



Information on Quarterly Welfare Assistance Tier 1 Statistics ('the Benefit Fact Sheets')

Composition of the Benefit Fact Sheets

The Benefit Fact Sheets consist of:

- an A4 snapshot, which highlights key points from the Benefit Fact Sheets, supporting the interpretation of the Tier One Statistics.
- ten Excel data files, containing information for:
 - 1) National totals for main benefits, other benefits, New Zealand Superannuation (NZS), Veteran's Pension (VP), selected supplementary and hardship assistance, number of dependent children, and number of non-beneficiaries (people who receive assistance from MSD that is not a main benefit). Recipient characteristics are shown for main benefits, and reasons for assistance are shown for hardship payments.
 - 2) National totals of main benefit grants and cancellations, broken down by Work and Income region and recorded reason for cancelling main benefits.
 - 3) Main benefits, broken down by Work and Income region and recipient characteristics.
 - 4) Selected supplementary assistance and hardship payments (including reason for assistance), broken down by Work and Income region.
 - 5) Main benefits, broken down by Regional Council area, benefit and recipient characteristics.
 - 6) Main benefits, broken down by Auckland board area, benefit and recipient characteristics (for latest quarter only).
 - 7) Main benefits, broken down by Territorial Authority area, benefit and recipient characteristics (for latest quarter only).
 - 8) Main benefits, broken down by service centres and benefit (latest quarter only).
 - 9) New Zealand Superannuation and Veteran's Pension, broken down by key recipient characteristics. This file also contains information on receipt of pensions paid from overseas.
 - 10) National totals of benefit sanctions arising from failure to meet work or youth activity obligations, broken down by Work and Income region, benefit, and type of sanction imposed.

The Benefit Fact Sheets are published here:

www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/statistics/benefit/

Notable changes to data in the Benefit Fact Sheets

From 1 December 2022, MSD **increased the support available for dental treatment through Special Needs Grants**. This change enabled more people to receive needed dental care without getting into debt. Changes included:

- increasing the maximum available from \$300 to \$1,000 within a 52-week period
- making it available for all MSD clients and low-income people
- allowing it to be used for any immediate and essential treatment.



When a policy is first implemented, we tend to see a noticeable change in trends, in this case a large uptake of that support, which then levels off as it becomes standard practice.

From December 2021, we have improved the way we report **Territorial Authority (TA)** statistics by enhancing our methodologies and aligning with the latest geographical boundaries. There may be some variation from previous Benefit Fact Sheet publications.

From December 2021, MSD changed the way the ethnicity of clients is reported, to an approach called '**total response**'. Ethnicity is about people's identity and sense of belonging. Ethnicity measures cultural affiliation, rather than race, ancestry, nationality, or citizenship. Ethnicity is self-perceived and people can identify with more than one ethnic group.

Total response ethnicity means people can appear more than once in our reporting, so ethnic group totals will add to more than 100 percent. The number of people receiving a benefit each quarter has not changed, but the way we represent them has. The total response ethnicity percentages are calculated by dividing the number of people who identify with each ethnic group by the total unique number of people with a reported ethnicity (this excludes people who have not specified an ethnicity).

For more information please see:

www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/tools/how-we-report-ethnicity.html

On 8 November 2021, the **removal of the Subsequent Child Policy** came into effect. Around 5,700 people transferred from **Jobseeker Support (JS)** to **Sole Parent Support (SPS)**. For more information on this policy change, please see: www.workandincome.govt.nz/about-work-and-income/news/2021/subsequent-child-policy-removal.html

From February 2021, MSD began publishing **rounded numbers** rather than actual numbers. This was done to continue to protect client information, while making more data available. All rounding is to base 3, and rounding is done independently for each table and for each report produced by MSD.

To find out how we have changed the way we work with client information visit:

www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/tools/how-we-keep-data-private.html

From 2 December 2019, forms and online applications were updated to include **three gender options for clients to choose from: "Male", "Female", and "Gender Diverse"**. Gender Diverse is not available in datasets prior to December 2019.

