

Census Reform and Māori Data Sovereignty: A Risk to Relationships

Ditching the traditional Census shakes Māori Data Sovereignty (MDS/G), especially the Relationships principle tied to whakapapa from our lessons. The old Census built trust—Māori shaped how their data was collected, tracing its provenance, purpose, and context to form a "data whakapapa".

But switching to administrative data via IDI breaks that bond. It breaches the future use principle: the Census let us protect data for future generations, ensuring it served cultural legacy. Now, without Māori input, tomorrow's iwi may inherit misrepresented identities or unmet needs—no safeguards against long-term harm.

Stats NZ must fix this: formal, regular chats with iwi to let Māori shape data practices. That's how we rebuild relationships and keep MDS/G intact.