



**MINISTRY OF SOCIAL  
DEVELOPMENT**  
TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO ORA

**Ministry of Social Development**  
**Benefit Fact Sheets**  
**Snapshot - March 2020 Quarter**

The Benefit Fact Sheets provide a high-level view of trends in benefit receipt. The Benefit Fact Sheets are published quarterly and contain information on benefit support provided by the Ministry.

New Zealand Government

# In the Benefit Fact Sheets

## Contents

### Main benefit assistance

Main benefit assistance	2
Jobseeker Support (JS)	2
Sole Parent Support (SPS)	3
Supported Living Payment (SLP)	3
Jobseeker Support by Work and Income region	4
Sole Parent Support by Work and Income region	5

### Benefit grants and cancellations

Benefit grants	6
Benefit cancellations	6

### Benefit sanctions

Benefit sanctions	6
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### Supplementary benefit assistance

Accommodation Supplement	7
Disability Allowance	7
Temporary Additional Support/Special Benefit	7

### Hardship assistance

Hardship grants	8
Special Needs Grants (SNG)	9
Benefit Advances (ADV)	9

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### Note regarding the regional estimated working-age population figures:

On 15 August 2019, Statistics New Zealand released their New Zealand's estimated population figures as at June 2019. Following this, on 22 October 2019, Statistics New Zealand published their revised regional population estimates as at June 2018 and as at June 2019. The revision of these figures has resulted in a small increase in the Ministry's estimations of the population proportion in urban areas, as well as decreases in population proportion in rural areas, by Work and Income region. Previously published reports have not been revised in terms of regional figures.

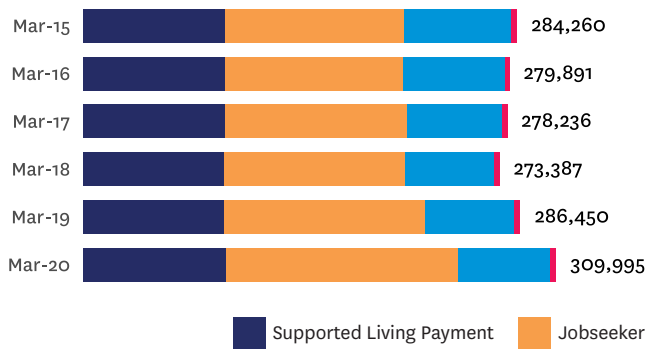
For further information, please refer to the following link to Statistics New Zealand website:

<https://www.stats.govt.nz/information-releases/subnational-population-estimates-at-30-june-2019-provisional>

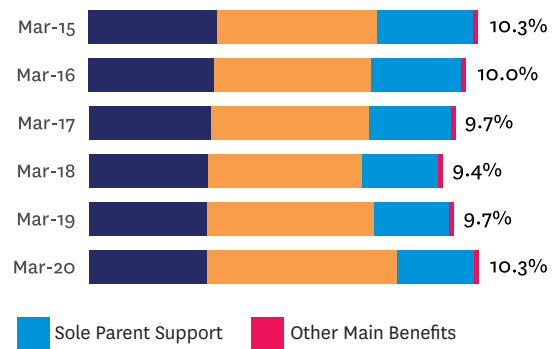
# Main benefit assistance

Main benefits for those of working age include: Jobseeker Support (JS), Sole Parent Support (SPS), Supported Living Payment (SLP), Youth Payment and Young Parent Payment (YP/YPP), Emergency Benefit (EB), Emergency Maintenance Allowance (EMA), Jobseeker Support Student Hardship (JSSH), Widow's Benefit Overseas (WBO), and Sole Parent Support Overseas (SPSO).

**Figure 1a. Number of working-age people receiving main benefits, at the end of the last six March quarters**



**Figure 1b. Proportion of working-age population receiving main benefits, at the end of the last six March quarters**



**309,995** working-age people receiving a main benefit as at the end of March 2020

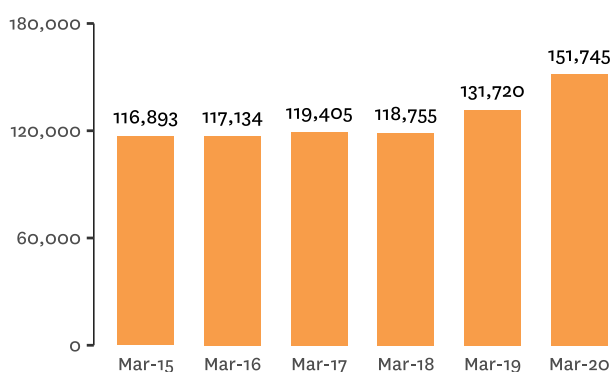
**10.3 percent** of the working-age population receiving a main benefit as at the end of March 2020

The number of working-age people receiving main benefits, as at the end of March 2020, was **8.2 percent higher** than at the end of March 2019. **Benefit numbers as a proportion of the working-age population increased to 10.3 percent**, compared with 9.7 percent as at the end of March 2019.

The working-age population are those aged between 18–64 of the estimated New Zealand resident population, year-ended as at June. The proportion of the working-age population uses the estimate for the year ending June, so estimates as at the end of June 2019 have been used for the March 2020 quarter.