On 1 April 2018, the **Families Package** was implemented. This had an effect on the **Accommodation Supplement, and Temporary Additional Support/Special Benefit** figures.

On 15 July 2013, the **Welfare Reform changes** came into effect. Three new benefits replaced most of the previous benefits: **Jobseeker Support (JS)**, **Sole Parent Support (SPS)** and **Supported Living Payment (SLP)**. The Benefit Fact Sheets report estimates of the number of clients receiving the new benefit categories for dates prior to 15 July 2013. Numbers from 15 July 2013 are actual numbers of people receiving these benefits. Further information on comparing current benefits to prior to the Welfare Reform can be found here:

www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/statistics/benefit/benefit-factsheet-changes-2013.html

New Zealand's COVID-19 response is reflected in the Benefit Fact Sheets

The figures in the quarterly Benefit Fact Sheets reflect the impacts of COVID-19, and MSD's response to support New Zealanders. Our response to the COVID-19 pandemic included several temporary operational changes to support people affected by the



pandemic, and to ensure the health and safety of our clients and of MSD's essential workers. Some of the changes made included deferring the need to provide subsequent medical certificates, reviewing the Disability Allowance, suspending obligation failures, and extending the 52-week reapplication period for JS and SPS clients.

Since the end of January 2022, all normal operating procedures have been restored, with the exception that review periods for medical certificates now reflect health provider recommendations rather than the previous fixed review period.

Data since March 2022 reflects the impact of the resumption of Work Capacity Medical Certificates (WCMC) reviews at the end of January 2022. As a result of these reviews, a number of clients who were receiving Jobseeker Support – Health Condition or Disability (JS – HCD) during the COVID-19 pandemic transferred to other benefits which better reflected their circumstances (eg. Supported Living Payment – Health Condition or Disability). However, from the end of September 2022 these changes begun to stabilise and returned to what we normally saw prior to the WCMC process being suspended in 2020. Most JS – HCD recipients had completed their medical certificate review process by the end of September 2022.

Further information on recent changes to the way MSD operates can be found here: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/

Other reporting products available to assist in interpreting the Tier 1 Statistics

The Benefit Fact Sheets Snapshot supports interpretation of the Ministry's Tier 1 Statistics. To provide more information on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on New Zealand's people, society, and economy, MSD also increased the frequency with which we report key benefit data and additional income support.

Weekly and monthly reporting are available on the MSD website:

- [Income Support Weekly Update](#)
- [Monthly Benefits Update](#)

Presentation of data

The following are reported in the Benefit Fact Sheets:

- counts (randomly rounded to base 3).
- dollar amounts (rounded to the nearest whole dollar). Dollar amounts in the commentary released alongside the Benefit Fact Sheets may be rounded to the nearest hundred thousand dollars.
- percentages (rounded to one decimal point and based on rounded numbers).
- annual and quarterly changes (counts and percentages rounded as above and based on rounded numbers).

Data limitations

The usual limitations for administrative data apply, including the possibility of:

- human error in entering data in the administrative system or when processing data
- having missing items, incomplete files, or duplicates
- under-reporting (not everyone eligible for a benefit or assistance applies for a benefit or assistance)



- circumstances that affect recipient responses (e.g. changes to the ethnicity that they report themselves).

Revisions

Any revisions to historic data are noted in the contents page of the relevant Excel data file.

Definitions/concepts

Aspect	Details
Data source	<p>Recipient information used in the Benefit Fact Sheets is extracted from MSD's administrative system after the end of the quarter.</p> <p>This information is collected by MSD to allow the Ministry to undertake its statutory functions, which include but are not limited to the provision of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• employment, income support, and superannuation services• student allowances and loans.
Population	<p>Recipients of main benefits, supplementary assistance, hardship assistance, New Zealand Superannuation, and Veteran's Pension within the last five years.</p>
Reporting period	<p>The Benefit Fact Sheets include the most recent quarterly data that is available.</p> <p>In total, five years of quarterly data plus an additional quarter (21 quarters) are available.</p> <p>Most Benefit Fact Sheets show the number of people receiving benefits at the end of the quarter. However, the following sheets show the sum of all events that occur in the quarter. The data in these sheets is a count of events over the quarter, not a count of clients. The following sheets show this information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• benefit grants and cancellations• benefit sanctions• hardship payments.

