discussions (if required)

Name	Position	Contact Number	Suggested 1 st contact
Maria Robertson	Deputy Chief Executive, Service Delivery and Operations	9(2)(a)	✓
Adrian Jarvis	General Manager, Services and Access	9(2)(a)	

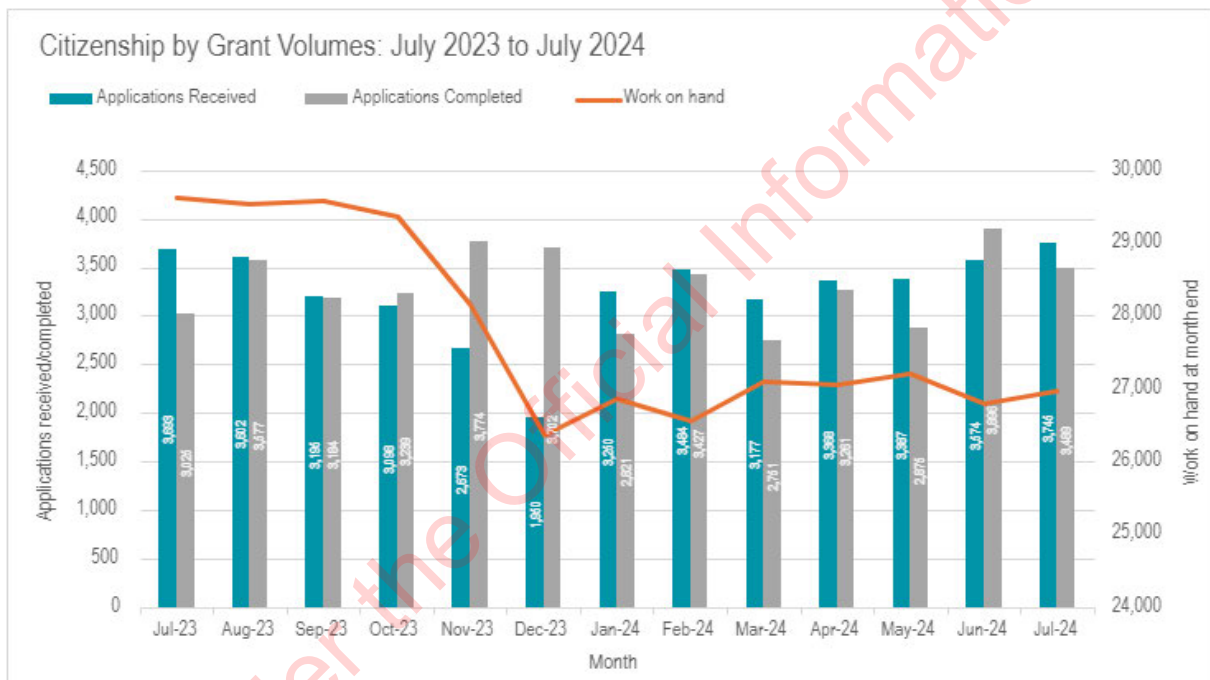
Return electronic document to:	Michael Mahoney, Michael.Mahoney@dia.govt.nz
Cohesion document reference	Citizenship processing update August 2024 - All Documents (cohesion.net.nz)
Ministerial database reference	IA20243336

Purpose

1. To provide you with an update on progress in assessing applications for citizenship by grant in July 2024, including the reasons for the differences in processing time for applicants.

