

Implications of Scrapping the Census for Māori Data Sovereignty

The transition from the previous census method to relying on administrative datasets poses a significant risk to Māori data sovereignty. This shift negatively effects the 6 principles of Māori data sovereignty, notably the principle of rangatiratanga. Rangatiratanga means authority to control, Māori have an right to exercise control over Māori data including, the creation, collection, access, analysis, interpretation, management, use and reuse of Māori data. By moving to administrative sources instead on the census Stats NZ directly reduces and restricts Māori ability to influence what Māori data is gathered and how it's used to represent them.

Furthermore, if key cultural aspects such as ethnicity are not accurately captured there will be gaps leading to misrepresentation that weaken Māori ability to make decisions for themselves and their own community's. This has a significant impact on the Māori data sovereignty principle of Kotahitanga. Data eco-systems need to function in a way that allow Māori to derive both individual and collective benefit.

Due to these risks I strongly advise that Stats NZ seek a partnership with Māori trusts such as Te Mana Raraunga to co-design the approach ensuring Māori have authority over their data and are able to benefit from its use.

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