

Predictive Risk Modelling — New Zealand's Shelved Algorithm for Flagging Children at Risk of Maltreatment

AI in the Public Sector · Good practice · New Zealand

Quality score: 40/100

Evidence strength: Descriptive / self-reported

Summary

New Zealand's MSD tested a statistical model scoring newborns' risk of substantiated maltreatment by age five (AUC 0.76). A planned 60,000-child live trial was cancelled by the responsible minister in 2015 over ethics and racial-bias concerns.

Key dimensions

Dimension	Score
Evidence of impact / measured public value	1/3
Transparency, fairness & accountability	2/3
Transferability / demonstrated replication	1/3
Scalability beyond pilot	0/3
Governance, capability & sustainability	2/3

Evaluated by C-NAPSE

Data sources

[C-NAPSE web research](#) — accessed 2026-07-31

[Ministry of Social Development \(MSD\), with University of Auckland / AUT researchers](#) — accessed 2026-07-31

[MSD — Predictive Risk Modelling research page](#) — accessed 2026-07-31

[NZ Herald — Anne Tolley scraps 'lab rat' study on children](#) — accessed 2026-07-31

[American Journal of Preventive Medicine — Children in the Public Benefit System at Risk of Maltreatment](#) — accessed 2026-07-31

[arXiv — Fairness analysis of NZ's predictive risk model](#) — accessed 2026-07-31

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