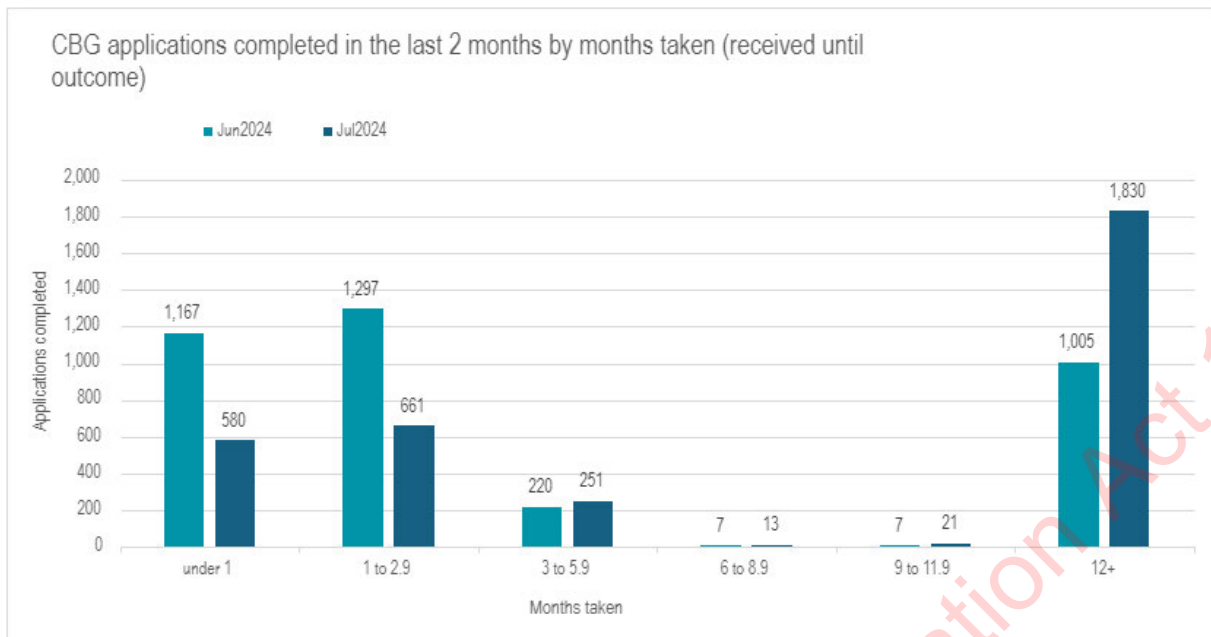
Current work on hand

2. A total of 3,356 citizenship by grant applications were completed in July. The total work on hand as of 1 August 2024 is 26,982, an increase of 0.7% from last month. Of these applications, 4,795 are allocated and being assessed and 22,187 are unassigned. Applications that were allocated and being assessed for eligibility in July were received in June 2023.
3. A focus on applications that required more manual assessment resulted in a larger number of older applications completed, and a decrease of 347 applications being completed in July compared to June.
4. The graph below shows the applications we received and completed from July 2023 to July 2024.



Age of applications on hand

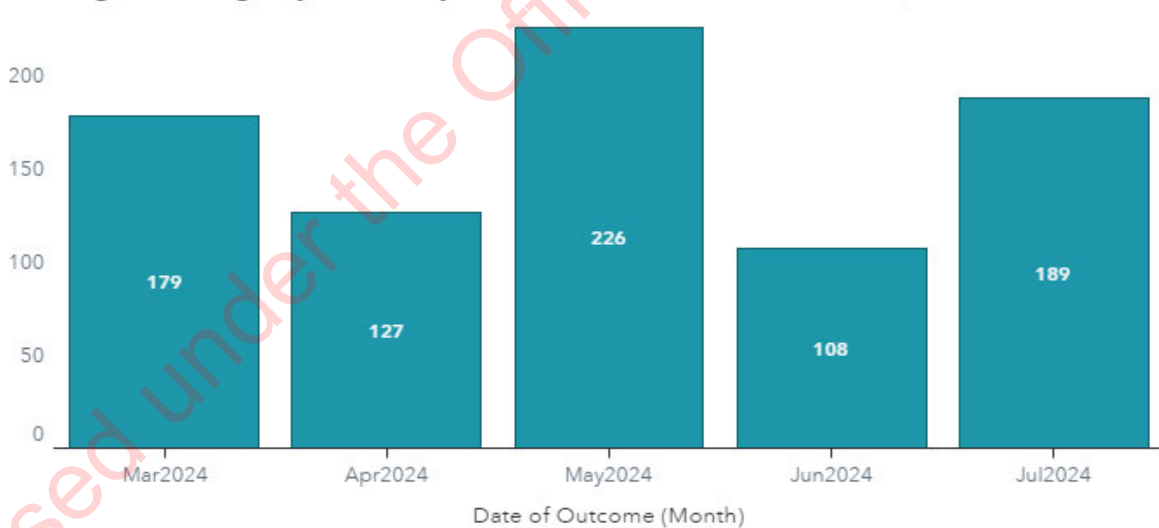
5. Each month a number of newer applications are able to be processed through largely automated checks. These checks match the information and photos supplied against that held by Immigration New Zealand, check the applicant has the correct visa and meets the requirement to have been present in New Zealand, and can establish the applicant's English language capability through their country of nationality or visa type. Once character checks with Police and security agencies are complete, many of these applications can be approved within a very short time.
6. In June and July we focussed on processing older applications, to reduce the overall wait time for citizenship by grant. We will continue this focus in August. Older applications usually require a lot of correspondence with the applicant and more detailed assessment of entitlement, these applications require more staff time and progress at a slower rate. The impact of the increased focus in June was seen across June and July.
7. The graph below shows the age of applications completed in June and July. It shows the impact of shifting our processing resource to focus on older applications. It shows that in July the Department completed 82% more applications older than 12 months than in June.



Average working days of completed applications

8. The average number of working days for an application to receive an outcome in July was 189 days. This is an increase of 81 days or 43% compared to 108 days in June.
9. The graph below shows the average number of working days to outcome over the past five months, this demonstrates how the average in May and July increased when focusing on older applications which require more time assessing and requesting more information from the applicant.

Average working days taken by month (received until outcome)



Out of scope

Out of scope

Current focus

13. In August we will continue to focus on processing the oldest applications. We will balance this with staff assigned to those applications that don't require as much manual assessment through automated checks, to be processed. We are also considering how we can more efficiently progress applications which require the most engagements with applicants, to free up resource to reduce overall work in hand.
14. We have finalised our guidance to staff around the changes to the Citizenship Guidance Document and in line with current good character policy, overseas convictions for violence and dishonesty are treated consistently with New Zealand law.
15. We are currently cross-skilling 11 staff members who are into their second of three weeks of training, and we will be cross-skilling a further 20 staff members. Their training is scheduled to commence on 12 August 2024.
16. Following the conclusion of training for the 30 cross-skilled staff members, the expected number of staff trained in citizenship will increase from 57 to a total of 87, an increase of 65% more staff that will be assessing citizenship applications.
17. Once fully trained and only assessing citizenship applications, it is expected the increase in staff will reduce the number of applications that are unassigned by up to 1,800 applications per month, an increase of 55% more applications; and increase the number of applications that are completed each month by up to 1,700, an increase of 65%.