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

- **Jobseeker Support (JS)** – a benefit paid for up to 52 weeks while clients look for work, are in training for work, or are unable to work due to a temporary health condition, injury, or disability. Recipients can reapply for JS, if they still require it, after 52 weeks.
- **Sole Parent Support (SPS)** – a benefit for sole parents whose youngest dependent child is less than 14 years of age. Recipients can reapply for SPS, if they still require it, after 52 weeks.
- **Supported Living Payment (SLP)** – a benefit for people who:
 - a) have a health condition, injury, or disability that severely limits their ability to work on a long-term basis (i.e. unable to work more than 15 hours a week)
 - b) are caring for someone who requires full-time care, or
 - c) are totally blind.



The long-term nature of conditions for people on SLP mean that fewer people transfer to other benefits or move into paid employment, compared to other types.

- **Youth Payment (YP)** – a benefit paid to 16 and 17-year-olds who are not being supported by their parents, have no dependent children, and are not in a relationship with someone receiving a benefit. A small number of 18-year-olds can also receive this benefit.
- **Young Parent Payment (YPP)** – a benefit paid to 16 to 19-year-old parents or guardians of a dependent child or children, who are undertaking or available for approved full-time training or who would be available if care could be found for their dependent child/children. A small number of 20-year-olds can also receive this benefit.
- **Emergency Benefit (EB)** – a benefit that is granted to people who are in significant hardship, as they are unable to earn a sufficient livelihood, but are not eligible for any other main benefit.
- **Emergency Maintenance Allowance (EMA)** – a benefit granted to sole parents who are in hardship and who do not qualify for other payments.
- **Jobseeker Support Student Hardship (JSSH)** – a benefit that provides income support for full-time students during breaks in study, who have little or no income, are actively seeking work, and are suffering hardship.
- **Widow's Benefit Overseas (WBO)** – a benefit for widowed women who meet certain criteria and are living in certain countries overseas (no longer available for new clients).
- **Sole Parent Support Overseas (SPSO)** – a benefit available to a widow or widower whose youngest dependent child is less than 14 years of age. They also need to meet certain criteria and be living in certain countries overseas to qualify.

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. The Benefit Fact Sheets report receipt of selected supplementary assistance:

- **Accommodation Supplement (AS)** – a payment to assist people on low incomes (beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries¹) with their rent, board, or the cost of owning a home. This is not available to those in public housing or charged Income-Related Rent.
- **Disability Allowance (DA)** – a payment to help cover ongoing additional costs due to a disability, available to both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries.
- **Temporary Additional Support (TAS)** – a payment available to people who are having difficulty paying for their ongoing essential living costs, available to both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries. TAS replaced Special Benefit (SPB) in 2006, however some people are still entitled to receive SPB, therefore these are counted together.
- **Unsupported Child's Benefit (UCB)/Orphan's Benefit (OB)** – a payment granted to the primary caregivers of orphaned or unsupported children. It is available to both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries.

Hardship Assistance is non-taxable, income-tested, and asset-tested assistance available to both non-beneficiaries and beneficiaries. Figures contained in the Benefit Fact Sheets are based on grants made, including:

¹ Individuals not receiving a main benefit.



- **Special Needs Grants (SNGs)** – one-off grants made to those who have immediate or emergency needs and who have no other means of paying the cost to meet those needs. Most SNGs are non-recoverable (do not need to be paid back).
- **Recoverable Assistance Payments (RAPs)** – non-taxable, interest-free financial assistance to people on a low income, who aren't receiving a benefit or pension. The aim is to enable them to meet essential immediate needs for specific goods and services.
- **Benefit Advances (ADVs)** – up to six weeks' worth of benefit payments are available in advance to recipients of a main benefit. The advance enables benefit recipients to meet one-off needs that are immediate and essential, but cannot be met from their regular income.

