Te Tari Taiwhenua
Internal Affairs

Stats NZ
Tatauranga Aotearoa

ALGORITHM ASSESSMENT REPORT

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Algorithms have an essential role in supporting the services that government provides to people in New Zealand and to help deliver new, innovative, and well targeted policies to achieve government aims.

In one year:

- **3.7 million** people pay Pay As You Earn (PAYE) tax or file a personal tax return.

- **277,410** people receive working age benefits and **753,319** receive New Zealand Superannuation.

- More than **700,000** people are referred for specialist surgery.

- There are around **2 million** accident compensation claims.

- More than **1.5 million** children, young people, and students enrol in the education system.

- **158,900** referrals about children at risk are made, and further action was needed in **33,000** cases.

- **41 million** mail items and **496,000** import sea containers are screened, and **13.9** million travellers are assessed at the border.

- More than **1.1 million** events are responded to by the police, and more than **100,000** cases are prosecuted.

The report presents an assessment of information reported by 14 government agencies about the computer algorithms they use to deliver their functions. It focuses on areas where algorithms are used in decision-making processes that affect people in direct and significant ways.

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Humans, rather than computers, review and decide on almost all significant decisions made by government agencies. As agencies continue to develop new algorithms, it's important to preserve appropriate human oversight and ensure that the views of key stakeholders, notably the people who will receive or participate in services, are given appropriate consideration.

- While agencies are applying a range of safeguards and assurance processes in relation to their algorithms use, there are opportunities for increased collaboration and sharing of good practice across government.

- There is also scope to ensure that all of the information that is published explains, in clear and simple terms, how algorithms are informing decisions that affect people in significant ways.

- The government commitment to Treaty-based partnership should also be reflected, embedding a te ao Māori perspective into the development and use of algorithms.

- In addition to connecting expertise across government, agencies could also benefit from a fresh perspective by looking beyond government for privacy, ethics, and data expertise. This could be achieved by bringing together a group of independent experts that agencies could consult for advice and guidance.

New Zealand Government