



11 DEC 2020

Tēnā koe

On 7 November 2020, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

- *The number of people on long term jobseeker or registered unemployed. Long term exceeds 6 months, broken down by Work and Income offices.*

On 24 November 2020, the Ministry contacted you in order to refine your request to the following:

- *The number of people on jobseeker benefits, long term (exceeds 6 months) broken down by Work and Income offices.*

The Ministry did not receive confirmation that you were satisfied with the proposed refinement. As such, your request has been responded to as it was originally asked.

On 4 December 2020, the Ministry informed you that it had extended the timeframe of your request until 11 December 2020. This was due to the consultation that had to be undertaken in order for the Ministry to provide a complete response.

To answer the first part of your request, please see the Excel spreadsheet attached which provides the number of current working age clients in receipt of Jobseeker Support Work-Ready who have been on a benefit for a duration of longer than six months as at quarter ending September 2020.

Jobseeker Support Work-Ready clients must be available for, and take reasonable steps, to find suitable employment of at least 30 hours per week. More information about work obligations for clients in receipt of Jobseeker Support can be found here: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/main-benefits/jobseeker-support/work-obligations-01.html.

Please take note of the following information regarding the table:

- The data enclosed is for clients that are of working age. Working age is determined as being clients who are between the ages of 18-64. The definition reflects the minimum age of eligibility for most main benefits and the age of qualifications for New Zealand Superannuation.

- Continuous duration is how long the current recipients of a benefit have been continuously receiving a benefit in the wider benefit system, including time in receipt of any other benefit except Unsupported Child's Benefit, Orphan's Benefit, New Zealand Superannuation, Veteran's Pension and non-beneficiary assistance.
- In order to protect client privacy, some values are suppressed and are represented by 'S'. The Ministry is unable to provide you with the exact number as releasing this information is likely to risk identifying the individuals concerned. As such, the information is withheld under section 9(2)(a) of the Act. The need to protect the privacy of these individuals outweighs any public interest in the information.

The Ministry is unable to provide you with unemployment statistics broken down as requested, as this information is not held by the Ministry. The Ministry is only able to report on the number of people that access its services and is unable to accurately determine unemployment statistics as not everyone who is unemployed receives assistance from the Ministry. I would recommend you look at the Statistics New Zealand webpage for an accurate representation of the unemployment rate in New Zealand. You can find this information on the following link: www.stats.govt.nz/indicators/unemployment-rate.

The Ministry does not record or register clients as being unemployed but endeavours to assist with a benefit that suits an individual's circumstances. As such the Ministry is refusing this part of your request under section 18(g)(ii) of the Act as the information is not held by the Ministry and is more closely connected with the functions of Statistics New Zealand.

For your information, the Ministry has a range of statistics and data available on its website, this information can be found on the following link: 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 and any attached documents available to the wider public. The Ministry will do this by publishing this letter and attachments 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 the number of clients in receipt of Jobseeker Support for longer than six months, 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.

Ngā mihi nui

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bridget Saunders', with a large, stylized initial 'B'.

Bridget Saunders
**Manager, Issue Resolution
Service Delivery**