## Jobseeker Support (JS)

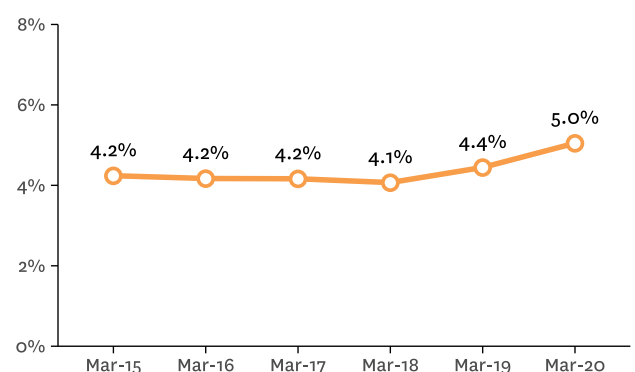
**Figure 2a. Number of working-age people receiving Jobseeker Support, at the end of the last six March quarters**



**151,745** working-age people receiving JS as at the end of March 2020

**5.0 percent** of the working-age population receiving JS as at the end of March 2020

**Figure 2b. Proportion of working-age population receiving Jobseeker Support, at the end of the last six March quarters**



As at the end of March 2020, **the number of working-age people on Jobseeker Support increased by 15.2 percent**, compared with the March 2019 quarter. **The proportion of working-age people receiving JS has been increasing since the March 2018 quarter.**

Jobseeker Support is for people who can usually look for or prepare for work. It also includes people who can only work part-time or cannot look for work at the moment (e.g. they have a health condition, injury, or disability).

## Sole Parent Support (SPS)

Figure 3a. Number of working-age people receiving Sole Parent Support, at the end of the last six March quarters

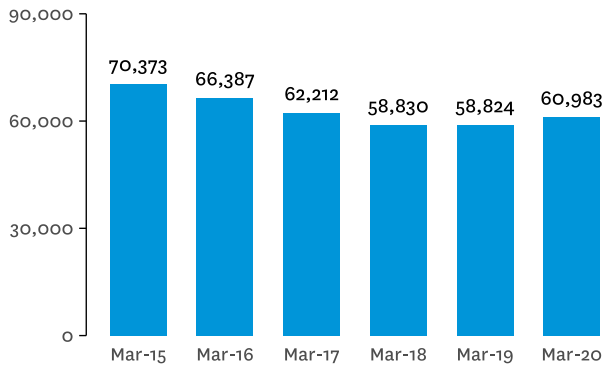
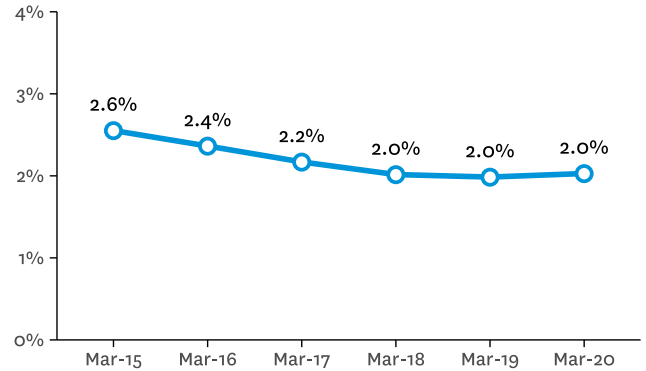


Figure 3b. Proportion of working-age population receiving Sole Parent Support, at the end of the last six March quarters



**60,983** working-age people receiving SPS as at the end of March 2020

**2.0 percent** of the working-age population receiving SPS as at the end of March 2020

As at the end of March 2020, **the number of working-age people on Sole Parent Support increased by 3.7 percent**, compared with the March 2019 quarter. **The proportion of working-age people receiving SPS decreased consistently** over the previous March quarters, but for the last three quarters **has stabilised at 2.0 percent**.

Sole Parent Support is for single parents, with at least one dependent child under 14 years, who can look for or prepare for part-time work.

## Supported Living Payment (SLP)

Figure 4a. Number of working-age people receiving Supported Living Payment, at the end of the last six March quarters

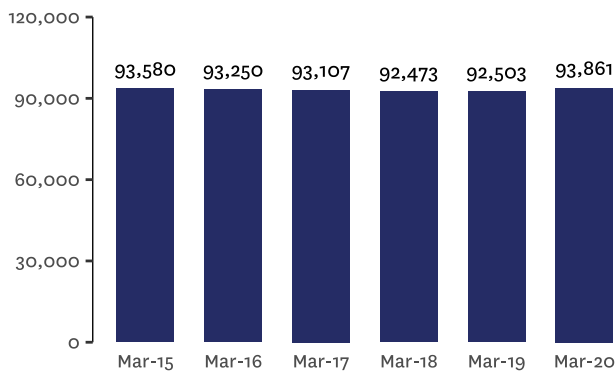
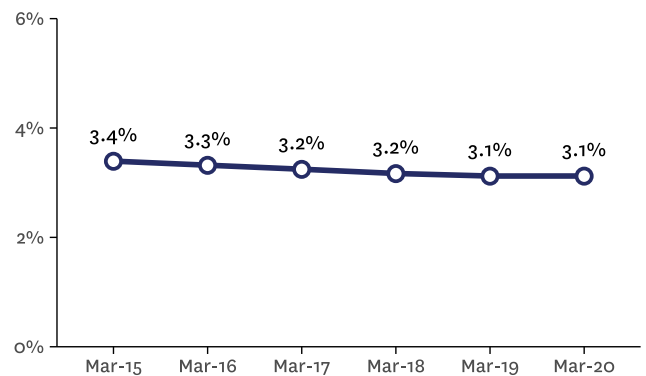


