



02 March 2022

Tēnā koe

On 1 February 2022, you contacted the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

- *A monthly or quarterly breakdown for the past five years showing the number of people receiving a benefit for mental health reasons, e.g. a psychological or psychiatric condition and the costs.*
- *Please also break these figures down by region.*

In the interests of clarity, your request will be responded to in the following sections.

1. *Monthly or quarterly breakdown for the past five years showing the number of people receiving a benefit for mental health reasons (psychological or psychiatric), broken down by region*

Depending on their circumstances, clients who are unable to work due to a psychological or psychiatric condition may be able to receive support from the Ministry as recipients of either the Supported Living Payment (SLP) or Jobseeker Support (JS).

SLP is a weekly payment to assist clients who have or are caring for someone with a significant health condition, injury, or disability such that they are not likely to be able to work 15 hours or more per week within the next two years. In most cases, the decision to grant SLP is based on a work capacity assessment by a registered health practitioner. However, some clients with a certain diagnosis can access SLP without having a detailed assessment of their capacity to work (e.g., clients who are totally blind or terminally ill).

JS is a temporary benefit paid for up to 52 weeks while clients look for work, are in training for work. This benefit is also available to people who can only work part-time, or to people who are temporarily unable to look for work due

to a health condition, an injury, or a disability (including a psychiatric or psychological condition).

More information about the Supported Living Payment can be found at the following link: [www.workandincome.govt.nz/products/a-z-benefits/supported-living-payment.html](http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/products/a-z-benefits/supported-living-payment.html).

More information about the Jobseeker Support can be found at the following link: [www.workandincome.govt.nz/products/a-z-benefits/jobseeker-support.html#null](http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/products/a-z-benefits/jobseeker-support.html#null).

Regarding your first question, please see the Regional Councils Data Tables located at this link: [www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/statistics/benefit/index.html](http://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/statistics/benefit/index.html). They show the number of clients in recent of JS or SLP by incapacity group, such as having a psychological or a psychiatric condition, since the end of December 2016 and broken down by quarter.

The information pictured below is a screenshot of the available data table for JS recipients who reside in the Auckland Regional Council area. Each Regional Council table includes a further breakdown by gender, age group, and ethnicity.

Recipient characteristic	Dec-16	Mar-17	Jun-17	Sep-17	Dec-17	Mar-18
<b>Benefit Sub Group</b>						
Jobseeker - Work Ready	15,513	15,318	14,442	14,229	14,952	15,579
Jobseeker - Health Condition or Disability	19,746	19,569	19,518	19,635	19,893	19,749
<b>Incapacity Group Jobseeker Support</b>						
1. Psychological or psychiatric conditions	8,220	8,121	8,169	8,241	8,448	8,361
2. Musculo-skeletal system disorders	3,357	3,495	3,474	3,504	3,507	3,393
3. Accidents	1,107	1,041	1,029	1,065	1,068	1,098
4. Cardio-vascular disorders	1,125	1,110	1,134	1,110	1,128	1,119
5. Pregnancy-related conditions	228	228	246	207	213	213
6. Other disorders and conditions	5,712	5,574	5,466	5,505	5,529	5,562

## 2. Costs

The Ministry can provide a snapshot of the amount paid to people receiving a main benefit, but this is generally reported as the amount paid to clients at a certain time and for a particular week. The creation of a quarterly cost breakdown for the past five years of one incapacity group (i.e., for JS and SLP recipients with a psychological or psychiatric condition), broken down by region, is not part of the Ministry's standard reporting and would require twenty iterations of data.

In order to prepare the requested data, therefore, the Ministry would need to divert personnel from their core duties and allocate extra time to complete this task. The diversion of these resources would impair the Ministry's ability to continue standard operations and would be an inefficient use of the Ministry's resources. As such, your request is refused under section 18(f) of the Official Information Act, requires substantial collation. The greater public interest is in the effective and efficient administration of the public service.

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'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 concerning the number of people receiving a benefit for mental health reasons over the past five years, 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.

Ngā mihi nui



pp.

Magnus O'Neill  
**General Manager**  
**Ministerial and Executive Services**