



# About the New Zealand Income Support Survey and the people it covers



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## **About the New Zealand Income Support Survey**

The New Zealand Income Support Survey was a nationwide, mostly in-person survey with 1,852 respondents that took place between June and December 2022.

It asked those New Zealanders about their:

- awareness of income support payments
- possible eligibility for income support payments
- experiences applying for income support.

This survey was done to provide nationally representative evidence to help evaluate recent changes to the income support system and inform future policy advice and service development. The survey was intended to provide timely, reliable, and relevant information that could not be collected more efficiently from other sources.

Across the following pages, we describe the profile of the survey population, and some key aspects of the methodology used for the New Zealand Income Support Survey. Additional detail about the methodology is available in the main methodology report published alongside these packs.

## **What did the survey ask about?**

Key questions in the survey asked about people's awareness, understanding, and receipt of different payments that make up the income support system.

Other areas the survey asked about included questions about:

- channels through which people made or renewed applications for payments
- ease or difficulty of making and renewing applications, and reasons why people found it easy or difficult
- the extent of non-take up by people who appeared or thought they were eligible for a payment, and the reasons for non-take up
- what people said was important to them when they thought about how much paid work they did
- material wellbeing
- shared care of children
- the wellbeing of extended family, whānau, or aiga
- what people with children in relevant age groups said about access to childcare and out-of-school care and its affordability
- people themselves – their age, ethnicity, gender and sexual identity, health, whether they are a disabled person, where they were born, the languages they speak, and what, if any, income support payments they were receiving at the time of the survey

Questions that people might feel more sensitive about answering, like questions about health, and what income support payments they received, were able to be answered in private so that even the interviewers did not know people's answers.

Detail about the questions themselves, and why we asked them, are available within the questionnaire and content guide published alongside the findings packs.

## Profile of the survey population

The table on this page shows the counts and percentages of the survey population in different demographic groups on an unweighted and weighted basis.

The weighting process used for the New Zealand Income Support Survey adjusts the counts of respondents to reflect the characteristics of the working-age population who are potentially eligible for income support from the Ministry of Social Development or Inland Revenue. The comparison of unweighted and weighted percentages shows that we:

- oversampled families with children, and undersampled single people without children
- oversampled females, and undersampled males
- oversampled people aged between 25 to 54, and undersampled 18 to 24 year olds.

This was consistent with the fieldwork approach we took, which was to prioritise interviewing families with children.

Further splits of the survey population are contained within the data file for this pack.

	Number	Percentage	Weighted number	Weighted percentage
<b>Family type</b>				
Partnered with children	568	30.7%	291,145	24%
Partnered without children	257	13.9%	141,028	11.6%
Single with children	450	24.3%	188,752	15.6%
Single without children	577	31.2%	592,302	48.8%
<b>Receipt of a main benefit</b>				
No	1,247	67.3%	862,604	71.1%
Yes	605	32.7%	350,623	28.9%
<b>Total response ethnic group/s</b>				
European	1,005	54.3%	652,017	53.7%
Māori	568	30.7%	356,469	29.4%
Pacific	286	15.4%	161,141	13.3%
Asian	217	11.7%	156,153	12.9%
MELAA	31	1.7%	16,360	1.3%
Other ethnicities	34	1.8%	28,228	2.3%
No ethnicity given	16	0.9%	16,775	1.4%
<b>Gender<sup>1</sup></b>				
Male	629	34.0%	490,783	41.9%
Female	1,178	64.4%	665,705	56.9%
<b>Age group<sup>2</sup></b>				
18-24	257	13.9%	274,507	22.6%
25-34	481	26.0%	268,745	22.2%
35-44	418	22.6%	247,273	20.4%
45-54	351	19.0%	209,384	17.3%
55-64	343	18.5%	212,640	17.5%
<b>Age of youngest child</b>				
0-2	328	17.7%	126,746	10.5%
3-4	141	7.6%	56,941	4.7%
5-13	428	23.1%	202,121	16.8%
14 and over	121	6.5%	48,320	4.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,852</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1,213,227</b>	<b>100%</b>

<sup>1</sup> Respondents who identified as another gender, or preferred not to say what their gender was, are not reported at the sub-group level on due to small counts throughout NZISS findings packs.

