



31 MAR 2021

On 4 March 2021, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

- *Over the last 15 months, has MSD seen an increase of clients on their books, who were returnees from overseas, 'brain gain', that for whatever reason have had to sign up with MSD at some point in time till they found work?*

The Ministry offers a number of different types of financial support to those in need. The types of support a client may be entitled to will depend on their individual circumstances, their specific need at the time, and the eligibility criteria of the relevant type of assistance. More information about the different types of assistance available and their respective eligibility criteria can be found online at the following link: [www.workandincome.govt.nz/products/a-z-benefits/index.html](http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/products/a-z-benefits/index.html)

The Ministry collates information from clients in the process of granting benefit applications, including information on whether the applicant has recently returned from overseas. This is noted in the Ministry's IT system under the label 'Returned to New Zealand'. This identifier is applied manually by Ministry staff to those who, once returned to New Zealand, apply for a main benefit without taking up any taxable employment prior to their application.

Please find the information requested in **Table One** in **Appendix One** which shows the number of main benefits granted between 1 December 2019 to 28 February 2021 for people that returned to New Zealand, broken down by month.

As you may be aware, COVID-19 led to thousands of New Zealanders returning home from overseas. Some of whom applied for a benefit on their return. Therefore, there are significant spikes in the data table, especially in April 2020.

Please note that the attached table only provides the number of main benefits granted, based on the 'Returned to New Zealand' identifier, and does not give information about ongoing receipt of benefit, such as whether the applicants have found work since they returned to New Zealand.

The principles and purposes of the Act 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
- 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](mailto:OIA_Requests@msd.govt.nz).

If you are not satisfied with this response regarding the number of main benefits granted for people that returned to New Zealand, 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](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz) or 0800 802 602.

Yours sincerely

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Bridget Saunders  
**Manager, Issue Resolution  
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## Appendix One

**Table One: The number of main benefits granted between 1 December 2019 to 28 February 2021 for people that returned to New Zealand, broken down by month.**

Month	Number of main benefits granted under the 'Returned to New Zealand' identifier
December 2019	699
January 2020	690
February 2020	756
March 2020	1,335
April 2020	4,212
May 2020	1,104
June 2020	693
July 2020	708
August 2020	1,023
September 2020	912
October 2020	720
November 2020	681
December 2020	720
January 2021	507
February 2021	456
<b>Total</b>	<b>15,213</b>

### Notes:

- This is a count of grants. An individual may have more than one grant within a period.
- 'Main Benefits' includes Jobseeker Support, Sole Parent Support, Supported Living Payment, Emergency Benefit, Emergency Maintenance Allowance, Jobseeker Support Student Hardship, Youth Payment, Young Parent Payment and excludes NZ Superannuation, Veteran's Pension, Non-Beneficiary assistance, Orphan's Benefit and Unsupported Child's Benefit
- To protect confidentiality the Ministry of Social Development uses processes to make it difficult to identify an individual person or entity from published data. These data tables have had random rounding to base three applied to all cell counts in the table. The impact of applying random rounding is that columns and rows may not add exactly to the given column or row totals. The published counts will never differ by more than two counts.