



12 APR 2021

Tēnā koe

On 11 March 2021, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information regarding your previous request of 16 February 2021:

- *In the December years from 2012 to 2020 how many Sole Parent Support or EMA recipients were aged 16-19, broken down by age, gender and ethnicity?*
- *[Regarding] the ethnic breakdown of Young Parent Payment clients, [it] shows a large increase in 'Unspecified Ethnicity' after 2015 ie in 2015 only 4 percent were classified as 'unspecified' climbing to 15.3% by 2020. Has there been a change in policy? Is self-identification required?*

The Sole Parent Support (SPS) is a weekly payment that helps single parents find part-time work or get ready for future work. To qualify for SPS a client must:

- be aged 20 years or older and;
- have continuously lived in New Zealand for 2 years or more since becoming a New Zealand citizen or permanent resident and;
- be ordinarily residing in New Zealand when they first apply for benefit.

More information about the SPS can be found on the Ministry's website here: www.workandincome.govt.nz/products/a-z-benefits/sole-parent-support.html

Emergency Maintenance Allowance (EMA) is an Emergency Benefit. It provides income support for sole parents with one or more dependent children if they do not meet specific criteria for the SPS or Young Parent Payment (YPP). More information about the EMA can be found here: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/main-benefits/emergency-maintenance-allowance/introduction.html

The YPP is a weekly payment for 16 to 19-year old parents who have a dependent child or children and are in need of financial assistance. You can also find more information about the YPP here: www.workandincome.govt.nz/products/a-z-benefits/young-parent-payment.html

In regard to the first aspect of your request, please find the following three tables enclosed as **Appendix A** showing the number of current SPS and EMA clients aged 16 to 19 for the period of 2013 to 2002, broken down by calendar year, ethnicity, gender and age:

- **Table One:** The total number of current Sole Parent Support and Emergency Maintenance Allowance clients aged 16 to 19 at the end of each year ending December 2013 to 2020, broken down by calendar year, benefit type and age
- **Table Two:** The total number of current Sole Parent Support and Emergency Maintenance Allowance clients aged 16 to 19 at the end of each year ending December 2013 to 2020, broken down by calendar year, benefit type and gender
- **Table Three:** The total number of Sole Parent Support and Emergency Maintenance Allowance clients aged 16 to 19 at the end of each year ending December 2013 to 2020, broken down by calendar year, benefit type and ethnicity

Data for both the SPS and EMA cannot be provided prior to 2013 as the information does not exist.

In regard to the SPS, the benefit was introduced by the Ministry in 2013 when new benefit categories replaced a range of former social security benefits as part of the Social Security (Benefit Categories and Work Focus) Amendment Act 2013. Therefore there are no SPS payments prior to this date.

In regard to EMA, there were no payments made prior to 2013 to clients aged 16 to 19.

Furthermore, some rows in the tables may appear missing for the age categories, as no payments were made to clients in these categories and as such, no data exists. As such, SPS and EMA data for 2012, and data pertaining to age categories where no payments were made, are refused under section 18(e) of the Act as this information does not exist.

You will note a continuous decline in clients receiving SPS and EMA from 2016 onwards. From October 2016, the Ministry changed the age eligibility of the SPS and EMA from years of age 19 or older to years of age 20 or older. Please note, clients receiving SPS or EMA in October 2016 remained on their current benefit, as such, there are still clients under age 20 receiving SPS and EMA after 2016.

The Ministry also made changes to the age eligibility for the YPP. The YPP age eligibility changed from 16 to 18 years of age to 16 to 19 years of age.

The tables provided in **Appendix A** show that 19-year olds made up the highest uptake of SPS and EMA between 2013 to 2016.

In regard to the second aspect of your request, for all main benefits, ethnicity is recorded in the Client Management System and ethnicity details recorded by the Ministry have been gathered under a variety of classification methods as clients come into contact with the Ministry.

The ethnicity data is self-identified based on an individual's preference or self-construct. Clients are not required to provide the Ministry with an ethnicity, which is why an 'unspecified' option is included. If a client chooses not to record an ethnicity, they are entitled to non-disclosure.