Civil Defence Payments are payments that are available to meet the immediate needs of people who are affected by a Civil Defence emergency or adverse event. This assistance is not income- or asset-tested.

Winter Energy Payment (WEP), starting 2018, is a non-taxable benefit paid in addition to the recipient's main benefit, New Zealand Superannuation, or Veteran's Pension to support eligible recipients to meet their household heating costs during the winter period, from 1 May to 1 October. During 2018, this period was 1 July to 29 September.

New Zealand Superannuation (NZS) is a fortnightly, non-income-tested payment for people aged 65 years and over who are New Zealand citizens or permanent residents, and normally live in New Zealand at the time NZS is applied for. It may be paid to people who do not meet the eligibility criteria, but are in a relationship (i.e. married, living as married, or in a civil union) with qualified recipients of NZS.

Veteran's Pension (VP) is a fortnightly payment for veterans who have served in the New Zealand Armed Forces in a war or other emergency, are New Zealand residents and normally live in New Zealand. Those eligible to receive a VP must choose to receive that pension or NZS.

Benefit sanctions are penalties imposed on clients' benefits for failure to fulfil their obligations. Sanctions from failure to fulfil work obligations are reported in the Benefit Fact Sheets. These include failure to prepare for work, to attend arranged appointments, or to accept offers of employment. The majority of clients who have work obligations are receiving JS or SPS. Most clients re-comply with their work obligations before a sanction is imposed.

Processes for identifying failures to comply with work-related obligation requirements were suspended from 23 March 2020 to 27 May 2020, as part of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sanctions affect clients in several ways, depending on their circumstances (e.g. sole parents, couples with dependent children, or people subject to money management), and the number of times they have had a sanction imposed over the last 12 months. Sole parents and couples with dependent children face a maximum 50 percent reduction of their main benefit when sanctioned. For clients without a partner or dependent children, and for couples with no dependent children, the first sanction is a maximum 50 percent reduction of their main benefit. For a second failure, they face a suspension (100 percent reduction) of their main benefit. A third sanction results in the main benefit being cancelled.

There are three grades of benefit sanctions:

- A Grade 1 sanction means the client has failed their obligations for the first time in the last 12 months and has not re-complied within five working days.
- A Grade 2 sanction occurs if a client has failed their obligations for the second time in the last 12 months and has not re-complied within five working days.



- A Grade 3 sanction means the client has failed their obligations for the third time in the last 12 months or has not accepted an offer of suitable employment (job refusal) and has not re-complied within five working days.

Note: Sanctions for youth activity failures impact on a young person's in-hand allowance or incentive payment.

Working-age clients are aged 18–64 years. This definition reflects the minimum age of eligibility for most main benefits and the age of qualification for New Zealand Superannuation (65). In some cases, benefits may be received by individuals outside of working age. Examples of this include:

- individuals receiving Youth Payment or Young Parent Payment, or individuals being eligible for a main benefit from a younger age
- people over 65 years receiving a benefit due to residency issues impacting on their eligibility for New Zealand Superannuation.

All data reported in the Benefit Fact Sheets concerned with main benefits is restricted to working age clients. Data on supplementary assistance, hardship assistance and pensions (NZS, VP and overseas pensions) is for all clients, regardless of age.

Population proportions are calculated using the estimated working-age population (18–64) subset of the estimated New Zealand resident population. The most recent June estimate available for the relevant 12-month period is used for the calculation. For more information on estimated New Zealand resident population, please see:

www.stats.govt.nz/topics/population-estimates-and-projections

Ethnicity is reported using the 'total response' approach. Ethnicity is about people's identity and sense of belonging, and measures cultural affiliation. Total response ethnicity means people can indicate that they identify with more than one ethnic group, so ethnic group totals will add to more than 100 percent. For more information, please see:

www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/tools/how-we-report-ethnicity.html

Continuous duration is the length of time the client has continuously been receiving any main benefit. A client is considered to have continuously been on a benefit even if there has been a break of up to 14 days (e.g. if they have transferred to another main benefit).

