

Risk of underestimating Māori Data Sovereignty through Census Removal

The scrapping of the traditional Census poses a significant risk to Māori Data Sovereignty, this risk is in relation to the principal of control. The administrative datasets within the Integrated Data Infrastructure were not designed with Māori in mind. Which means that Māori have little influence over how their identity and image are represented, recorded and used. Without the Census, a key place where Māori can self-identify is lost, and administrative data may instead rely on inconsistent or narrow classifications that may misrepresent them.

The impact of this risk is quite large, as it undermines the Māori population's ability to exercise tino rangatiratanga over their data and it weakens the evidence base that Māori organisations require to make good decisions.

To mitigate this risk, Stats NZ should establish co-governance arrangements with Māori to ensure that any replacement system for the traditional Census is able to reflect Māori priorities and safeguard their right to self-identification. The new system should include a way to allow for Māori to influence the data definitions to ensure their iwi and hapū data is captured. Without doing this, the

scrapping of the Census will only risk greater marginalisation of the Māori voices in national statistics.

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