



21 November 2023

Tēnā koe

On 4 October 2023, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

Each numbered paragraph below is to be treated as a discrete request; they are not to be treated as a single global request - (although provision of information under one request may in turn satisfy another of the requests). Please advise if you can accept the requests in this format, or whether I should send a separate e-mail for each request.

1. *For the period 1 January 2020 - 31 December 2020:*
 - a. *How many sole parent support benefit applications were granted?*
 - b. *Of those granted, how many were granted to Female applicants vs Male applicants?*
 - c. *How many sole parent support benefit applications were declined / refused?*
 - d. *Of those declined / refused, how many were declined / refused to Female applicants vs Male applicants?*
 - e. *Of those granted, how many were granted to applicants with "shared care" where the children were in their care for less than 40% of the time.*
 - f. *Of those granted, how many were granted to applicants with "shared care" where the children were in their care for 25% or less of the time.*

2. *For the period 1 January 2021 - 31 December 2021:*
 - a. *How many sole parent support benefit applications were granted?*
 - b. *Of those granted, how many were granted to Female applicants vs Male applicants?*
 - c. *How many sole parent support benefit applications were declined / refused?*

- d. *Of those declined / refused, how many were declined / refused to Female applicants vs Male applicants?*
 - e. *Of those granted, how many were granted to applicants with "shared care" where the children were in their care for less than 40% of the time.*
 - f. *Of those granted, how many were granted to applicants with "shared care" where the children were in their care for 25% or less of the time.*
3. *For the period 1 January 2022 - 31 December 2022:*
- a. *How many sole parent support benefit applications were granted?*
 - b. *Of those granted, how many were granted to Female applicants vs Male applicants?*
 - c. *How many sole parent support benefit applications were declined / refused?*
 - d. *Of those declined / refused, how many were declined / refused to Female applicants vs Male applicants?*
 - e. *Of those granted, how many were granted to applicants with "shared care" where the children were in their care for less than 40% of the time.*
 - f. *Of those granted, how many were granted to applicants with "shared care" where the children were in their care for 25% or less of the time.*
4. *For the period 1 January 2023 - 30 September 2023:*
- a. *How many sole parent support benefit applications were granted?*
 - b. *Of those granted, how many were granted to Female applicants vs Male applicants?*
 - c. *How many sole parent support benefit applications were declined / refused?*
 - d. *Of those declined / refused, how many were declined / refused to Female applicants vs Male applicants?*
 - e. *Of those granted, how many were granted to applicants with "shared care" where the children were in their care for less than 40% of the time.*
 - f. *Of those granted, how many were granted to applicants with "shared care" where the children were in their care for 25% or less of the time.*
5. *For the period 1 January 2020 through 30 September 2023:*
- a. *How many complaints have been lodged relating to a beneficiary's ineligibility for sole parent support benefit(s)?*
 - b. *How many of those complaints have been investigated vs dismissed?*
 - c. *Of those complaints investigated how many have resulted in cancelation of future benefit payments.*

- d. *Of those complaints investigated how many have resulted in repayment requirements, and at what average rate of repayment requirement vs write off.*
- e. *Have any beneficiaries continued to receive sole parent support benefit payments, notwithstanding they only had contact with the subject children for 25% or less of the time?*

On 2 November 2023, the Ministry wrote to you to advise that more time was required to respond to your request. On the same day you replied with a complaint about this extension decision. I do wish to thank you for your patience, while we have finished collating the information you have requested and prepared it for release. However, as advised, should you remain concerned with the decision to extend the timeframe for responding to your request, you have a right to complain to the Office of the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman's contact details are included at the end of this letter.

Sole Parent Support benefit is a weekly payment that helps single parents find part-time work or get ready for future work. If you'd like to read more about this benefit please see: www.workandincome.govt.nz/products/a-z-benefits/sole-parent-support.html.

The following tables include the years from 2020 to 2023. There are four tables for each year covering the time period of 1 January to 31 December, with the exception of the current year 2023 where available data is from 1 January to 31 August.

Eligibility for Sole Parent Support is determined by whether the parent is considered the primary caregiver. You will note that the data below shows a number of grants where at least one child is in care for less than 40 percent and 25 percent of the time.

It is important to note that this data includes clients who may have more than one dependent child in their care, where the other child/ren is in their care for more than 50% of the time.

In other cases where there was only one dependent child in care, the Ministry has reviewed these grants to ensure consistency and accuracy. For some it was found that the number of days in care had been entered incorrectly due to staff error and should have been higher, these and other discrepancies identified are being followed up as appropriate where they have not already been addressed previously.

Questions 1a, b, c, d, e, f**Table One: Working Age Sole Parent Support benefit grants from 1 January to 31 December 2020, by gender.**

Gender			Total
Gender Diverse	Female	Male	
9	21,945	2,856	24,810

Notes:

- The table includes working age only (18 to 64 years)
- This is a count of grants, not clients and the same client may have been granted more than once.

Table Two: Working Age Sole Parent Support benefit declines from 1 January to 31 December 2020, by gender.

