



**MINISTRY OF SOCIAL  
DEVELOPMENT**  
TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO ORA



## Ministry of Social Development

# Benefit Fact Sheets

### Snapshot - December 2021 Quarter

The Benefit Fact Sheets provide a high-level view of trends in benefit receipt. The Benefit Fact Sheets are published quarterly and contain information on income support provided by the Ministry.

# In the Benefit Fact Sheets Snapshot

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### Protecting our clients information – confidentiality

All information in this document has been randomly rounded to base 3. Data found here is rounded independently from other products produced by the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) resulting in small differences in the data between products.

From 12 February 2021, MSD is applying a range of new confidentiality procedures to public data releases. These will continue to protect client information, while making more data available. To find out how we have changed the way we work with client information visit:

<https://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/tools/how-we-keep-data-private.html>

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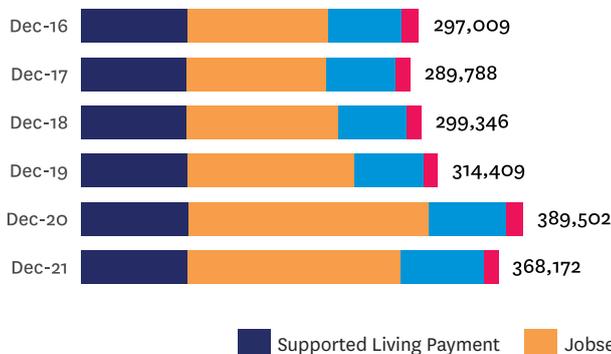
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# Main benefit assistance

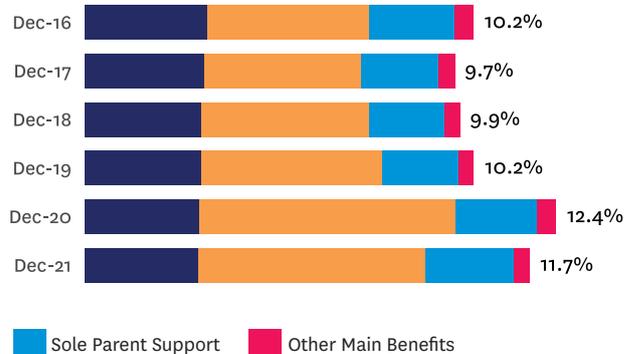
## Main benefits

Main benefits for working-age (18–64 years) clients include: Jobseeker Support (JS), Sole Parent Support (SPS), Supported Living Payment (SLP), Youth Payment and Young Parent Payment (YP/YPP), Emergency Benefit (EB), Emergency Maintenance Allowance (EMA), Jobseeker Support Student Hardship (JSSH), Widow’s Benefit Overseas (WBO), and Sole Parent Support Overseas (SPSO).

**Figure 1a. Number of working-age clients receiving main benefits at the end of the last six December quarters**



**Figure 1b. Proportion of working-age population receiving main benefits at the end of the last six December quarters**



**368,172** working-age people receiving a main benefit as at the end of December 2021

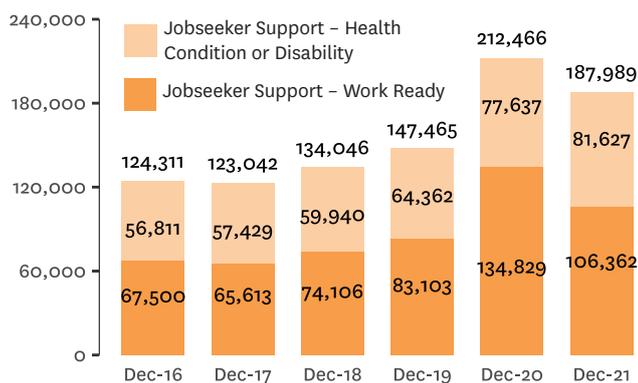
**11.7 percent** of the working-age population receiving a main benefit as at the end of December 2021

The number of working-age people receiving a main benefit, as at the end of December 2021, was 5.5 percent lower when compared to the December 2020 quarter. Benefit numbers as a proportion of the working-age population decreased to 11.7 percent from 12.4 percent as at the end of December 2020.

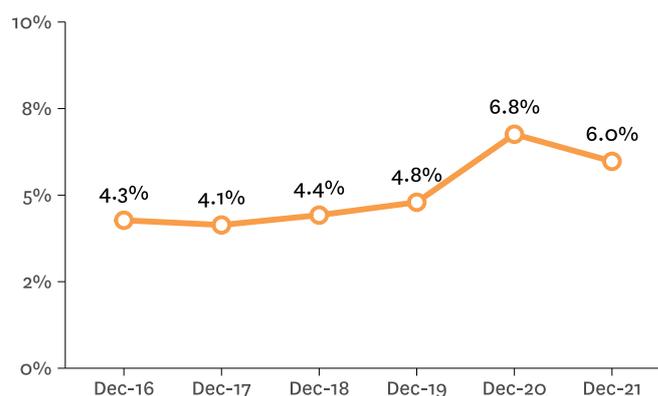
The working-age population is a subset of the estimated New Zealand resident population, defined as those aged 18–64. To calculate population proportions, the working-age population is used, as at the most recent June estimate available.