Next briefing

18. You will receive the next briefing on Thursday 5th September 2024.



Maria Robertson
Deputy Chief Executive, Service Delivery and Operations



Internal Affairs briefing

Hon Brooke van Velden
Minister of Internal Affairs

Title: **Citizenship processing update September 2024**

Date: 5 September 2024

Key issues

This report sets out the current work on hand, and average processing times for work completed in August 2024.

Contact for telephone discussions (if required)

Name	Position	Contact Number	Suggested 1 st contact
Maria Robertson	Deputy Chief Executive, Service Delivery and Operations	9(2)(a)	✓
Adrian Jarvis	General Manager, Services and Access	9(2)(a)	

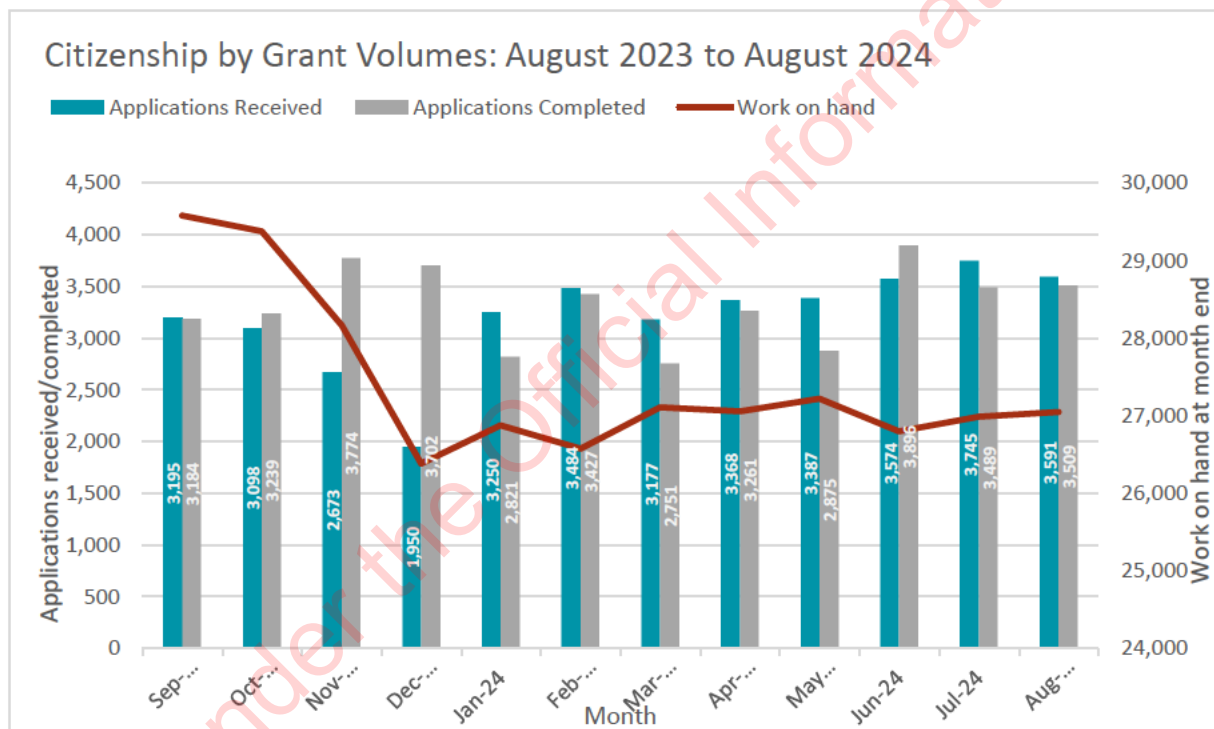
Return electronic document to:	Michael Mahoney, Michael.Mahoney@dia.govt.nz
Cohesion document reference	Citizenship processing update September 2024 - All Documents (cohesion.net.nz)
Ministerial database reference	IA20243887

Purpose

1. To provide you with an update on progress in assessing applications for citizenship by grant in August 2024, including the reasons for the differences in processing time for applicants.

Current work on hand

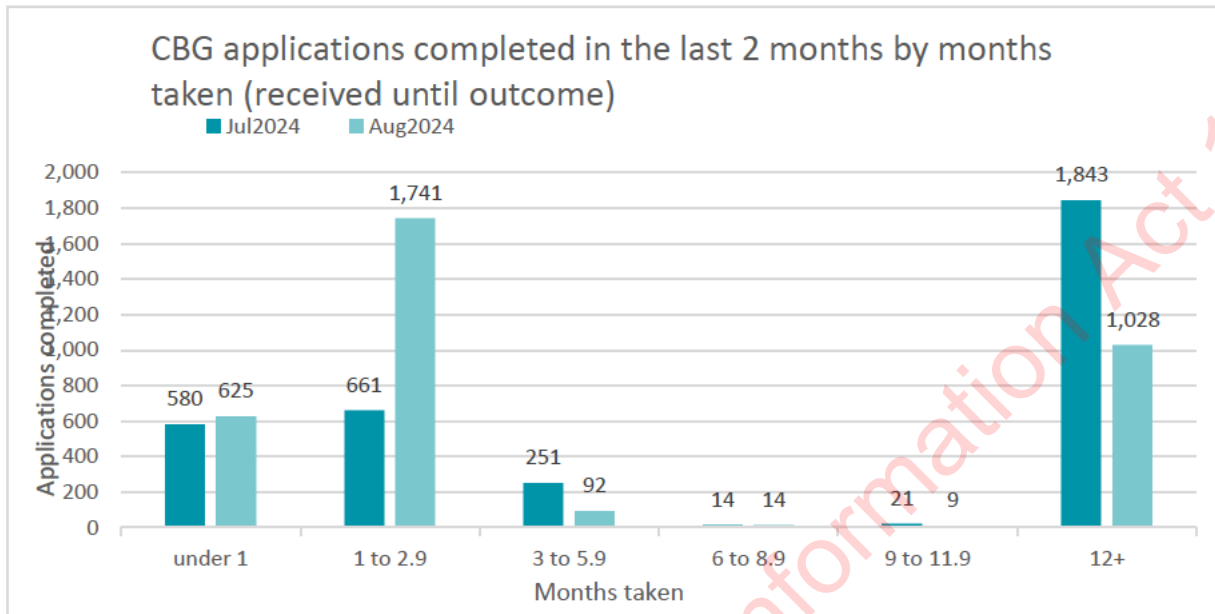
2. A total of 3,509 citizenship by grant applications were completed in August. The total work on hand as of 1 September 2024 is 27,046, an increase of 0.2% from last month. Of these applications, 5,534 are allocated and being assessed and 21,512 are unassigned. Applications that were allocated and being assessed for eligibility in August were received in July 2023.
3. In August, we continued to focus on applications that required more manual assessment and those that can be processed through automated checks. This resulted in a reduction to the average number of days it takes to receive an outcome and an overall increase of 0.6% more applications being completed in August compared to July.
4. The graph below shows the applications we received and completed from August 2023 to August 2024.



