



23 May 2025

Tēnā koe

Official Information Act request

Thank you for your email of 28 March 2025, requesting further information on wait times for the call centre, including average wait time and number of successful calls answered.

I have considered your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act). Please find my decision on each part of your request set out separately below.

For clarity, my response to your questions provides information on the wait times for clients accessing Work and Income contact centre services.

Question 1: Regarding the longest recorded wait time in December 2024—was this for a call that was answered or one that remained unanswered? If it was answered, could you please provide the longest recorded wait time for an unanswered call in the past 12 months, including the month it occurred?

The call that you refer to (that was made on 11 December 2024) was answered by the Work and Income phone number.¹

We are unable to provide you information on the longest recorded wait time for an unanswered call as our data is not collected in this way. This part of your request is refused under section 18(g) of the Act as the information you had requested is not held by the Ministry and I have no grounds to believe that the information is either held by or closely connected to the functions of another department, Minister of the Crown or organisation.

Data is collected for abandoned calls which covers a range of scenarios, including where a call is abandoned unanswered, where a call is abandoned due to the information required being provided via our automated messages, as well as many other reasons an individual may choose to abandon a call. To be helpful, we are providing you with the longest wait time until the call was abandoned by the caller, this occurred on the afternoon of 17 May 2024. The caller waited for 2 hours and 9 minutes.

¹The *Work and Income phone number* is defined as the main General enquiries line: 0800 559 009. This excludes calls answered by our Customer Service Representatives relating to Housing, StudyLink, Seniors or Job Connect.

Question 2: The number of calls to the Work and Income 0800 number that were unanswered, broken down by month for the past 12 months.

Question 3: The average wait time before a call was answered, broke down by month.

Question 5: The number of calls successfully answered by Customer Service Representatives over the same period, broken down by month.

We have interpreted Customer Service Representatives as staff that work in the Work and Income Contact Centre.

We are unable to confirm whether a caller ended their call because the caller's query was unanswered. This part of your request is refused under section 18(g) of the Act as the information you had requested is not held by the Ministry and I have no grounds to believe that the information is either held by or closely connected to the functions of another department, Minister of the Crown or organisation.

To be helpful, we are providing you with the number of abandoned calls instead.² Please see the **Appendix** which provides the number of answered phone calls, abandoned phone calls, and average wait time for the Work and Income phone number, from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025.

Question 4: If available, please provide separate figures for calls where a callback service was used and where it was not.

Between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025, we have offered over 3,535,000 callbacks (89% of our total call volumes). Of those offers, 76% were accepted by callers. In total, 75% of all calls answered within Work and Income Contact Centres are via the callback system, eliminating the need for callers to physically wait on the line while they wait to be answered. When clients call us, our phone system will let them know the expected wait time.

We currently offer call backs to those clients who:

- have called from a valid, disclosed phone number (ie not private or withheld), and
- the expected return time of the call is within our business operating hours, and
- the wait time on that line is more than seven minutes.

I will be publishing this decision letter, with your personal details deleted, on the Ministry's website in due course.

If you wish to discuss this response with us, please feel free to contact OIA_Requests@msd.govt.nz.

²A caller can abandon a call for a range of reasons, including that their call went unanswered.

If you are not satisfied with my decision on your request, 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

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'A' followed by a horizontal line.

Anna Graham
General Manager
Ministerial and Executive Services

Appendix

The number of phone calls received, answered phone calls, abandoned phone calls, and average wait time (in minutes) for the Work and Income phone number, from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025.

Month	Number of calls received	Number of calls answered	Number of calls abandoned*	Call abandonment rate**	Average wait time (mins)
April 2024	324,381	273,532	50,849	15.7%	07:07
May 2024	369,000	306,722	62,278	16.9%	06:48
June 2024	302,422	255,165	47,257	15.6%	06:19
July 2024	354,869	293,705	61,164	17.2%	07:44
August 2024	357,609	296,826	60,783	17.0%	07:25
September 2024	348,184	297,094	51,090	14.7%	06:09
October 2024	359,781	297,531	62,250	17.3%	07:22
November 2024	343,867	283,635	60,232	17.5%	07:52
December 2024	302,023	250,576	51,447	17.0%	08:08
January 2025	299,101	245,593	53,508	17.9%	09:50

Month	Number of calls received	Number of calls answered	Number of calls abandoned*	Call abandonment rate**	Average wait time (mins)
February 2025	267,900	220,547	47,353	17.7%	09:57
March 2025	323,878	267,662	56,216	17.4%	08:25

*Number of calls abandoned: a caller who enters the queue and then hangs up before their call is answered by a Customer Service Representative is classified as an "Abandoned call".

** Call abandonment rate: out of all calls received on any given month, the call abandonment rate represents the percentage of those calls that were abandoned by the caller before a Customer Service Representative was able to answer their call.