## Jobseeker Support (JS)

**Figure 2a. Number of working-age people receiving Jobseeker Support by sub category, at the end of the last six December quarters**



**Figure 2b. Proportion of working-age population receiving Jobseeker Support, at the end of the last six December quarters**



**187,989** working-age people receiving Jobseeker Support as at the end of December 2021

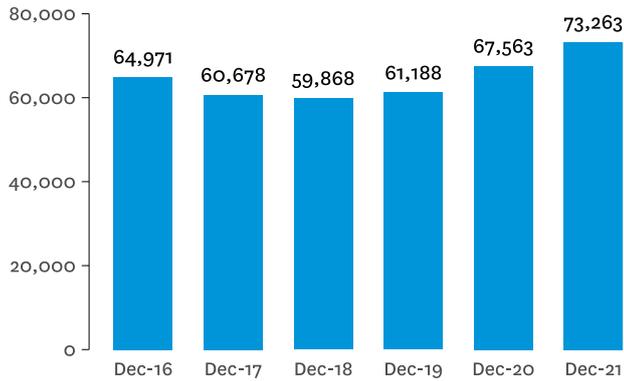
**6.0 percent** of the working-age population receiving Jobseeker Support as at the end of December 2021

As at the end of December 2021, the number of working-age people on Jobseeker Support decreased by 11.5 percent, when compared to the December 2020 quarter. This is due to the decrease in Jobseeker Support – Work Ready, which decreased by 21.1 percent when comparing the end of December 2021 (106,632) to December 2020 (134,829).

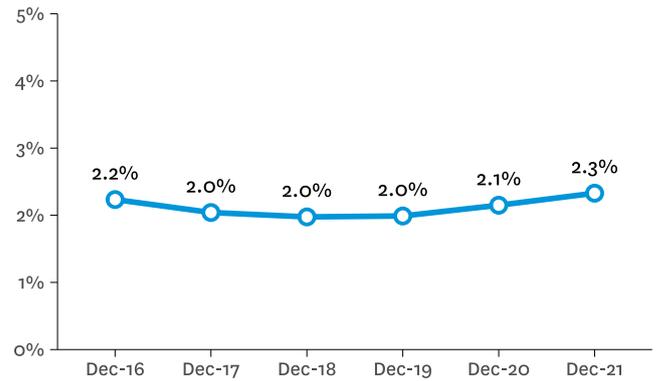
Jobseeker Support is for people who are actively looking for or preparing for work. It includes people with part-time work obligations and those who cannot look for work at the moment (e.g. those with a health condition, injury, or disability).

## Sole Parent Support (SPS)

**Figure 3a. Number of working-age people receiving Sole Parent Support at the end of the last six December quarters**



**Figure 3b. Proportion of working-age population receiving Sole Parent Support at the end of the last six December quarters**



**73,263** working-age people receiving Sole Parent Support as at the end of December 2021

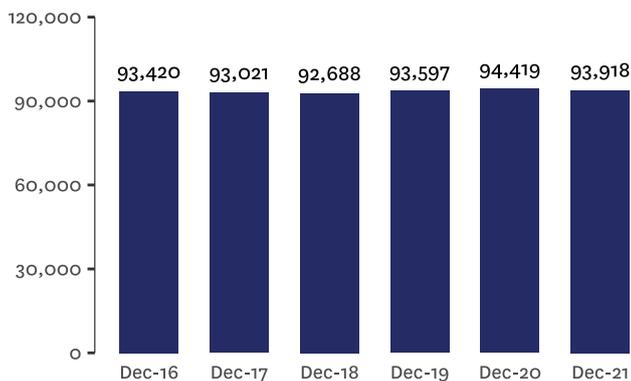
As at the end of December 2021, **the number of working-age people on Sole Parent Support increased by 8.4 percent**, when compared to the December 2020 quarter. **The proportion of working-age people receiving SPS increased to 2.3 percent** as at the end of December 2021.

**2.3 percent** of the working-age population receiving Sole Parent Support as at the end of December 2021

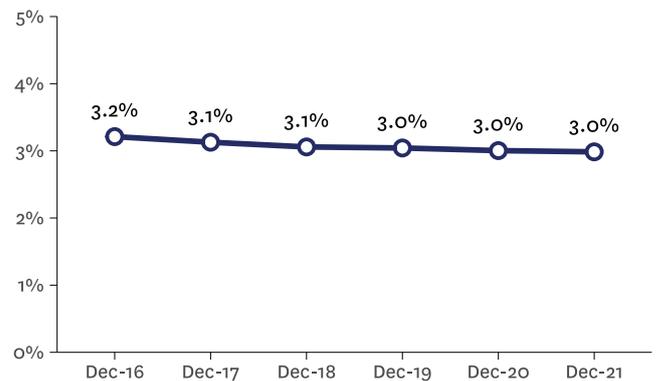
Sole Parent Support is for single parents, with at least one dependent child under 14 years.

## Supported Living Payment (SLP)

**Figure 4a. Number of working-age people receiving Supported Living Payment at the end of the last six December quarters**



**Figure 4b. Proportion of working-age population receiving Supported Living Payment at the end of the last six December quarters**



**93,918** working-age people receiving Supported Living Payment as at the end of December 2021

As at the end of December 2021, **the number of working-age people on Supported Living Payment decreased by 0.5 percent**, when compared to the December 2020 quarter. **The proportion of working-age people receiving SLP remained steady at 3.0 percent** as at the end of December 2021.

