

## **Upholding The Māori Data Sovereignty Amid Census Changes**

Replacing the traditional Census and instead, relying on the administrative data raises a major risk to Māori Data Sovereignty (MDS). The principle of *Rangatiratanga* (authority) upholds Māori rights to control the data about themselves, including the way it is collected and classified. The administrative datasets were not designed with Māori in mind and therefore, often miss out the critical information such as the iwi identity, origin and their connections with respect to whenua. Without this type of data, Māori cannot really make effective decisions for factors such as housing, education, health and cultural wellbeing.

The loss of iwi identity and ancestry data also violates the principle of *Whakapapa* (relationships), as it detaches data from its valid proper context and its identity. If Māori are excluded from moulding the new Census, there is a genuine risk of long-term harm through misrepresentation or invisibility in records.

To address these risks, Stats NZ should work collaboratively with maori to develop the future Census. This indeed means to actively involve iwi and Māori organisations in resolutions about data collection and assuring that Māori priorities are specifically included. Creating strong Māori governance over the process helps avoid the gaps and uphold MDS principles.