

30 March 2026

Ref: OIA-2526-056

Spencer Jones

fyi-request-33991-be9620fc@requests.fyi.org.nz

Tēnā koe Spencer

Thank you for your email to Statistics New Zealand, which was partially transferred to the Social Investment Agency (SIA) on 19 March 2026. SIA is responding in turn below, to the following parts of your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act):

Confirmation of whether individuals who meet the definition of “veteran” under the Veterans’ Support Act 2014 can be identified within national datasets held or administered by Statistics New Zealand, including but not limited to the Integrated Data Infrastructure (IDI).

The statutory definition of “veteran” under the Veterans’ Support Act 2014 is based on having undertaken qualifying operational service or qualifying routine service. For individuals who served after 1 April 1974, this requires evidence of service on a qualifying deployment.

SIA cannot reliably identify whether individuals meet this statutory definition using data in the IDI. Information on qualifying operational service or qualifying routine service, including deployment history, is not directly observable in IDI datasets. As a result, the statutory definition of “veteran” cannot be consistently or comprehensively applied using IDI data alone.

Although statutory veterans cannot be identified in the IDI, SIA previously undertook analytical work that required identifying a group of people with indicators of completed military service. For this purpose, SIA developed a proxy definition with Veterans Affairs New Zealand that could be implemented using available administrative data. This work became a report published in April 2024 called *Building an evidence base for understanding veteran outcomes*. You can read this report here: <https://www.sia.govt.nz/publications/Building-in-evidence-base-for-understanding-veteran-outcomes>

That definition was:

All those who have completed a period of military service, but who no longer serve. The majority will have served in the Navy, Army or Air Force of the New Zealand Defence Force—either the Regular Force, the Reserves, or both.

This definition was developed solely to identify a cohort that could be observed for analytical purposes. It does not reflect the statutory definition in the Veterans’ Support Act and does not represent an estimate of the actual number of veterans in New Zealand.

The proxy group is broader but substantially less precise than the statutory definition. It is known to both include individuals who are not veterans under the Act and exclude individuals who would qualify as veterans but cannot be observed using administrative indicators. Accordingly, results based on this definition should not be interpreted as a measure of the size, prevalence, or total population of veterans.

The cohort was constructed using indicators such as:

- recorded employment with the New Zealand Defence Force,
- self-identification of military service in datasets that collect employment information,
- receipt of veterans' pension payments.

Responses below refer to veterans only as identified using this analytically constructed proxy group.

If such identification is possible, please provide:

a. The datasets or administrative sources used to identify veterans.

The datasets used for this analysis are listed in **Appendix 1 – Detailed description of methods and data sets** of our report and at the top of the relevant code files. These are almost all administrative sources. Bespoke linking of some information on Vietnam Veterans was added to the IDI. This was used to validate our method of identifying veterans from administrative sources.

b. The approximate number of individuals currently identified as veterans within the Integrated Data Infrastructure or related datasets.

Using the proxy definition described above, SIA identified 43,941 individuals in the 2021 administrative data who met the criteria for inclusion in the analytical cohort.

This figure represents the number of people who could be identified using the available data and methodology, not an estimate of the true number of veterans in New Zealand. SIA does not hold, and has not produced, a reliable population-level estimate of the total veteran population using administrative data.

More recent figures are not available, as this was a one-off analysis and the project has since concluded.

c. Any data linkage methods used to identify veterans (for example: service records, administrative datasets, or agency-supplied identifiers).

Data linkage methods are described in our report. The exact methodology can be reviewed in our code.

d. Any limitations or caveats recorded by Statistics NZ relating to the completeness or reliability of veteran identification in national datasets.

The limitations and caveats are described in detail in our report (pg. 30-31).

Any reports, research papers, or analytical work undertaken by or for Statistics NZ that estimate the size of the New Zealand veteran population using administrative data.

Along with the report *Building an evidence base for understanding veteran outcomes* linked on page one, you can find the IDI code used for the analysis here: <https://github.com/nz-social-wellbeing-agency/Veterans/tree/main>.

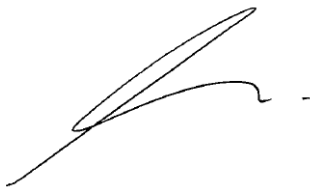
To the extent that your request seeks copies of completed reports or documents containing this analysis, that information is publicly available. Accordingly, those aspects of your request are refused under section 18(d) of the Official Information Act, *that the information requested is or will soon be publicly available*.

If you wish to discuss any aspect of your request or this response, or if you require any further assistance, please contact info@sia.govt.nz

As part of our commitment to transparency, we proactively release our responses to information requests where possible. This response, with your personal details removed, may be published on our website shortly.

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.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Luana Scowcroft', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Luana Scowcroft
Manager – Engagement, Ministerials, and Communications
Social Investment Agency