



22 MAY 2020

Dear [REDACTED]

On 24 April 2020, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, the following information regarding Main Benefit applications made in Invercargill, since the start of the COVID-19 Alert Level 4 lockdown:

- *New business applications since Level 4 lockdown,*
- *Ethnicity breakdown and*
- *How many of those applications are new clients to MSD?*

New Zealand was in COVID-19 Alert Level 4 lockdown from 11.59pm on Wednesday 25 March 2020 to 11.59pm on Monday April 27, 2020.

The Ministry has interpreted your question regarding '*new business applications since Level 4 lockdown*' as a request for the number of applications received by the Ministry for Main Benefits between the period 26 March 2020 to 27 April 2020.

The time period you have requested, from 26 March 2020 to 27 April 2020, does not follow the Ministry's existing reporting conventions. The reporting conventions enable the Ministry to present data in a clear and concise manner, which can easily be reconciled against information already presented in the Ministry's online publications and portals.

As such, the Ministry cannot provide you with the requested information for the time period between 26 March 2020 to 27 April 2020. However, the Ministry is able to provide you with the requested information for the time period between 1 April 2020 to 30 April 2020.

Please find Table One and Table Two as detailed below:

- **Table One:** The number of working age Main Benefit grants at the Invercargill Service Centre during the period between 1 April 2020 to 30 April 2020, broken down by ethnic group and whether it is the client's first grant.
- **Table Two:** The number of working age Main Benefit grants at the Invercargill Service Centre during the period between 1 April 2020 to 30 April 2020, broken down by benefit group and whether it is the client's first grant.

Table One: The number of working age Main Benefit grants at the Invercargill Service Centre during the period between 1 April 2020 to 30 April 2020, broken down by ethnic group and whether it is the client's first grant.

Ethnic group	New grant		Total
	Yes	No	
Māori	44	155	199
NZ European	223	302	525
Other	53	83	136
Pacific People	6	19	25
Unspecified	82	11	93
Total	408	570	978

Table Two: The number of working age Main Benefit grants at the Invercargill Service Centre during the period between 1 April 2020 to 30 April 2020, broken down by benefit group and whether it is the client's first grant.

Benefit group	New grant		Total
	Yes	No	
JS related	382	488	870
Other main benefits	26	82	108
Total	408	570	978

Notes for Table One and Table Two:

- 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.
- JS is Jobseeker Support (JS).
- Other Main Benefits include Emergency Benefit (EB), Emergency Maintenance Allowance (EMA), Supported Living Payment (SLP) and Sole Parent Support (SPS).
- This is a number of grants not number of clients.
- A client may have multiple grants during the reported period.
- First grant is where a client has never received a benefit prior.
- The ethnicity classification that is used to construct this table does not necessarily align with the current Statistics New Zealand classification of ethnicity. Ethnicity details recorded by the Ministry have been gathered under a varied of classification methods as clients come into contact with the Ministry. The ethnicity data may be self-identified based on an individual's preference or self-construct.

You may be interested on the Ministry's Monthly Benefits Update, available here: www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/statistics/covid-19/index.html. Please note that the April version of the Monthly Benefits Update includes additional information, such as regional and demographic data. The supporting data table also contains information on Jobseeker Support by Territorial Authority. The data table for the month of April now includes Accommodation Supplement data by Territorial Authority.

You can find more information regarding trends in benefit receipt published on the Ministry of Social Development Benefit Fact Sheets available here: www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/statistics/benefit/index.html.

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 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.

If you are not satisfied with this response regarding new business applications since Level 4 lockdown in the Invercargill Service Centre, 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.

Yours sincerely

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