

Admin-Only Census Risks Māori Rangatiratanga over Data

Replacing the full Census with administrative datasets risks undermining Māori Data Sovereignty by shifting authority over Māori data from iwi and hapū to agencies that originally collected data for other purposes. This conflicts with the principles of rangatiratanga (self-determination), whakapapa (context and provenance), and kaitiakitanga (responsible stewardship) highlighted in Chris's lecture. Admin records undercount Māori who do not engage with services, and they encode ethnicity inconsistently across systems; both effects bias estimates of population, descent, iwi affiliation and need. Decisions on funding, representation and infrastructure would then be based on distorted numbers, eroding collective benefit and trust. Centralized linkage in the IDI without Māori governance amplifies risk of misuse or secondary use beyond original consent.

Mitigation: adopt a Māori-led co-governance model for the IDI and all census-replacement methods; retain a self-identification enumeration component (e.g., a short statutory Māori survey) to calibrate and correct admin data; mandate tikanga-based standards for ethnicity/iwi variables and transparent quality flags; create an independent Māori data audit panel with power to pause releases; and fund iwi capability to manage and access their own data. These steps protect sovereignty while enabling efficient use of admin data.