Figure 4b. Proportion of working-age population receiving Supported Living Payment, at the end of the last six March quarters



**93,861** working-age people receiving SLP as at the end of March 2020

**3.1 percent** of the working-age population receiving SLP as at the end of March 2020

**The number of working-age people on Supported Living Payment has remained stable** when compared with the end of March 2019. There were 93,861 SLP recipients as at March 2020, which is 1,358 more than at the end of March 2019.

Supported Living Payment is for people who have, or care for someone with, a health condition, injury or disability that severely limits their ability to work on a long-term basis. The long-term nature of conditions for people on Supported Living Payment mean that very few people move from Supported Living Payment into paid work or to another benefit.

# Jobseeker Support regional distribution as a proportion of the working-age population, by Work and Income region, as at March 2020

Most of the increase in proportion of the working-age population\* receiving Jobseeker Support has occurred in the North Island/Te Ika-a-Māui. Northland had the highest proportion of the working-age population receiving Jobseeker Support, at 9.1 percent as at the end of March 2020.

In terms of annual change, Southern, Wellington, and Central had the lowest percentage point increases, of 0.3 percentage point as at the end of March 2020, when compared with March 2019.

Work and Income has 11 geographical regions. An extra category, 'Other Region', is used to count people managed by national units, for example contact centres and processing centres.

All percentages have been rounded to the nearest decimal point. As a result, a percentage point change may be displayed as zero.

