



17 January 2022

Tēnā koe

On 9 December 2021, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

- *How many people are granted the job seeker benefit via this section (63) of the Act? (instead of eligible)*
- *What's the range of rates paid to these people? (min/max) What's the median rate?*
- *What's the mean rate?*
- *Are there any internal documents for guidance or some form of schedule in your policies on what rates are paid?*

In the interests of clarity, I will answer your questions in turn:

- *How many people are granted the job seeker benefit via this section (63) of the Act? (instead of eligible)*

Section 63 of the Social Security Act 2018 allows the Ministry to grant an Emergency Benefit on grounds of hardship where a person is:

- Unable to earn enough income for themselves or their dependants (if any); and
- Who is not entitled to a main benefit under the Social Security Act or to New Zealand superannuation or a veteran's pension; and
- To whom the Ministry has determined not to grant one of the following benefits on grounds of hardship: Jobseeker Support, Youth Payment, or Young Parent Payment.

The Emergency Benefit is granted at the rate of the equivalent benefit. The equivalent benefit is determined by the Case Manager when processing the Emergency Benefit application.

Please see **Table One** in **Appendix A** which shows the number of Emergency Benefit grants granted on hardship grounds at Jobseeker Support rate in the period of 1 January 2019 to 30 November 2021, by month.

There are numerous factors which influence the amount of Emergency Benefits granted each month. These are largely seasonal related trends. For example, spikes in December are attributable to seasonal workers requiring assistance, businesses which have shut down over the Christmas break and do not qualify for holiday pay, or teacher aides applying for assistance after schools close for the holidays. Please note this list is not exhaustive. April 2020 increases are largely due to the effects of COVID-19 and the associated lockdowns.

- *What's the range of rates paid to these people? (min/max) What's the median rate?*
- *What's the mean rate?*

This information is publicly available, and therefore I am refusing this aspect of your request under section 18(d) of the Act. Please see the following link for the rates payable of Jobseeker Support: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/deskfile/main-benefits-rates/jobseeker-support-current.html

- *Are there any internal documents for guidance or some form of schedule in your policies on what rates are paid?*

The Ministry's processes for determining rates payable for the Emergency Benefit are publicly available here: workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/main-benefits/emergency-benefit/payment.html. This website is a direct copy of the internal website that Ministry staff use.

Please find attached the 'Emergency Benefit Interview form', which is completed by Ministry staff when clients apply for the Emergency Benefit. You will note that Question 16 asks at what rate the benefit will be granted. This rate is manually calculated based on the client's circumstances. You can find the formulas used to calculate the rate payable, as well as examples, here: workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/main-benefits/emergency-benefit/charging-income-01.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 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 benefits granted through section 63, 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
Service Delivery

Appendix A

Table One: Number of Emergency Benefit grants granted on hardship grounds at Jobseeker Support rate in the period 1 January 2019 to 30 November 2021, by month.

Month of grant	Number of grants
January 2019	423
February 2019	255
March 2019	324
April 2019	417
May 2019	360
June 2019	327
July 2019	435
August 2019	303
September 2019	474
October 2019	462
November 2019	225
December 2019	924
January 2020	405
February 2020	246
March 2020	465
April 2020	1,059
May 2020	447
June 2020	318
July 2020	354
August 2020	360
September 2020	444
October 2020	363
November 2020	267
December 2020	1,302
January 2021	558
February 2021	309
March 2021	393
April 2021	414
May 2021	312
June 2021	309
July 2021	525
August 2021	762
September 2021	921
October 2021	771
November 2021	453

Notes for Table One:

- This is a number of grants and not number of clients. A client may have multiple grants during the reported period
- 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. 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.