**3.0 percent** of the working-age population receiving Supported Living Payment as at the end of December 2021

Supported Living Payment is for people who have, or care for someone with, a health condition, injury or disability that limits their ability to work. The long-term nature of conditions for people on Supported Living Payment mean that fewer people transfer to other benefits or move into paid employment, compared to other benefit types.

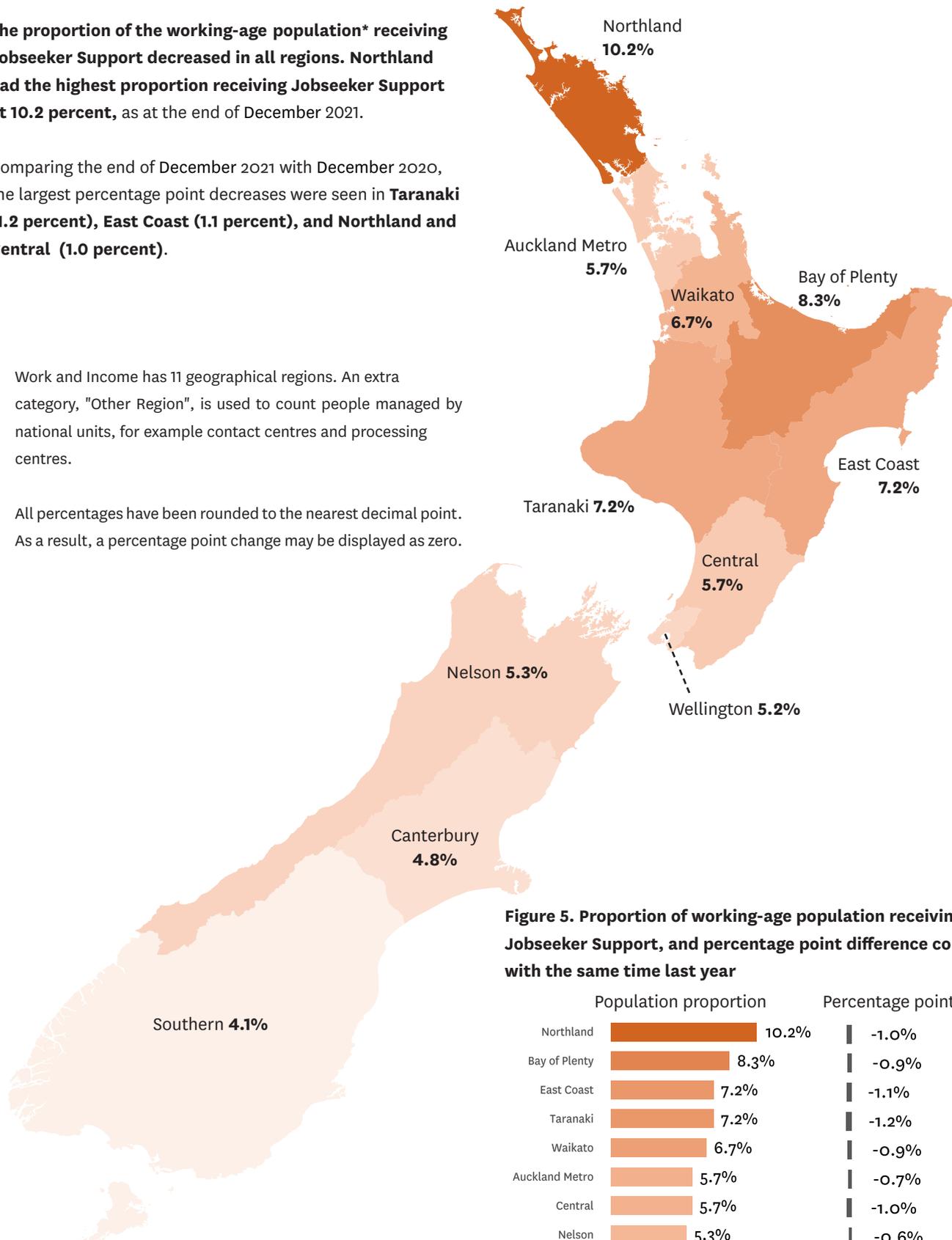
# Regional distribution of Jobseeker Support as a proportion of the working-age population, by Work and Income region, as at December 2021

The proportion of the working-age population\* receiving Jobseeker Support decreased in all regions. Northland had the highest proportion receiving Jobseeker Support at 10.2 percent, as at the end of December 2021.

Comparing the end of December 2021 with December 2020, the largest percentage point decreases were seen in Taranaki (1.2 percent), East Coast (1.1 percent), and Northland and Central (1.0 percent).

Work and Income has 11 geographical regions. An extra category, "Other Region", is used to count people managed by national units, for example contact centres and processing centres.

All percentages have been rounded to the nearest decimal point. As a result, a percentage point change may be displayed as zero.



