



Thank you for your email of 20 August 2019 requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, the following information:

- *The number and type of sanctions that have been imposed on benefits from January 2017 to date, broken down by region and quarter.*

As you are aware, a sanction is imposed on a benefit when a client has not fulfilled their obligations. Over the last five years there has been an overall decline in the number of sanctions issued, particularly sanctions imposed where clients have not fulfilled their work-related obligations.

The Ministry publishes data relating to sanctions on a quarterly basis, including the number of sanctions imposed, broken down by Work and Income region. This information is available at: [www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/statistics/benefit/latest-quarterly-results/benefit-sanctions.html](http://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/statistics/benefit/latest-quarterly-results/benefit-sanctions.html).

There are three types of sanctions: graduated (percentage reduction in benefit amount), suspended and cancelled. Sanctions can affect benefit recipients in a number of ways depending on their circumstances and the number of times they have had a sanction imposed over the last 12 months. Not everyone who does not meet their obligations will be sanctioned. A sanction can be withdrawn when a client re-complies or provides additional information.

Please find enclosed a table showing the number and type of sanctions imposed on benefits for the period 1 March 2017 to 30 June 2019, broken down by region and quarter.

Please note, in order to protect client privacy, some values are suppressed and are represented by 'S'. The Ministry is unable to provide you with the exact number as releasing this information is likely to risk identifying the individuals concerned. As such, this information is withheld under section 9(2)(a) of the Act. The need to protect the privacy of these individuals outweighs and public interest in the information.

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.

The 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 shortly. The Ministry will do this by publishing this letter on the Ministry of Social Development'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 with us, please feel free to contact [OIA\\_Requests@msd.govt.nz](mailto:OIA_Requests@msd.govt.nz).

If you are not satisfied with this response regarding sanctions imposed on benefits, 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](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz) or 0800 802 602.

Yours sincerely



Bridget Saunders  
**Manager, Issue Resolution, Service Delivery**

**Table One: The number and type of sanctions imposed on benefits for the period 1 March 2017 to 30 June 2019, broken down by region and quarter.**

Quarter Ending	Work and Income Region	Sanction type		Total
		Graduated and Rate Reduction	Suspended and Cancelled	
31-Mar-17	Northland	854	149	<b>1,003</b>
	Auckland Metro	3,736	591	<b>4,327</b>
	Waikato	1,256	244	<b>1,500</b>
	Taranaki	983	174	<b>1,157</b>
	Bay of Plenty	1,633	323	<b>1,956</b>
	East Coast	1,071	180	<b>1,251</b>
	Central	827	120	<b>947</b>
	Wellington	918	119	<b>1,037</b>
	Nelson	486	128	<b>614</b>
	Canterbury	837	153	<b>990</b>
	Southern	S	S	<b>560</b>
	Other	S	S	<b>123</b>
	Quarter total	<b>13,174</b>	<b>2,291</b>	<b>15,465</b>
	30-Jun-17	Northland	983	224
Auckland Metro		3,708	822	<b>4,530</b>
Waikato		1,881	385	<b>2,266</b>
Taranaki		893	167	<b>1,060</b>
Bay of Plenty		1,485	273	<b>1,758</b>
East Coast		640	157	<b>797</b>
Central		786	163	<b>949</b>
Wellington		966	128	<b>1,094</b>
Nelson		434	131	<b>565</b>
Canterbury		644	172	<b>816</b>
Southern		S	S	<b>436</b>
Other		S	S	<b>141</b>
Quarter total		<b>12,865</b>	<b>2,754</b>	<b>15,619</b>
30-Sep-17		Northland	668	184
	Auckland Metro	3,693	833	<b>4,526</b>
	Waikato	1,511	392	<b>1,903</b>
	Taranaki	881	201	<b>1,082</b>
	Bay of Plenty	1,435	265	<b>1,700</b>
	East Coast	677	140	<b>817</b>
	Central	852	176	<b>1,028</b>
	Wellington	853	149	<b>1,002</b>
	Nelson	349	91	<b>440</b>
	Canterbury	544	142	<b>686</b>