Age of applications on hand

5. Each month a number of newer applications are able to be processed through largely automated checks. These checks match the information and photos supplied against that held by Immigration New Zealand, check the applicant has the correct visa and meets the requirement to have been present in New Zealand, and can establish the applicant's English language capability through their country of nationality or visa type. Once character checks with Police and security agencies are complete, many of these applications can be approved within a very short time.
6. In July and August we continued to focus on processing older applications to reduce the overall wait time for citizenship by grant. We will continue this focus in September. Older applications usually require a lot of correspondence with the applicant and more detailed assessment of entitlement, these applications require more staff time and progress at a slower rate. The impact of the increased focus in July was seen through the older applications completed in July and August.

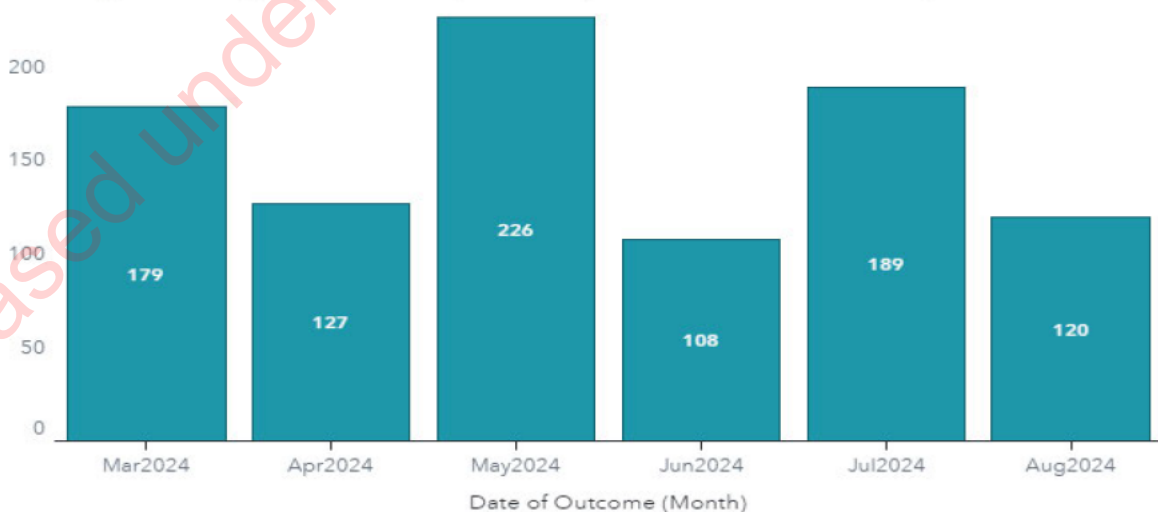
7. The graph below shows the age of applications completed in July and August. It shows the impact of shifting our processing resource to focus on older applications in July and August. It also shows an increase in those applications that are able to be processed through automatic checks. This resulted in 91% more applications being completed in August compared to July that were less than 3 months old.



Average working days of completed applications

8. The average number of working days for an application to receive an outcome in August was 120 days. This is a decrease of 69 days or 37% less compared to 189 days in July.
9. The graph below shows the average number of working days to outcome over the past five months, this demonstrates how the average in May and July increased when focusing on older applications which require more time assessing and requesting more information from the applicant. In June and August, the graph shows how processing a large number of applications through the automated checks reduced the average working days to receive an outcome.

Average working days taken by month (received until outcome)



Out of scope

Out of scope

Current focus

13. In September we will continue to focus on processing the oldest applications and continue to follow up with those customers with applications on hold to progress them. We will balance this with staff assigned to those applications that don't require as much manual assessment through automated checks, to be processed. We are also considering how we can more efficiently progress applications which require the most engagements with applicants, to free up resource to reduce overall work in hand.
14. In July, we began cross-skilling 30 staff on citizenship by grant tasks. The first group of 10 staff have recently completed the first part of citizenship training. As a result of their training, they are able to complete two of the three tasks when assessing a citizenship by grant application. We have a further 20 staff members continuing citizenship training, who will begin processing citizenship applications in the coming weeks.
15. We are currently looking to develop further training and support with submissions. This will reduce the number of submissions on hand waiting to be reviewed and increase the number of submissions that will be sent to you for a decision each month.
16. We will also continue to look at opportunities to cross-skill other staff members to citizenship as the demand requires.

