



11 October 2023

Tēnā koe

On 19 September 2023, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

- 1. The total number of New Zealanders on any benefit. Feel free to send any existing data files you have on hand, to start with.*
- 2. A matrix breakdown to understand which benefits often work together, e.g., 100,000 people get both Benefit A and Benefit B, but only 10,000 get both Benefit B and Benefit C.*
- 3. The total number of people receiving 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 or more different benefits in total within each quarter, or year. As many years of data as you have available, please.*
- 4. The total number of beneficiaries broken down by the total \$ value of all benefits they have received per quarter, or year, e.g. \$0-\$5k, \$5-10k, \$10-15k... etc. As many years of data as you have available, please.*

The Ministry regularly publishes benefit data on our website at the following link: [www.msdc.govt.nz/about-msdc-and-our-work/publications-resources/statistics/benefit/](http://www.msdc.govt.nz/about-msdc-and-our-work/publications-resources/statistics/benefit/). You can find the total number of New Zealanders on benefits in these statistics.

A beneficiary is defined as a client who is receiving a main benefit. A non-beneficiary is a client who is not receiving a main benefit, but could be receiving another assistance type, such as supplementary assistance or hardship assistance.

**Main benefits** are income-tested and asset-tested. They include the following:

- Jobseeker Support (JS)
- Sole Parent Support (SPS)
- Supported Living Payments (SLP)

- Youth Payment (YP)
- Young Parent Payment (YPP)
- Emergency Benefit (EB)
- Emergency Maintenance Allowance (EMA)
- Jobseeker Support Student Hardship (JSSH)
- Widow's Benefit Overseas (WBO)
- Sole Parent Support Overseas (SPSO).

**Supplementary Assistance** is non-taxable, income-tested, and asset-tested assistance to meet specific costs, including accommodation, childcare, training, and health-related or medical-related costs. These are:

- Accommodation Supplement (AS)
- Disability Allowance (DA)
- Temporary Additional Support (TAS)
- Unsupported Child's Benefit (UCB)/Orphan's Benefit (OB)
- Special Benefit (SB).

**Hardship Assistance** is non-taxable, income-tested, and asset-tested assistance available to beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries. These include:

- Special Needs Grants (SNGs)
- Recoverable Assistance Payments (RAPs)
- Benefit Advances (ADV).

There are a few other assistance types which do not fit into these three categories. These are:

- New Zealand Superannuation (NZS)
- Veteran's Pension (VP)
- Civil Defence Payments
- Winter Energy Payment (WEP).

You can read more about these assistance types on our benefit statistics page at the following link: [www.msd.govt.nz/documents/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/statistics/benefit/2023/bfs-t1-stats-information-jun-23.pdf](http://www.msd.govt.nz/documents/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/statistics/benefit/2023/bfs-t1-stats-information-jun-23.pdf).

One client can only be in receipt of one main benefit at a time. Clients on main benefits can be eligible for one or more supplementary assistances.

For the requested matrix breakdown to understand which benefits often work together, we have included main benefits and supplementary assistances. The Ministry's reporting system allows us to report this information at a specific

point in time. Including one-off payments in the hardship assistance category would require the Ministry to report on beneficiaries daily.

Please find the attached **Appendix** which contains **Table One**: the number of current benefits with supplementary benefits included as at the end of June 2014 – 2023.

You will note that the Widows Benefit Overseas is included in this table. This benefit is no longer available for new clients. The clients currently receiving this benefit were eligible and already receiving it at the time it was phased out in 2013.

The attached **Appendix** also contains **Table Two**. **Table Two** breaks down the number of beneficiaries who are receiving a main benefit and supplementary assistances as at the end of June from 2014 to 2023.

You will note that we have included NZ Superannuation/Veteran's Pension and Orphan's/Unsupported Child's benefits as main benefits in the tables. This is not in line with our standard reporting. We have included this to ensure we are giving you the most fulsome response possible.

I am unable to provide you with the total number of beneficiaries broken down by the total value of all benefits they have received per quarter or year as it is held in notes on individual case files. As such I am refusing this part of your request under section 18(f) of the Act. In order to provide you with this information, Ministry staff would have to manually review a substantial number of files. The greater public interest is in the effective and efficient administration of the public service.

I have considered whether the Ministry would be able to respond to your requests given extra time, or the ability to charge for the information requested. I have concluded that, in either case, the Ministry's ability to undertake its work would still be prejudiced.

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'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 main benefits and supplementary assistances, 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.

Ngā mihi nui

*Bridget Saunders*

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