



Dear [REDACTED]

On 12 February 2019, you emailed the Ministry requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, the following information:

- *Data on how many New Zealanders receive some sort of benefit or financial assistance. I have seen some information that states that roughly 300,000 receive "main benefits", a further 300,000 receive "supplementary benefits" and there were roughly 380,000 "hardship assistance payments" made. There could well be cross over of some of those as I assume it's possible to receive a "main benefit" plus a "supplementary benefit".*

Do you have data on how many New Zealanders, in total, or what percentage of our population receive some sort of benefit or financial assistance?

Work and Income provides financial assistance to people who are not working or who are on low incomes. Information about the financial assistance available can be accessed from the Work and Income website here: www.workandincome.govt.nz/ and the Work and Income Manuals and Procedures website here: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/index.html.

As at the end of December 2018, 1,148,236 distinct individuals were in receipt of a benefit and/or some form of supplementary assistance. This includes:

- 1,087,968 individuals were in receipt of some form of benefit (this includes Jobseeker Support, Supported Living Payment, Supported Living Payment Overseas, Sole Parent Support, Youth Payment, Youth Parent Payment, New Zealand Superannuation, Veterans Pension, Orphans Benefit, Unsupported Childs Benefit, Emergency Benefit, Emergency Maintenance Allowance, Jobseeker Support Student Hardship, and Widows Benefit Overseas)
- 381,647 individuals in receipt of some form of benefit (as listed above) and some form of supplementary assistance
- 706,321 individuals in receipt of some form of benefit (as listed above) only
- 60,268 individuals were receiving some form of supplementary assistance only; supplementary assistance includes but is not limited to Accommodation Supplement, Disability Allowance, Temporary Additional Support and Special Benefit.

Hardship assistance can be provided to both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries. Hardship assistance is granted as a one off payment, unlike a benefit or supplementary assistance which is an on-going payment. Hardship assistance is not included in the figures provided in this response. Benefit and supplementary

assistance receipt is reported as a snapshot at a defined point in time. Hardship assistance cannot be reported on in a meaningful way using point in time reporting as it would only capture those who had received hardship assistance on that day.

As such, your request for this information is refused under section 18(g) of the Official Information Act as the information you have requested is not held by the Ministry and there are no grounds to believe that the information is held by another department or Minister of the Crown or organisation.

Data regarding the amount of hardship assistance granted is available from the Ministry's Benefit Fact Sheets here: www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/statistics/benefit/index.html.

The principles and purposes of the Official Information Act 1982 under which you made your request are:

- to create greater openness and transparency about the plans, work and activities of the Government,
- to increase the ability of the public to participate in the making and administration of our laws and policies and
- to lead to greater accountability in the conduct of public affairs.

This Ministry fully supports those principles and purposes. The Ministry therefore intends to make the information contained in this letter available to the wider public shortly. The Ministry will do this by publishing this letter on the Ministry of Social Development's website. Your personal details will be deleted and the Ministry will not publish any information that would identify you as the person who requested the information.

If you wish to discuss this response with us, please feel free to contact OIA_Requests@msd.govt.nz.

If you are not satisfied with this response regarding distinct individuals in receipt of some sort of benefit or financial assistance, you have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or 0800 802 602.

Yours sincerely



Cassandra Wise
Manager, Issue Resolution