

6 July 2021

Susan Pockett

By email: fyi-request-15879-9c27afbf@requests.fyi.org.nz
Ref: H202107584

Tēnā koe Susan

Response to your request for official information

Thank you for your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) on 24 June 2021. You requested:

*“As a follow-up to my question about operational false positive rates:
(a) How many of the PCR tests for SARS-CoV-2 done in NZ to date have been scored positive?”*

The first test for COVID-19 in New Zealand was on 22 January 2020. Please note some people (e.g., border and healthcare workers) are tested more than once. The total number of testing results including positive tests are available online at: www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-data-and-statistics/testing-covid-19.

“(b) How many of these positive tests have returned a cycle threshold of 35 or more?”

Please note that cycle threshold (Ct) values provide very limited information about a positive case of COVID-19. It also cannot be interpreted meaningfully without broader clinical data and technical interpretation, which would render individuals identifiable. The Ministry of Health (the Ministry) considers Ct values to be clinical information, and therefore personal health information. Given the small number of people contracting COVID-19 in New Zealand, the Ministry considers that the risk of identification and unwarranted disclosure of personal information about those persons is higher than the public interest in knowing the Ct values of any given case. Ct values should also not be released in their current form, due to the risk of the information being misinterpreted. As such, this part of your request is withheld under 9(2)(a) to protect the privacy of natural persons, including the deceased natural persons.

Under section 28(3) of the Act you have the right to ask the Ombudsman to review any decisions made under this request. The Ombudsman may be contacted by email at: info@ombudsman.parliament.nz or by calling 0800 802 602.

Please note that this response, with your personal details removed, may be published on the Ministry of Health website at: www.health.govt.nz/about-ministry/information-releases.

Nāku noa, nā

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gill Hall', written in a cursive style.

Gill Hall
Group Manager, COVID-19 Science and Insights
COVID-19 Health System Response