Quarter Ending	Work and Income Region	Sanction type		Total
		Graduated and Rate Reduction	Suspended and Cancelled	
	Southern	414	119	533
	Other	148	7	155
	<b>Quarter total</b>	<b>12,025</b>	<b>2,699</b>	<b>14,724</b>
	<b>31-Dec-17</b>			
31-Dec-17	Northland	600	161	761
	Auckland Metro	3,680	885	4,565
	Waikato	1,382	357	1,739
	Taranaki	748	135	883
	Bay of Plenty	1,862	273	2,135
	East Coast	1,056	218	1,274
	Central	796	215	1,011
	Wellington	539	153	692
	Nelson	416	112	528
	Canterbury	507	121	628
	Southern	S	S	426
	Other	S	S	136
	<b>Quarter total</b>	<b>12,049</b>	<b>2,729</b>	<b>14,778</b>
	<b>31-Mar-18</b>			
31-Mar-18	Northland	814	173	987
	Auckland Metro	3,277	776	4,053
	Waikato	1,533	385	1,918
	Taranaki	799	176	975
	Bay of Plenty	1,881	421	2,302
	East Coast	1,117	263	1,380
	Central	574	187	761
	Wellington	469	137	606
	Nelson	386	125	511
	Canterbury	488	110	598
	Southern	S	S	465
	Other	S	S	149
	<b>Quarter total</b>	<b>11,857</b>	<b>2,848</b>	<b>14,705</b>
	<b>30-Jun-18</b>			
30-Jun-18	Northland	822	211	1,033
	Auckland Metro	2,705	634	3,339
	Waikato	1,251	340	1,591
	Taranaki	704	156	860
	Bay of Plenty	1,712	344	2,056
	East Coast	575	156	731
	Central	376	117	493
	Wellington	657	115	772
	Nelson	S	S	323

Quarter Ending	Work and Income Region	Sanction type		Total
		Graduated and Rate Reduction	Suspended and Cancelled	
	Canterbury	390	92	<b>482</b>
	Southern	301	97	<b>398</b>
	Other	S	S	<b>136</b>
	<b>Quarter total</b>	<b>9,864</b>	<b>2,350</b>	<b>12,214</b>
<b>30-Sep-18</b>	Northland	636	157	<b>793</b>
	Auckland Metro	2,433	632	<b>3,065</b>
	Waikato	965	287	<b>1,252</b>
	Taranaki	542	102	<b>644</b>
	Bay of Plenty	926	235	<b>1,161</b>
	East Coast	460	84	<b>544</b>
	Central	324	78	<b>402</b>
	Wellington	414	122	<b>536</b>
	Nelson	S	S	<b>182</b>
	Canterbury	299	82	<b>381</b>
	Southern	284	102	<b>386</b>
	Other	S	S	<b>158</b>
	<b>Quarter total</b>	<b>7,571</b>	<b>1,933</b>	<b>9,504</b>
	<b>31-Dec-18</b>	Northland	513	117
Auckland Metro		1,806	437	<b>2,243</b>
Waikato		927	234	<b>1,161</b>
Taranaki		590	117	<b>707</b>
Bay of Plenty		1,057	196	<b>1,253</b>
East Coast		289	91	<b>380</b>
Central		416	62	<b>478</b>
Wellington		392	77	<b>469</b>
Nelson		S	S	<b>281</b>
Canterbury		365	102	<b>467</b>
Southern		228	82	<b>310</b>
Other		S	S	<b>157</b>
<b>Quarter total</b>		<b>6,963</b>	<b>1,573</b>	<b>8,536</b>
<b>31-Mar-19</b>		Northland	675	119
	Auckland Metro	1,861	391	<b>2,252</b>
	Waikato	1,082	283	<b>1,365</b>
	Taranaki	554	72	<b>626</b>
	Bay of Plenty	928	174	<b>1,102</b>
	East Coast	1,442	266	<b>1,708</b>
	Central	478	86	<b>564</b>
	Wellington	519	68	<b>587</b>

Quarter Ending	Work and Income Region	Sanction type		Total
		Graduated and Rate Reduction	Suspended and Cancelled	
	Nelson	258	79	<b>337</b>
	Canterbury	S	S	<b>409</b>
	Southern	270	73	<b>343</b>
	Other	S	S	<b>103</b>
	<b>Quarter total</b>	<b>8,516</b>	<b>1,674</b>	<b>10,190</b>
30-Jun-19	Northland	731	129	<b>860</b>
	Auckland Metro	1,842	326	<b>2,168</b>
	Waikato	1,516	414	<b>1,930</b>
	Taranaki	523	93	<b>616</b>
	Bay of Plenty	1,477	262	<b>1,739</b>
	East Coast	806	261	<b>1,067</b>
	Central	637	128	<b>765</b>
	Wellington	796	116	<b>912</b>
	Nelson	S	S	<b>284</b>
	Canterbury	434	110	<b>544</b>
	Southern	314	109	<b>423</b>
	Other	S	S	<b>92</b>
	<b>Quarter total</b>	<b>9,369</b>	<b>2,031</b>	<b>11,400</b>

**Notes:**

- Graduated and Rate Reduction sanctions are where a client's benefit has been reduced, normally by 50%.
- The table includes working age people only (aged 18 to 64 years).
- Main Benefits exclude NZ Superannuation, Veteran's Pension, Non-Beneficiary assistance, Orphan's Benefit and Unsupported Child's Benefit.
- The 'Other' region includes clients managed from non-regional service centres such as the Centralised Unit Housing service centre and Studylink Processing Centre.
- This is a report counting sanctions not clients. Clients may have had more than one sanction.
- Some records have been suppressed with an "S" to protect client privacy.