



9 October 2024

Tēnā koe

Official Information Act request

Thank you for your email of 19 September 2024, requesting information about decisions relating to children living in poverty or experiencing material hardship.

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

- 1. How many more children does official data and modelling estimate will be living in poverty or experiencing material hardship as a result of increased benefit sanctions announced on 12 August 2024?*

The Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) has not undertaken any modelling and no new obligations have been introduced, therefore your request for this information is refused under section 18(g) of the Act as this information is not held by the Ministry and I have no grounds to believe that the information is held by another department or Minister of the crown or organisation.

The Traffic Light System, which was implemented on 12 August 2024 did not introduce any additional work, work preparation or social obligations and did not change the nature of financial sanctions or who they apply to. Instead, the Traffic Light System serves as a resource to assist beneficiaries in comprehending and adhering to their current obligations, enabling them to prevent sanctions and the related consequences.

- 2. How many families with children who receive any benefits or payments have had their benefits or payments sanctioned, either partially or completely since the new benefit sanctions announced on 12 August 2024 came into effect?*

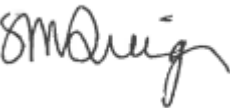
As mentioned above, no new obligations have been introduced since the implementation of the Traffic light System. The below **Appendix** shows the number of sanctions and the number of working aged main benefit clients with dependent children with a sanction imposed in the period from 1 August 2024 to 30 August 2024. Further publicly available data regarding sanctions can be found here: <https://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/statistics/benefit/index.html>

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.

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

pp. 

Magnus O'Neill
General Manager
Ministerial and Executive Services

Appendix

Number of sanctions and number of working aged main benefit clients with dependent children with a sanction imposed in the period from 1 August 2024 to 30 August 2024.

Month	Number of clients	Number of sanctions
August 2024	567	567

Notes:

- The table includes working age only (18 to 64 years).
- Main benefits exclude New Zealand Superannuation, Veteran's Pension, Non-Beneficiary assistance, Orphan's Benefit and Unsupported Child's Benefit.
- A client can have more than one sanction within the time period.
- Children in care is assessed at the time of sanction.
- To protect confidentiality, the Ministry of Social Development 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.