



17 AUG 2020

Dear

On 1 July 2020, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, the following information:

- *The number of Jobseeker Support (Work Ready) grants given for the period of 1 March 2019 to 30 June 2019 and 1 March 2020 to 30 June 2020, broken down by reason and month.*

Jobseeker Support (JS) is a temporary benefit paid for up to 52 weeks while clients look for work, are in training for work, or are unable to work due to a health condition, injury or disability. Jobseeker Work Ready grants, however, refer solely to grants for clients who are available for and seeking full-time employment.

More information about the eligibility criteria for Jobseeker Support can be found here: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/main-benefits/jobseeker-support/qualifications.html.

Please see Appendix One, which has two tables showing the number of Jobseeker Support Work Ready grants approved for the periods of 1 March 2019 to 30 June 2019, and 1 March 2020 to 30 June 2020.

Please note, the 'Event Reason' recorded for a grant is the reason the client applied and does not necessarily impact the client's application for Jobseeker Support. Rather, applications are approved if they meet the eligibility criteria, which is based on family circumstances and residential status. When a client begins the application process, the 'Event Reason' is recorded by a case manager to help ensure that the client is applying for the most appropriate financial assistance based on his or her (i.e., the client's) circumstances.

Furthermore, please note that only one 'Event Reason' can be recorded per client. However, multiple 'Event Reasons' may apply to an individual case. The most relevant 'Event Reason', as determined by a case manager, is chosen.

You will notice an increase in the number of Jobseeker Support Work Ready grants that were approved in 2020. As a result of job loss from the impacts of COVID-19, there was a significant increase in new benefit applications.

The Ministry's Monthly Benefit Update report shows that at the end of June 2020, recipients of Jobseeker Support had increased by 54,223 since June 2019. The majority of these new benefit recipients applied between March and April 2020, which saw an increase of 38,425 recipients since February 2020.

Furthermore, as at the end of April 2020, 46% of the new Jobseeker Work Ready grants for the year were for clients who either had no benefit history or had last received a benefit over a decade ago. Compared to last year, this is a large increase in the proportion of clients with little or no benefit history; these clients accounted for only 26% of JS-WR grants as at the end of April 2019.

The Monthly Benefit Update report can be found here: www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/statistics/covid-19/index.html.

In May 2020, the Minister for Social Development announced the COVID-19 Income Relief Payment (CIRP), a targeted support package for New Zealanders who have lost their job due to the impacts of COVID-19. As at 10 July 2020, there were 16,524 recipients of the CIRP.

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 and any attached documents available to the wider public. 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 to request regarding Jobseeker Support statistics, 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



Bridget Saunders
Manager, Issue Resolution, Service Delivery

Appendix One

Table One: The number of Jobseeker Support Work Ready grants approved during the period of 1 March 2019 to 30 June 2019, broken down by month and event reason

Event Reason	March 2019	April 2019	May 2019	June 2019
Ceased Work	2,582	2,495	3,809	3,487
Available for Work	1,698	1,392	1,743	1,473
Returned to NZ	362	292	421	353
Testing Eligibility	479	458	490	462
Income Reduced	197	221	281	277
Released from Prison	509	470	586	496
All other reasons	1,466	1,191	1,497	1,330
Total	7,293	6,519	8,827	7,878

Table Two: The number of Jobseeker Support Work Ready grants approved during the period of 1 March 2020 to 30 June 2020, broken down by month and event reason

Event Reason	March 2020	April 2020	May 2020	June 2020
Ceased Work	5,855	13,530	5,905	4,608
Available for Work	3,004	6,968	3,123	2,430
Returned to NZ	1,036	3,972	977	603
Testing Eligibility	920	2,336	968	784
Income Reduced	451	1,085	530	526
Released from Prison	637	833	699	667
All other reasons	1,825	1,929	1,203	1,709
Total	13,728	30,653	13,405	11,327

Notes:

- The notes refer to both Table One and Table Two.
- This is a count of grants, not clients, and the same client may have been granted more than once in any given period.
- The table includes working-age clients only (i.e., those clients 18-64 years of age)
- Jobseeker Support (Work Ready) grants include Jobseeker Support Work Ready and Jobseeker Support Work Ready Hardship grants.
- To receive Jobseeker Support on the grounds of hardship, the client must meet all the qualifications for Jobseeker Support except for the residence criteria. However, they must be a New Zealand citizen or permanent resident but have lived in New Zealand for less than two years, be suffering hardship, and not qualify for any other benefit.
- 'Testing Eligibility' may be selected if a client has just become available for work, no other event reason is applicable, and he or she is testing their entitlement to a benefit.
- 'All other reasons' includes, but is not limited to, 'partner imprisoned,' 'drug and alcohol,' and 'psychiatric disability'.
- The tables do not include Jobseeker Support recipients who, because of having a health condition, injury or a disability, cannot work or are limited in their capacity to seek, undertake, or be available for full-time employment.