Dependent children (whether own, stepchild, adopted, grandchild or mokopuna) are primarily under the care and responsibility of the person receiving the benefit, living with that person as a member of their family, and substantially reliant on that person for financial support.

Service centres are identified using their system codes. Satellite sites that use the same system code as their base site are not listed separately. This means that the information presented may not match the location of all existing Work and Income satellite service centres, although it includes everyone receiving services from either a service centre or an associated satellite centre.



Classifications

Benefit Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jobseeker Support• Sole Parent Support• Supported Living Payment• Other main benefits
Other main benefits subgroups	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Youth Payment/Young Parent Payment• Jobseeker Support Student Hardship• Emergency Benefit• Emergency Maintenance Benefit• Sole Parent Support Overseas• Widow's Benefit Overseas
Continuous duration on benefit	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• One year or less• More than one year
Gender	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Male• Female• Gender Diverse
Ethnic group (Level 1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• European• Māori• Pacific peoples• Asian• Middle Eastern/Latin American/African• Other ethnicities
Age group (general)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 18–24 years• 25–39 years• 40–54 years• 55–64 years
Age group (NZS/VP Excel file)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Under 60 years• 60–64 years• 65–69 years• 70–74 years• 75–79 years• 80–84 years• 85–89 years• 90 years and over
Jobseeker Support subgroups	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jobseeker Support – Work Ready• Jobseeker Support – Health Condition or Disability
Support Living Payments subgroups	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Supported Living Payment – Health Condition or Disability• Supported Living Payment – Carers <p><i>Note that Supported Living Payment Overseas is included in the total for Supported Living Payment – Health Condition or Disability</i></p>
Incapacity group Jobseeker Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Psychological or psychiatric conditions• Accidents• Musculo-skeletal system disorders• Cardio-vascular disorders• Pregnancy-related conditions• Other disorders and conditions



Incapacity group Supported Living Payment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Psychological or psychiatric conditions• Intellectual disability• Musculo-skeletal system disorders• Nervous system disorders• Cardio-vascular disorders• Accidents• Cancer and congenital conditions• Other disorders and conditions
Age of youngest dependent child (Sole Parent Support)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Under 5 years• Ages 5–13 years
Reason for hardship assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Food• Accommodation related• Medical and associated costs• People affected by benefit stand downs• Electricity and gas• School education costs• Re-establishment grants• Driver license• Health related• Long-acting reversible contraception (national level only)• Emergency housing (national level only)• Other
Client with dependent children (benefit sanctions)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dependent child(ren)• No dependent child(ren)
Sanction type	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Graduated• Suspended/cancelled
First sanction reason	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recipients who failed to attend appointment(s)• Clients who failed to prepare for work• Clients who failed to participate in work• Other reasons
Duration of graduated sanction	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Up to 4 weeks• 4 to 8 weeks• Over 8 weeks
Work and Income regions (12 regions, including Other)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Auckland• Bay of Plenty• Canterbury• Central• East Coast• Nelson (Nelson, Marlborough, and West Coast)• Northland• Southern• Taranaki (Taranaki, King Country, and Whanganui)• Waikato• Wellington• Other (i.e. clients managed by national units such as contact centres and other processing centres)



**Regional
Councils/Unitary
Authorities**

(17 regions, including
Other/Unknown)

- Auckland
- Bay of Plenty
- Canterbury
- Gisborne
- Hawke's Bay
- Manawatū-Whanganui
- Marlborough
- Nelson
- Northland
- Otago
- Southland
- Taranaki
- Tasman
- Waikato
- Wellington
- West Coast
- Other/Unknown

Auckland boards

(20 boards)

- Albert-Eden
- Devonport-Takapuna
- Franklin
- Great Barrier/Waiheke
- Henderson-Massey
- Hibiscus and Bays
- Howick
- Kaipātiki
- Māngere-Ōtāhuhu
- Manurewa
- Maungakiekie-Tāmaki
- Ōrākei
- Ōtara-Papatoetoe
- Papakura
- Puketāpapa
- Rodney
- Upper Harbour
- Waitākere Ranges
- Waitematā
- Whau

