

Advice on Māori Data Governance and Sovereignty

Rangatiratanga refers to the authority Māori have over data. If an Integrated Data Infrastructure (IDI) approach is taken, the decision about what data Māori want to share is lost, losing authority over the data. IDI has the risk of misrepresenting groups if ethnicity data is inconsistent across agencies. For example, someone might be Māori in the Ministry of Health data set but NZ European in the Ministry of Education. If one dataset is relied on to count the Māori population, it could be undercounted. The IDI format fails to capture information such as iwi, ethnicity self-identification and household structures. Removing this type of data from the system could limit iwi and hapū from planning housing, education or health. This means Māori lose the ability to exercise self-determination through control of their data.

An approach to mitigate these risks for Stats NZ is to codesign the new approach with Māori. This will ensure Māori governance over how ethnicity and iwi data is collected. This would allow Māori to gather the data they believe would be valuable to their community. With this insight, Māori data remains accurate, relevant and useful to the communities, protecting rangatiratanga and supporting equitable policy outcomes.

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