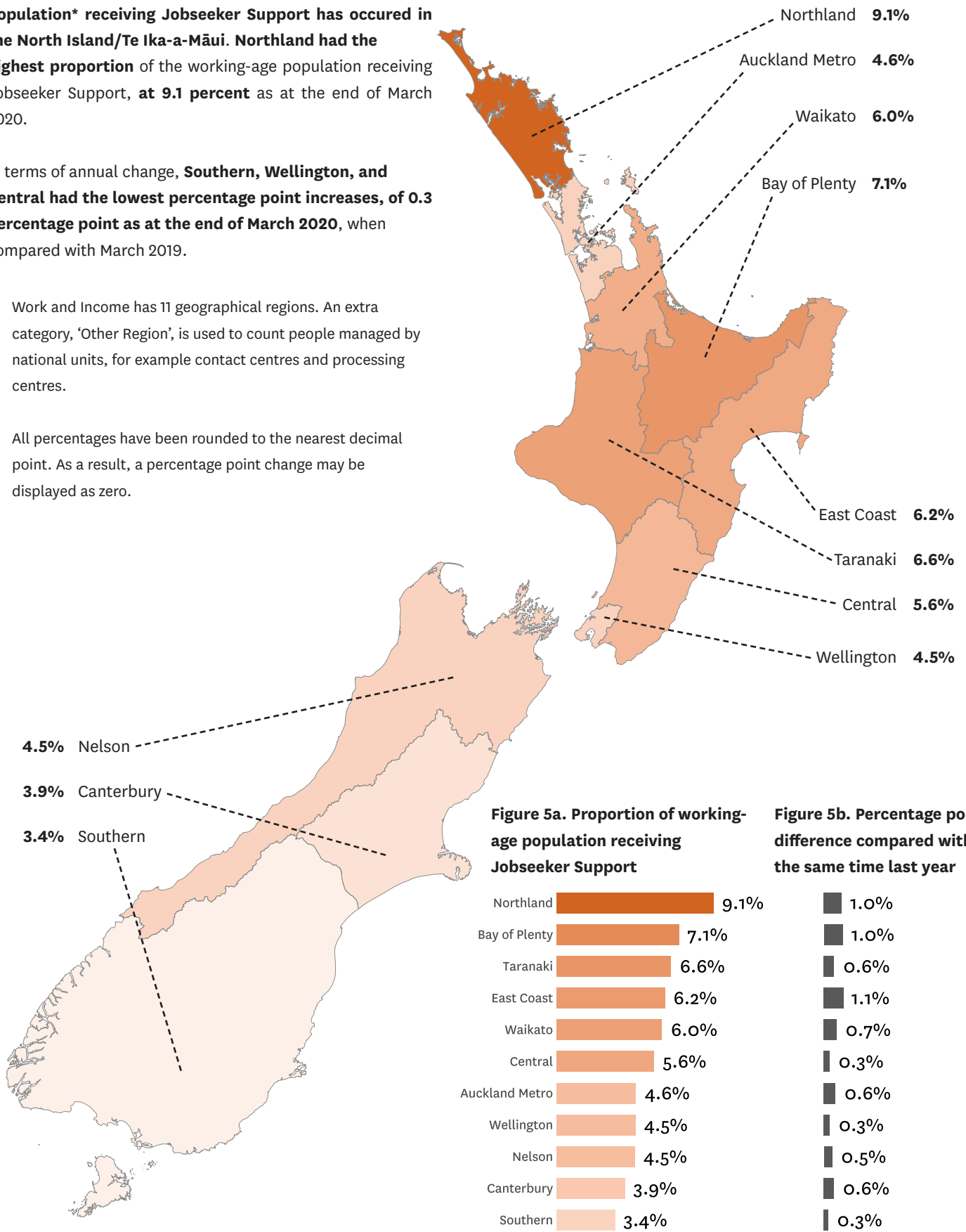


Figure 5a. Proportion of working-age population receiving Jobseeker Support

Figure 5b. Percentage point difference compared with the same time last year

\* The regional estimated working-age population figures used on pages four and five of this report have been calculated using Statistics New Zealand's revised regional population estimates as at June 2019. For more information, please refer to the note on page 1.

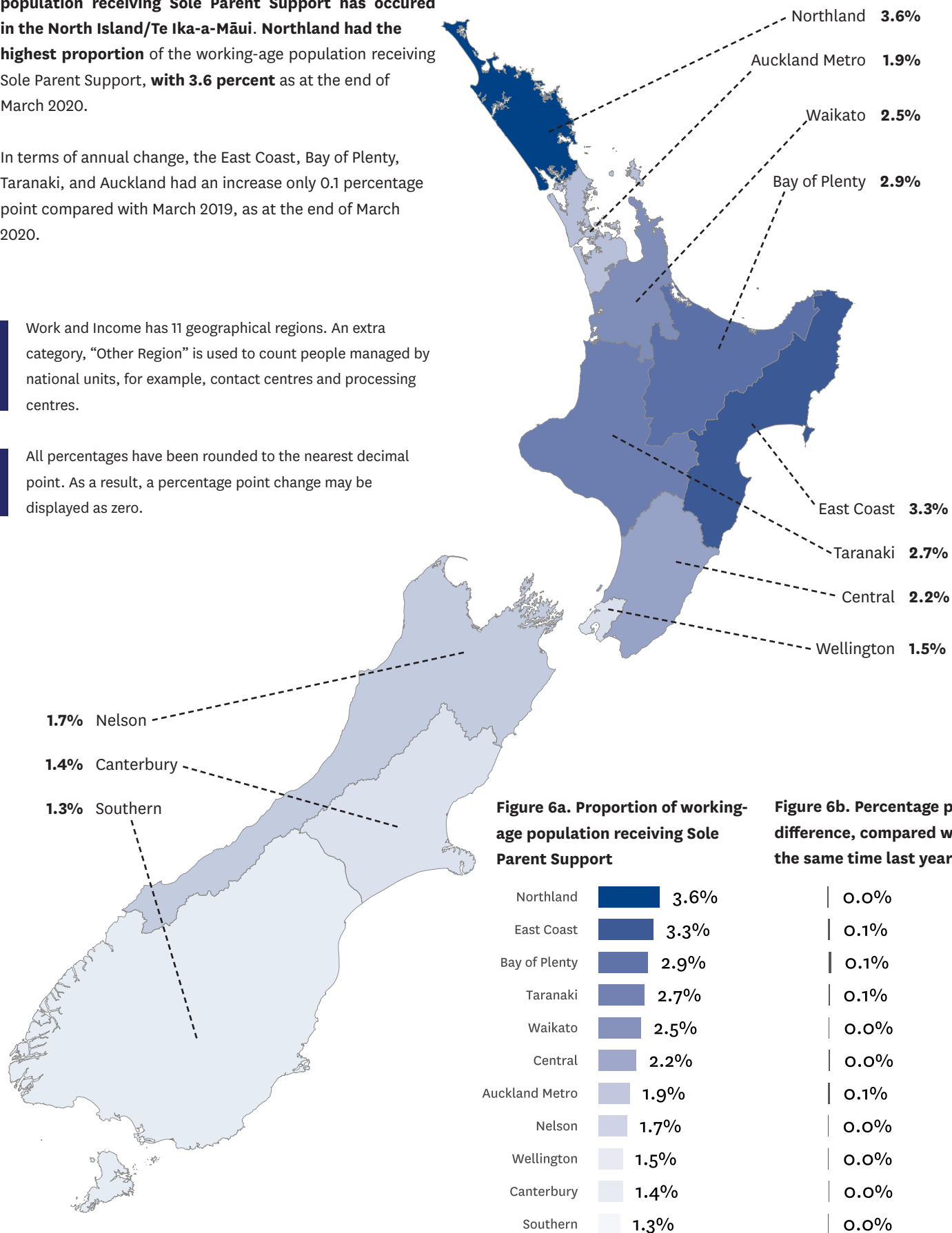
# Sole Parent Support regional distribution as a proportion of the working-age population, by Work and Income region, as at March 2020

Most of the increase in proportion of the working-age population receiving Sole Parent Support has occurred in the North Island/Te Ika-a-Māui. Northland had the highest proportion of the working-age population receiving Sole Parent Support, with 3.6 percent as at the end of March 2020.

In terms of annual change, the East Coast, Bay of Plenty, Taranaki, and Auckland had an increase only 0.1 percentage point compared with March 2019, as at the end of March 2020.