**Figure 5. Proportion of working-age population receiving Jobseeker Support, and percentage point difference compared with the same time last year**

Region	Population proportion	Percentage point change
Northland	10.2%	-1.0%
Bay of Plenty	8.3%	-0.9%
East Coast	7.2%	-1.1%
Taranaki	7.2%	-1.2%
Waikato	6.7%	-0.9%
Auckland Metro	5.7%	-0.7%
Central	5.7%	-1.0%
Nelson	5.3%	-0.6%
Wellington	5.2%	-0.8%
Canterbury	4.8%	-0.8%
Southern	4.1%	-0.5%

\* The regional estimated working-age population figures used on pages three and four of this report have been calculated using Statistics New Zealand's revised regional population estimates as at June 2021.

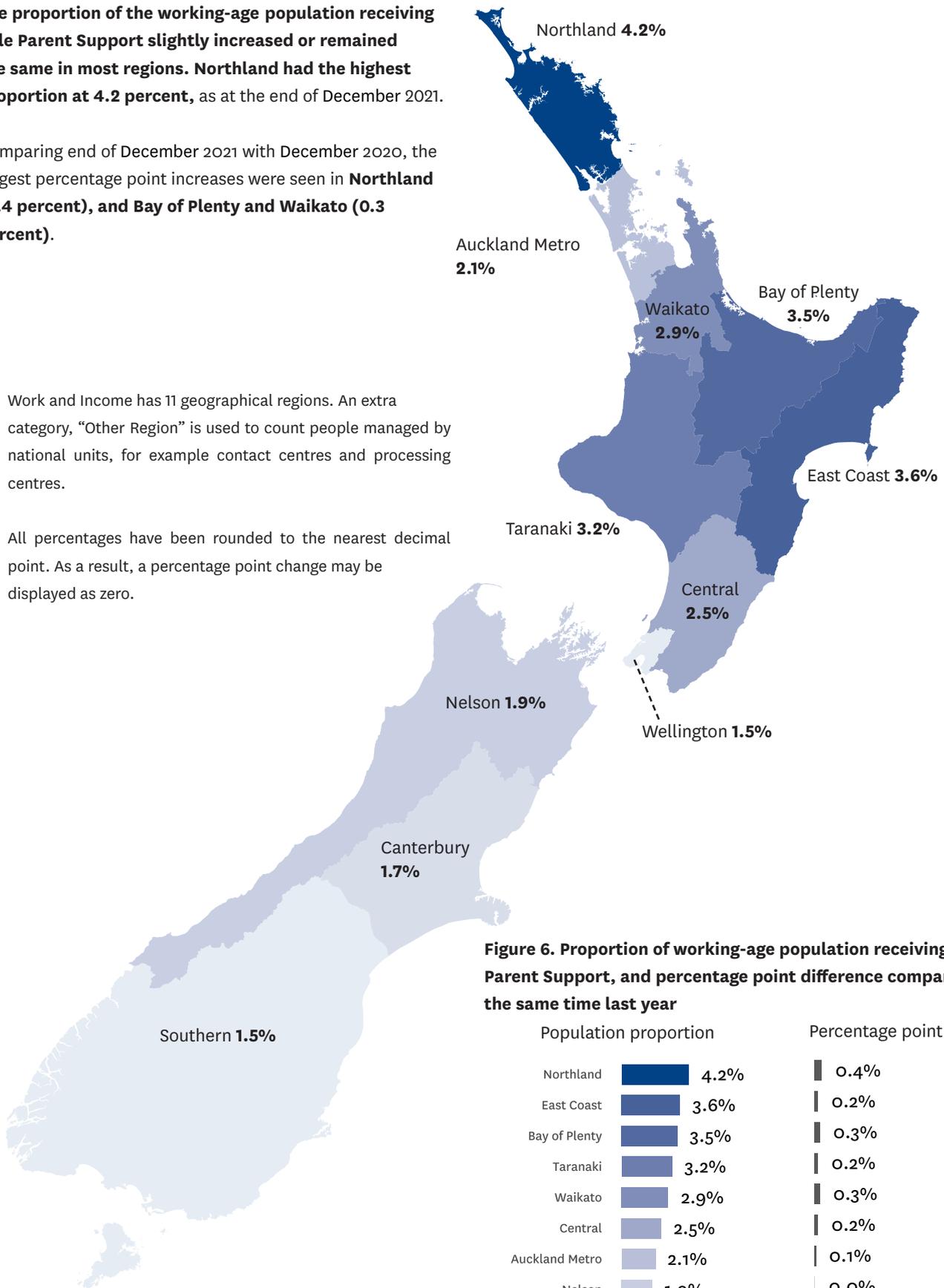
# Regional distribution of Sole Parent Support as a proportion of the working-age population, by Work and Income region, as at December 2021

The proportion of the working-age population receiving Sole Parent Support slightly increased or remained the same in most regions. Northland had the highest proportion at 4.2 percent, as at the end of December 2021.

Comparing end of December 2021 with December 2020, the largest percentage point increases were seen in Northland (0.4 percent), and Bay of Plenty and Waikato (0.3 percent).

Work and Income has 11 geographical regions. An extra category, "Other Region" is used to count people managed by national units, for example contact centres and processing centres.

All percentages have been rounded to the nearest decimal point. As a result, a percentage point change may be displayed as zero.