Next briefing

17. You will receive the next briefing on Thursday 10th October 2024. In the Passports Processing Update the Department has recommended the Department shift to a monthly life and identity products and services processing update. Should you agree, this briefing will include citizenship by grant data.



Maria Robertson
Deputy Chief Executive, Service Delivery and Operations



Internal Affairs briefing

Hon Brooke van Velden
Minister of Internal Affairs

Title: Life and Identity Services monthly update

Date: 9 October 2024

Key issues

To provide you with monthly updates on the status of all life and identity products and services. This report provides information about volumes in passports, citizenship, RealMe verified identities and births, deaths and marriages applications for September. It also sets out how the Department is managing upcoming planned system changes and forecast volumes.

Action sought

For noting

Timeframe

At your convenience

Contact for telephone discussions (if required)

Name	Position	Contact Number	Suggested 1 st contact
Maria Robertson	Deputy Chief Executive, Service Delivery and Operations	9(2)(a)	✓
Adrian Jarvis	General Manager, Services and Access	9(2)(a)	
Return electronic document to:	Lesley Tse lesley.tse@dia.govt.nz		
Cohesion document reference	695965552-396 695965552-400		
Ministerial database reference	IA20244369		


Purpose

1. This briefing updates you on the Department of Internal Affairs' (the Department) current volumes in passports, citizenship, RealMe Verified Identities and births, deaths and marriages applications. It also sets out how the Department is managing upcoming planned system changes and forecast volumes.
2. Data on delivery performance for the Department's life and identity products is included as Appendix A.

Background

3. The Department tracks performance metrics across all life and identity products and services, across all locations, and for all delivery channels, task types and employees. This data provides the insights used to continually improve productivity, efficiency, cost and service standards.