Work and Income has 11 geographical regions. An extra category, "Other Region" is used to count people managed by national units, for example, contact centres and processing centres.

All percentages have been rounded to the nearest decimal point. As a result, a percentage point change may be displayed as zero.



**Figure 6a. Proportion of working-age population receiving Sole Parent Support**

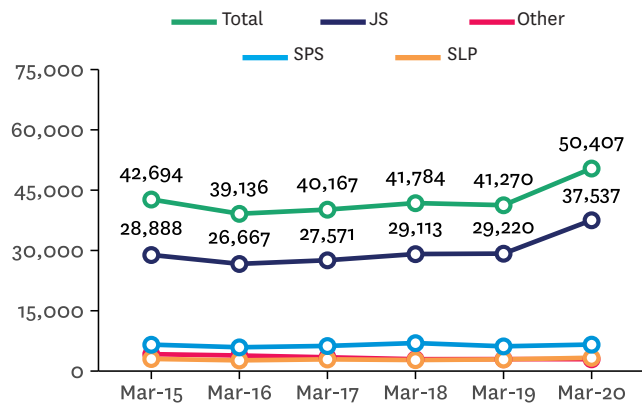
**Figure 6b. Percentage point difference, compared with the same time last year**

Northland	3.6%	0.0%
East Coast	3.3%	0.1%
Bay of Plenty	2.9%	0.1%
Taranaki	2.7%	0.1%
Waikato	2.5%	0.0%
Central	2.2%	0.0%
Auckland Metro	1.9%	0.1%
Nelson	1.7%	0.0%
Wellington	1.5%	0.0%
Canterbury	1.4%	0.0%
Southern	1.3%	0.0%

# Benefit grants and cancellations

## Grants

Figure 7. Number of benefit grants during the last six March quarters



The number of benefits granted increased by 9,137, compared with the March 2019 quarter, to 50,407 for the March 2020 quarter. Compared with March 2019, there was an increase of 28.5 percent in benefit grants for Jobseeker Support during the March 2020 quarter.

A grant is the formal acceptance of entitlement to a benefit. The numbers reported here are for benefits granted during the March quarter, for the last six March quarters (i.e. 1 January to March).

## Cancellations

Figure 8a. Number of cancellations by benefit during the last six March quarters

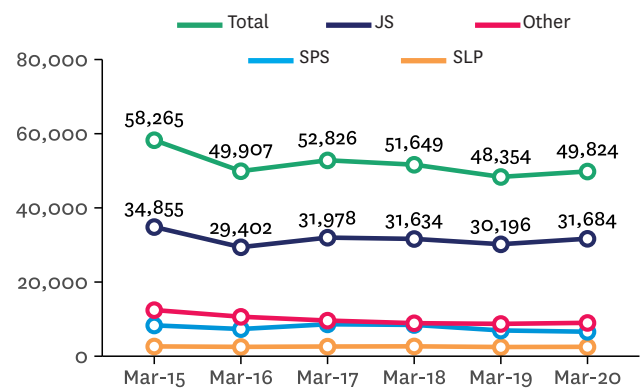
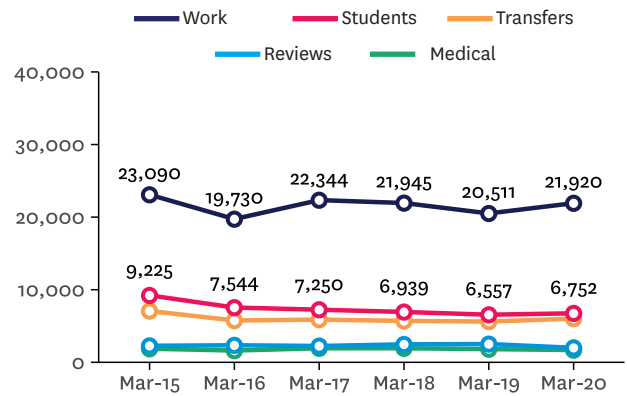


Figure 8b. Number of cancellations by selected reason during the last six March quarters



**49,824** benefit cancels made during the March 2020 quarter

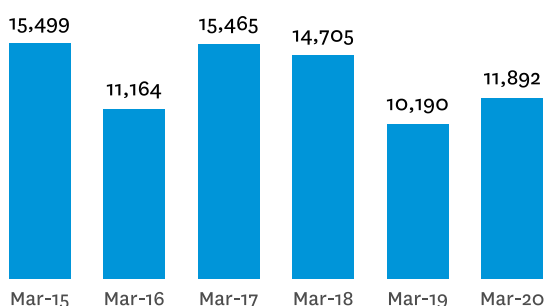
The number of benefits cancelled increased by 1,470, compared with the March 2019 quarter, to 49,824 during the March 2020 quarter. **Obtaining work, a main reason for benefit cancellations, increased by 1,409** compared with the March 2019 quarter, to 21,920 during the March 2020 quarter.

**21,920** benefit cancels made during the March 2020 quarter due to entering paid work

A cancellation (cancel) is the formal process that stops the entitlement to a benefit. The numbers reported above are for benefits cancelled within the March quarter, for the last six March quarters (i.e. 1 January to March).