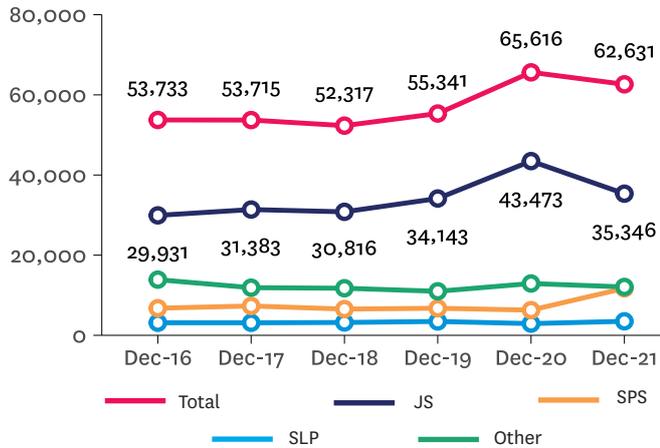
**Figure 6. Proportion of working-age population receiving Sole Parent Support, and percentage point difference compared with the same time last year**

Region	Population proportion	Percentage point change
Northland	4.2%	0.4%
East Coast	3.6%	0.2%
Bay of Plenty	3.5%	0.3%
Taranaki	3.2%	0.2%
Waikato	2.9%	0.3%
Central	2.5%	0.2%
Auckland Metro	2.1%	0.1%
Nelson	1.9%	0.0%
Canterbury	1.7%	0.1%
Wellington	1.5%	0.0%
Southern	1.5%	0.1%

# Benefit grants and cancellations

## Benefit grants

Figure 7. Number of benefits granted during the last six December quarters



The total number of benefits granted during the December 2021 quarter decreased by 2,985, or 4.5 percent, when compared with the December 2020 quarter.

There were 35,346 benefit grants for Jobseeker Support (JS) during the December 2021 quarter, a decrease of 8,127, or 18.7 percent, when compared with the December 2020 quarter.

A benefit grant is the formal acceptance of entitlement to a benefit. The numbers reported here are for the total number of main benefits granted during the December quarter, for the last six December quarters (i.e. 1 October to 31 December).

## Benefit cancellations

Figure 8a. Number of cancellations by benefit during the last six December quarters

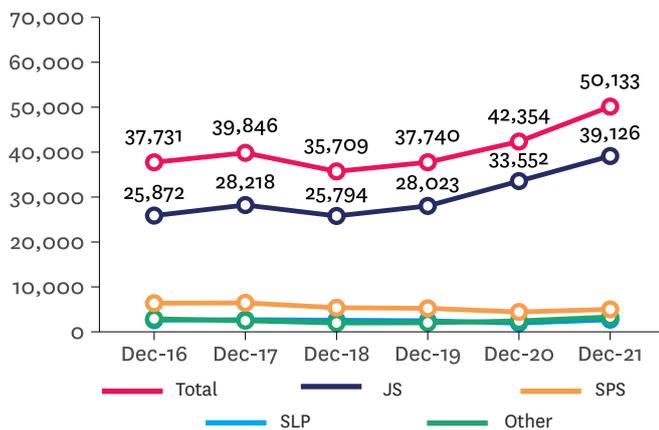
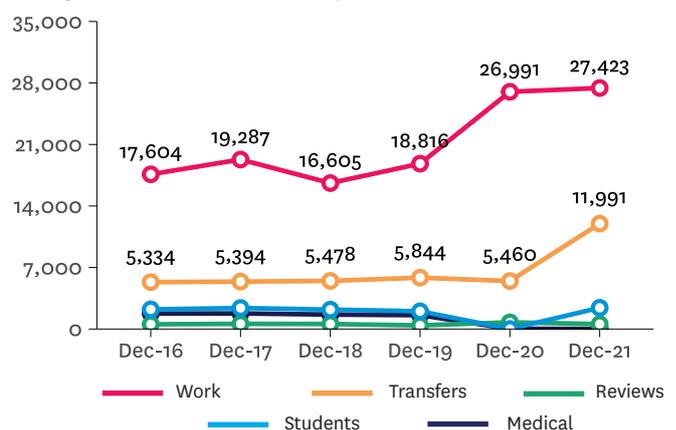


Figure 8b. Number of cancellations by selected reason during the last six December quarters



**50,133** benefit cancellations during the December 2021 quarter

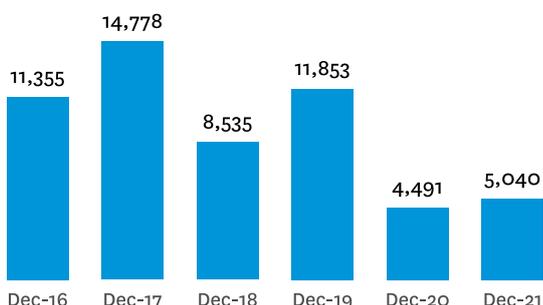
The number of benefit cancellations during the December 2021 quarter increased by 7,779 when compared to the December 2020 quarter, or an increase of 18.4 percent. Obtaining work, a main reason for benefit cancellations, increased by 1.6 percent when compared to the December 2020 quarter.

