



15 JUN 2020



Dear 

On 19 May 2020, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, the following information:

- 1. Data on who received the wage subsidy during the coronavirus, lockdown pandemic, broken down by age and ethnicity for the first 12 weeks of the scheme*
- 2. The above figures as a percentage of the total population of people in that age group/ethnicity for the first 12 weeks of the scheme*
- 3. Data from 1. for the age group 15-24 broken down further by gender, region and industry*
- 4. The total cost of the wage subsidy scheme in the first 12 weeks broken down by age of recipient*

The Ministry recognises the need for more information about the recipients of the Wage Subsidy. However, the Ministry does not currently have the capability to accurately report the information requested by age, ethnicity and gender. The system used to receive, and process Wage Subsidy applications did not have that functionality built into it and the very rapid timeframe for implementation did not allow for those additions.

In order to provide you with data on who received the Wage Subsidy, broken down by age for the first 12 weeks of the scheme, it would require substantial manual collation. Staff would have to search through thousands of Wage Subsidy applications to determine the age of each employee included and/or individual applicant. If the Ministry was able to provide you with this information, we would not be confident that the data would accurately reflect the true proportions of age. As such your request for the breakdown of age for the first 12 weeks of the scheme, those figures as a percentage, the data broken down further from the ages 15-24 by region and industry and the total cost of the first 12 weeks broken down by age, is refused under sections 18(f) of the 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.

As Wage Subsidy applications do not require applicants to provide ethnicity or gender details for themselves or their employees, your request for the breakdown of ethnicity for the first 12 weeks of the scheme, those figures as a percentage and the data broken down further from the ages 15-24 by gender and ethnicity, is refused under section 18(g) of the Act. The information you have requested is not held by the Ministry and I have no grounds to believe that the information is held by another department or Minister of the Crown or organisation.

As at 5 June 2020, \$11,024,152,938 has been paid out by the Ministry to applicants for the Wage Subsidy and Leave Payment Schemes. This information currently is published weekly on the Ministry website in the link provided below. For the reasons stated above, the Ministry is unable to breakdown this figure by age of recipient.

You may be interested in the Ministry's reporting on COVID-19 related measures which is published on the Ministry's website here: [www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/statistics/covid-19/index.html](http://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/statistics/covid-19/index.html). Here you will be able to find a snapshot of businesses receiving COVID-19 support payments, and the value of these payments broken down by business size and industry.

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](mailto:OIA_Requests@msd.govt.nz).

If you are not satisfied with this response, 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.

Yours sincerely



Kate Satterthwaite  
**General Manager, Ministerial and Executive Services**