## Benefit sanctions

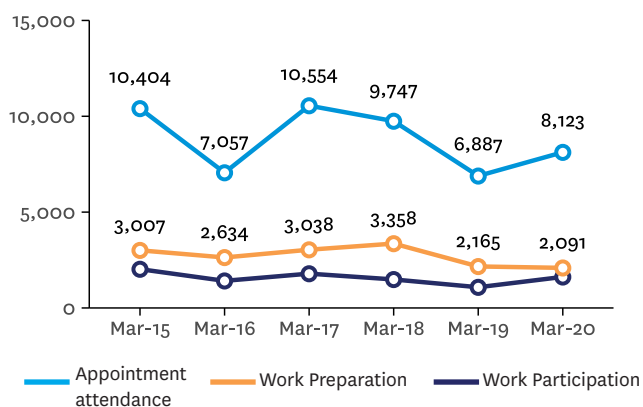
Figure 9. Number of sanctions for unfulfilled work obligations during the last six March quarters



The number of sanctions issued during the March 2020 quarter was **11,892**. This was an increase of 1,702 compared with the March 2019 quarter.

A sanction is a reduction on a person's benefit that occurs if they do not fulfil their work obligations. Sanctions can affect benefit recipients in a number of ways, depending on their circumstances and the number of times they have had a graduated sanction over the last 12 months. There are three types of sanctions: graduated (i.e. percentage reduction in benefit amount), suspended, or cancelled.

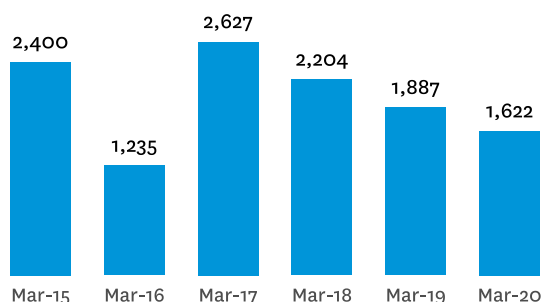
**Figure 10. Number of sanctions for unfulfilled work obligations, by reason, during the last six March quarters**



The main reason for sanctions was due to clients not attending arranged appointments, with 8,123 recipients having unfulfilled work obligations due to this reason during the March 2020 quarter.

The maximum main benefit reduction for sole parents and couples with dependent children is 50 percent, when sanctioned within a 12-month period. For people without a de facto partner or couples with no dependent children, the first sanction is a maximum 50 percent reduction of their main benefit; for a second non-fulfilment of an obligation, they face a 100 percent suspension of their main benefit; and a third sanction will then result in a cancellation.

**Figure 11. Number of graduated sanctions active at the end of the last six March quarters**

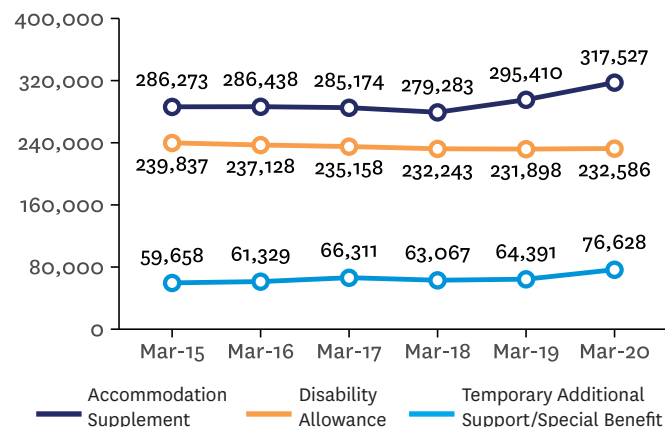


As at the end of March 2020, there were 1,622 sanctions that were actively in place.

Not everyone who does not fulfil their obligations gets sanctioned; if benefit recipients re-comply or provide additional information, the sanction can be withdrawn.

## Supplementary benefit assistance

**Figure 12. Number of recipients of supplementary assistance at the end of the last six March quarters**



The number of people receiving the Accommodation Supplement in the March 2020 quarter was 317,527. This was an increase of 22,117 compared with the March 2019 quarter.

The number of people receiving Temporary Additional Support/Special Benefit increased by 12,237, compared with the end of March 2019, to 76,628 as at the end of March 2020.

The Accommodation Supplement is a weekly payment to assist people on low incomes with their rent, board, or the cost of owning a home, but not those in public housing or Income-Related Rent. The number of people receiving an Accommodation Supplement tends to follow trends around broader benefit numbers.

The Disability Allowance is a weekly payment to assist people who have on-going costs because of a disability. A person does not need to be receiving a main benefit in order to qualify for the Disability Allowance. The number of people receiving a Disability Allowance tends to follow trends around broader benefit and New Zealand Superannuation numbers.

Temporary Additional Support is a weekly payment that helps people to cover essential living costs that cannot be met from their income and through other resources. A person does not have to be receiving a main benefit to qualify for Temporary Additional Support. Temporary Additional Support replaced Special Benefit in 2006, however some people are still entitled to receive Special Benefit, therefore these are counted together.