**27,423** benefit cancellations during the December 2021 quarter due to obtaining work

A cancellation (cancel) is the formal process that ends the entitlement to a benefit. The numbers reported above are for benefits cancelled within the December quarter, for the last six December quarters (i.e. 1 October to 31 December).

## Benefit sanctions

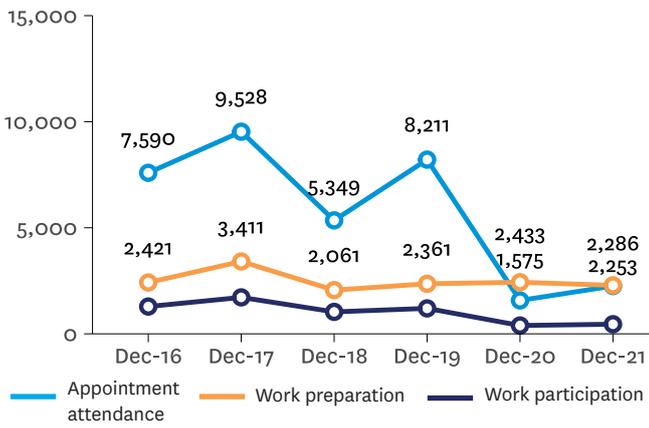
Figure 9. Number of sanctions for unfulfilled work obligations during the last six December quarters



The number of sanctions issued during the December 2021 quarter was 5,040. Between 23 March 2020 and 27 May 2020, work related obligation failures were suspended. They restarted back in late June 2020 and have been increasing quarter on quarter since then.

A sanction is a reduction in a person's benefit that may occur if they do not fulfil their work obligations. Sanctions can affect benefit recipients in a number of ways, depending on their circumstances and the number of times they have had a sanction over the last 12 months. There are three types of sanctions: graduated (i.e. percentage reduction in benefit amount), suspended, or cancelled.

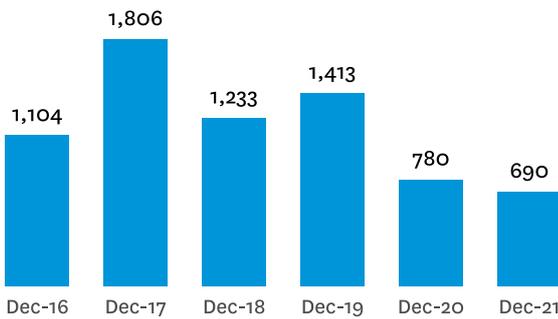
**Figure 10. Number of sanctions for unfulfilled work obligations, by reason, during the last six December quarters**



The main reason for sanctions was due to clients failing to prepare for work and not attending appointments (including seminar appointments), with 2,286 and 2,253 sanctions for clients having unfulfilled work obligations due to these reasons respectively during the December 2021 quarter.

The maximum main benefit reduction for sole parents and couples with dependent children is 50 percent, when sanctioned within a 12-month period. For people without a de facto partner or couples with no dependent children, the first sanction is a maximum 50 percent reduction of their main benefit; for a second non-fulfilment of an obligation, they face a 100 percent suspension of their main benefit; and a third sanction will then result in a cancellation of their benefit.

**Figure 11. Number of graduated sanctions active at the end of the last six December quarters**

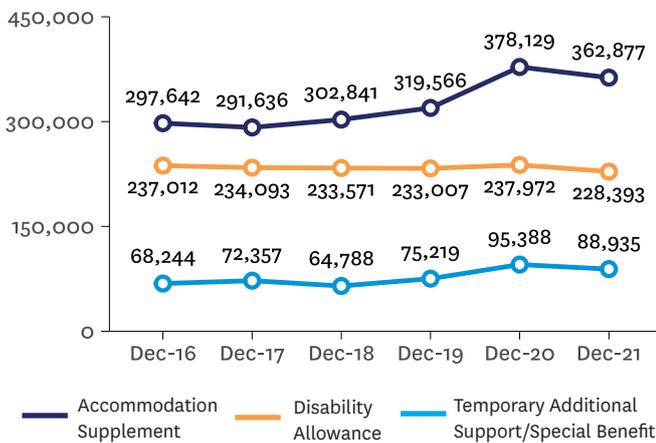


As at the end of December 2021, there were 690 graduated sanctions actively in place (i.e. when a client has a percentage reduction in their weekly benefit rate).

Not everyone who does not fulfil their obligations gets sanctioned; if benefit recipients re-comply or provide additional information, the sanction can be overturned.

## Supplementary assistance

**Figure 12. Number of recipients of supplementary assistance at the end of the last six December quarters**



The number of people receiving **Accommodation Supplement** in the December 2021 quarter **decreased by 15,252** when compared to the December 2020 quarter.

The number of people receiving **Temporary Additional Support/Special Benefit** in the December 2021 quarter **decreased by 6,453** when compared to the December 2020 quarter.

The number of people receiving **Disability Allowance** in the December 2021 quarter **decreased by 9,579** when compared to the December 2020 quarter.

The Accommodation Supplement is a weekly payment to assist people on low incomes with their rent, board, or the cost of owning a home, but is not available to those in public housing or charged Income-Related Rent. The number of people receiving an Accommodation Supplement tends to change in line with main benefit numbers.

