



Dear

On 5 September 2021, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

- *Please provide the number of beneficiary households eligible for TAS that have not applied that include at least one child, over each of the last five years.*

On 1 October 2021, the Ministry emailed you to advise you of the need to extend the due date of the request, as more time for consultation was necessary.

Temporary Additional Support (TAS) is a non-taxable supplementary payment that can be paid for a maximum of 13 weeks (at which point a re-application is required). It is paid as a last resort to help clients with their regular essential living costs that cannot be met from their income and other resources.

TAS produces a rate of payment based on an individual client's costs and income. Most forms of income support are included as income, including Child Disability Allowance (CDA) and Disability Allowance (DA). It may also interest you to know that disability related costs are also included as costs in the TAS calculation.

There are a number of reasons why people may appear to have potential eligibility, but do not receive, TAS. Some clients who appear on the apparent deficiency list may not wish to take up TAS, despite encouragement. Others on the list may not be eligible because they have not yet notified a change in circumstance, income or costs. In some cases, the deficiency is due to an error or oversight, such as costs or income not being entered in the system correctly.

The Ministry proactively reaches out to clients to communicate the eligibility and entitlement for TAS. Some of the key components of the Ministry's approach to contact clients about potential entitlement include:

- 3,000 clients are contacted each month and these contacts will be staggered over the course of each month
- clients will be contacted by email or letter, and in some instances both email and letter
- clients will be encouraged to make contact with the contact centre to complete an initial screening in relation to their potential entitlement
- an appointment will be made for the client to complete their application for TAS at their local service centre, where required.

Please see enclosed **Table One**, which outlines the total number of Working Age Main Benefit clients with a possible Temporary Additional Support (TAS) deficiency, that do and do not receive TAS or a Special Benefit, broken down by year.

Table One: The total number of Working Age Main Benefit clients with a possible Temporary Additional Support (TAS) deficiency, that do and do not receive TAS or a Special Benefit, broken down by year.

As at the end of	The number of Working Age Main Benefit clients with a possible Temporary Additional Support (TAS) deficiency, that do and do not receive TAS or a Special Benefit
March-2017	10,083
March-2018	5,670
September-2019	8,038
June-2020	7,685
March-2021	10,197

Notes for Table One:

- Working age is 18 to 64 years of age
- The quarters provided are the quarters in which this data is available. The dates being provided are due to changes in the way the data was reported and the fact clients did not have to reapply during level 4 in 2020.
- Main Benefit excludes New Zealand Superannuation, Veteran's Pension and Non-beneficiary assistance.
- Apparent deficiency is approximated based on costs provided in supplementary assistance. This deficiency model to do this was updated in 2019.
- 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 2 counts.

Any estimate on the number of people with a likely deficiency in income is somewhat imprecise because not all of our administrative data is comprehensive or up-to-date. This is because the apparent deficiency in income is determined based on information recorded in our systems at a given point in time, we need clients to make contact and confirm their circumstances which means that an initial screening opportunity is required.

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 regarding the number of beneficiary households eligible for Temporary Additional Support, that have not applied, that include at least one child, 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

Bridget Saunders
Manager
Issues Resolution