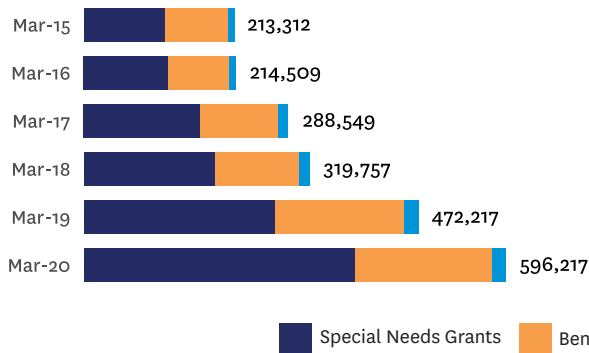


# Hardship assistance

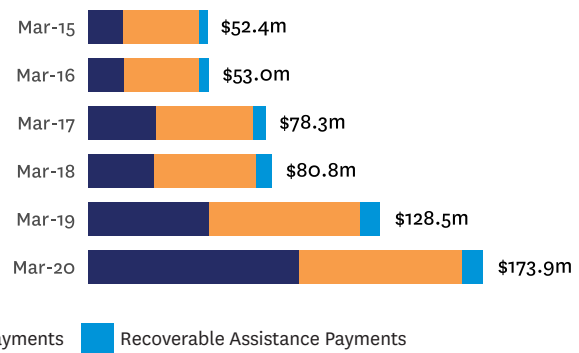
A total of **596,217 hardship assistance payments, worth \$173,855,443**, were granted during the March 2020 quarter. These figures are **higher than during the March 2019 quarter**, when 472,217 hardship assistance payments, worth \$128,492,321, were granted.

Hardship assistance includes, but is not limited to: Special Needs Grants (SNGs), Benefit Advances (ADVs) and Recoverable Assistance Payments (RAPs). These forms of assistance are designed to help people who have immediate needs. The numbers reported for hardship assistance granted are sums of grants granted within the March quarter (i.e. 1 January to 30 March). Hardship assistance contains all ages data, rather than working-age only (i.e. 18 to 64).

**Figure 13a. Number of hardship grants during the quarter for the last six March quarters, by type of assistance**



**Figure 13b. Value of hardship grants during the quarter for the last six March quarters, by type of assistance**

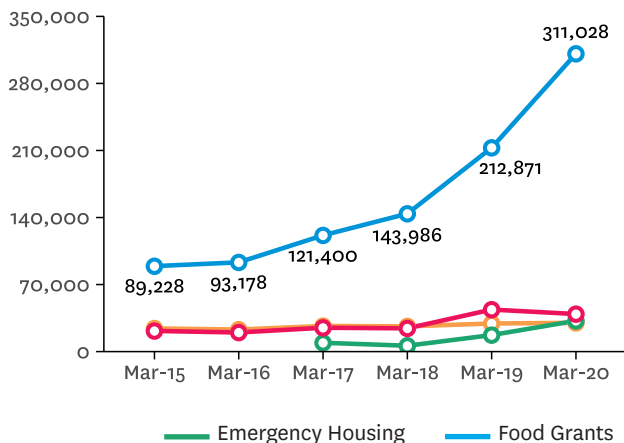


**596,217** payments granted during the March 2020 quarter

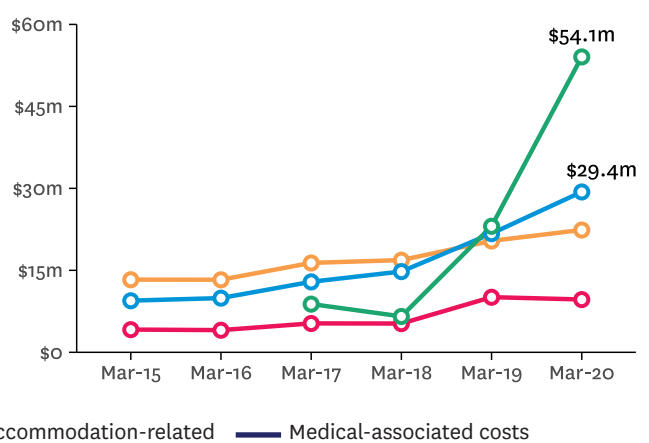
**\$173,855,443** value of grants provided during the March 2020 quarter

Reasons for hardship assistance, detailed below, include both Benefit Advance and Special Needs Grant reason categories. The Accommodation-related reasons are for Benefit Advance Grants. Food Grants, Medical-associated costs, and Emergency Housing reasons are for Special Needs Grants.