The Disability Allowance is a weekly payment to assist people who have on-going costs because of a disability. A person does not need to be receiving a main benefit in order to qualify for the Disability Allowance. The number of people receiving a Disability Allowance tends to change in line with main benefit and New Zealand Superannuation numbers.

Temporary Additional Support is a weekly payment that helps people to cover essential living costs that cannot be met from their income or other resources. A person does not have to be receiving a main benefit to qualify for Temporary Additional Support. Temporary Additional Support replaced Special Benefit in 2006, however some people are still entitled to receive Special Benefit, therefore these are counted together.

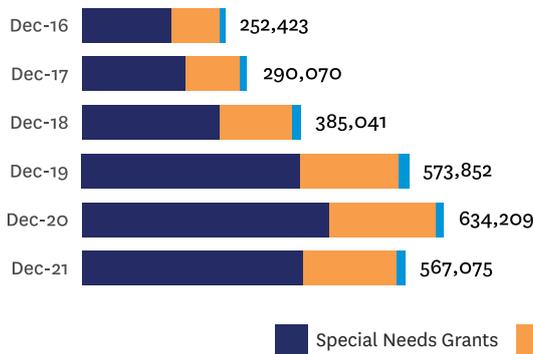
# Hardship assistance

A total of **567,075 hardship assistance payments, worth \$231,332,494** were provided during the December 2021 quarter. Compared with the December 2020 quarter, the number of hardship assistance payments was 10.6 percent lower but the value of hardship payments was 7.6 percent higher.

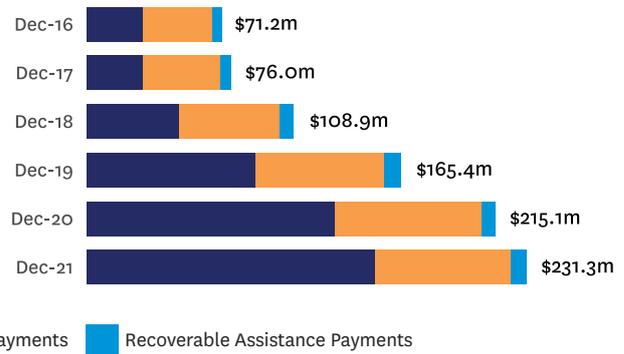
Hardship assistance includes, but is not limited to: Special Needs Grants (SNGs), Benefit Advances (ADVs) and Recoverable Assistance Payments (RAPs). These forms of assistance are designed to help people who have immediate needs. The numbers reported for hardship assistance are those provided within the December quarter (i.e. 1 October to 31 December). Hardship assistance data is not limited to the working-age population (i.e. 18–64 years).

## Total hardship assistance

**Figure 13a. Number of hardship payments provided during the quarter for the last six December quarters, by type of assistance**



**Figure 13b. Value of hardship payments provided during the quarter for the last six December quarters, by type of assistance**

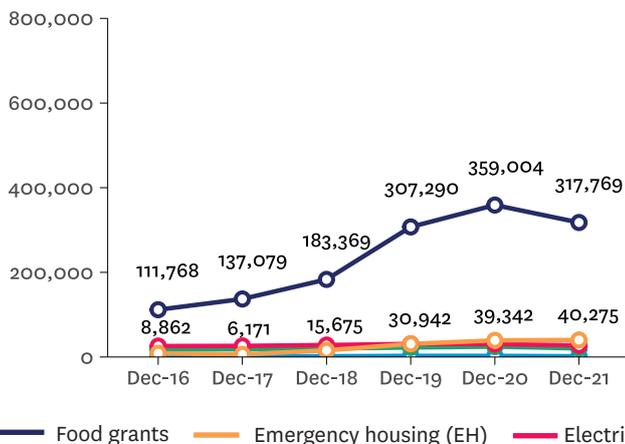


**567,075** hardship payments provided during the December 2021 quarter

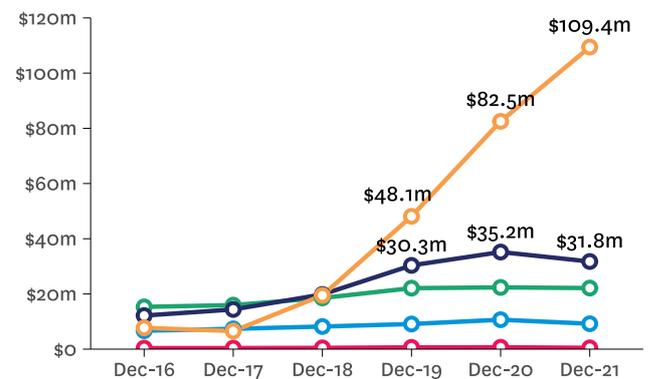
**\$231,332,494** is the value of hardship payments provided during the December 2021 quarter

## Reasons for granting hardship assistance

**Figure 14a. Number of hardship payments provided during the quarter for the last six December quarters, by selected reason**



**Figure 14b. Value of hardship payments provided during the quarter for the last six December quarters, by selected reason**