<sup>2</sup> A small number of respondents (2) declined to provide an age.

## **Sample design and adjustments**

A key aspect of the New Zealand Income Support Survey was the survey design. We wanted to ensure that we were able to survey a range of different family types across New Zealand. We also wanted to ensure that we interviewed a similar number of families with children as were interviewed in the 2006 Communications Survey that supported the evaluation of the Working for Families reforms. To do this:

- we focused our interview efforts into areas that had a higher rating of area deprivation using the NZ Dep 2018 measure. This was because families who were likely to meet the criteria for Working for Families, or supplementary assistance from MSD, were more likely to live in these areas
- we allowed for up to two interviews per household visited, in case there were multiple families with children in that household
- we prioritised families with children in the screening process, so that these families were given priority if there were multiple family units in the household that looked eligible for the survey
- we carefully amended our design halfway through fieldwork, based on data collected from the field, to ensure that interviewers were visiting areas which the data suggested contained the families we wanted to talk to
- we adjusted our design through fieldwork to also reduce the number of families without children that were being streamed into the survey, to ensure that we got enough families with children to participate in the survey.

## **Data collection**

The data collection for the New Zealand Income Support Survey was undertaken by Reach Aotearoa.

### **Recruitment**

Households that had been randomly selected for the New Zealand Income Support Survey were mailed an invitation letter from MSD and Inland Revenue, which included information about the survey, and a flyer about measures that were being taken to minimise COVID-19 related risks.

COVID-19 protocols were implemented to ensure the safety of respondents and interviewers. In cases where respondents were unable to be interviewed face-to-face due to COVID-19 or other illness, they were offered the option of rescheduling the interview to a future date or completing the survey via a video interview.

Once a person had consented to taking part, and had passed the survey screening questions, they were asked to sign an electronic consent form.

### **Interviews**

The Reach Aotearoa team conducted interviews primarily through face-to-face interviews with the aid of a computer but were also able to undertake video interviews if needed. Electronic showcards were used to help respondents when needed. These would automatically update as the survey progressed. Additionally, sections of the survey were designed so that participants could fill them in by themselves. This was to provide respondents privacy when answering potentially sensitive questions about themselves.

### **Acceptability**

At the end of the interview, respondents were asked to provide feedback on the acceptability of the survey, through a self-response section. Most respondents found the survey acceptable or highly acceptable across the following measures: survey length, number of questions, complexity of questions, intrusiveness of questions, the way they were encouraged to take part in the survey.

Interviews took on average 24 minutes, with the survey being quicker for respondents without children. Almost all respondents fully completed the survey.

## **Data quality**

### **Auditing**

To ensure survey protocols were followed correctly and to ascertain respondents' satisfaction with the survey process, Reach conducted audit calls with 24 percent of all respondents. Respondents were also left postcards, which they could use to send feedback directly to Reach Aotearoa (with the option to remain anonymous if they chose).

As part of routine audit processes, discrepancies in the data from one interviewer were identified. Following an investigation, it was determined that the data collected by this interviewer at 13 out of 61 households could not be relied upon. This data was deleted from the New Zealand Income Support Survey dataset that was used for this analysis.

### **Post survey checks**

As part of checks that took place after completion of the survey, a routing error was identified that impacted the in-work tax credit section of the survey. Two groups of respondents that should have been asked questions in the in-work tax credit section of the survey were not.

Additionally, a separate error was found that affected 15 respondents who were incorrectly not asked questions about paid work and relationships. It was determined that this issue was down to an isolated technical fault.