Out of scope



Out of scope

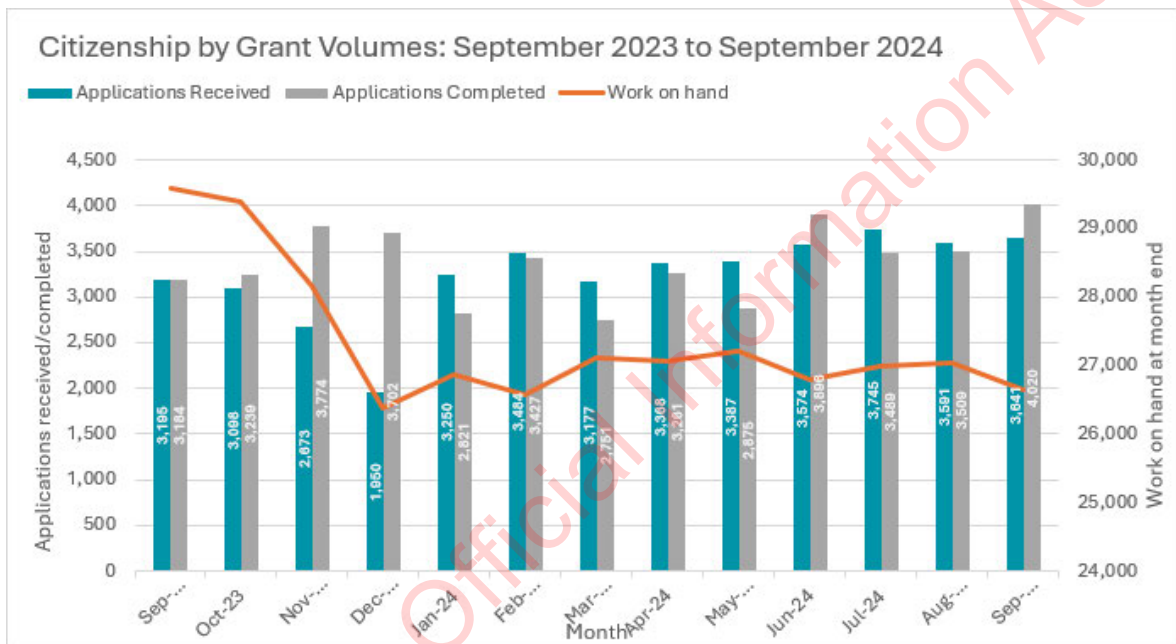


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Citizenship by grant

Current work on hand

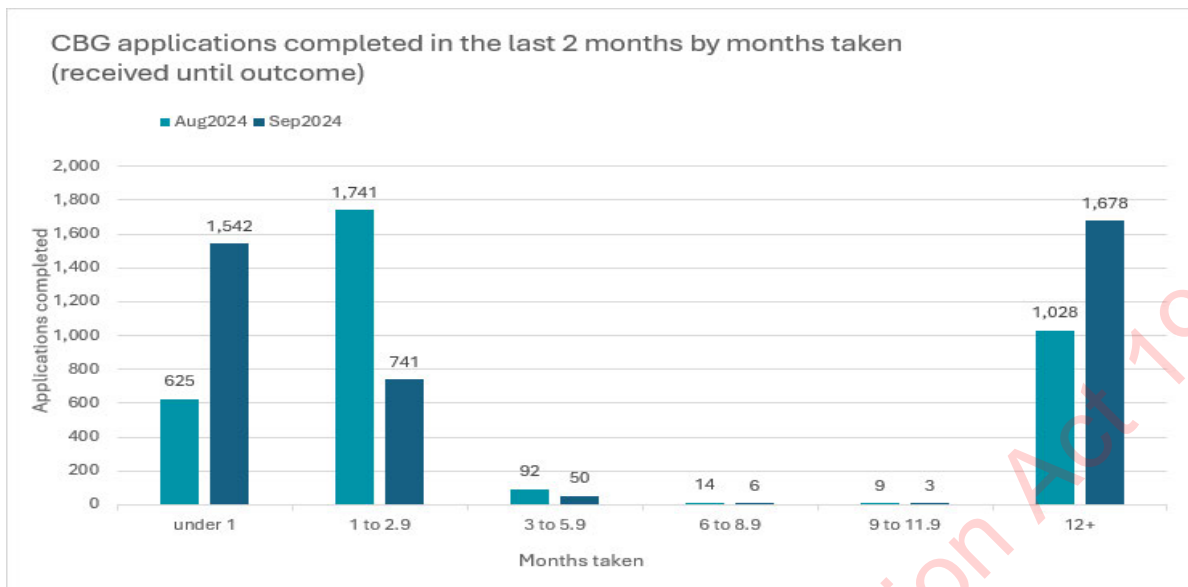
13. In September the Department received 3,641 applications and completed 4,020 applications for citizenship by grant². The number of completed applications is the highest recorded this year. On 30 September there were 26,638 applications on hand a decrease of 1.5% from last month. Of these applications, 5,632 are allocated and being assessed and 21,006 are unassigned. Applications that were allocated and being assessed for eligibility in September were received in August 2023.
14. The graph below shows the applications we received and completed from September 2023 to September 2024.



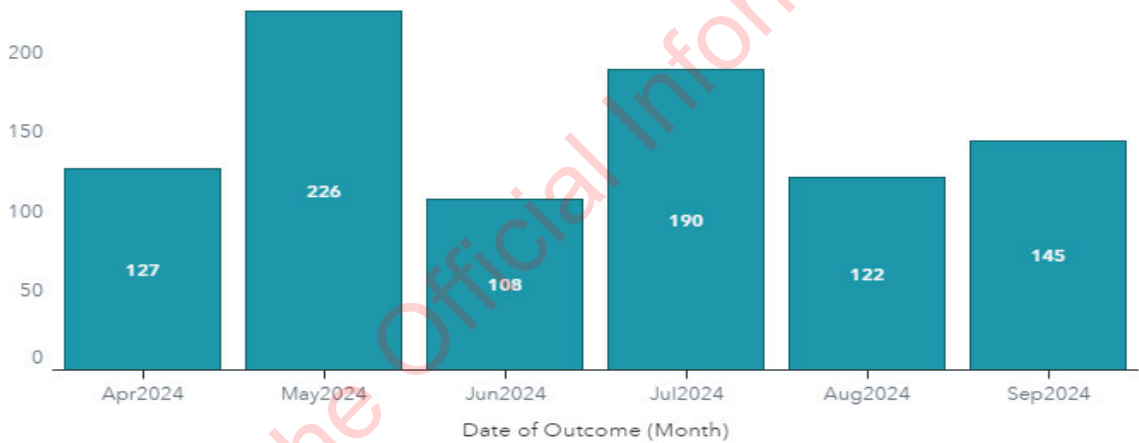
Age of applications on hand

15. The applications completed each month are a mix of new applications that are able to be assessed using automated checks and older applications that require more manual work.
16. We continue to focus on processing older applications which require more manual work and time to assess. This results in an immediate increase in the average overall wait time reported for applicants (16% higher in September than in August), but a decrease over the medium term as we work through these queues. The ultimate objective is to reduce the time for all applicants to receive an answer.
17. The graph below shows the age of the applications completed in August and September.

² Completed applications are applications where the applicant withdrew, was granted citizenship, or has been referred to you as a submission.



Average working days taken by month (received until outcome)




Out of scope

Current focus

- In October we will continue to focus on reducing the citizenship by grant processing timeframes by focusing on older applications and following-up with customers with applications on hold, to progress them.

19. There are currently 82 staff skilled in citizenship by grant tasks, including 28 people that have recently completed citizenship by grant cross-skill training from other products/services. These people have started assessing citizenship by grant applications. It takes about six months to become fully competent in assessing the full range of grant applications so we expect to see an increase in productivity in the coming months as these cross-skilled staff become more proficient. Cross-skilling training for a further six staff in Auckland will commence on 14 October as we continue to look at opportunities to cross-skill other staff members to citizenship as the demand requires. To reduce the number of submissions on hand and awaiting review we will be piloting submissions training this month. We expect this will increase the number of submissions that will be sent to you each month for a decision.

Out of scope




Systems and policy changes

Changes are planned to the citizenship by grant system

23. In 2020 we implemented a new citizenship by grant system. That system has been incrementally improved over the past four years. In November we plan to introduce new system functionality to manage citizenship confirmation letters, this includes the creation of a new Confirmations Register.
24. We are planning for a bigger change in early 2025, which will incorporate our common capability, identity proofing service (IDP) for citizenship by grant applications. The Identity proofing service is at the heart of the passports changes made earlier this year, and the cornerstone of the Department's identity strategy. This will enable:
 - the creation of a single person record, across all service delivery products, improving management of entitlement, eligibility and integrity of the products and services we deliver;
 - a standardized and automated identity proofing workflow, resulting in effort and processing time savings, a reduction in errors and risk and improve data integrity; and
 - expanded and improved utility of current service delivery products and potential future products.
25. This change will increase productivity through streamlined processes and automation allowing staff to focus on high-value tasks and problem solving.

