



18 January 2023

A.j Sheppard

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Tēnā koe A.j Sheppard

On 3 November 2022 you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

- 1. The highest accumulated sum paid to an individual welfare recipient for each year. Please include all benefits, supplements, loans, state/emergency housing costs and any other assistance that incurred a cost to New Zealand taxpayers.*
- 2. The highest accumulated sum paid to a couple/household welfare recipient for each year. Please include all benefits, supplements, loans, state/emergency housing costs and any other assistance that incurred a cost to New Zealand taxpayers.*

In addition to the above requests I also request figures in regards to length of time recipients have stayed on welfare. For the purpose of the request below please exclude any sickness/disability benefit recipients.

- 1. How many recipients have received some form of welfare payment/benefit for 5 years or longer?*
- 2. How many recipients have received some form of welfare payment/benefit for 10yrs or longer?*
- 3. What is the median time period recipients receive the job seeker benefit?*
- 4. What is the longest period of time a current recipient has been receiving the job seeker benefit*

On 30 November 2022, the Ministry emailed you to advise that more time was required to respond to your request for information. The reason for the extension was that consultations necessary to make a decision on the request are such that a proper response to the request cannot reasonably be made within the original time limit.

For the sake of clarity, the Ministry will respond to your requests in turn.

- 1. The highest accumulated sum paid to an individual welfare recipient for each year. Please include all benefits, supplements, loans, state/emergency housing costs and any other assistance that incurred a cost to New Zealand taxpayers.*
- 2. The highest accumulated sum paid to a couple/household welfare recipient for each year. Please include all benefits, supplements, loans, state/emergency housing costs and any other assistance that incurred a cost to New Zealand taxpayers.*

Regarding the first two questions of your request, the information you are seeking is not standard reporting for the Ministry and substantial manual collation would be required to generate the data. As such I refuse your request under section 18(f) of the Official Information Act. 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 request 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.

- 1. How many recipients have received some form of welfare payment/benefit for 5 years or longer?*
- 2. How many recipients have received some form of welfare payment/benefit for 10yrs or longer?*

For the number of working age main benefit clients with a continuous duration for 5 years and more, and 10 years and more as at the end of October 2022, please see **Table One** below.

For the sake of clarity, as requested, any sickness/disability benefit recipients have been excluded. Supported Living Payment – caring for, has been included. More information on this payment is available here <https://www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/main-benefits/supported-living-payment/caring-for-a-person-01.html>.

Table One: Number of working age main benefit clients with a continuous duration for 5 years and more and 10 years and more as at the end of October 2022.

Benefit Group	Continuous Duration		Total
	5<10 years	10 years and over	
Emergency Maintenance Allowance	129	90	216
Sole Parent Support	14,730	8,376	23,106
Supported Living Payment - Carer	2,070	2,343	4,410
Emergency Benefit	96	36	129
Jobseeker Work Ready related	7,551	4,605	12,153
Total	24,573	15,450	40,020

Notes

- Working age is 18 to 64 years old.
- Main Benefits exclude NZ Superannuation, Veteran's Pension, Non-Beneficiary assistance, Orphan's Benefit and Unsupported Child's Benefit.
- Jobseeker Work Ready related excludes Jobseeker Support Health Condition, Injury or Disability
- Supported Living Payment - Carer excludes Supported Living Payment Health Condition & Disability and Supported Living Payments Overseas
- Continuous duration is how long the current recipients of a benefit (or benefit group) have been continuously receiving a benefit in the wider benefit system, including time on all benefits except Unsupported Child's Benefit, Orphan's Benefit, New Zealand Superannuation, Veteran's Pension and non-beneficiary assistance.
- To protect confidentiality the Ministry 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.
- Random rounding does not round down to zero, a value of one or two will be rounded to three.
- 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.

3. *What is the median time period recipients receive the job seeker benefit?*
4. *What is the longest period of time a current recipient has been receiving the job seeker benefit*

In response to your questions for median time period and longest time period on a Jobseeker Support as at the end of October 2022 please see **Table Two** below. For the sake of clarity, as requested, any sickness/disability benefit recipients have been excluded.

Table Two: The median and maximum of working age Jobseeker Support Work Ready related continuous duration as at end of October 2022

Benefit Group	Continuous Duration (Days)	Continuous Duration (Days)
	Median	Maximum
Jobseeker Work Ready related	2,988	16,587

Notes

- Working age is 18 to 64 years old.
- While the person who has longest duration in this data was on Jobseeker at the time this data was retrieved, that doesn't mean they were on Job seeker for the entire duration.
- Continuous duration is how long the current recipients of a benefit (or benefit group) have been continuously receiving a benefit in the wider benefit system, including time on all benefits except Unsupported Child's Benefit, Orphan's Benefit, New Zealand Superannuation, Veteran's Pension, and non-beneficiary assistance.
- To protect confidentiality the Ministry 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.
- Random rounding does not round down to zero, a value of one or two will be rounded to three.
- 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.

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.

If you are not satisfied with this response regarding benefit durations, 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.

Ngā mihi nui

Bridget Saunders

Bridget Saunders
Manager
Issue Resolution