

## **Protecting Māori Rangatiratanga in Census Reform**

Stats NZ recently scrapped the traditional Census, replacing it with a model based mainly on administrative data from the IDI. While this approach may improve efficiency, it raises significant concerns for Māori communities. According to the Wai 2522 claim, Māori data is a taonga and Māori hold sovereignty over their data. Replacing the Census in this way undermines Māori rangatiratanga and disregards their inherent right to self-determination over data governance.

Undermining Māori data sovereignty and relying on inaccurate data can lead to misguided policy decisions that fail to meet the needs of Māori communities, weaken Māori cultural identity and heritage, and exacerbate social exclusion and discrimination, deepening social division. Furthermore, lack of protection over data sovereignty can cause long-term harm to future generations by limiting Māori self-determination and their capacity for sustainable development, threatening their social, cultural, and economic wellbeing.

Although the traditional full Census is time-consuming and costly, it remains essential. To help reduce costs, Stats NZ could collaborate closely with Te Mana Raraunga. By combining internet-based and in-person data collection methods, the survey can ensure data completeness and accuracy. Throughout the process, it is vital to respect Māori rangatiratanga to genuinely uphold Māori Data Sovereignty and Governance (MDS/G).