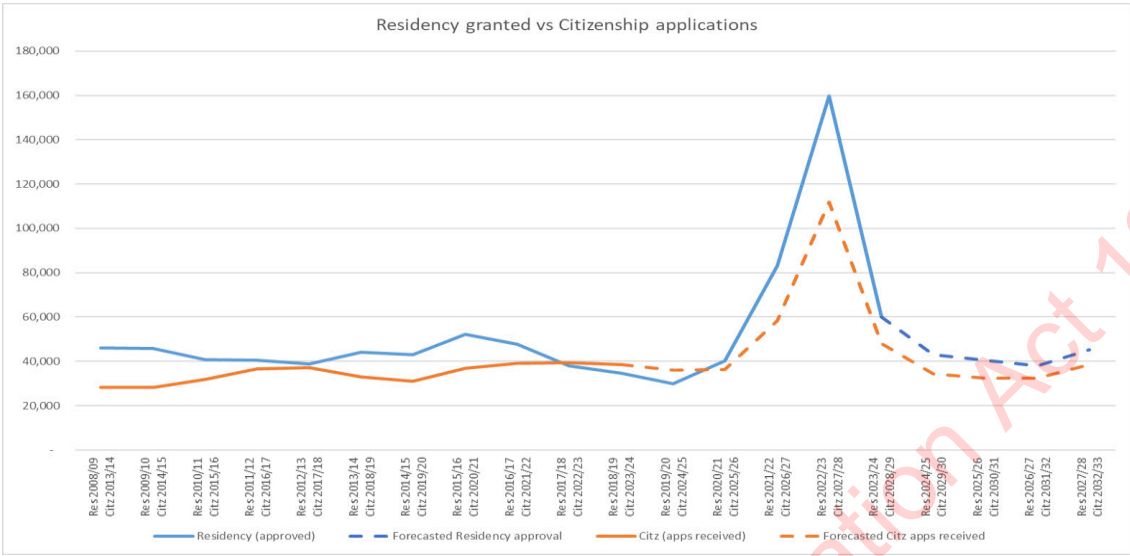
Out of scope



Out of scope

Visa changes will mean a sharp increase in citizenship applications

32. In December 2021, a new one-off simplified pathway to residence was launched by Immigration New Zealand. People can apply for New Zealand citizenship five years after receiving a visa enabling them to remain in New Zealand indefinitely. Citizenship by grant application numbers tend to be around 80% of the number of people who received residence visas five years prior.
33. We expect a small surge of approximately 58,000 applications to begin in 2026-2027 financial year, due to approximately 83,000 residency approvals in 2021-2022. A second larger surge of 112,000 applications is expected in 2027-2028 following 160,000 residency approvals for 2022-2023. We estimate that up to 70% of people will apply for citizenship within 5 to 6 years of their residency approval.
34. An increase in citizenship by grant applications will likely flow through to a smaller increase in New Zealand passport applications.
35. The changes planned to the citizenship processing system are expected to decrease the staff effort required to assess an application. These are planned with plenty of time for staff to adjust to the changes, and any unexpected impacts to be managed before this peak.
36. The graph below provides more details information on citizenship forecast volumes up to July 2033.



Life and identity products and services performance measures

37. As part of the Department’s progress towards developing Life and Identity products and services performance measure dashboards, Appendix A reflects the first iterative of the new measures for passports, citizenship by grants, birth, death, marriage and civil union registrations and RealMe verified identities. The analytics include measures for September 2024.

Maria Robertson
Deputy Chief Executive, Service Delivery and Operations

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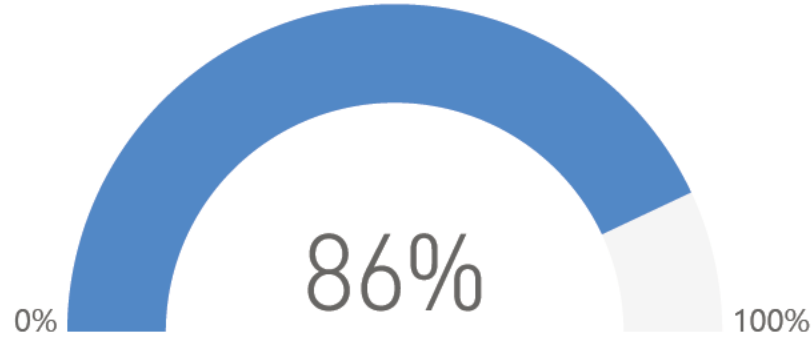
Appendix A

Out of scope

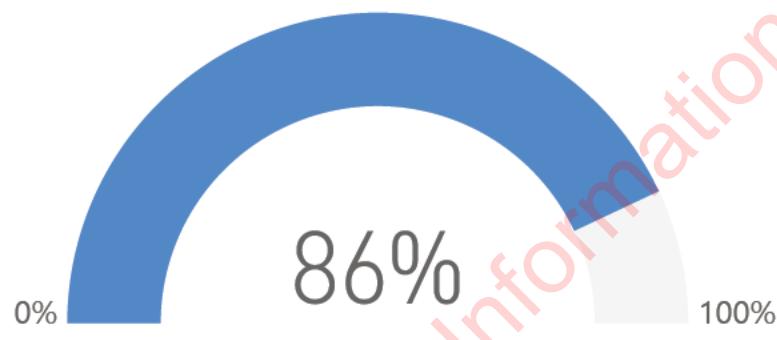
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Citizenship by Grant Dashboard