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 to your request for information regarding the Sole Parent Support, Emergency Maintenance Allowance and Young Parent Payment benefits, 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
**Manager, Issue Resolution
Service Delivery**

Appendix A

Table One: The total number of current Sole Parent Support and Emergency Maintenance Allowance clients aged 16 to 19 at the end of each year ending December 2013 to 2020, broken down by calendar year, benefit type and age

Year ending	Age	Emergency Maintenance Allowance	Sole Parent Support
December 2013	18	0	S
	19	6	1,344
	Total	6	1,344
December 2014	17	S	0
	18	0	S
	19	9	1,122
	Total	9	1,125
December 2015	18	S	S
	19	9	1,023
	Total	9	1,023
December 2016	19	S	603
	Total	S	600
December 2017	19	S	S
	Total	S	S
December 2018	19	S	0
	Total	S	0
December 2019	18	S	0
	19	S	S
	Total	S	S
December 2020	18	S	0
	19	S	9
	Total	S	6

Notes:

- Care must be exercised when making comparisons across time periods of the number or proportion of clients in various age groups.
- To protect confidentiality the Ministry of Social Development 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.
- 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.
- In certain circumstances low numbers may potentially lead to individuals being identified.
- Due to these privacy concerns, numbers for some categories of clients have been suppressed or aggregated.
- Suppressed numbers have been replaced by an 'S'.

Table Two: The total number of current Sole Parent Support and Emergency Maintenance Allowance clients aged 16 to 19 at the end of each year ending December 2013 to 2020, broken down by calendar year, benefit type and gender

Year ending	Gender	Emergency Maintenance Allowance	Sole Parent Support
December 2013	Female	S	1,317
	Male	S	27
	Total	6	1,344
December 2014	Female	9	1,110
	Male	S	18
	Total	9	1,125
December 2015	Female	6	1,014
	Male	S	9
	Total	9	1,023
December 2016	Female	S	597
	Male	0	S
	Total	S	600
December 2017	Female	S	S
	Total	S	S
December 2018	Female	S	0
	Total	S	0
December 2019	Female	S	0
	Male	0	S
	Total	S	S
December 2020	Female	S	6
	Male	S	0
	Total	S	9

Notes:

- Care must be exercised when making comparisons across time periods of the number or proportion of clients in various age groups.
- To protect confidentiality the Ministry of Social Development 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.
- 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.
- In certain circumstances low numbers may potentially lead to individuals being identified.
- Due to these privacy concerns, numbers for some categories of clients have been suppressed or aggregated.
- Suppressed numbers have been replaced by an 'S'.

Table Three: the total number of Sole Parent Support and Emergency Maintenance Allowance clients aged 16 to 19 from 2013 to 2020, broken down by calendar year, benefit type and ethnicity

Year ending	Gender	Emergency Maintenance Allowance	Sole Parent Support
December 2013	Māori	S	735
	NZ European	0	360
	Pacific Peoples	S	150
	Other	S	72
	Unspecified	0	30
	Total	6	1,347
December 2014	Māori	S	621
	NZ European	0	294
	Pacific Peoples	S	123
	Other	S	45
	Unspecified	0	42
	Total	9	1,125
December 2015	Māori	S	522
	NZ European	S	291
	Pacific Peoples	S	132
	Other	S	42
	Unspecified	0	36
	Total	9	1,023
December 2016	Māori	S	342
	NZ European	0	126
	Pacific Peoples	S	75
	Other	S	27
	Unspecified	0	36
	Total	S	600
December 2017	Māori	0	S
	NZ European	0	S
	Pacific Peoples	S	0
	Other	0	S
	Total	S	S
December 2018	Māori	S	0
	Total	S	0
December 2019	Māori	0	S
	Pacific Peoples	S	0
	Unspecified	S	0
	Total	S	S
December 2020	Māori	S	S
	NZ European	S	S
	Pacific Peoples	0	S
	Total	S	9

Notes for Table Three:

- 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.
- While the Ministry collects multiple ethnicities from clients, we only report a unique form of ethnicity for core benefit data (one ethnic group per person with Māori coming first, Pacific groups second followed by other groups ending with NZ European).
- Care must be exercised when making comparisons across time periods of the number or proportion of clients in various age groups.
- To protect confidentiality the Ministry of Social Development 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.
- 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.
- In certain circumstances low numbers may potentially lead to individuals being identified.
- Due to these privacy concerns, numbers for some categories of clients have been suppressed or aggregated.
- Suppressed numbers have been replaced by an 'S'.