

Analysis of threats to Māori data sovereignty

33568509

When Te Tiriti o Waitangi was signed, Māori never surrendered sovereignty to the Crown. Consequently, today Māori continue to have ultimate sovereignty over Māori culture and, more specifically in this case, Māori Data. Māori data is a taonga, and thus is respected as such and subject to the principles of Māori data sovereignty rules.

The shift from the traditional census to administrative data is concerning, precisely in regards to said sovereignty. Administrative data is often collected without explicit consent, although it is later depersonalised, the data belongs still to Māori, therefore already breaking the Māori data principle of Rangatiratanga.

Administrative data also measures problems or shortcomings, thus it measures Maori at their most vulnerable, and can create a distorted picture of Maori communities. These large databases shape a number of essential structures in society. This error could result in harming the very communities it came from, thus not upholding the data principle of Kotahitanga.

To alleviate these risks, data must always be used in context, in this case, when dealing with minorities not represented equally in data sets. Additionally, there should be opt-out options for people, in combination with offering data privacy education. Finally, this needs to be done in collaboration with Māori organisations that focus on Māori Data Sovereignty, e.g Te Mana Rauunga.