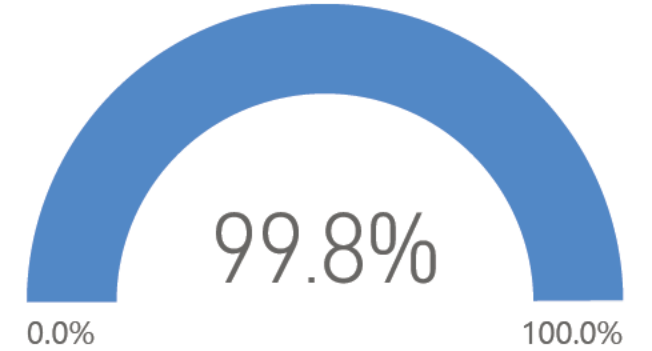
Ease of applying for Citz by Grant Customers



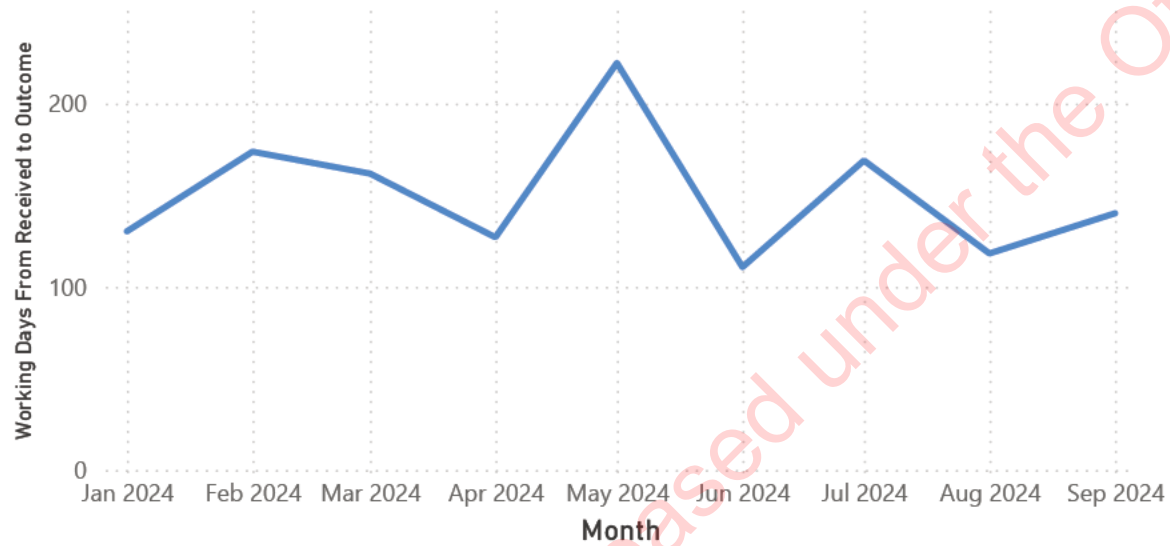
Customer satisfaction with Citz by Grant services



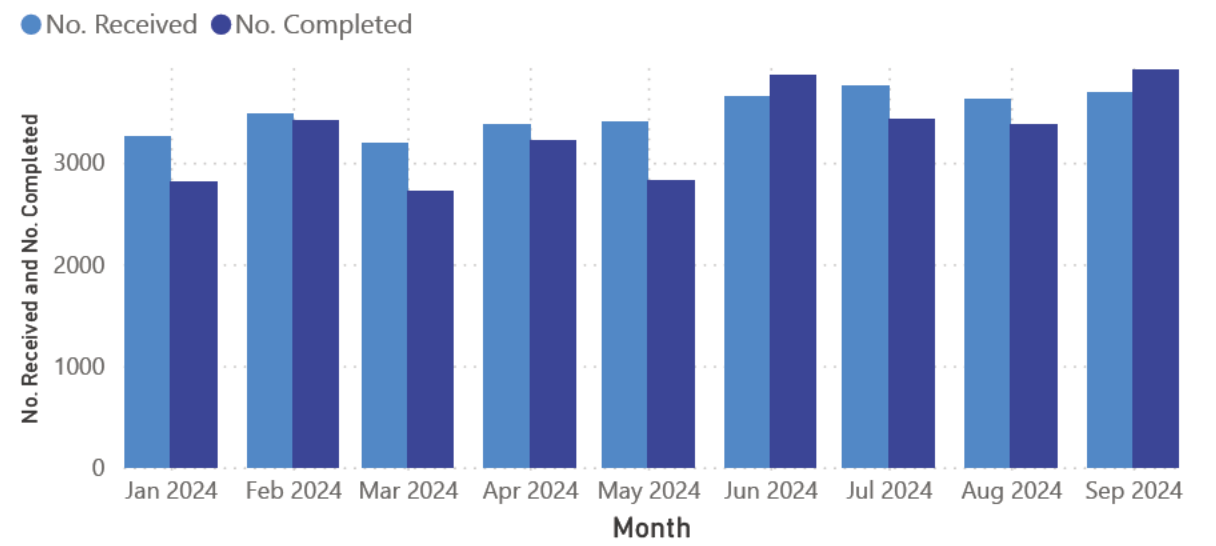
Issued without error



Average Processing Time from Receipt to Outcome



Monthly Citz by Grant Received and Completed



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