



14 September 2022

Tēnā koe

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

- *I would like to ask how many superannuitant couples not married nor in a civil union have been determined by the MSD to be in de facto relationships each year for the last 5 years?*

*Also, I would like to ask how many couples, where one party is a student, not married nor in a civil union have been determined by the MSD to be in de facto relationships each year for the last 5 years?*

*Further, I would like to ask how many couples that were neither superannuitants nor couples where one party is a student who were not married nor in a civil union have been determined by the MSD to be in de facto relationships each year for the last 5 years*

A person's relationship status is important for the Ministry to ensure they are receiving the correct benefit at the correct rate. Clients are considered to be part of a couple when they are in a relationship with another adult. The Ministry recognises relationships as being either de facto, a civil union or marriage. More information about relationship status and benefits can be found at [www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/core-policy/relationship-status-for-benefit/introduction.html](http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/core-policy/relationship-status-for-benefit/introduction.html).

However what category a client's relationship falls under does not further affect the rate of benefit granted, therefore the Ministry only centrally reports whether a person is in a relationship or not.

Therefore, I am unable to provide you with this information, if it does exist it will be held in notes on individual case files. In order to provide you with this information, Ministry staff would have to manually review thousands of files. As such, I refuse your request under section 18(f) of the Official Information 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.

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, 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



Magnus O'Neill  
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