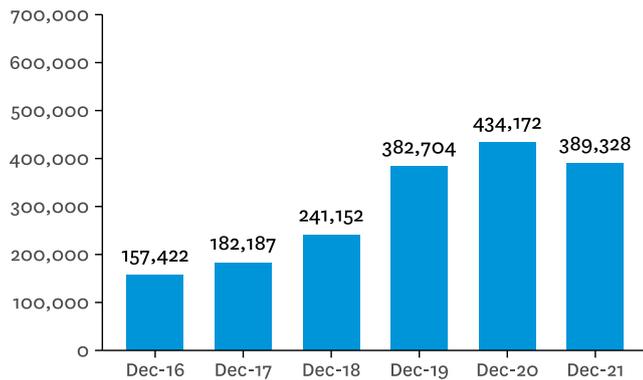


**The number of Special Needs Grants (SNGs) for food has decreased** since the December 2020 quarter. There were 41,235 fewer food SNGs provided, totalling 317,769 during the December 2021 quarter. The value of food SNGs provided decreased by 9.7 percent to \$31,755,246 during the December 2021 quarter.

The number of Emergency Housing Special Needs Grants (EH SNGs) during the December 2021 quarter increased when compared with the same period last year. There were 933 more EH SNGs provided, totalling 40,275 during the December 2021 quarter.

## Special Needs Grants (SNGs)

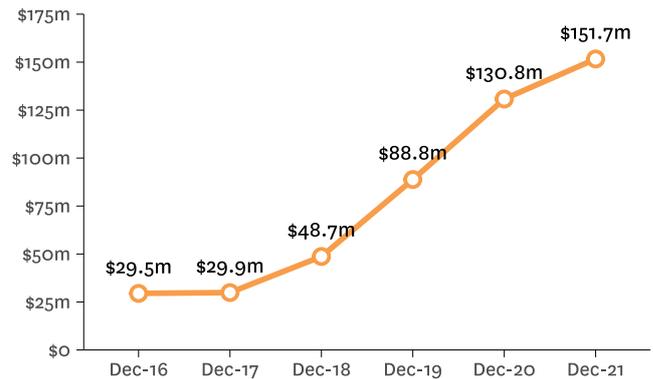
**Figure 15a. Number of Special Needs Grants provided during the quarter, for the last six December quarters**



**389,328** Special Needs Grants provided during the December 2021 quarter

**\$151,657,458** is the value of Special Needs Grants provided in the December 2021 quarter

**Figure 15b. Value of Special Needs Grants provided during the quarter, for the last six December quarters**

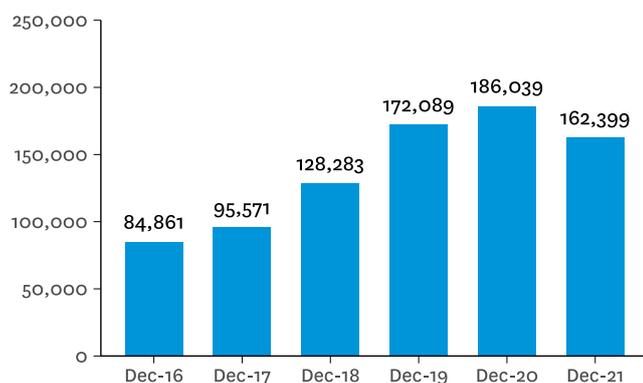


The number of Special Needs Grants provided was **44,844** fewer during the **December 2021** quarter when compared to the same period in 2020. The value of grants provided increased from \$130,770,852 during the December 2020 quarter to \$151,657,458 during the December 2021 quarter.

A Special Needs Grant provides a non-taxable, one-off recoverable or non-recoverable payment to help people meet immediate needs. A person does not need to be receiving a main benefit to be eligible for a Special Needs Grant.

## Benefit Advances (ADVs)

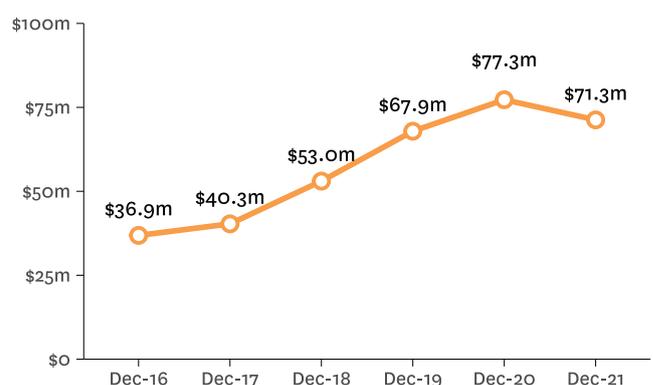
**Figure 16a. Number of Benefit Advances provided during the quarter, for the last six December quarters**



**162,399** Benefit Advances provided during the December 2021 quarter

**\$71,264,634** is the value of Benefit Advances provided during the December 2021 quarter

**Figure 16b. Value of Benefit Advances provided during the quarter, for the last six December quarters**



The number of Benefit Advances provided was **23,640** fewer during the **December 2021** quarter, compared with the December 2020 quarter. This has resulted in the value of Benefit Advances provided decreasing by 7.8 percent to a total of \$71,264,634.

Anyone receiving a main benefit who requires assistance to meet an immediate essential need can have access to a Benefit Advance. The advance can be up to six weeks of their net entitlement, and is recovered from subsequent payments of benefit. People not receiving a main benefit may receive Recoverable Assistance Payments.