Territorial Authorities

(67, composed of 66
current territorial
authorities, and
Other/Unknown
(including Chatham
Islands))

Current territorial authorities:

- A to D (9 TAs)
Ashburton District; Auckland Super City (from March 2018); Buller District; Carterton District; Central Hawke's Bay District; Central Otago District; Christchurch City; Clutha District; Dunedin City
 - F to I (10 TAs)
Far North District; Gisborne District; Gore District; Grey District; Hamilton City; Hastings District; Hauraki District; Horowhenua District; Hurunui District; Invercargill City
 - K to M (10 TAs)
Kaikōura District; Kaipara District; Kāpiti Coast District; Kawerau District; Lower Hutt City; Mackenzie District; Manawatū District; Marlborough District; Masterton District; Matamata-Piako District
-



- N to R (11 TAs)
Napier City; Nelson City; New Plymouth District; Ōpōtiki District; Ōtorohanga District; Palmerston North City; Porirua City; Queenstown-Lakes District; Rangitikei District; Rotorua District; Ruapehu District
- S to U (13 TAs)
Selwyn District; South Taranaki District; South Waikato District; South Wairarapa District; Southland District; Stratford District; Tararua District; Tasman District; Taupō District; Tauranga District/Tauranga City; Thames-Coromandel District; Timaru District; Upper Hutt City
- W (13 TAs)
Waikato District; Waimakariri District; Waimate District; Waipā District; Wairoa District; Waitaki District; Waitomo District; Wellington City; Western Bay of Plenty District; Westland District; Whakatāne District; Whanganui District; Whangārei District
- Other/Unknown (including Chatham Islands).

Since the BFS December 2021 quarter publication, these former territorial authorities were reported under Auckland Super City:

- Auckland City; Franklin District; Manukau City; North Shore City; Papakura District; Rodney District; Waitakere City

MSD service centres (118 service centres)	Auckland (29)	Albany; Avondale; Clendon; Glenfield; Glenmall; Helensville; Highland Park; Māngere; Manukau; Manurewa; Mt Albert; Mt Eden; New Lynn; Onehunga; Orewa; Ōtāhuhu; Ōtara; Papakura; Papatoetoe; Pukekohe; Queen Street/Auckland Childcare Processing Unit; Takapuna; Tāmaki; Three Kings; Waiheke; Waitākere; Waiuku; Warkworth; Westgate
	Bay of Plenty (10)	Greerton; Kawerau; Mount Maunganui; Ōpōtiki; Rotorua; Taupō; Tauranga; Te Puke; Tokoroa; Whakatāne
	Canterbury (9)	Ashburton; Hornby; Linwood; New Brighton; Papanui; Rangiora; Riccarton; Shirley; Sydenham
	Central (8)	Dannevirke; Feilding; Foxton; Horowhenua; Kāpiti; Ōtaki; Palmerston North; Wairarapa
	East Coast (8)	Flaxmere; Gisborne; Hastings; Napier; Ruatōria; Taradale; Waipukurau; Wairoa
	Nelson (6)	Blenheim; Greymouth; Motueka; Nelson; Richmond; Westport
	Northland (7)	Dargaville; Kaikohe; Kaitiāia; Kamo; Kawakawa; Kerikeri; Whangārei Central
	Southern (10)	Alexandra; Balclutha; Dunedin Central; Gore; Invercargill; Mosgiel; Oamaru; Queenstown; South Dunedin; Timaru



Taranaki (9)	Hāwera; Marton; New Plymouth; Stratford; Taihape; Taumarunui; Te Kuiti; Waitara; Whanganui
Waikato (14)	Cambridge; Dinsdale; Five Cross Roads; Glenview; Hamilton; Hamilton East; Huntly; Matamata; Morrinsville; Ngāruawāhia; Paeroa; Te Awamutu; Thames; Waihi
Wellington (8)	Johnsonville; Lower Hutt; Naenae; Newtown; Porirua; Upper Hutt; Wainuiomata; Wellington

Contact details for further information:

www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/contact-us/index.html