The impacts of these issues are noted where appropriate in the New Zealand Income Support Survey findings packs.

Additionally, further information about these issues is available in the main methodology report.

## Screen out and response rates

### Screen out rate

The New Zealand Income Support Survey had a large screening component to it. This was because we wanted to ensure that we were only talking to people who would be eligible for at least one payment out of the following:

- Accommodation Supplement
- family tax credit
- in-work tax credit.

As a result, there were two layers of screening that took place. The first level of screening took place at the household level, and was designed to identify if there was at least one family in the household that potentially could be eligible for the survey.

Out of all households that took part in this screening process, 72 percent contained at least one eligible family. Following this, the prioritisation rules were then used to select a person to be interviewed. At this stage, further information was collected about the selected person to determine if they were eligible to take part. Of people who made it to this stage, 52 percent were screened out. These rates were higher than expected.

### Response rate

The response rate is a measure of the number of people that participated in the survey, as a proportion of those selected to take part. The higher the response rate, the more representative the survey results are of the New Zealand population.

For the New Zealand Income Support Survey, the main objective was to maximise the total number of surveys completed, using a spread of different family types which was as even as possible. Because the screening out rate was higher than expected, a decision was made to prioritise producing higher survey counts, at the cost of maximising response rates.

The overall response rate for the survey, incorporating both primary and secondary interviews, was **50 percent**.

## Data weighting

Weights are usually applied to sample survey data during its analysis to adjust for factors such as selection probabilities, non-response and sample skews, relative to population figures.

For the New Zealand Income Support Survey, two sets of weights were produced for use in analysis. Family weights were produced for analyses that focused on family unit entitlements, while individual rates were produced for analyses that focused on individuals' awareness and experiences with the income support system.

These weights were calculated using data from the Integrated Data Infrastructure (IDI). The table below shows how the weighted survey results for numbers of families and individuals receiving key payments of interest compared against the benchmarks from the IDI.

<b>Payment</b>	<b>IDI benchmark families</b>	<b>IDI benchmark individuals</b>	<b>Survey result families</b>	<b>Survey result individuals</b>
<b>Main benefits (as at end June 2022)</b>	342,594	361,968	318,377	350,623
<b>Accommodation Supplement (as at end June 2022)</b>	288,435	318,486	293,566	334,969
<b>Family tax credit (21/22 tax year)</b>	238,080	314,427	210,345	287,578

Given the approach used, these results were considered acceptable for our analysis. A more detailed discussion of this approach is contained within the methodology report.

## **Analysis**

### **Statistical significance**

The main findings packs published alongside this document use the 95% confidence intervals of the data to determine statistically significant results. Statistically significant results were identified in one of two ways. They were identified by comparing sub-group results against either:

- the survey average
- other results within that sub-group.

Some findings within New Zealand Income Support Survey findings packs might not be statistically significant using this approach, but might still be interesting or important to consider. Ultimately, we advise users of this data to use their own discretion over which results are important to them.

### **Scale responses**

Many questions within the New Zealand Income Support Survey utilised a scale response (such as a Likert scale). Scale responses are grouped together to form logical groupings for presentation and analysis. How this is done is detailed within the individual findings packs.

### **Verbatim responses**

Many questions in the NZISS allowed respondents to provide “other” answers to the questions if none of the pre-coded answers were suitable for their circumstances. These other responses were manually recoded and included within analysis where appropriate. More information on how this was done is available within the main methodology report.

### **Confidentiality**

There are some instances where we aggregate or omit data from the survey. These include when:

- category counts are less than six
- the margin of error of an estimate is larger than 20 percentage points
- the relative sampling error for a category is above 50 percent.

This is done to keep the personal information of New Zealand Income Support Survey respondents safe and to ensure the robustness of the published information. Additionally, data categories with a margin of error between 10 and 20 percentage points, or a relative sampling error between 20 and 50 percent are flagged, to be viewed with caution.