Gender		Total
Female	Male	
4,536	1,386	5,922

Notes:

- The table includes working age only (18 to 64 years).
- This is a count of declines, not clients and the same client may have been declined more than once.

Table Three: Working age Sole Parent Support benefit grants where at least one child is in care for less than 40 percent of the time 1 January to 31 December 2020

Count
30

Table Four: Working age Sole Parent Support benefit grants where at least one child is in care for 25 percent or less of the time 1 January to 31 December 2020

Count
9

Notes for Tables Three and Four:

- The tables include working age only (18 to 64 years).
- This is a count of grants, not clients and the same client may have been granted more than once.

- The percentage of time in care is based on the number of days in care calculated for each child included in the benefit as at the benefit commencement date.
- Some cases may be excluded due to the timing of the child's inclusion in the parent benefit.

Confidentiality

- 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.

Questions 2a, b, c, d, e, f**Table One: Working age Sole Parent Support benefit grants from 1 January to 31 December 2021, by gender.**

Gender			Total
Gender Diverse	Female	Male	
12	24,657	3,108	27,777

Notes:

- The table includes working age only (18 to 64 years).
- This is a count of grants, not clients and the same client may have been granted more than once.

Table Two: Working Age Sole Parent Support benefit declines from 1 January to 31 December 2021, by gender.

Gender			Total
Gender Diverse	Female	Male	
6	3,402	1,050	4,458

Notes:

- The table includes working age only (18 to 64 years).
- This is a count of declines, not clients and the same client may have been declined more than once.

Table Three: Working age Sole Parent Support benefit grants where at least one child is in care for less than 40 percent of the time 1 January to 31 December 2021

Count
48

Table Four: Working age Sole Parent Support benefit grants where at least one child is in care for 25 percent or less of the time 1 January to 31 December 2021

Count
12

Notes for Tables Three and Four:

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Questions 3a, b, c, d, e, f**Table One: Working Age Sole Parent Support benefit grants from 1 January to 31 December 2022, by gender.**

Gender			Total
Gender Diverse	Female	Male	
21	20,820	2,880	23,724

Notes:

- The table includes working age only (18 to 64 years).
- This is a count of grants, not clients and the same client may have been granted more than once.

Table Two: Working Age Sole Parent Support benefit declines from 1 January to 31 December 2022, by gender.

Gender			Total
Gender Diverse	Female	Male	
3	3,339	810	4,152

Notes:

- The table includes working age only (18 to 64 years).
- This is a count of declines, not clients and the same client may have been declined more than once.

Table Three: Working age Sole Parent Support benefit grants where at least one child is in care for less than 40 percent of the time 1 January to 31 December 2022

Count
36

Table Four: Working age Sole Parent Support benefit grants where at least one child is in care for 25 percent or less of the time 1 January to 31 December 2022

Count
12

Notes for Tables Three and Four:

- The tables include working age only (18 to 64 years).
- This is a count of grants, not clients and the same client may have been granted more than once.
- The percentage of time in care is based on the number of days in care calculated for each child included in the benefit as at the benefit commencement date.
- Some cases may be excluded due to the timing of the child's inclusion in the parent benefit.

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Questions 4a, b, c, d, e, f**Table One: Working Age Sole Parent Support benefit grants from 1 January to 31 August 2023, by gender.**

Gender			Total
Gender Diverse	Female	Male	
9	13,884	2,157	16,050

Notes:

- The table includes working age only (18 to 64 years).
- This is a count of grants, not clients and the same client may have been granted more than once.

Table Two: Working Age Sole Parent Support benefit declines from 1 January to 31 August 2023, by gender.

Gender			Total
Gender Diverse	Female	Male	
3	2,250	567	2,817

Notes:

- The table includes working age only (18 to 64 years).
- This is a count of declines, not clients and the same client may have been declined more than once.

Table Three: Working age Sole Parent Support benefit grants where at least one child is in care for less than 40 percent of the time 1 January to 31 August 2023

Count
30

Table Four: Working age Sole Parent Support benefit grants where at least one child is in care for 25 percent or less of the time 1 January to 31 August 2023

Count
9

Notes for Tables Three and Four:

- The tables include working age only (18 to 64 years).
- This is a count of grants, not clients and the same client may have been granted more than once.
- The percentage of time in care is based on the number of days in care calculated for each child included in the benefit as at the benefit commencement date.
- Some cases may be excluded due to the timing of the child's inclusion in the parent benefit.

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Questions 5a, b, c, d, e

For question 5 a, b, c, d, and e, regarding complaints relating to a beneficiary's ineligibility for sole parent support benefit(s), I am unable to provide you with this information as it is held in notes on individual client files. In order to provide you with this information, Ministry staff would have to manually review a substantial number of files. As such, I refuse your request under section 18(f) of the 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 on Working Age Sole Parent Support benefit grants and declines with us, please feel free to contact 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 or 0800 802 602.

Ngā mihi nui

Bridget Saunders

Bridget Saunders
**Manager Issue Resolution
Service Delivery**