**Figure 14a. Number of hardship grants during the quarter for the last six March quarters, by selected reason**



**Figure 14b. Value of hardship grants during the quarter for the last six March quarters, by selected reason**

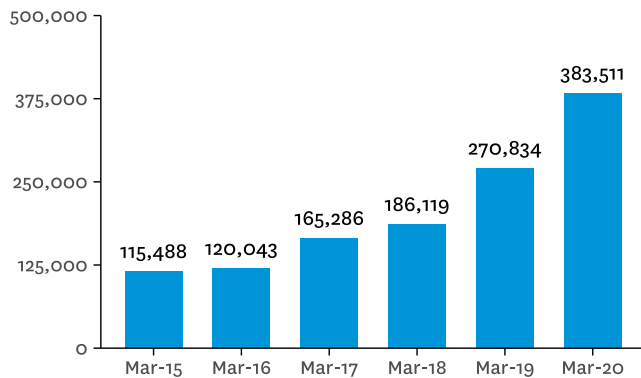


The number of Emergency Housing Special Needs Grants (EH SNGs) granted increased compared with the March 2019 quarter. 14,877 more grants were granted, totalling 32,141 during the March 2020 quarter. **The average value for each EH SNGs granted increased from \$1,337 in the March 2019 quarter, to \$1,682 in the March 2020 quarter.** The total number of EH SNGs granted and the increasing average value has contributed to **a higher total value of EH SNGs during the March 2020 quarter. A total value of \$54,069,680 was granted for EH SNGs**, an increase from \$23,079,536 during the March 2019 quarter.

**The demand for Special Needs Grants (SNG) for food assistance continues to increase.** Compared with the March 2019 quarter, there were 98,157 more SNGs for food granted, totalling 311,028 during the March 2020 quarter. As a result, the value of SNGs for food assistance increased to \$29,358,224 during the March 2020 quarter.

## Special Needs Grants (SNGs)

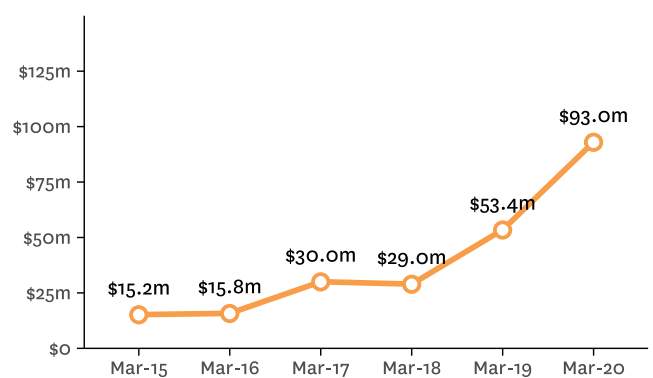
Figure 15a. Number of Special Needs Grants granted during the quarter for the last six March quarters



**383,511** Special Needs Grants granted during the March 2020 quarter

**\$92,997,133** is the value of Special Needs Grants granted in the March 2020 quarter

Figure 15b. Value of Special Needs Grants granted during the quarter for the last six March quarters

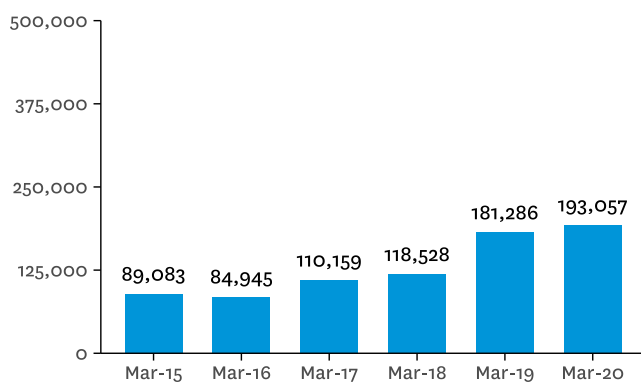


The number of Special Needs Grants granted was **112,677** higher during the **March 2020** quarter than during the March 2019 quarter. This has resulted in the **value of grants granted increasing by 74.0 percent**, or \$53,446,707 to \$92,997,133, when compared with March 2019.

A Special Needs Grant provides non-taxable, one-off recoverable or non-recoverable financial assistance for people to meet immediate needs. A person does not need to be receiving a main benefit to be eligible for a Special Needs Grant. Special Needs Grants include Emergency Housing Special Needs Grants.

## Benefit Advances (ADVs)

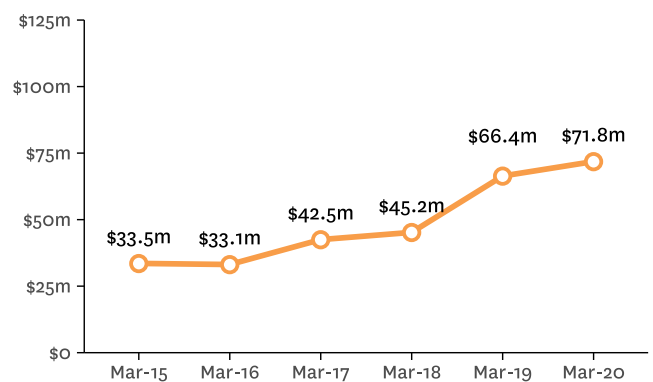
Figure 16a. Number of Benefit Advances granted during the quarter for the last six March quarters



**193,057** Benefit Advances granted during the March 2020 quarter

**\$71,830,370** is the value of Benefit Advances granted during the March 2020 quarter

Figure 16b. Value of Benefit Advances granted during the quarter for the last six March quarters



The number of Benefit Advances granted was **11,771** higher during the **March 2020** quarter, compared with the March 2019 quarter. This has resulted in the **value of Benefit Advances granted increasing** by \$5,432,731, to a total of \$71,830,370.

All people receiving a main benefit who require assistance to meet a particular immediate essential need can have access to an advance payment of their benefit, up to six weeks of their net entitlement.